

FACULTY INTERACTION

INTRODUCTION

“Contact between students and faculty in and outside of class is critical for student engagement because it influences student motivation and involvement” (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009). The time and effort you spend invested in your course will be worth the payoff in student learning and satisfaction.

A CLOSER LOOK

Like teaching in a face-to-face setting, teachers vary considerably in the methods and degrees to which they choose to develop connections with students. While it is largely a matter of style, experience and scholarship indicate that students log in more frequently and produce more high-quality work in online courses in which instructors are frequently and truly interactive. Here are some ways to be more interactive with your students.

Practicing Solid Interaction

- Create an introductory/welcome video about you and your course.
Note: Our Media team is happy to help you!
- Include an introductory icebreaker assignment for students in the first week of your course, and post and participate yourself.
- Use the Announcement feature periodically to talk about course content with your students.
- Personalize communications with students by using their names in feedback and email.
- Respond promptly to student questions.
- Conduct weekly office hours via chat, telephone, or web conference.
- Check in every day (or nearly so).
- Offer timely and detailed feedback on all student work.

Research says . . .

“When students did not believe the faculty were fully engaged in the course, the perception of academic quality diminished.”

- Armstrong, 2011

Achieving Even Greater Interaction

- Participate in student discussion forums on occasion.
- Use the Announcement feature as a blog (include some personal anecdotes and connect course content to broader issues in the industry or in the news), or link students to a blog you keep outside of Canvas.
- Create discussion forums in which you ask questions—and enable and encourage students to ask questions.
- Include audio clips or podcasts that you recorded yourself as an alternative to your students reading the course content. You can also record your feedback on student work.
- Don’t wait until the end of the course to find out what students think of assignments or activities; use ungraded quizzes in Canvas to collect student feedback throughout your course.



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Approaching the Gold Standard of Interaction

- Require each student (or groups of students) to have a short web conference with you during the first two weeks of class.
- Provide students with tips on ways of self-motivating—and solicit tips from them.
- Include visuals and videos that tie into the content pages; also include them in the announcements you post and in the feedback that you give students on their work.
Note: Images or videos of you or taken by you that highlight course content can be especially meaningful if they are of excellent quality.
- Require self-assessment as part of major assessments—and offer feedback on the self-assessment as well as the assessment itself.
Note: Your instructional designer can be a great resource here!
- Use Twitter or other social media platforms to facilitate student connection to broader themes in the field—i.e., move beyond “the structure of an LMS [learning management system] or the timing of a semester” (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009).
- Mentor students by suggesting areas for more research, internships, and job opportunities.
- Engage in discussions with other online instructors and get their best tips for interacting with students.

EXAMPLE

Here is a News post from a course. Notice how it connects students to broader industry awareness and encourages them to think about their professional future.

Wisconsin Hospitals 2014 Quality Report ▾ ✕

Posted Feb 13, 2015 4:51 PM

Students,

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) just released its 2014 report on Quality. It is not required reading, but you may wish to peruse it to see the type of information that is collected and reported to the WHA. Participating in this in some manner will likely be an aspect of your future role.

<http://www.wha.org/pdf/WHA2014QualityReport.pdf>

Brenda

REFERENCES

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- [ASG Best in Show](#) by UW Extended Campus; University of California, Irvine; and University of Washington
- [Tweeting the night away: Using Twitter to enhance social presence](#) by Dunlap and Lowenthal in the *Journal of Information Systems Education* (2009)
- [Exploring online teaching: A three-year composite journal of concerns and strategies from online instructors](#) by the *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*