Building Student Communities
Why Important

Sense of classroom ‘community’ linked to student performance – retention and learning achievement

Comparability of learning in classroom requires interactions with instructor and fellow students

Required for certification – good practice, comparability of learning experience

Assessment results – an area where we can improve
Fall 2013 Student Survey Result – What would help you succeed?

- Tutoring on the course content: 32.8% (99)
- Technical help for computer/Laulima problems: 16.2% (49)
- Better technical skills (using a computer, word processing, email, etc.): 14.6% (44)
- Knowing something about my classmates (building a sense of community): 18.5% (56)
DE – Same Course but Different Environment

DE instruction requires rethinking class methods and assignments

Asynchronous, separated by space and time

Students need help in feeling connected to:

- Instructor
- Fellow students: to make friends; to network; to have resource for dealing with homework, College life etc.

Must consciously structure these interactions, does not just happen as in a classroom
Instructor’s Role

Key role as center of/facilitator of class identity

Requires conscious class design

Must be sustainable (e.g. role in discussions)

Must be aware of and address balancing of needs: building trust, fostering (requiring?) sharing while maintaining boundaries and privacy
Instructor’s role in creating a ‘classroom’

Sample Methods
- Be visible – e.g. post introduction of self, could be a video introduction
- Have scheduled Skype/conferencing session(s) with students
- Maintain schedule of virtual office hours
- Have scheduled chat sessions
- Be active in discussion forums
- Provide frequent announcements, reminders etc.
- Provide frequent and direct feedback on homework/quizzes/tests
- Have synchronous individual progress meetings via phone, chat, or videoconferencing
- Maintain blogs or journals of student/instructor interchange
- Have forum to share bookmarks/recommendations (e.g. sources, news articles)
- Encourage ‘old school’ tools – telephone and face to face.
- Other?
Instructor Role - Structuring Student Interactions

In addition to assignments, make clear communication expectations – e.g. netiquette

A Guide to Netiquette

1. All take a turn, and everyone gives a turn
2. Don't write everything in uppercase
3. Break text into short paragraphs, leaving a line in between
4. Write concisely. Online learning requires a lot of reading and people will be more likely to read your messages if you get to the point and make it concisely and clearly. Planning ahead what to write helps.
5. Revise before submitting. The benefit in online learning is that you can revise what you say before making it “live.”
6. Avoid acronyms, including internet-specific acronyms (BTW, LOL, and so on). They seem hip and trendy, but not everyone will know what you are saying.
7. Avoid time-saving contractions (e.g. “&”)
8. Avoid abbreviations that others might not understand or know the meaning of.
9. Use proper grammar and spelling.
10. Avoid taking long quotes from other sources. Use only what you need.
11. Avoid the “me, too!” habit in posting. Post something substantial.
12. After posting a question or comment, check back in a few days to see if someone is responding to you.

2. Always assume good intent from others in their messages
3. Wait 24 hours before replying to an attack
4. Expect occasional conflict
5. However, don’t mistake confusion for conflict
6. Be considerate in your language—the lack of visual/auditory feedback makes it so you do not see the effects of what you say on others.
Student Community Building

Tools:
- Discussion
- Blogs
- Facebook / My Space
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Wikis
- PowerPoint
- Chats
- Google Docs

- Other?
Student Community Building

Assignments
- Introductions
- Blogs – informal sharing
- Discussions – more formal sharing
- Peer editing/critiquing
- Case study Reports
- Role Playing
- Collaborative assignments. (Group Research Essay, Debate, PowerPoint, Performance (of task/information), creating projects for YouTube, Wiki, website etc.)

Key – have to deal with up front:
  - Clear structure – expectations and responsibilities of group dynamics
  - Grading/rubrics - accountability
  - Creation of groups – assigned roles, responsibilities, accountability
  - Build into SLOs

- Other kinds of assignments?
Collaborative Assignments

Include as Course SLOs (students see it is valued)

The end of the course, the student will be able to:

Plan, develop, and document a professional-grade multimedia product that can be used to educate, sell, or inform.
Work effectively as a member of a multimedia production team.
  a. Collaboratively develop a requirements document
  b. Collaboratively develop a production schedule
  c. Collaboratively develop a navigation map (system flowchart)
  d. Collaboratively develop storyboards
  e. Collaboratively produce a well-integrated, media-enhanced product
Identify and analyze the technological impediments to multimedia production and distribution.
Identify and discuss the technology underlying multimedia objects such as sound files, video files, graphic files.
Identify and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of multimedia-enhanced products.
Evaluate and critique multimedia productions.
Analyze the current status of multimedia production and distribution systems and predict future advances and implementations.

Figure 1: Sample Learning Outcomes
## Collaborative Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Active involvement</td>
<td>➢ Surrendering control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Mirrors workplace</td>
<td>➢ Potential class misalignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Greater exposure</td>
<td>✓ No qualified members for a given role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Vertically</td>
<td>✓ Personality conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Horizontally</td>
<td>✓ Unpredictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Realistic appraisal</td>
<td>✓ Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 9: Risk-Value Analysis*
Resources

- What kinds of support do DE instructors need to implement?

- Website: Best Practices in Designing Online Courses (Las Positas College)

http://lpc1.clpcccd.cc.ca.us/lpc/blackboard/best_practices/

(College website: http://www.laspositascollege.edu)
Sample Bibliography


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