I. Overview of importance

- Clear link between degree of instructor to student communication and student engagement in class and with College; positively linked to retention and completion rates

- Required
  * Regular and effective contact is a requirement for DE courses as specified in ACCJC "Guide for Evaluating DE Courses"
  * Explicitly required in HCC DE course certification and recertification

- Evidence of need
  * HCC Fall 2013 Student Survey indicated 90% of students feel more frequent reminders from instructor would help them succeed in the class.
  * Scholarly studies of what constitutes effective DE teaching and DE instructional practices clearly support the importance of giving prompt and substantive feedback and that frequent communication is even more pronounced with DE students.

II. Best Instructional Practices

A) Establish and maintain connection
  * Be visible as teacher (crucial to sense of a classroom): e.g. post introduction of self, could be a video introduction
  * Maintain schedule of virtual office hours/chat sessions/Skype sessions
  * Encourage/be ready to use traditional means – telephone and face to face.

B) Reinforce student discipline and time management
  * Provide frequent announcements, reminders etc.

C. Give Instructor Based Material and Feedback

  * Provide instructor prepared e-lectures or instructor introductions/explanations even if reliant on publisher created materials
  * Be active in discussion forums (but not overbearing)
  * Respond to questions promptly; let them know grading turn around time (or changes)
  * Provide frequent and direct feedback on homework/quizzes/tests

III. Tools to help with announcements and ensuring communication

Ross demonstrated and discussed merits of several tools.

Suggestion: Ask students to indicate at start of the semester which method of communication they will rely on (email; text); require them to respond to ensure link via this communication method. If they do not respond with a choice, do not make connection by first week, initiate academic alert for follow up.

There are live (synchronous) and asynchronous methods.

Live: telephone, chat, video/audio conference (e.g. Elluminate)
Asynchronous: many tools on Lauima (announcements, email archive), texting, social media, Google calendar
Concern raised – if multiple reminders, via many mediums, some students complain about being bombarded. Best to do anyway but explain why necessary explicitly.

Laulima Tools
Ross quickly reviewed benefits on using these commonly used Laulima tools:

- Laulima Announcements (asynchronous; mass communication)
- Laulima Email Archive (asynchronous; mass communication)
  This allows instructor to send out email via alias tool so can send even when not logged into Laulima.
- Laulima Chat Room (synchronous; individual or small group communication)
  Key here is communication is not private so use should be only general information and exchange with students; if students want private chat, would need to set up with personal Google Gmail account, not part of menu of UH Google options.

New Tools
Ross demonstrated two ways to use students’ phones – on which they are far more reliant than email – without having them know your phone number and building in privacy protection. A key concern with text blasting/reminding is trust: students’ trust in use of their phone numbers and instructors not wanting to give out their numbers.

* Remind101 (text message tool; mass communication)
This is a free service; register your class and get a discreet account. Students are asked to text to that number with a particular term (generated by program and you give to them) for that account. From that point on, you can send out quick, blast messages from phone or computer and it is sent to the students phones who registered. You do not know their number, they do not know yours. Also – this is one way communication. Great way to remind students of upcoming assignments, due dates, exam end date etc. Go to: remind101.com

* Google Voice - requires personal account; cannot use with UH account (text message and voice tool; individual or mass communication)
This entails setting up an account for a class section, and through an app, a phantom number is generated (with area code from mainland which is ok.) Then, if students call this number, you are alerted via email, tablet or phone (via an app) to know if student is trying to get in touch via phone. Works best with Firefox/Chrome/Safari (not Explorer)

* Google Calendar
Ross and Mike discussed use; also requires individual gmail account, not through UH Google. Instructor creates a list of student emails and then can enter calendar due dates/times and alert is sent out to students via email. Requires instructor set up and maintenance of email list, but after that, can be used to remind student quickly.

Ross will post step by step instructions for Remind101 and Google Voice.