

A TLPDC QUICK TIP SHEET

An essential component of a successful online learning environment is instructor presence. Students must be assured that they are not alone in their learning. Investigate more through these resources.

5 STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING PRESENCE IN THE ONLINE CLASS:

Instructor presence means many things, especially during these extraordinary times. It means that we need to be compassionate, caring and committed to student communication. "Simply put, instructor presence means 'being there' in your class. In an online environment, it means to have your students see you behind the screen as a real person so that they can reach you when they have questions or need help with their learning" (Instruction@UH, December 2020, Retrieved from <https://www.instruction.uh.edu/2019/01/11/five-strategies-for-enhancing-instructor-presence-in-online-courses/>).

 [READ MORE](#)

1. "Create a video-based instructor introduction/course orientation." Students want to meet you and to hear your authentic voice. Keep it brief, but welcoming.
2. "Make your syllabus more interactive. As opposed to a traditional text heavy syllabus, creating an interactive and engaging syllabus that incorporates multimedia elements besides text, such as audio, video, images and animation, can help to give students the options to obtain the information in a more interactive way."
3. "Participate in the student discussion forums and model proper online discussion."
4. Answer student questions in a timely manner, through whatever mechanism you use for Q&A, a discussion board, email or by using announcements to post answers to the most common questions you receive.
5. Hold synchronous virtual optional sessions for students to easily drop in (Zoom, Teams) to talk with you. Post a topic title to encourage student participation. "Today's virtual session will focus on (TOPIC) from the learning and I'll also answer other questions" for example. Students are often intimidated and don't want to appear weak or needy to you, their instructor.

 [OTHER ADVICE](#)

5 STEPS TO A MORE COMPASSIONATE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN A DIFFICULT TIME:

1. Continue to hold students to a high standard, but keep it reasonable and realistic. Compassion over control.
2. Empathy and flexibility must be key components to our pedagogy across all learning modalities.
3. Consider taking the "less is more" approach when it comes to assignments. Add flexibility and choice in assessment, assignments and deadlines when possible.
4. If learning outcomes can still be achieved, it may be worth making adaptations and reducing the number of assignments considering the very real challenges students are facing. They may be dealing with sickness, financial strains, loss and grief, anxiety, depression or any combination of very real struggles.
5. A business-as-usual approach, when circumstances are anything but usual, can actually be harmful.

We cannot control the circumstances of the pandemic and its impact, but we can control the grace and understanding in our communication with students and the lessons our students take away from our interactions with them.



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