

Teaching Tip Tuesday

Instructor Presence Online

Studies indicate that student perceptions of instructor engagement and concern for the challenges faced by students are critically important to student success in online courses. In spite of knowing this, one of the most significant challenges faced by online instructors is finding the best way to demonstrate their presence to students, and to replicate the type of interactions provided in face-to-face forums. These tips may help you to cultivate the online presence you want in your course.

- 1 Be human.** Present a face to the students through frequent video announcements. Use video feedback on assignments. Don't over-edit your lectures— allow them to contain verbal fumbles. Increasing your humanity will make you more approachable to students.
- 2 Be clear about your communication plan.** Let students know how and when you will communicate with them. Provide expected response times for communication and turn-around times for assignment grading. Provide instructions on how to see your feedback.
- 3 Be personal.** Generic feedback can be useful, but feedback tailored to individual students is far more effective. Show your concern with their goals when possible, using language like “I know you are a _____major, so...”
- 4 Provide a FAQ page or ongoing Q&A discussion.** This will make it easier for students to obtain help by providing a non-threatening, ongoing safe-space for questions. It will help normalize asking for clarification and help.
- 5 Use a consistent module design.** Providing a clear and consistent format for modules that begins with a page detailing the anticipated learning outcomes, what the students need to do, and how each component of the module helps them achieve learning outcomes is essential. Including links to all instructional materials and assignments accessed as part of the module will reduce the stress of having to find these resources.
- 6 Make criteria for success clear.** Providing rubrics or grading criteria for all assignments will give students a better idea of what your expectations are, showing respect for student time and effort.
- 7 Solicit student feedback often.** Use anonymous forms to collect data on what aspects of the course are working for students, and how things that aren't working might be improved. Share the results and consider changes to problematic design features. This shows your students that you care about their experience in your course, and is a great platform for demonstrating your responsiveness to them.
- 8 Add your voice to discussions.** Comment on discussions boards as often as you expect your students to. Use this forum to deepen understanding by asking questions, and to instill confidence by providing encouraging or positive feedback.