

Engaging Students at a Distance

Tuesday June 13, 2023

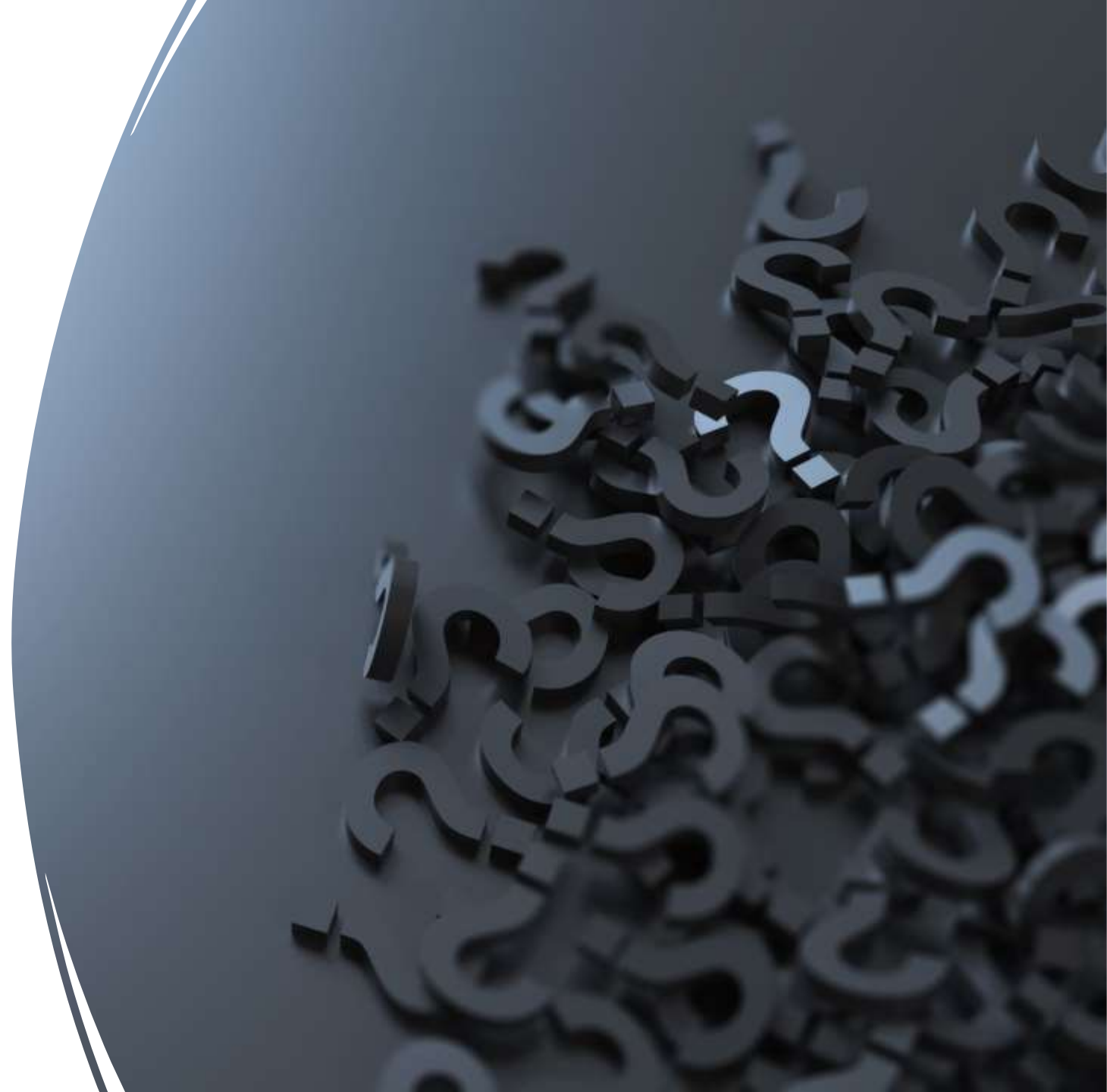
Facilitated by: Susan Gallanis, Kate
Robertson & Elizabeth Evans

CELT – The Center for Excellence in
Learning and Teaching



Introductions and Poll

- What strategies have you used to engage students (any instructional method)?
- Poll questions



Prayer





Session Outline

The ***who, what, why, how & where*** of Engagement at a Distance:

- Who is engaged?
- What? – What do we mean by “distance”? What is student engagement?
- Why? – Why is it important?
- How? – Planning and being prepared
- Where? – Where does engagement at a distance happen?
 - Announcements
 - Online Discussions
 - Feedback on assignments



Session Objectives

After this session, you will be able to:

- Define student engagement and instructor presence
- Explain and discuss why instructor presence is important to student learning
- Plan activities that help your students feel you are "present" in the online course
- Identify techniques for engaging distance students through announcements, online discussions and feedback on assignments



The “What” & “Why”


What is student engagement, and why is engagement with distance students vitally important for teaching excellence



Introducing a Perspective

- Elizabeth Evans interviews Madelyn Kempen, Lead Instructional Designer in the CELT about student engagement.

<https://cuwaa.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=28c46f6f-9cb0-4939-8b3d-b01901648051>

An illustration on the left side of the slide shows a row of four unlit lightbulbs hanging from above. Below them, a single lightbulb is lit, glowing yellow with radiating lines around it. The background is dark grey.

What is student engagement?

- According to Barkley and Major (2022): "Student engagement is the mental state students are in while they are learning, at the intersection of feeling and thinking."
 - Motivation (feeling)
 - Active Learning (thinking)

Why is student engagement important?

- NSSE researchers found improvements in
 - Student learning outcomes
 - Self-perception of learning
 - Persistence
- Promotes a sense of community
 - Mutual sense of community promotes student success



More on Why? *Students want to know: Are you there?*

The other side of student engagement is instructor presence

“The quality of the instructor – student relationship is not a frill or ‘feel-good’ aspect of schooling, it is an essential feature of learning” (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

Evidence based.. Instructor social and cognitive presence

Maintaining instructor presence is the ability to

- project one's self into the asynchronous learning environment
- establish relationships with students that are personal and purposeful.
- create the conditions for inquiry and quality interaction to collaboratively achieve worthwhile educational goals

Community of Inquiry Framework by
Garrison, 2007



Show students you are there

- **Be Timely and Personable**
 - The student needs to know you are there: reach out to them and respond to them when they contact you
- Model and foster **open communication**
 - learners feel secure to communicate openly
- **Share your knowledge** and expertise by facilitating attention to course content
- **Guide students** through the learning experience by facilitating discussion, collaborative work, and feedback on assignments





Be Prepared

How planning and preparation ahead of time can help you engage with your distance students.

Planning and Preparation

“When students experience greater exposure to clear and organized instruction, they perceive their faculty as being more invested in their learning and development, and they report being more academically motivated and engaged in their studies. Moreover, students who enter college less academically prepared benefit more from exposure to clear and organized instruction” (Roska, Trolan, Blaich, & Wise, 2017).

- Write your announcements up ahead of time – save them for future use.
- Save your common discussion question responses.
- Set a schedule for virtual office hours, offer them by appointment, or both
- Schedule on your calendar
 - Grade work promptly
 - Respond promptly to questions
- Use videos to clear up any misconceptions about course work or tasks – save them for future use.



How do I do this?

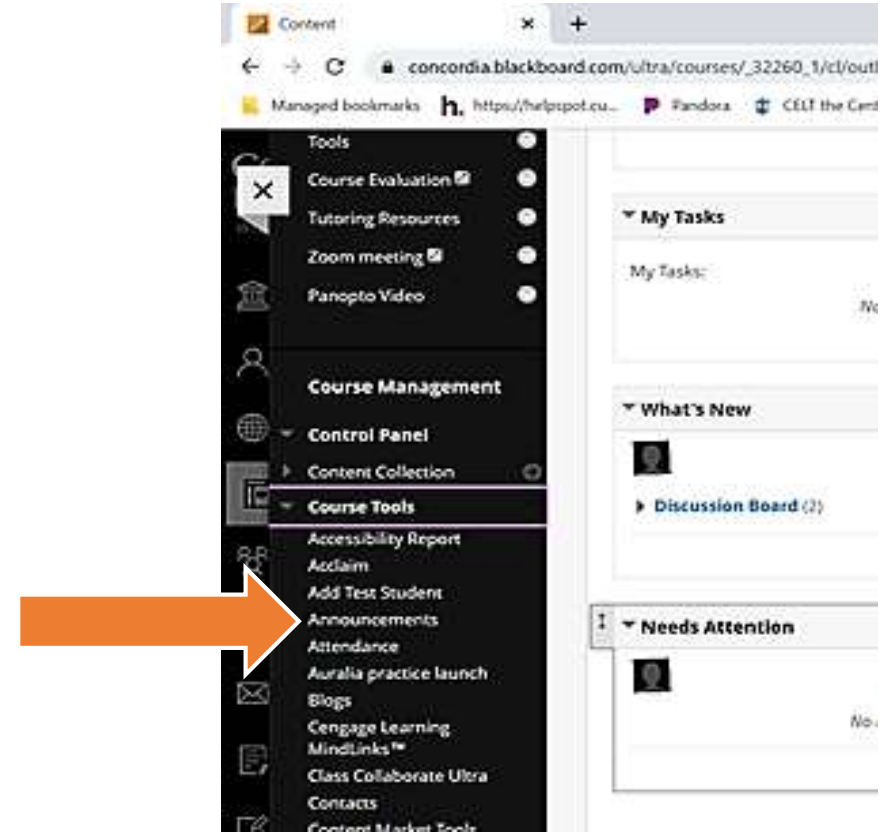
Three of the primary places in your Blackboard course where engagement with students happens:
Announcements, Online Discussions,
and Feedback on Assignments



Announcements, not Email

Benefits of Announcements:

- Announcements are posted in the course, AND are send to students' emails.
- Announcements are saved, emails are not.
- Displayed on the home page.

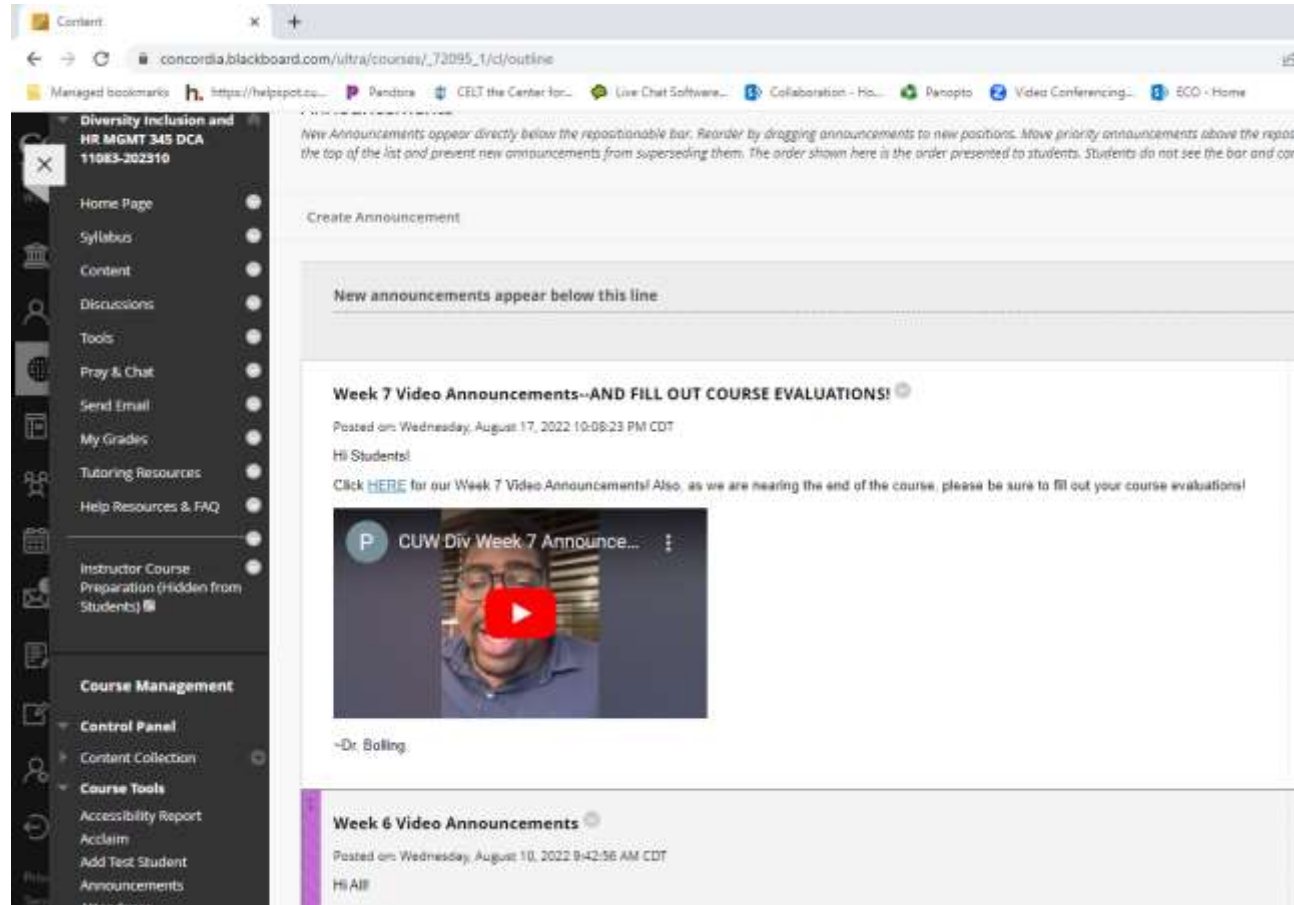


Announcements...

- Are an effective way to communicate and engage with **the entire class**
- Should be sent out weekly
- Could be sent out additionally as a special update (link to a current event, notice about grading, reminder about a big assignment)
- Could be written or video
- Should help build rapport between you and your students



Let's look at a sample announcement:



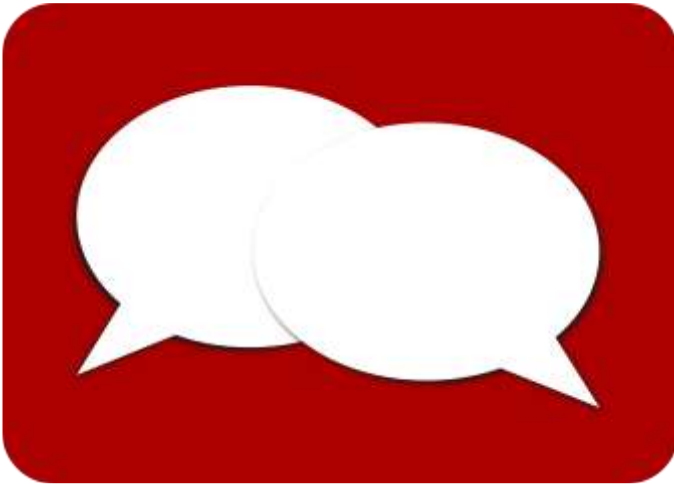
The screenshot shows a Blackboard course page for 'Diversity Inclusion and HR MGMT 345 DCA 11063-202310'. The left sidebar contains navigation options like Home Page, Syllabus, Content, Discussions, Tools, Pray & Chat, Send Email, My Grades, Tutoring Resources, Help Resources & FAQ, and Course Management. The main content area displays a 'Create Announcement' section with a 'New announcements appear below this line' separator. Below this, there is an announcement titled 'Week 7 Video Announcements--AND FILL OUT COURSE EVALUATIONS!' posted on Wednesday, August 17, 2022. The announcement text reads: 'Hi Students! Click [HERE](#) for our Week 7 Video Announcements! Also, as we are nearing the end of the course, please be sure to fill out your course evaluations!'. A video thumbnail is shown with a red play button. Below the video, it says '~Dr. Bolling.'. A second announcement for 'Week 6 Video Announcements' is partially visible at the bottom.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9eb9mL0sLY>

- Questions for discussion:

- How would you describe Dr. Bolling's announcement?
- What strategies did he use?
- How does his announcement build engagement and rapport?

Online Discussions



- Are an effective way to communicate and engage with *a small group within the class (and also the whole class... stay tuned)*

Dr. Meghan Watry-Christian – Department Chair, OT-CUW

- Design tips:
 - Consider purpose of discussion board (case studies, sharing drafts for feedback, creating handouts)
 - Very clear and specific instructions for initial posts AND replies
 - Consistency across assignments and courses

Online Discussions – Instructor Actions

Action	Engagement
Instructors wait to engage until after due date for initial post	Doesn't "skew or stop" discussion – fosters diversity of thought and opinion
Instructors ask for resources	"That's an interesting perspective, what resources can you share from the field that support that?"
Instructors write a summary post of main themes from initial posts	Instead of looking to faculty for "right answer", faculty can guide replies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "When you reply, look for..."• "Make connections to..."• "How does the view presented..."
Instructors track which individual students they respond to	Interactions with all students
Instructors use video in online discussions	Engaging and personal to see instructor, hear their voice.

Feedback on assignments...

- Are an effective way to communicate and engage with *an individual student in your class*
- Could come from rubrics or evaluation criteria
- Could be audio and/or video feedback along with written
- Should be substantive (beyond “good job”)
- Should be reflective of the particular assignment
- Should be educational – ie: should help students improve on their subsequent assignments
- Make it personable
- *Question for discussion: How do you put your personal stamp on your feedback?*



One Online Instructor Experience

- Continuation of interview of Madelyn Kempen by Elizabeth Evans

<https://cuwaa.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=924ab0a2-cf00-4879-9c78-b01901687b7f>





Summary/Wrap-up

Please post your biggest “takeaway” point in the chat.

Thank you for attending today! Have a wonderful summer; reach out to the CELT anytime with questions or concerns.

Resources

- Barkley, E. F., & Major, C. H. (2022). *Engaged teaching: A handbook for college faculty* (1st ed.). SocialGood.
- Concordia University Teaching Observation Process and Form: <https://celt.cuw.edu/teaching-observation-process-and-form/>
- Garrison, D. (2007). "Online community of inquiry review: Social, cognitive, and teaching presence issues." *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*. 11.10.24059/olj.v11i1.1737. <https://teaching.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/2020-05/Community%20of%20Inquiry%20Framework.pdf>
- Ohio State University Teaching and Learning Resource Center "Online Instructor Presence" (n.d.). <https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/teaching-topics/online-instructor-presence>
- Technology Resources
 - [Send Announcements from Your Blackboard Course](#)
 - [Provide Audio/Video Feedback on Blackboard Assignments](#)
 - [Add Zoom Meeting Link to Your Blackboard Course](#)
 - [Guide for Storing and Sharing Video Files](#)