Model of an Online Course

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Keeping in mind the things that students bring to your class along with their needs and challenges, how can we create a course online that can support students and provide quality learning?

In this presentation, we'll talk about some of the practical things that you can do in your course to ensure student success. We'll be going into detail on these items as we move through the Faculty Institute.

Community
Fostering a sense of community within your course is critical. This helps overcome the tendency for students to feel isolated and supports their need for social interaction. Some ways of doing this are through discussion boards, peer evaluations and group projects.

Communication and Feedback
Perceived communication and contact with an instructor is one of the most common factors for success in online learning. Provide students with clear outlines for how they can contact an instructor. This can be through email, Skype, virtual, or telephone office hours

In regards to feedback on papers and assessments, you'll want to get a response to the student in less than 24 hours or at maximum between 24-48 hours. If this is not possible due to high course enrollment let students know when they can expect to hear from you.

Set up a discussion board for Frequently Asked Questions and use the "Announcements" feature of the course management system. Remember, you are no longer in a classroom setting where you can answer a question and all of the students hear the answer. In order to avoid having an overwhelming number of emails from students it's important to have clear expectations and guidelines from the beginning.

Expectations and Accountability
In an online course it is not enough to simply post a syllabus. A successful course will:

- Post a syllabus and reference deadlines throughout the course.
- Clearly outline expectations for all activities and assignments throughout the course.
- Keep expectations consistent and unchanged throughout the course.

- Provide step-by-step instructions for academic assignments AND how to use the technologies of the course.
- Instructor and TAs take accountability for the course and frequently “check in.”

Engineering Economy EIN4354, Summer 2012 Due Dates

Assignment/Quiz	Description/Notes	Date Due	Points	Gradebook title	Done
All assignments are due at 10:00 p.m. on the due date.					
Discussion: 1st post	Your initial discussion board post is due each Wednesday at 10:00 p.m.				
Discussion: 2 responses	Your two discussion board responses are due Friday at 10:00 p.m.				
Quizzes	Your quizzes for all of the modules covered each week are due Friday at 10:00 p.m.				
Activity or Project	Your weekly activities or projects are due Sunday at 10:00 p.m.				
Midterm and Final Exams	The dates/times for your proctored midterm and final exams will be posted as soon as they are available				
Week 1	**May 14 - 20**				
Module 1 Discussion Post: Hello!	Introduce yourself to the class with a post.	5/18	5	1-DB-Hello	
Webtour Quiz	You cannot view introduction module until you have passed the Webtour quiz (5 points out of 5)	5/18	5	WebTourQz	
Handbook Quiz	You cannot view the course material until you have passed the handbook quiz (8 points out of 10)	5/18	10	HB Qz	
Contract Quiz	Agree to these statements to show that you clearly understand your responsibilities and the commitment necessary to succeed in this course.	5/18	5	Con Quiz	
Module 1 Quiz	Quiz covering Chapter 1 material.	5/18	20	1-qz	
Module 2 Problem Set	Chapter 2: Drill Problems 1 (a,d,f,j) and Application Problems 1 (a,b) and 2.	--	--		
Module 2 Quiz	Quiz covering Sections 2.1 and 2.2 material.	5/18	20	2-qz	
Module 1 Discussion Post: Article	Post an article (Web URL) concerning an engineering investment, classify it, and justify your classification. NOTE: YOU WILL NOT BE GIVEN CREDIT IF YOUR ARTICLE HAS ALREADY BEEN POSTED!	5/20	10	1-DB-Article	
Module 2 Activity	Build a GoogleDocs spreadsheet for the cash flows of the investment that you identify in the Module 1 Discussion Post. Merely estimate any data you require to fill in the necessary data.	5/20	10	2-ACT	
Week 2	**May 21 - 27**				
Module 3 Problem Set	Chapter 2: Drill Problems 3, 4, 6, 9, 14, 15 and Application Problems 4, 5.	--	--		
Module 3 Quiz	Quiz covering Sections 2.3 through 2.6 material.	5/25	20	3-qz	
Module 5 Problem Set	Chapter 2: Drill Problems 21, 22, 23, 25, 26 and Application Problem 8.	--	--		
Module 5 Quiz	Quiz covering Sections 2.7 and 2.8 material.	5/25	20	5-qz	
Module 4 Activity	Post a Bureau of Labor Statistics Index (or other index of choice) and estimate inflation rates.	5/27	10	4-ACT	

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Frequent and Consistent Deadlines

Without the framework provided by regular classroom meetings, students taking online classes tend to put off doing the work. Provide the student with a framework of regular deadlines.

- Require students to complete weekly activities such as quizzes, discussions, and projects that require them to login frequently.
- Keep deadlines on the same day of the week and at the same time. Students have a lot of different deadlines and keeping them consistent will help them to remember yours.
- Students tend to prefer having things due at midnight, although this can be problematic in the event that they have any difficulties with technology as the Help Desk is closed at that time.

Student Engagement

One of the advantages of an online course is the ability to present materials in a variety of ways to engage the student.

There is a direct correlation to the amount of times a student logs into the course and the success in the course. Some examples of student engagement are:

- Discussion Boards
- Short lectures in segments of 15 minutes or less
- Variety in the presentation of materials (current events, youtube videos, articles, readings, lecture, humor, webquests, etcetera)
- Collaboration and other interaction with their peers
- Projects
- Weekly assessments

Availability of Assistance

Students are very busy and can get frustrated quickly when technology doesn't work or assignment instructions are unclear. Be sure to provide students with specific information on how to get help. Point them to the Help Desk for technical assistance, give them a course questions discussion board to provide answers to assignment questions. When students feel comfortable that they can get their problems solved quickly, they'll be able to focus on the course material.

Most face to face undergraduate courses – especially of the freshman and sophomore levels, follow a lecture and assessment model. Usually the students attend a lecture and are given 2-3 major exams throughout the semester.

Converting this model to an online setting by replacing the lectures with video and putting the exams into the course management system does not tend to support student success.

Generally, watching a lecture—whether it is live or recorded is a fairly passive activity. A successful course tends to focus on "active learning." This means that students spend their time doing something with the course material. The following modules within the Faculty Institute will provide ideas and strategies that will help you incorporate active learning into your online or hybrid course.

UF Standards & Markers of Excellence

- Introductory video or text is provided on the course website to establish the instructor presence in the online course.
- Students are divided into appropriate-sized ***groups*** to encourage interaction and engagement.

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I've just given you some features that can be found in a model online course. You'll find that the UF Standards and Markers of Excellence provide a useful overview of practices that have been proven to be effective.

Since we have been focusing on student engagement, let's look at the *Interaction and Engagement* section of the Standards. That section recommends that you welcome the student to your course—this is just like what you do in a face to face course. Provide the class with some background and context for what they are going to learn.

Another recommendation is that the class be divided into groups. Just as with a face to face course, it is easier to relate to a smaller group of people than a large group. To foster quality discussions, consider dividing your class into groups of 5 to 15 students. The actual number of students in each group will depend upon the overall size of your class, the level of the course and your objectives for the assignment.

UF Standards & Markers of Excellence

- The course provides opportunities for ***students*** to ***engage*** with other ***students*** in a variety of communication and interaction experiences.
- The course provides opportunities for ***students*** to ***engage*** with ***instructor*** in a variety of communication and interaction experiences.

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The UF Standards recommend that you provide opportunities for students to interact with each other and you, the instructor. We have mentioned a few ways to do this—discussions, group projects, peer review and faculty feedback. Later in the workshop, we'll talk about some specific tools that can help you manage these types of activities.

Standard		
Standard	Annotation	Example
Introductory video or text is provided on the course website to establish the instructor presence in the online course.	Help students get to know you with a welcome message. Students who "connect" with their instructor are more likely to log in and do the coursework.	A video welcome message allows the student to see and hear their professor discuss the course just he/she might do in a face to face course.
Students are divided into appropriate-sized groups to encourage interaction and engagement.	It can be difficult for students to work together and interact effectively in troups that are too large or too small.	Group size may vary depending upon the activity. Set up groups that are small enough so that each person can make a significant contribution, but not so small that the group stagnates if one or two people do not contribute.
The course provides opportunities for students to engage with other students in a variety of communication and interaction experiences.	Student-student interactions can help students engage with the course material as well as each other.	Students can interact with each other through group discussions, small-group projects and peer review.
The course provides opportunities for students to engage with instructor in a variety of communication and interaction experiences.	Students appreciate personal attention from their instructor.	A discussion board set up for questions about the course content is an easy way for the instructor to answer questions. Provide feedback to students about their coursework as frequently as possible.

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If the standard or marker of excellence is not clear, please review the version with annotations that can be found in the links for this module. This document lists the standard, further explanation of the standard and then an example.

Since we have just been talking about the importance of "Active Learning" in an online course, it's time to put that concept into practice. Please write down the strengths and challenges that the students taking your course a likely to have. Consider specific needs that your students are likely to have.

You can use the worksheet form that is provided, or simply jot your thoughts on a piece of paper. As we go through the workshop, you'll refer to these worksheets to determine the best way to create your course.

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