

ONLINE LEARNING

Leading students to succeed in new ways



College of Agricultural,
Consumer &
Environmental Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

CREATING COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

Get to know your students.
Foster peer connections during class.

Of the characteristics of a high-quality online course, ACES students were most likely to experience a strong **sense of community** when they had an opportunity to **connect with peers**.



Some things you can do:

- Use the **same breakout groups**
- Allow groups **time to work together** during class
- Ask for a **2-word check-in** at the start of class for students to express connect with others
- Login to Zoom **5-10 minutes before class** to provide a space for conversation and connection
- Send **weekly emails**; include something personal

MOTIVATING STUDENTS

Get real with your students.
Connection & empathy lead to motivation.

Instructors expressed the least efficacious beliefs in motivating students with low interest. Motivational theories support the **need for connection and empathy**. Be open to expressing your own challenges with motivation during COVID, and provide shared time for conversation and connection.



Some things you can do:

- **Increase sense of community** in classes to increase student motivation
- **Replace lectures** with case studies, problems to solve in small groups, or open discussion on current topics or issues
- Structure assessments with **small goals** to build success instead of one large assignment

OBJECTIVES ↔ ASSESSMENTS

Ensure course outcomes are met.
Align objectives with assessments.

Students indicated low to moderate connections between the course **learning objectives and assessments**. To ensure students are learning the intended course objectives, ensure the expected outcomes (knowledge, behaviors, &/or attitudes) are accurately assessed in assignments or in-class activities.



Some things you can do:

- Use **consistent due dates** -- time & day(s) of the week -- to minimize confusion and help students establish a routine
- **Review course objectives** with students at multiple times throughout semester
- **Explicitly connect** assignments and class activities to the course objectives (i.e., establish the why)

MANAGING EMAILS & EXPECTATIONS

Prioritize student emails.
Establish clear expectations for responses.

Students report that a reasonable amount of time for instructors to respond to emails is **18 hours**. Specifically, the majority of student concerns are delayed responses from instructors when they have individual questions during non-class meeting times.



Some things you can do:

- Communicate to students your **anticipated email response time** to establish expectations
- Devote **5 min. at the start of class** to answer questions, thus reducing quantity of emails
- If you **use a central forum to post questions**, give students extra credit for answering peers' questions correctly (i.e., When is this due?)

WHAT ACES STUDENTS SAID...

MOTIVATION

Again, motivation. It has to come from yourself because there is no one else there to even study with. I am also concerned about asynchronous classes especially, for this reason. I hope that professors are encouraged to be more responsive. I know that this is hard on those teaching, but **students look to professors and TAs for inspiration and guidance.** It is extremely important for students, professors, and TAs to remain engaged with each other.

CLASS MANAGEMENT

It was helpful when the professors **recorded their zoom lectures.** It also helped when they provided **multiple different sources** to learn the material. I liked classes that kept to a simpler structure. Online format makes complicated assignments more difficult to complete.

CONNECTION

I would say the courses that the professors went out of the way to include the students in them. Not through a ton of extra assignments, but where they **included the students in the discussion** and made sure to **engage the students to get us thinking.** I am an introvert so this part of class can be hard for me and I have to be pushed a lot to join in discussion, but honestly participating in discussion is the part of the class that really takes it outside the classroom and engages my mind. This **causes me to learn and question more** than what we learn in class and enhances my knowledge. When a professor simply talks at us for an hour straight, I tend to drift off and never really come back.

EXPECTATIONS

Having the same, **consistent assignments due on consistent deadlines each week** (excluding special course projects, papers, etc.) was **EXTREMELY** helpful at helping us keep up with content and it was an effective learning tool. For example, each week there's a worksheet due on Wednesday a quiz due on Friday (and this is constant every week). **One weekly email with announcements/everything we need to know for the week was helpful** (some instructors sent multiple times per week--- this was too much and become an annoyance rather than a helpful resource).