

Online Learning That Lasts: Three Ways to Increase Student Engagement & Retention

By Tyler J. Griffin, PhD

It is not uncommon for students in online courses to experience one or more of the following frustrations:

- “I don’t love the subject, but I have to take this class to graduate.”
- “I’m not invested in this class because I don’t feel connected with the material, the teacher, or other students.”
- “I rarely learn anything in this class that I will remember or use after the term ends.”
- “I am losing motivation to complete assignments or turn in my work on time.”

All these issues can lead to a much larger concern, students who finally conclude, “I don’t care about this class anymore. I’m dropping out.”

It is easy to assume that these problems are mostly due to the subject matter. While we can’t always change *what* needs to be taught, we can always change *how* we package it. And ironically, when we make the right adjustments,

we will find improvement in all the trouble areas listed above. So, what can we do to facilitate meaningful experiences that lead to higher levels of student satisfaction and long-term learning that lasts far beyond the end of the term?

Begin by realizing that you most likely don’t need a complete course redesign to engage and retain more students at higher levels. You can start by making simple yet strategic changes that immediately improve student engagement and learning in the courses you already teach. You just need to know what to do and where to start.

Here are three techniques you can use in your courses that will improve learning and retention in your online classes: (1) front-load the relevance, (2) maximize the strengths of online learning tools without migrating face-to-face teaching weaknesses and constraints to digital classes, and (3) help students learn at more than one or two levels of cognitive engagement.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>

This newsletter has featured many tips on how to improve student motivation and engagement. Here are a few more from a recent Magna Online Seminar led by Barbi Honeycutt, founder of Flip It Consulting.

- **Offer choices**—“Building in elements of choice can enhance engagement since students are working on tasks/topics that relate to their area of interest. For example, you could offer five topics from which students could choose to write their research paper on. Or you could offer a variety of formats for students to complete assignments,” Honeycutt said.
- **Chunk course content**—“Breaking larger units into smaller modules and/or revealing only one topic at a time so students can focus without getting overwhelmed are a couple of ideas to sustain engagement,” Honeycutt said.
- **Show up**—“Setting [up] online chat sessions, sharing examples, calling on students by name in the discussion board, making connections between student discussions ... these are all ways to enhance engagement and sustain interest in a course,” she said. @

President: William Haight
(whaight@magnapubs.com)

Publisher: David Burns
(dburns@magnapubs.com)

Managing Editor: Rob Kelly
(robkelly@magnapubs.com)

ADVISORY BOARD

Randy Accetta, PhD
Mentor-in-Residence, Communication
www.entrepreneurship.arizona.edu

Toni Bellon, PhD
Professor, Middle/Secondary Education
North Georgia College & State University
tbellon@northgeorgia.edu

Jennifer E. Lerner, PhD
Associate Vice President for e-Learning
Northern Virginia Community College
jlerner@nvcc.edu

B. Jean Mandernach, PhD
Professor & Senior Research Associate
Grand Canyon University
Jean.Mandernach@gcu.edu

John Orlando, PhD
jorlando@gmail.com

Lawrence C. Ragan, PhD
Director- Faculty Development
World Campus
Penn State University
lcr1@psu.edu

Online Classroom (ISSN 1546-2625) is published monthly by Magna Publications Inc., 2718 Dryden Drive, Madison, WI 53704. Phone 800-433-0499; Fax: 608-246-3597. Email: support@magnapubs.com. Website: www.magnapubs.com. One-year subscription: \$197 (Multiple print subscriptions and Group Online Subscriptions are available. Call Customer Service at 800-433-0499.) Photocopying or other reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to *Online Classroom*, 2718 Dryden Drive, Madison, WI 53704. Copyright ©2014, Magna Publications Inc.

Submissions to *Online Classroom* are welcome. Please review article submission guidelines located at www.magnapubs.com/catalog/online-classroom/

Authorization to photocopy or reuse content from *Online Classroom* is available for academic institutions, businesses, and individuals from the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC). To see a list of options available for you to reuse select content, visit www.copyright.com or use the QR code to the right. You can also call CCC at 978-750-8400 for more information.



INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE

From Barely There to Fully Present: 3 Ways to Improve Your Instructor Presence

By Diane Monsivais, PhD, CNE,
CRRN

I recently received a frantic phone call from a distraught colleague who had just received her student evaluations after teaching her first online course. Tearfully, she shared with me sample student comments such as, “I didn’t get any feedback on my assignments until it was too late to help me with the next assignment,” and “I never heard from my instructor. It was like she was barely there.”

Frustrated because she felt that she had been doing a good job of communicating with her students, and also fearful since her adjunct position depended in part on receiving positive student evaluations, she asked for help in setting up an improvement plan for the next course.

Unfortunately, my colleague’s frustrating experience is not uncommon for instructors new to the online environment. Managing instructor presence—students’ perceptions of how instructors interact with them and guide their learning during a course—is the key to overcoming frustration. It’s not unusual for instructors and students to have widely different perceptions of instructor presence during the same course.

For instructors who may be teaching multiple courses and spending large blocks of time answering student email, the time spent on their courses makes them feel fully present and fully engaged. To students, however, who may be looking for interaction from the instructor on the course discussion boards, it may seem the instructor

is “barely there” because there is little trace of the instructor in the course.

How would your students rate your instructor presence on a continuum from “barely there” to “fully present”? If there’s a difference between your *students’* perception and *your* perception of your instructor presence, you can improve your presence with some simple strategies.

After working with online students at all levels of higher education for more than a decade, I’ve developed a three-step approach for creating a strong instructor presence. In this article I describe those steps, giving you a clear plan that can save time, improve the learning environment, and result in positive student evaluations.

Step 1: interact early and share your plan with the class

About a week before the course starts, send a welcome note reminding students the course will be starting. Include information they might need immediately, such as how to access the course and recapping information (or reminding them) about the book being used.

At the beginning of the course, be transparent about your interaction plan. Planned interactions range from daily attention to questions, guidance, and problems to weekly formal feedback on assignments. Normally, the most pressing questions students have are when their questions will be answered and how soon the assignments will be graded, so addressing those up

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 >>

<< FROM PAGE 2

front decreases anxiety. Here's an example:

I will normally be checking into the course twice a day, so if one of your classmates doesn't answer, I will within a fairly short time. You will receive feedback on postings and assignments in time to use it for any needed improvements on future work.

Your daily and weekly times for course interaction should be on your work calendar, just as showing up for a traditional face-to-face class would.

Step 2: check-in daily and interact if needed

Check in often to the course discussion board that is set up for questions, monitor your course email, and post any announcements as needed. How often is often enough will depend on the length and level of the course. For graduate students in a seven-week course, I check at least twice a day. When students find they are getting prompt responses to questions, their anxiety levels decrease. This short check-in routine becomes a time-saver because students don't send individual emails or create chaos by giving each other incorrect information. Whether it's a five-minute check-in first thing in the morning and/or late at night, it should be a planned routine that is part of your work flow.

Be clear about the days you may not check in as often, whether that is on weekends or certain weekdays. Travel days may also be times you cannot respond within your usual time. Because most of our students are employed full-time during the week, weekends are when many of them focus on their classwork. For those students, instructor

availability on Saturdays and Sundays is critical.

Some specifics about the "Course Concerns and Questions" discussion board

Directions for the discussion board should tell students to post any questions related to the course on the discussion board rather than sending the instructor individual emails. Some students resist making their questions public, so an encouraging note on the discussion board itself saying, "Other students will be grateful you asked" is a way to encourage those who may be reluctant to ask. Here is an example:

Please post all course-related questions or concerns on the discussion board set up for that purpose. Both students and faculty are expected to contribute to replies. Even if you find yourself a little hesitant to ask questions in a public area (for fear that everyone in the world knows something you don't!), just go ahead and ask. I can guarantee if you have a question about something, there are at least five of your classmates wondering the same thing, and they will be overwhelmingly grateful to you for asking. How do I know this with such great certainty? Because it happens every semester over and over! Some of our most interesting discussions sometimes happen on this discussion board, so please just jump in. (Reserve email for those events that pertain to you personally.)

Some specifics about email

Reply to any individual emails about course content by thanking the student for the question and letting that student know that since others will benefit from the response

that he or she should post the question on the course questions discussion board and that you will answer it there. The only emails from students should be related to individual personal issues such as problems interfering with course-work. Here's a sample response to an email asking a course-related question.

Thanks for asking this question. I think your classmates may also be wondering about that and would benefit from clarification. Please post your question on the course discussion board; I will respond there.

Some specifics about announcements

Post announcements at least weekly. The announcement board is a great place to provide the following information:

- **General assignment feedback**—Give group feedback about an assignment, or use exemplars of student work to model an "A" assignment.
- **Clarification about a general issue**—If a few students have been asking the same type of question on the discussion board or it's clear there is confusion about anything in the course, the announcement area is a great place to reach everyone.
- **Encouragement**—Provide calm reassurance about problems that may be beyond the students' control, such as university tech issues.

Step 3: grade and summarize (at least) weekly

Set aside specific times each week for grading and posting summaries/synthesis for the week. This can be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 >>

Get Organized

By John Orlando, PhD

A wise teacher once told me that half of college success is just being organized, and I'm sure the same is true for any work. Yet we provide precious little guidance to students on this critical life skill. Lack of organization leads to students who fail or burden us with late assignments and excuses.

David Allen has created an excellent organizational method he calls "Getting Things Done." I will lay out how to apply this organizational philosophy with Evernote in order to better manage tasks. This will work for both you and your students, and I've included a link to a tutorial at the end that will show your students how to use it to get organized. Since the basic organizational principles can be used with a variety of technologies, I will finish with some student organization systems that you can suggest to your students as alternatives to Evernote.

Evernote and Getting Things Done

There isn't enough space in this article to cover all the ins and outs of the Getting Things Done system here, and most people will modify it to suit their needs anyway. But the basic idea is that you create a note in Evernote for each task. For students, that task may include an assignment, studying for an exam, or doing an outside job. For faculty, that task can relate to their courses, research, or committee work. That note includes information on what needs to be done as well as any attachments related to the tasks. In other words, you are translating information from an email message, class assignment, or other attachment to a task, which means that you are

already organizing your work.

A critical element of the system is to tag each task with information that allows you to sort your tasks later. The power of Evernote is that it has a built-in tagging function that allows for easy organization of notes. For instance, a student might create a note about a paper due in a class in two weeks. The student would then add a tag related to the category of the task, such as "work" or "school." This allows the student to draw together all school-related tasks at once. Another tag might identify the course itself, such as "Bio 354," so the student can find out what is coming up in a particular course.

Beyond subject matter, it is important to also tag tasks with importance and urgency. A common organizational error is to confuse urgency, and especially someone else's urgency, with importance. An email asking for your opinion on the Green Bay Packers' first-round draft pick right now, with that little red exclamation mark at the end, is not giving you an important task, but we tend to respond to urgency as if it were. Separating the two puts them in perspective.

Students and instructors should tag their tasks by importance from "high" to "low" and urgency from "immediate" to "long-term." The latter is best for tasks that do not have a set due date. For those with a due date, it is better to tag them with the actual date itself. This allows us to quickly see what is coming up.

A secret to being productive is to understand that importance always trumps urgency. High importance and low urgency trumps low importance and high urgency. From students' perspectives, that means

they should work on the term paper that is due in a week before the "Top Five YouTube Cat Videos" list that a friend wants within an hour. Not understanding this principle is at the heart of most students'—and other people's—organizational problems.

Faculty will also benefit from using Evernote to organize their tasks. A good start is to create notes for work related to their courses. I like to create a note for each of my courses that records student issues. Many learning management systems (LMSs) have a place to record grades, but not the conversations that you have with students. It is easy to forget that you granted a student an extension on an assignment when he or she corners you after a class or sends you an email. I have one note where I record all this information. This also helps me identify patterns when I see that I have granted extensions in the past, and especially to defend decisions when I can provide the exact dates and descriptions of past events. This record is also valuable when someone else asks you for information about a student.

Research

Another good use of Evernote is to organize your research. We constantly run across articles that we save for future reference, but can't find later. Evernote is an ideal system for gathering together research. When you find an article that you like, simply create a note with your thoughts on the content of the article and how it relates to your current research. You can then attach the article to the note and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 >>

<< FROM PAGE 4

even annotate it with comments or highlights if it is a PDF. You then tag it according to its topic and source, and when you are writing a paper on a particular topic, you can simply pull up in one place all the resources you have saved on that topic.

Students should also be encouraged to use this method to save the resources they get from their classes, what they find outside class, and even resources from their past work. Tagging that information by class and subject will also help them keep track of class resources and do their own research. In this way, each student will create a growing repository of information that will serve them not only in future courses but throughout their lives.

Teaching organization not only will improve students' performance in school but will provide them with a life skill that will serve them long after college. This, after all, is the whole point of education.

Here's a tutorial on how to use

Evernote with Getting Things Done: www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVQmkC77pEc&feature=youtu.be. Consider passing it on to your students to help them get organized.

Other organizational tools are as follows:

- myHomework (<https://myhomeworkapp.com/>) is a free app that will help students track their course schedules, assignments, and due dates. It works on nearly any mobile device, from iPads and iPhones to Android devices. It also will sync what students enter across all their devices, so that, for example, they can check on their iPhones over lunch what they entered into their iPads in class.
- Studious (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.young.studious>) is a personal to-do list and calendar designed for students. You enter your assignments as notes and can even set your phone to ring or vibrate as they are coming due.
- GTasks (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.dayup.gtask&feature=nav_result#?t=W

[251bGwsMSuxLDMsIm9yZy5kYXl1cC5ndGFzayJd](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=251bGwsMSuxLDMsIm9yZy5kYXl1cC5ndGFzayJd)) is a task list manager from Google (enough said). It allows you not only to enter descriptions of your tasks but also to organize them by due date, priority, and subject. Of course, it also syncs with your Google Calendar, so a quick peek at your calendar gives you an overview of your tasks.

John Orlando writes, consults, and teaches faculty how to use technology to improve learning. He helped build and direct distance learning programs at the University of Vermont and Norwich University and has written more than 50 articles and delivered more than 60 workshops on teaching with technology. John is the associate director of the Center for Faculty Excellence at Northcentral University, serves on the Online Classroom editorial advisory board, and is a regular contributor to Online Classroom. @

<< FROM PAGE 3

a time-intensive task, depending on the number of students and the particular assignment. Better to set aside more time than you may need at first. I generally block the morning after an assignment is due to grade and provide feedback.

Students' ability to improve their next posting may be based on the feedback you provide, so if the next posting is due before you provide that feedback, they miss the chance to use your feedback for improvement. Students should receive feedback on weekly assign-

ments within 48 hours so they can incorporate suggestions for improvement into the next assignment. The interaction plan is your pledge to your students, so make sure to honor the response times you have promised.

End-of-the-week discussion board summaries are an effective way to highlight points you think are important, demonstrate synthesis of ideas, and perhaps clarify misunderstandings that have arisen.

Summary

With student satisfaction and

your teaching career at stake, a strong instructor presence can produce big payoffs. By applying these practical strategies, you'll be amazed at how quickly your "barely there" presence rating will move to "fully present," resulting in an improved learning environment and positive student evaluations.

Diane Monsivais is an assistant professor/advisor for the MSN in Nursing Education at The University of Texas at El Paso. @

Front-loaded relevance

Too often, teachers wait until the end of a course, a unit, or a class session to “pull back the curtain” and reveal the big moment of connection for everything they taught, only to be disappointed when the students seem completely unimpressed and unmoved. By giving the students just enough relevant context at the beginning of a course or a lesson, we give them a reason to stay focused on what we are about to teach without them “zoning out.” The intent of front-loaded relevance is to create a “cognitive vacuum” in the students. This serves to activate their curiosity, pique their interest, or trigger an innate desire to resolve problems or gain a sense of understanding.

Initial relevance building should take only a few minutes. In practice, this can be accomplished by using a concise and applicable problem, short story, video clip, or case study, followed by a prompt such as, “Now, let’s explore a few theories/concepts/processes/practices or products that could help you make sense of this situation or solve this problem.” Returning to the initial problem or scenario at the end of class will help students recognize that they are learning and see meaningful connections between your course and their lives outside school.

There are many less complicated ways to increase relevance at the beginning of class. Consider how you could implement some of the following techniques before presenting new material:

- Poll students on their level of con-

fidence in a widely held belief that relates to your lesson. This will get them thinking at deeper levels about the material, and they will more likely stay engaged to find a resolution.

- Show students a picture of an object that could be metaphorically related to your topic, and ask them to make connections between the object and the topic. Their understanding of the tangible object will help inform their lack of understanding of the abstract subject. When helpful, keep referring them back to the object at different points of the online lesson.
- Take whatever synthesis question you were going to ask at the end of your class and ask it at the beginning. This helps the students see where you are trying to take them. This is similar to showing a person the picture on a puzzle box before they try to put any pieces together.
- Use a relevant “Look for ...” or “Watch for ...” statement before having students read a block of text, watch a movie, perform an experiment, or work on an assignment. This will increase student focus and engagement and decrease their feelings of disconnectedness with the material.

Front-loaded relevance is effective only to the degree that teachers use examples, scenarios, questions, or objects that are truly applicable to students outside class. While preparing for a class, ask yourself, “Whose questions am I trying to help the students answer—mine or theirs?” The more we focus on the latter, the more engaged the students will be and the more they

will keep performing at higher levels for us.

Maximize online learning strengths, minimize face-to-face weaknesses

Online teachers often migrate face-to-face techniques and paradigms to their digital classes. While many principles and practices of effective teaching work well in both settings, it is important to recognize that each has strengths and weaknesses and to adjust accordingly.

One of the major strengths of online learning is its ability to maintain high levels of ongoing engagement through responsibility from the learners. In many traditional classroom settings, students can easily disengage from the flow of class and still receive points for being present. They feel comfortable letting their minds wander, knowing that the highly motivated students will answer all discussion questions from the instructor. They also know they can “cram” for tests and get help on assignments from others when needed.

Online students can slip into passive learning mode more easily than can traditional classroom students, who are surrounded by others who can see their outward behaviors. Knowing this, online teachers should implement frequent opportunities for *all* students to respond to simple learning checks and be accountable for what is being covered. If credit for a day’s class is based on reasonably spaced, short measurements of competency or on student reflections, the students

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 >>

<< FROM PAGE 6

will quickly learn to stay focused and engaged. This will prevent them having to spend extra time backtracking to find answers or missed information before they can proceed with the next part of the lesson.

To implement this principle, find natural breaks in each day's lesson and insert a short quiz, a discussion board requirement, or other response form. Carefully monitor student responses to adjust for an ideal range of difficulty and complexity for these mastery checks. If the questions or tasks are too difficult or complex, student frustration will increase and class engagement and retention will actually decrease. If they are too simple, students will disengage more often, knowing they will be able to pass your competency checks without paying attention to the material along the way. Depending on your students, you may also find that it helps to attach a low point value to some or all of these checkpoints for increased motivation to stay focused.

Use many levels of learning

Educational taxonomies are a way of classifying various orders of learning processes. Bloom's Taxonomy has been the most widely used since 1956, when it was first published. It consists of six layers (in increasing order of complexity): remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. Online classes that expect students to learn and perform at all six layers are more likely to engage and retain students than those that focus only on one or two.

Since testing what students remember or understand is usually easier than assessing something they create or evaluate, many faculty traditionally put more focus in their courses on the two lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Online instructors should analyze their courses to find where more complex learning objectives could reasonably be integrated to activate different levels of learning in their students.

With imagination, a teacher can include application, analysis, evaluation, and creation levels of learning on tests. These levels of learning are more naturally integrated, however, in small-group work settings, individual assignments, term-long projects, or learning portfolios. Online courses naturally allow students to connect with other class members across space and time to work together on these higher-order objectives. With the proliferation and mastery of technology tools today, our students are also well equipped to create projects, presentations, portfolios, and apps.

Students cannot learn at the higher levels of the taxonomy without fully employing the lower levels of remembering and understanding. However, students who create something meaningful for your class are far more likely to remember and understand what they learned than those who are just asked to memorize and understand critical facts and details about your field of study.

Conclusion

When integrating new strategies into your online courses, remember to pace yourself. Don't try to change everything all at once or you will

likely become overwhelmed and fail. Pick a few of your favorite suggestions and try implementing them. Once they are working naturally for you, try experimenting with others.

Your students are perhaps your greatest asset in making course improvements. Be open and honest with them about your desires and efforts to make your class more meaningful and engaging for them. Let them know of your concern regarding their successful completion of your class. Occasionally ask them for feedback as you experiment with new techniques or course designs, and be open to their suggestions. They will appreciate the fact that you are focused on improving the learning experience for them as students.

Effective packaging and sequencing of material in any course will lead to greater engagement and better retention.

Tyler Griffin is an assistant professor at Brigham Young University. On August 5, he will lead the Magna Online Seminar "Online Learning that Lasts: How to Engage & Retain Students." For information, see www.magnapubs.com/catalog/online-learning-that-lasts-how-to-engage-and-retain-students/ @



Three E-learning Design Considerations

By Suzanne Zak

With today's technologically savvy student, the online learning environment should be an effective platform for course delivery. And it is—for some. But attrition rates for online courses remain high. How is it possible to have a nation of higher-education students who understand how to operate a plethora of ubiquitous electronic devices, yet they cannot figure out where to go once logged into an e-learning class? What are some of the barriers to e-learning that stand in the way of today's tech-savvy students? How can our online courses be designed to help students navigate and complete the e-learning course?

Challenges

One of the first challenges for the student in an online environment is understanding the layout of the course. Online learning puts the student in the center or in control of his or her learning (Fee, 2009), both in navigating the course and doing the work. Unlike the traditional classroom, where the instructor sets the agenda for the class and determines the content for that class, in an online environment, the student is in control of the experience. The student must be motivated to log on and navigate the environment in order to achieve the learning outcomes.

Creating and designing an environment that is user-friendly, aesthetically pleasing, and useful seems to be the greatest challenge in promoting student retention and engagement. A study conducted by Robins and Holmes found that, based on appearance, users judge the credibility of a website in 3.42 seconds (Robins & Holmes, 2008, p. 9). Also in these seconds, students respond emotionally to what they see.

Images can communicate complex concepts in a succinct manner, yet many online environments focus on written content, using words more than imagery. In addition, students can be overwhelmed when they enter an online course for the first time and see too many assignments or areas to navigate.

Announcements page

To help students with their initial login experience, create an announcements page that includes an image or banner on the top and a "read this first" tab on the left-hand side of the page that provides a general overview of the course environment and demonstrates how the course is set up. It is also helpful to include a short video in this section that introduces you and the course layout.

Many LMSs include a calendar or homepage the students are sent to once they log in. In my teaching experience, having the announcements set as the entrance point for the course helps keep students on task. Most LMSs have the ability to email an announcement, so students can be reminded of upcoming deadlines. Having announcements in both places helps students plan (Ishtaiwa & Abulibdeh, 2012).

Consistency is key

With online learning, consistency from the educator and course environment seems to be key in keeping students engaged throughout the semester. Besides the discussion board, emails are the number one source of communication. Online learning environments are largely asynchronous by nature. The advantage to online learning is its flexibility, allowing students access to course information and assignment completion 24/7. While the educator is not expected to be "on" 24/7, timely responses to students'

questions, problems, or concerns can help maintain forward momentum. In a regular semester, it is not unreasonable for students to expect a response from their instructor within 24 to 36 hours during weekdays. The more consistent and timely the communication, the better the rapport that develops between the students and teacher, helping students feel connected to the class and content.

Consistency with course content and deadlines is essential for student success. An online course environment typically employs weekly or biweekly lessons. Educators who faithfully stick to their schedules create a consistency for students to follow, enabling predictability to help students keep on task. Students become accustomed to an online rhythm that usually entails reading, watching a video, listening, or writing. It is of utmost importance to keep those tasks consistent throughout the semester.

References:

- Fee, K. (2009). *Delivering E-Learning: A Complete Strategy for Design, Application and Assessment* (1st ed.). Kogan Page.
- Ishtaiwa, F. F., & Abulibdeh, E. S. (2012). The Impact of Asynchronous e-Learning Tools on Interaction and Learning in a Blended Course. *International Journal of Instructional Media*, 39(2), 141-159.
- Robins, D., & Holmes, J. (2008). Aesthetics and credibility in web site design. *Information Processing & Management*, 44(1), 386-399. doi:10.1016/j.ipm.2007.02.003
- Suzanne Zak is an Ed.D.C.T. candidate in music and music education at Teachers College, Columbia University. @

View Instructor Presence Research Papers on Academia.edu for free. Higher education has embraced innovative ways of using technology to enhance learning, and online environments in particular, as a way to increase efficiencies, open educational opportunities for students irrespective of location, and to more. Higher education has embraced innovative ways of using technology to enhance learning, and online environments in particular, as a way to increase efficiencies, open educational opportunities for students irrespective of location, and to increase flexibility of learning and teaching. More specifically, instructor-created videos were used to enhance the sense of presence in a fully online course. Based on surveys, reflections, and unstructured follow-up interviews, the students responded favorably to the richer mode of communication and indicated that they felt a greater connection to the instructor, as well as their classmates. Keywords: community of inquiry, engagement, epresence, media richness, online education, presence. At the end of the semester, the students were surveyed to assess the effectiveness and to determine ways to improve this type of content. In the initial stages of this project, the intent was to use a Flip digital camcorder to record the videos for this course. In the Col framework, teaching presence and social presence facilitate students' cognitive presence and improve their learning. Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, and Archer (2001) stated that teaching presence consists of three core instructor responsibilities: designing and organizing the course, facilitating discourse, and providing direct instruction. Course design includes selecting curriculum materials and communication tools, setting project deadlines, and creating learning activities that best utilize the tools and materials. This study introduces perceived instructor presence as a way to promote such interactions and investigates its effects on student learning experience in online learning. Drawing upon theories of constructivism and social presence, this study proposes a research model to explore the causal relationships from the interactivity of a communication tool to the perception of instructor presence and to student learning experiences such as engagement and satisfaction. H3: Perceived instructor presence positively affects student satisfaction in online learning. Satisfaction is defined as the extent to which users believe that their needs, goals, and desires have been fully met (Mohammadi, 2015).