How to Connect with your Students

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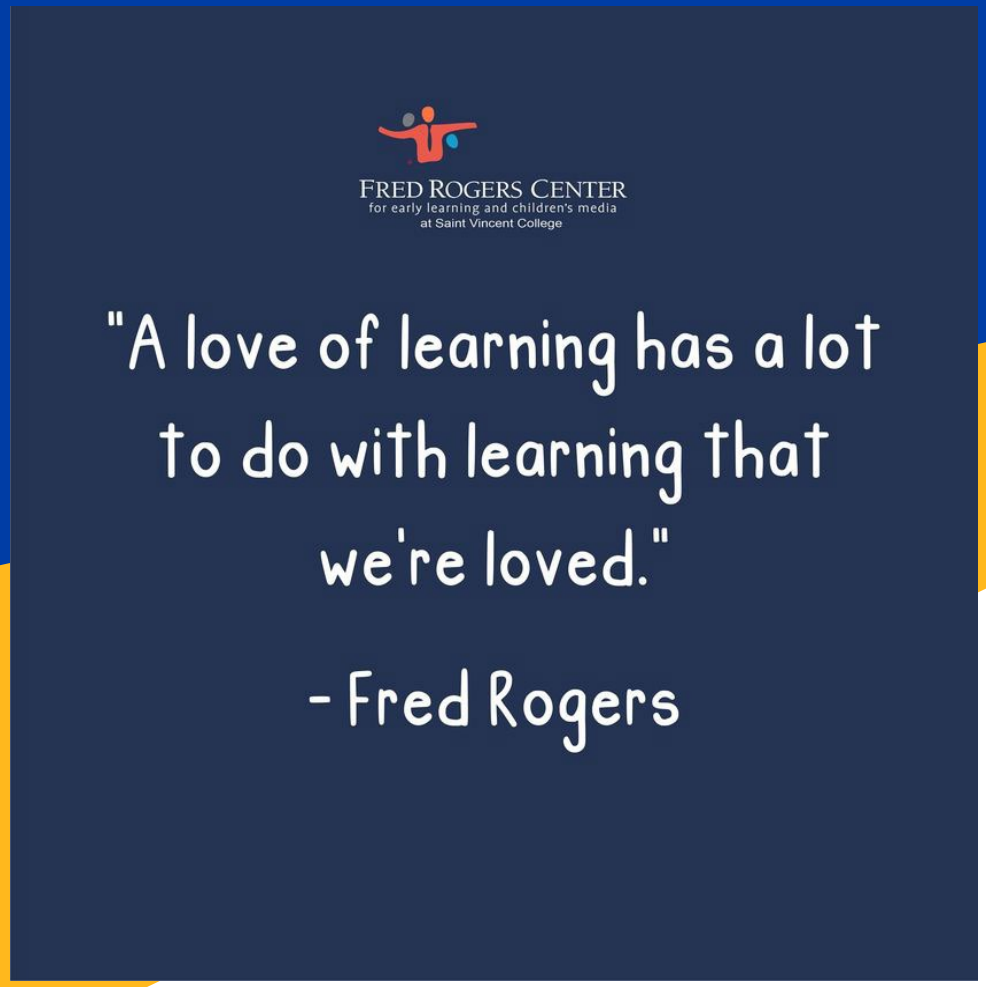

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Intros

Share:

- Your name and
- the subject you teach

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Agenda

- The value of community
- What is social presence?
- The role of faculty
- Faculty behaviors
- Student behaviors
- A boatload of ideas on how to support social presence

A Community

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Question

How many communities do you belong to?
What is a community that works for you?
Why does it work?

Why Community?

We all have a basic human need to feel like we are part of a community. Building community in the classroom, where students could otherwise feel isolated from the teacher or fellow students, helps to address this need and promotes a good feeling about students' experience at the university.

Learning Communities

Learning communities are groups of people engaged in intellectual interaction for the purpose of learning. They have shared interests, common goals and responsibilities toward one another and the group as a whole.

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Learning Communities

The sense of belonging that a learning community provides can make students feel **safe** enough to respond to questions even when they are unsure of the answer and seek help from the instructor or peers when needed.

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What is Social Presence?

Social presence is defined as the sense of being with another, the degree to which a person is perceived as a real person and a student's sense of belonging in a course via their ability to interact with other students and the instructor . Learning environments with social presence are sociable, warm, and personal.

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The Value of Social Presence

Studies have found that students who perceived high levels of social presence tend to be more satisfied with their course and instructor.

Research has also shown a positive correlation between the level of students' perceptions of social presence in their courses and higher results on learning measures.

A sense of belonging to a community can influence the motivation to persist. Motivation has been shown to be crucial in sustaining engagement in a learning community.

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The Value of Social Presence

When there is shared social identity with a group, group cohesion is enhanced and the group will become more productive.

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The Value of Social Presence

It is argued that social presence is an important antecedent to collaboration and critical discourse. This is established through a common purpose.

Social presence does not mean supporting engagement for purely social purposes. Students are expected to be skeptical or critical of ideas. However, the socio-emotional needs of the participants should be considered.

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Question

What do you think about all of this?

My Experience with Social Presence

- The New Virtual Classroom book
- APU Blended Learning Research Project and Certification
- UCR Community of Inquiry Research Project and RIDLE course

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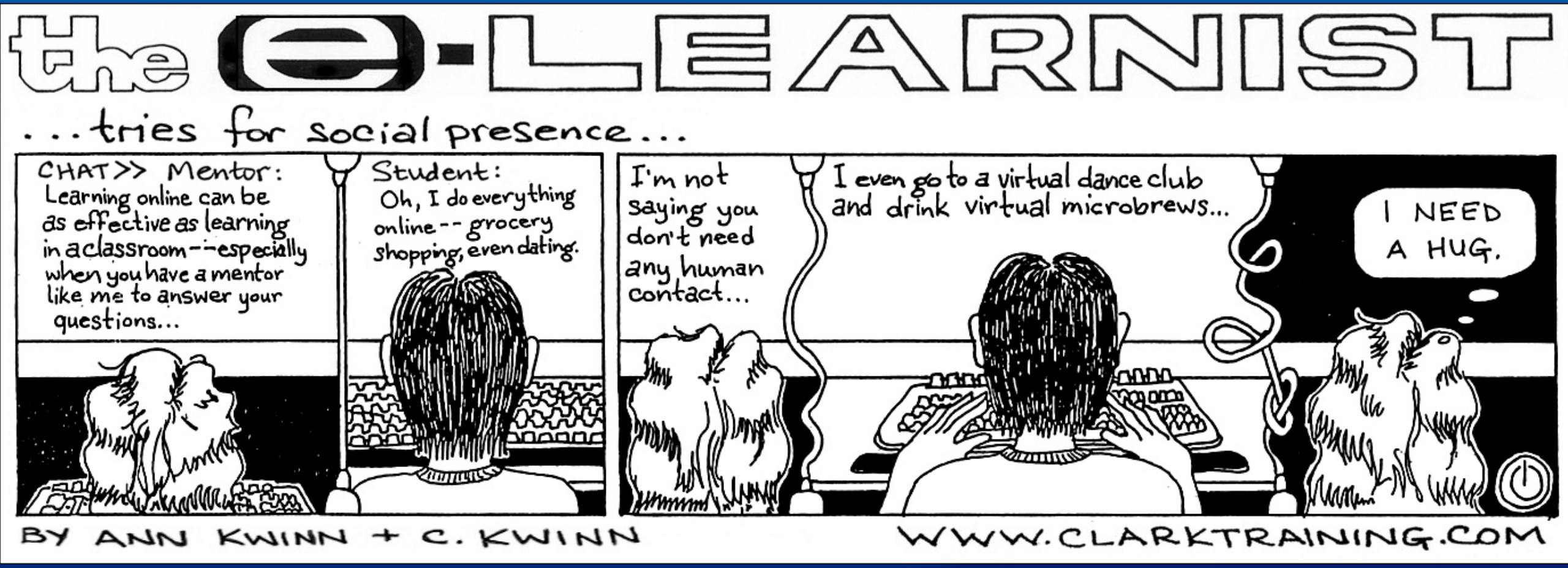
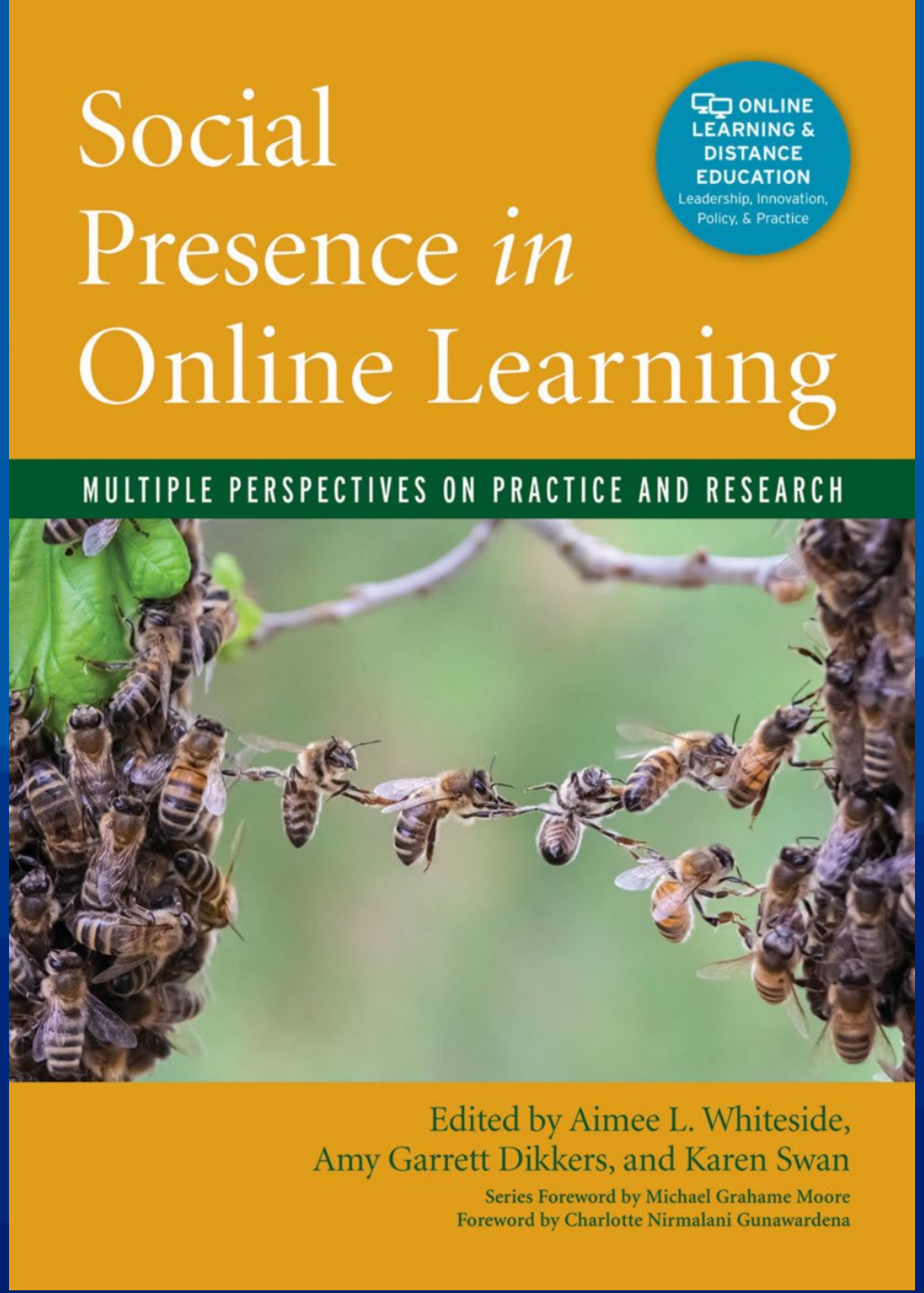
Social Presence in Courses



References


ONLINE LEARNING & DISTANCE EDUCATION
Leadership, Innovation, Policy, & Practice
Social Presence in Online Learning
MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE AND RESEARCH
Edited by Aimee L. Whiteside, Amy Garrett Dikkers, and Karen Swan
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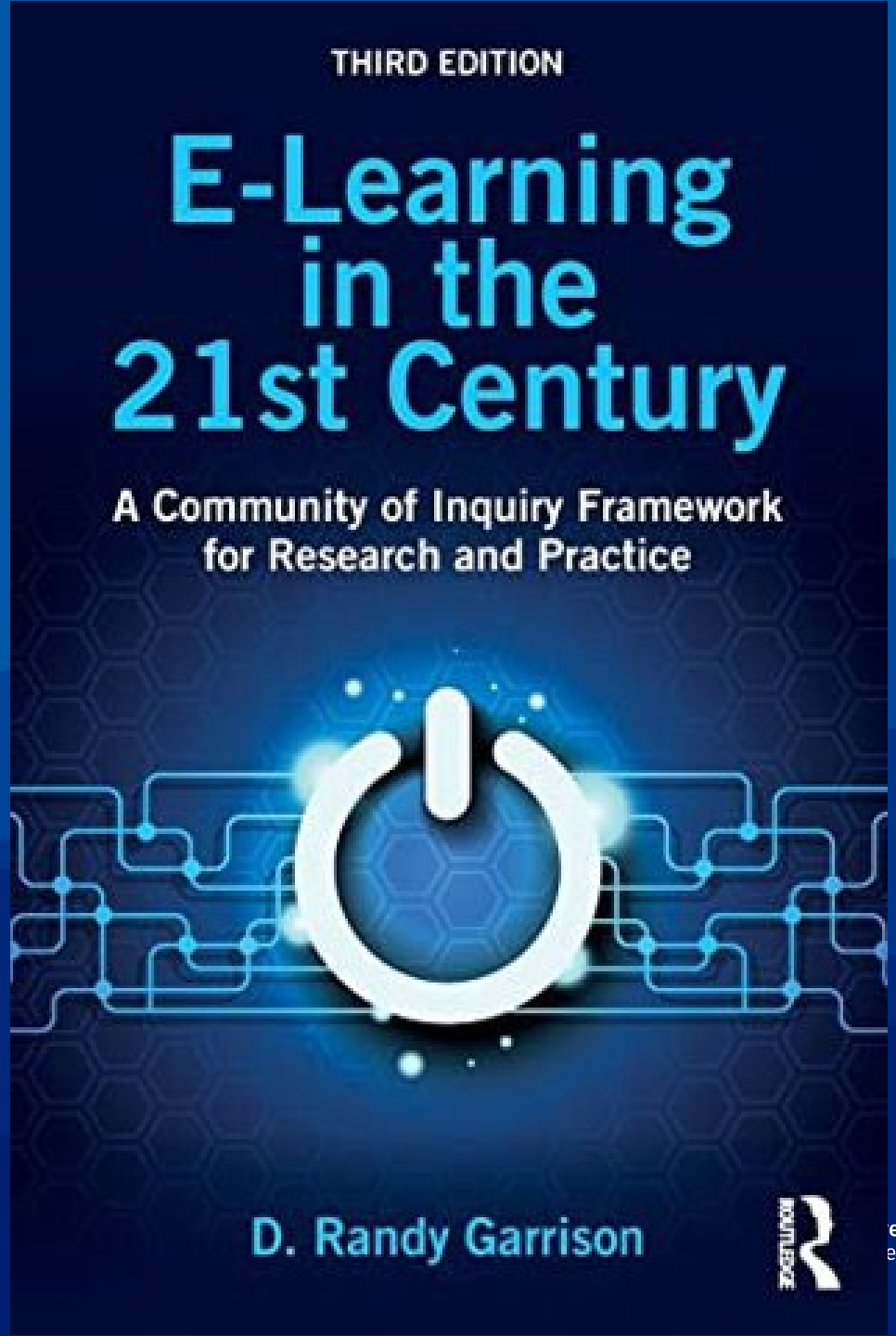
THIRD EDITION
E-Learning in the 21st Century
A Community of Inquiry Framework for Research and Practice
D. Randy Garrison

The Role of Faculty

- Convey the Instructor persona (or personality)
- Course design
- Communication

Instructor Persona

Students want to get to know the real you.

- Add your biography to the course including some personal information.
- Post a recent photo.
- Share your teaching philosophy.
- Share your scholarship or creative works.
- Create a welcome message and announcements
- Provide feedback that reveals your personality and knowledge of the students.

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Course Design

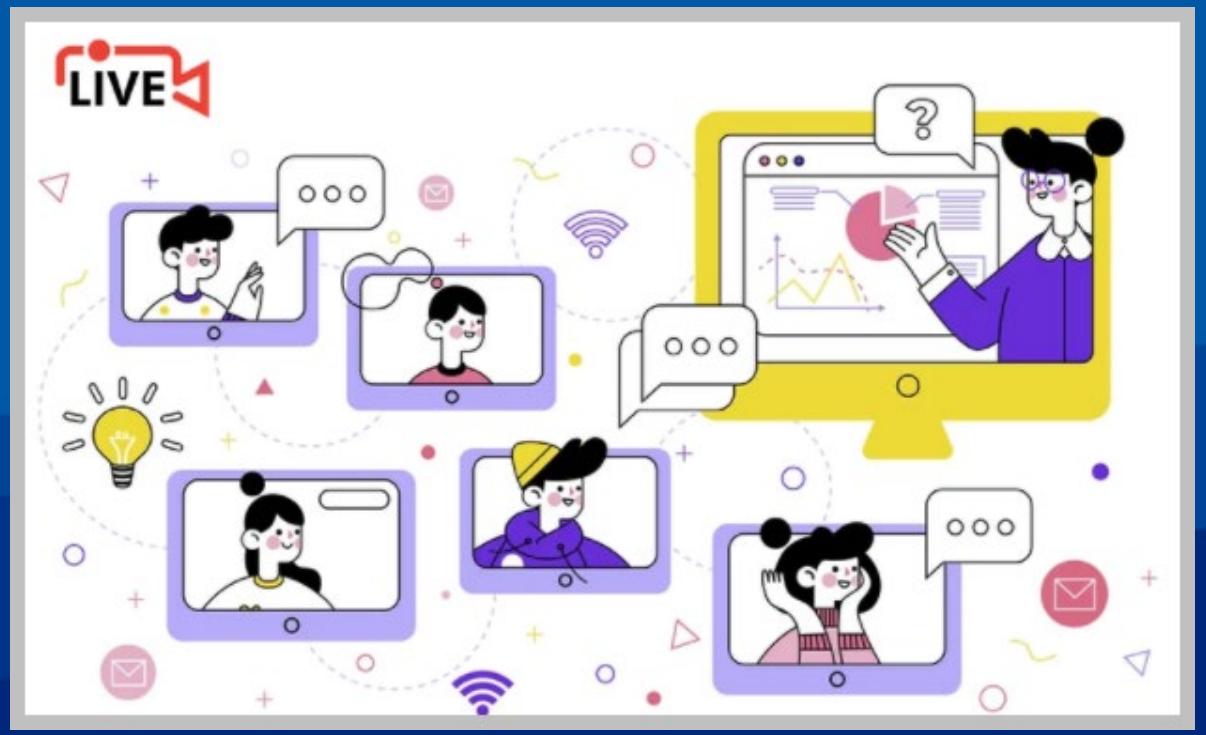
- Intentionally design opportunities for teacher -to-student interaction.
- Create assignments that reflect teacher's passion for their subject matter.
- Clearly set expectations for their role in class discussions, etc.
- Add humor when appropriate (such as content -related comic strips).

Humor

The Eagles were right
We are all just prisoners here, of our own device!

INDIAN HILLS
COMMUNITY CENTER
A PERFECTIONIST WALKED INTO A BAR APPARENTLY IT WASN'T SET HIGH ENOUGH

Communication



- Regularly communicate with the class in a consistent, predictable and public manner.
- Occasionally send individual e -mails to students.
- Provide timely and detailed feedback.
- Consider using a discussion forum to post student assignments.
- Self-disclose and share personal stories.
- Address students by name.

Question

What are some of your communication or feedback standards or goals?

Faculty Behaviors

- Immediacy

  Teacher immediacy is “nonverbal and verbal behaviors, which reduce psychological and/or physical distance between teachers and students” Examples: Non-verbal: smiling, eye contact, a relaxed body position, and gesturing Verbal: humor, informal dialogue with students, for students' opinions

- Paralanguage

  Paralanguage includes emoticons, all caps, terms like Hmm and Yuk, exaggerated punctuation or spelling such as Whheeww! or spelling out how you are feeling.

- Modeling social presence

Promoting Emotional Safety & Participation

Setting climate is a process of creating the conditions for participants to feel sufficiently at ease to engage in meaningful discourse.

It is creating a social-emotional climate for rich open communication (regardless of the medium of communication) that can build group cohesion for sustained collaborative inquiry.

Question

How important is emotional safety?
How do you achieve it?

Shared Academic Purpose

How do you achieve shared academic purpose?

- Ask students: What do you want to get from this course?
- Allow students to have input on assignments, discussions and assessments.
- Create groups to identify questions about content, process and assessment expectations. Bring to the whole class.
- Faculty are transparent about why the course is designed the way it is. This encourages metacognitive awareness.

Speed Networking Question

What activities in your courses promote social presence or what would you like to try?

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Ways to Support Social Presence – Vote for Top 3

1. Be a real person. Be approachable, treat students with respect, show interest in their learning.
2. Have the students do Introductions – especially connected to course content.
   i.e. ask: What do you want to get out of this course?
3. Take a class photo – labeling the names of the people in the class.
   Put it in your slide deck or in your online course shell.
   If you are in Zoom, do a screen capture.
4. Create study pairs/ groups.
5. Provide collaborative exercises – include roles and structure.
6. Use peer grading.
7. Put in your syllabus a statement about your desire to create community.
   Remove harsh directive language, ie. YOU MUST COMPLETE assignment by the deadline.
8. Provide a gallery of student examples that other students can comment on (can be online)
9. Set up rules of etiquette collaboratively with the students.
   An example guideline is: Show respect for the opinions of others.
10. Think about how safe various types of students in your class will feel about contributing.
11. Do mindfulness activities – For example: everyone names a place for a visualization.

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