

Eight (8) Techniques to Promote Social Presence and Communications in Online Courses

1. Monitor discussion posts and guide the direction of the class discussion to keep students on topic.
2. Establish virtual office hours to meet with students by telephone, Blackboard Collaborate or other virtual meetings platforms.
3. Consider using short (1 minute or less) video messages to share updates with your class.
4. Provide substantive feedback on graded assignments starting with a compliment comment followed by recommendations for improvement.
5. Manage expectations for communications by posting an announcement when graded assignments will be returned or the timeframe by which students can expect the instructor to respond to email questions.
6. Record a brief (less than 2 minutes) Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, etc, video message to introduce the lesson for the week. Post the link to the video recording as a course announcement.
7. Ask students for their cell phone numbers at the start of a course. Sometimes a phone call can serve as a better mode of communication than email or text, particularly if the message can be misinterpreted. But do follow-up your phone calls with an email recapping the conversation so that there is documentation.
8. Monitor group work by asking groups to meet with the instructor periodically throughout the semester for updates on assignments.