Tips and Techniques for Integrating Social, Teaching & Cognitive Presence into Your Courses

Social Presence

- Create a "Meet Your Classmates" section of your course where you and students introduce yourselves to one another.
    - Ideas for course bios—
        - model the exercise
        - 100 things no one knows about you
- Explicitly introduce students to the unique nature and learning potential of online discussion
- Establish rules of Netiquette for your course.
- Develop initial course activities (e.g. ice breakers) to encourage the development of swift trust.
    - An online equivalent of "ropes" course where you guide peers through "landmines"
- Model & encourage the use of verbal immediacy behaviors in interactions with students.
    - Language use: you, me, us, we
- Encourage students to share experiences & beliefs in online discussion.
    - Use of personal anecdotes, personal experiences (that are related!)
- Make participation in discussion a significant part of course grades.
- Require discussion participants to respond to their classmates postings &/or to respond to all responses to their own postings.
- Make students responsible for sustaining discussion threads.
- Make students summarize discussion threads.
- Have students serve as experts (e.g. lead a discussion)
- Require students to incorporate materials from the discussions in their assignments.
- Encourage & support vicarious interaction.
- Use tracking mechanisms to reward reading as well as responding to messages.
- Use short videos of yourself to introduce the course and particular topics.
- Journal or otherwise interact with your students on an individual and personal basis.
    - Reflective journal about the learning process
- Use audio to embed feedback on assignments within them.
- Design community building activities.
- Design collaborative activities – problem solving tasks, projects, small group discussion.
    - Competitive and cooperative games
- Consider including real time communications using applications such as chat, collaborative whiteboards, interactive video.
- Consider incorporating Web 2.0 applications in course activities, especially social software such as blogs, wikis, *YouTube, Flickr, MySpace, Second Life*, etc.
- Work within teams but change roles amongst students

Teaching Presence

- Provide frequent opportunities for both public and private interactions with students.
- Provide students with timely & supportive feedback.
- Restrain from being overly "present" in online discussions, rather facilitate student interaction.
- Apply collaborative learning principles to support small group discussion and collaborative projects.
- Design diverse, graded activities to be completed every week.
- Design courses for learner choice, flexibility & control.
- Design and review courses for clarity & consistency.
- Ensure courses are well organized and that the organization is clear to students & easy to navigate.

- Clearly state course goals and instructional expectations.
- Provide a detailed course schedule including due dates for all assignments.
- Provide students with explicit and redundant instructions for all course activities.
- Make goals clear and use redundancy
- Provide clear grading guidelines including rubrics for complex assignments.
- Review changing faculty roles and reflect on your own cognitive, affective & managerial behaviors.
- Develop forums or learning communities for online faculty to share experiences & support one another.

Design courses with the following in mind:
- Module Structure: (3 types of activities to consider: Info, active & discuss)
- Communication and trust
- Address individuals and groups
- Design for different learning styles
- Require responses to online discussions

Cognitive Presence
- Identify big ideas you want students to take away from your course and develop major course activities around their assessment.
- Identify important knowledge, skills & attitudes students should learn and develop additional course activities around their assessment.
- Provide multiple representations of the knowledge you want students to learn and multiple activities for practicing desired skills.
- Encourage experimentation, divergent thinking & multiple perspectives in online discussion through provocative, open-ended questions.
- Model, support & encourage diverse points of view in online discussion.
- Require discussion summaries that identify steps in the knowledge creation process.
- Use content & process scaffolds to support discourse behaviors.
- Use peer review of discussion postings to shape responses.
- Use online discussion & writing activities to support conceptual learning and divergent thinking.
- Use self-testing, practice assignments, simulations & other interactive activities to support skill development & convergent thinking.
- Develop grading rubrics for discussion & course activities that reward desired cognitive behaviors.
- Provide frequent opportunities for testing & feedback.
- Automate testing & feedback when possible.
- Develop general learning modules with opportunities for active learning, assessment & feedback that can be shared among courses &/or accessed by students for remediation or enrichment.
- Present words in spoken form, use words and pictures simultaneously to explain concepts.
- Avoid extraneous video & audio, do not add redundant on-screen text.
- Begin presentations with descriptions of components & organization.
- Allow learners to control the pace of presentations.

Richardson, Ice & Swan, 2009 Conference on Distance Teaching & Learning: Madison, WI