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Title: Creating an intuitive, meaningful, and career-relevant asynchronous online course

My philosophy of online teaching has three planks. First, online courses should be organized to be simple, consistent, and uniform. In accord with principles of universal design, an intuitive and easy-to-understand course structure promotes student engagement and reduces attrition. Second, online education should involve strategic communications with students that are regular and meaningful. Third, online education should be career-forward, emphasizing the relevance of assignments and learning activities to real-world vocational application.

Plank 1: Online courses should be as simple, consistent, and uniform as possible

Simple, consistent, and uniform course structure promotes regular and sustained student engagement and conserves the time of both instructor and the student. It prevents attrition and manages student workload expectations. Simple, consistent, and uniform design across multiple courses allows the instructor to achieve economies of scale and manage time.

Simple course design means that online course sites should reduce clutter, use bulleted or numbered lists, speak in plain language, and provide all relevant content in a single, easily accessible location. The students access readings, lecture videos, workshops, and quizzes from the single course page without the need to access an auxiliary platform or tool.

Consistent course design means the students can expect to take the same assignments in the same sequence every week. In every case, the students have to read, watch lecture videos, complete interactive workshops, and take a quiz. With a consistent deadline, the student completes the same sequence of activities. There are no one-off assignments or separate deadlines. Larger or more irregular assignments create more stress for the student and more grading burden, while increasing student attrition.

Uniform course design means using a similar structure across all of a professor's asynchronous online courses. By establishing uniformity across classes, students know what to expect before they enroll. Students who take more than one class simultaneously appreciate consistency across the courses, not just within them. And uniform classes provide economies-of-scale to better manage workload.

Plank 2: Online education should involve strategic communications that are regular and meaningful

Communications with students in an online course should be thoughtful, relevant, and intentional. Rather than spam students with announcements or notifications, a weekly email contains all relevant reminders and course information in a single weekly communication. Since deadlines are the same each week, a weekly email reinforces the course's consistency. It is sent to all classes at the same time, promoting uniformity. Including useful information, such as links to job postings or news articles, ensures the students read the email.

Plank 3: Online education should be career-forward and highlight real world experience

Online education should be career-forward. The course material should highlight the real-world application of concepts and ideas. Instructors should have knowledge of the employment path for relevant jobs after graduation. As a lawyer, I routinely advise students on the law school application process and legal careers. I also use real-world ethical or professional scenarios in my courses.