Preparing Your Students for Online Learning

As you begin your Spring 2021 online course, how will you prepare your students for successful online learning? In this issue of the Online Teaching Coaching Newsletter, we will feature some quick tips to help prepare your students for the online learning environment, and to set them up for success in Spring 2021!

What can you do during **this first week** of your online course to help your students be ready for online learning?

- Welcome your students to the course and let them know course expectations.
- Get your students off to a great start with introductory activities.
- Show your students best practices for online success, through your own postings & actions in the online course.
- Let your students know where to find resources for Blackboard technical support (ITS) and for learning help and support (Mason Learning Services).

Tips for Preparing Your Students for Online Learning Success

Welcome Announcement & Email: Welcome your students, introduce yourself and the course, and describe the schedule & routine for the online course. Prepare your students for success by communicating what's expected of them in the online course. Also let them know what they may expect from you (as instructor).

- Whenever you post an announcement in your Blackboard course, you also can automatically email the announcement to all users in the course. See **instructions** for Blackboard announcements (Blackboard Help).
- What to include in a welcome email to your students? See examples of what you might include in a welcome message **here.**

Course Orientation & Introductory Activities: Include orientation activities & resources for your students, to help familiarize them with the Blackboard course site. You also may assign some introductory activities to give students practice with various tools that they'll need to master in Blackboard.

- Post a **course introduction or orientation video** so that students can learn to navigate your Blackboard course, also learn more about you as instructor.
- Post a **low-stakes syllabus quiz** in Blackboard to make sure that students become familiar with the syllabus and course requirements; they also can gain practice taking quiz in Blackboard.

Model Best Practices for Online Success

Promote success of your online students by modeling successful behaviors. Students will look to you (instructor) to show them best practices for online success, including:

- **Time Management. Manage your time effectively & efficiently.** Be self-motivated and self-disciplined, planning your time and schedule for your online course.

- **Presence.** Be present & active in your online classroom. Each time you check your online course, leave some evidence so that students can see that you were there (*e.g.*, a brief posting or comment).

- **Communication.** Keep students updated with clear and regular communications—postings, announcements, emails. Respond to their questions and postings promptly, so that they know you are engaged and that you hear them.

- **Respectful Interaction.** Interact with others respectfully, using **inclusive teaching practices** and observing **Netiquette guidelines.**

Direct Your Students to Mason Support Resources

Blackboard and Technical Support: Refer your students to **ITS Student Support website.** Students also may contact **ITS Support Center** for help and assistance with Blackboard & technical issues.

Learning Support: Mason Learning Services provides students with one-on-one academic coaching, academic success workshops, and online resources. Refer students to **Guide to Online Learning** website, which includes tips for online success, and addresses questions students may have about online courses (*e.g.*, what's the **difference** between synchronous and asynchronous online courses?).

Learn More about Preparing & Supporting Online Students

Kumar, P. and Skrocki, M. (2016, May 06). **Ensuring student success in online courses.** *Faculty Focus*. Retrieved January 24, 2021.

Borrero, L. and Miller, J. (2019, September 25). **Supporting underprepared students in the online classroom.** *Faculty Focus*. Retrieved January 24, 2021.

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