Supporting Your Students' Online Learning Success

As you begin your Fall 2021 online course, how will you prepare & support 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 Fall 2021!

What can you do at the start of your course, and throughout the semester, to support your students and their online learning? **Communication is key!**

- Communicate by posting regular announcements in your Blackboard course, sharing expectations and reminders with your students.
- Show students that you are present in your course!
- Model best practices for online success, through your own postings, behaviors, and 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 Supporting Your Students' Online Learning Success

Communicate by Posting Regular Announcements.
- Start off by welcoming your students! Introduce yourself by posting your instructor profile, including your photo. Use videos and announcements to welcome, engage, and orient students to 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).
- Throughout the course, post regular announcements to update/remind your students of assignment deadlines. In your announcements, also include words of encouragement, support, and guidance.
- Whenever you post an announcement in your Blackboard course, automatically email the announcement to all users in the course. See **instructions** for Blackboard announcements (Blackboard Help).

Be Present in Your Course!
- Let students know that you are present and that you care about their learning. Students will feel more engaged and prepared, if they feel that you care about their learning.
- Maintain your teaching presence by responding promptly to student questions and emails, ideally within 24 hours. Provide regular, prompt, and timely feedback to keep your students informed about their progress in the online course.
- Establish your social presence by creating informal online spaces for your students to engage as an online learning community, such as a class introduction discussion forum, ice breakers, "Water Cooler" forum, and "Ask Your Instructor" discussion forum.

Model Best Practices for Online Success

Promote success of your online students by modeling successful behaviors. Students look to you as instructor to model 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, Inclusive, and Equitable Interaction.** Interact with others respectfully, using **inclusive & equitable 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 delivery formats of online courses (*e.g.*, whether synchronous or self-directed).

Learn More about Preparing & Supporting Online Students

Kumar, P. and Skrocki, M. (2016, May 06). **Ensuring student success in online courses.** *Faculty Focus.* Magna Publications.

Borrero, L. and Miller, J. (2019, September 25). **Supporting underprepared students in the online classroom.** *Faculty Focus.* Magna Publications.

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