

Strategies for Encouraging High Levels of Engagement in Online Courses

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Abstract: Online courses often have a higher drop rate than face-to-face courses, yet the demand for them is increasing. How do we increase participant satisfaction and encourage learning at a level that is equal to or better than the face-to-face courses?

“I had vowed that I would never take an online course,” said Kristie. “I heard the horror stories. But I was stuck. I could not graduate without this course and it is online.” Kristie saw herself as computer literate, yet online had not appeal, at least initially. After five weeks, Kristie sent the professor an e-mail. “I never thought an online course could be so creative and so exciting.” What had Kristie expected? An electronic workbook? Isolation? Discussions by e-mail?

Online courses often have a higher drop rate than face-to-face courses, yet the demand for them is increasing. How do we increase participant satisfaction and encourage learning at a level that is equal to or better than the face-to-face course?

What are the successful strategies? This list offers several options utilized in courses that promote learning and are enjoyed by students.

- Providing ways for students to be successful with the technical aspects of the course so these do not get in the way of the dynamic aspects of the course
- Constructivist Learning Environments
- Creation of dynamic learning experiences
- Personalizing courses and adding the human touch
- Compelling activities
- Encouraging and supporting student responsibility for learning
- Developing an active learning community
- Enhancing emotional intelligence
- Self-assessment by the professor
- Frequent opportunities for feedback to the professor with some of these being anonymous

Bringing Kristie from the rejection of all online courses to acceptance of them as an option then embracing them as a wonderful way to learn may be a long journey. These strategies provide a beginning as professors develop meaningful courses.

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