Supporting Adult Student Success in Online Learning Environments

Kristina Richards, University of Colorado Boulder
Elena Sandoval-Lucero, University of Colorado Denver

Overview

Adults and Online Learning
Academic Advising for Online Learning
Online Engagement and Student Success

Introduction

Top 5 Benefits of Online Learning for Adult Students

- Online learning offers more flexible scheduling than traditional campus-based programs.

- Online learning offers a more personalized learning experience.

- Online learning can improve access to and affordability of higher education.

- Online learning can help boost degree attainment rates for adult learners.

- Online learning may lead to better career prospects.

Growth in Online Learning

- Online institutions enroll nearly 1.1 million students – about 6% of all postsecondary enrollment.

- In 2021 about 53% of all students took at least some online classes. 26% studied exclusively online.

- Approximately 65% of online students identify as female.

- Nearly 7.5 million students take online classes at public institutions.

- Diversity in online schools is comparable to other institutions.

- The pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in online learning by adults.

    - Forbes (2024)

Adult Student Success in Online Learning

- Credibility

- Transparency

- Flexibility

- Accessibility

- Interactivity

- Personalization

- Productivity

Blieck, Kauwenberghs, Zhu, Struyven, Pynoo, & DePryck (2019)

Advising

Academic Advisors Play Integral Role for Online Learners:

- Serve as major point of contact for learners in online environments.

- Create much needed connection with the institution.

- Understand and respond to the unique needs of online learners.

- Help facilitate sense of belonging.

Richards & Moreno, 2023.

How Can Advisors Best Support Online Learners?

- Take a holistic approach-online learners are individuals with busy, complex lives.

- Understand and feel comfortable referring learners to virtual resources.

- Employ a well-thought out communication plan with timely communications to learners.

- Connect with faculty when appropriate to create team approach to student support.

- Remain curious-how can you improve the online learning experience?

Effective Communication Strategies for Advisors

- Connecting with online learners early in their program in a meaningful way sets the stage for the advisor-student relationship.
  - Require an initial advising or on-boarding session when students begin program.
- Communicating regularly with online learners with timely resources and information.
  - What do learners need to know most and when? How can you add value to their experience
- Integrate individualized, warm check-ins into your communication plan.
  - This exercise can make a big impact.
- Employ diverse methods of communication. Get creative!
  - Text, Zoom, Slack, newsletter.
- Evaluate what works and adjust accordingly.

Building Community

- **Creating robust opportunities within the classroom for learners to engage.**
  - Meaningful discussion board activities
  - Intentional group work
- **Informal online communities can be the most impactful.**
  - Career oriented connections
  - Sharing of experiences
  - Connection beyond classroom

Zhu, J. & Dawson, K., 2024.

Teaching Presence
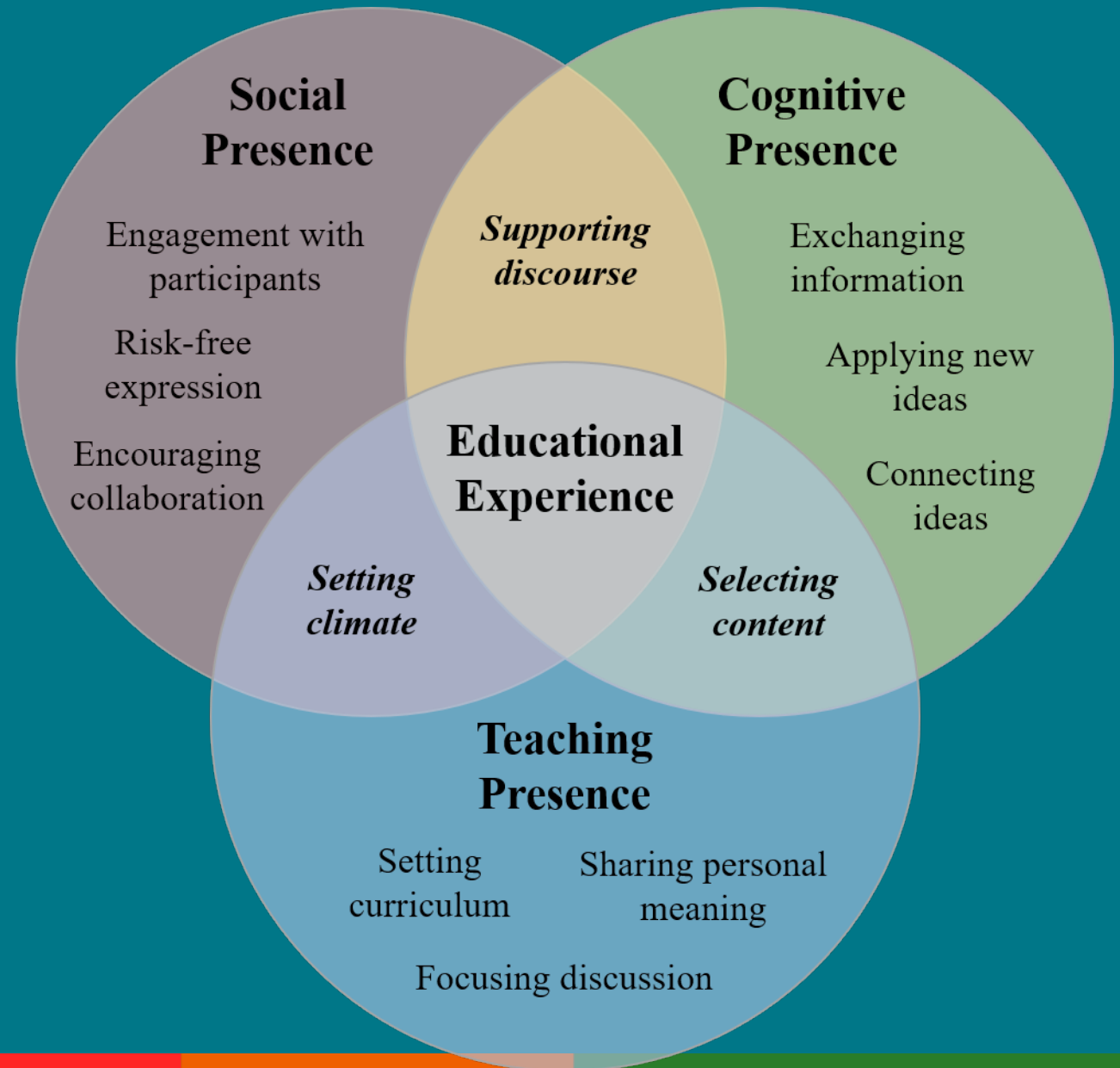
Social Presence

Table 1.

Evidence Based Approach – Building Social Presence in Online Classes.

Feature	Methods
Welcome Note	Send welcome note to all the students. Helps in building virtual presence.
Introduction	Include a personal introduction (video and description) and provide an overview of the class. Use of video and pictures adds a personal touch to classes.
Communication	Timely communication, problem solving communication and response to emails, virtual chat sessions and regular use of discussion questions shows that faculty is active in online classes.
Blogs and Social Media	Use of blogs and social media such as twitter and face book for class help in establishing connections between faculty-students, students-students, student-world, and student-content. Caution must be exercised while using social media platforms.
Personal Stories	Students should be encouraged to share personal stories (appropriate stories) and these activities can be included as ice breaker activity in the online classroom.
Timely and Continuous Feedback	Feedback on course work and assignment is extremely important in online (or any) class. Because students are physically distant, they want to know how they are doing at any given point. This will enhance students' academic achievement.

Open in a separate window

(Adapted from Eight Ways to Increase Social Presence in Your Online Classes).

Singh, Singh, & Mathees (2022)

Cognitive Presence

Table 2.

Evidence Based Approach—Building Cognitive Presence in Online Classes.

Feature	Methods
Communication	Plan and begin your class with the end in mind. Clearly communicate expectations and learning outcomes/objectives of the class.
Mix of Assignments	Include variety of tasks and activities in classroom and provide options so students can pick and choose their own activity based on their interest.
Team work and discussions	Include team-based activities and encourage active discussions in classroom. Design discussion questions with your audience in mind, build connections with course content, and previously learned information.
Clear grading rubric and expectations	Use clear rubric to grade assignments and outline expectations for assignment and tasks early on the semester.
Respect diversity	Allow students with diverse perspectives to express their opinion freely and demonstrate support for their thoughts/views.
Make connections	Ensure that students are able to see clear connection between online class, course assignments and their field of work/expertise.
Invite Feedback	Ask students for feedback and make changes based on the feedback. Allow students to participate in sessions such as "how to improve course/class" via technology through zoom or adobe breakout sessions. Clearly communicate how changes were made based on the feedback received from students. Include examples of completed work so students are able to see what is expected of them.

Singh, Singh, & Mathees (2022)

Teaching Presence

Table 3.

Evidence Based Approach—Building Teaching Presence in Online Classes.

Personalization	Create a personalized class platform and share information about yourself through pictures, stories and other medium. Invite students to share information as well.
Open office hours and regular check in	Schedule online open office hours through zoom or online chat and invite students to participate. Reach out to students to see how they are doing and how one could facilitate teaching and learning for them. This will help students especially if they fall behind in their class work.
Activities to raise awareness of technology	Include initial activities that would allow students to become familiar with technology and software that is being used in the class.
Meetings via zoom and use of webcam	Arrange regular zoom meetings and use different features of zoom such as raise hands, break out rooms to interact with students. Encourage students to turn on their webcam so other colleagues/students can see them during meetings.
Acknowledgment and peer support	Acknowledge students work, their progress and praise them openly. Provide support to students especially if they struggle to complete assignments and tasks. Praise students and encourage them to be supportive of their peers.
Join virtual meetings early	Join the meeting room early to connect with students in case they join early as well. This will also help in building connections with students.
Clear expectations	Assignments should be clear. Students should be aware that they can reach out to faculty (synchronously or asynchronously) if they need support.

Singh, Singh, & Mathees (2022)
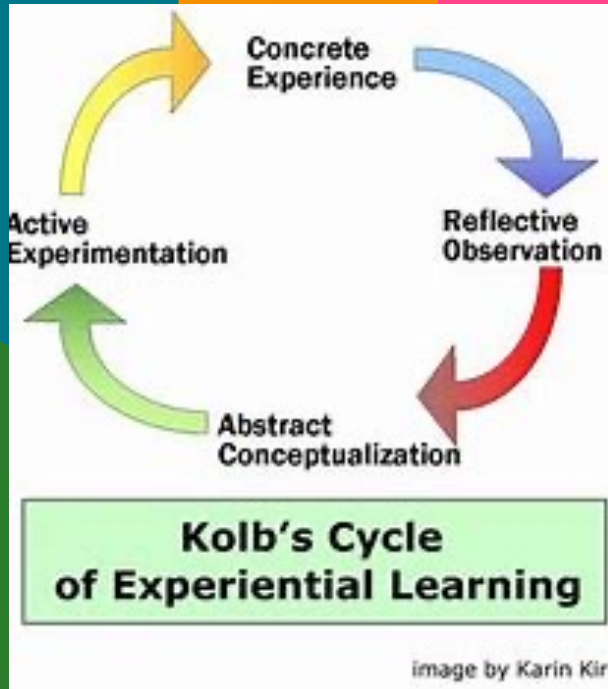
Educational Experience

Experiencing – Concrete Experience

Examining – Reflective Observation

Explaining – Abstract Conceptualization

Applying – Active Experimentation

Dunlap, Verma, & Johnson (2016)

Feedback in Online Learning

My Feedback Promise

My feedback promise: Because feedback plays a crucial role in your growth and development as a learner, I am committed to providing **timely and constructive feedback** on your assignments, projects, and class participation.

This feedback will help you identify your **strengths and areas for improvement,** allowing you to make progress throughout the course.
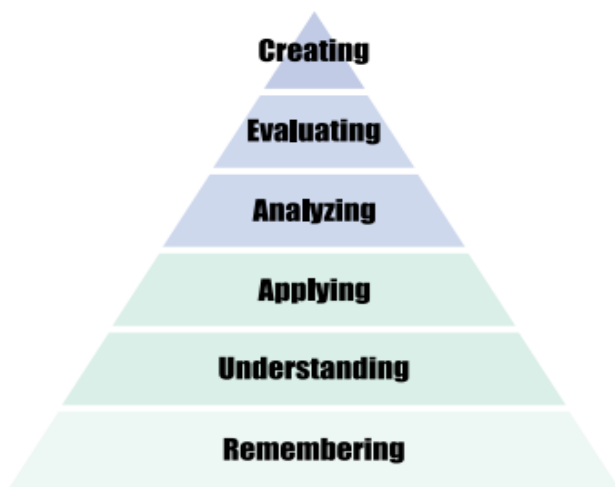
RISE
MODEL FOR
MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK

RISE *to the occasion*
to provide meaningful feedback to peers and colleagues

Creating

Evaluating

Analyzing

Applying

Understanding

Remembering

ALIGNED WITH BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Elevate

Raise to a higher degree or purpose in <u>future</u> iterations

EX: "Perhaps you can expand this in X capacity to further address Y" <u>OR</u>
"Perhaps you can re-purpose X as Y for Z"

Suggest

Introduce ideas for improvement of <u>current</u> iteration

EX: "You might consider tweaking X for Y effect" <u>OR</u>
"You might want to include supporting information from X resource - Here's a link"

Inquire

Seek information and/or provide ideas through questioning

EX: "Have you considered looking at X from Y perspective?" <u>OR</u>
"When you said X, am I understanding you to mean XY?"

Reflect

Recall, ponder and communicate

EX: "I relate/concur/disagree with X because..." <u>OR</u>
"I liked what you did with X because..."

Questions & answers

Invite questions from the audience

Resources

Dunlap, J. C., Verma, G., Johnson, H. L., (2016). Presence+Experience: a framework for the purposeful design of presence in online courses. *TechTrends, 60,* 145-151

Richards, K., & Moreno, S. (2023). Considerations in working with online populations. In Campbell, S. M., Stevens Taylor, C., & Dial, M. (Eds.), *Academic Advising Administration: Essential Knowledge and Skills for the 21st Century (2nd Edition)* (pp. 63-67). DOI: 10.4324/9781003437598-7

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