

# Building Communities of Learners

Telecoop Conference  
Estes Park, Colorado  
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## Purpose of Study

- To explore the area of building community and see its effects on student learning in the online setting

## Purpose of Presentation

- Offer review of literature on building community
- Show the importance of community to student learning

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## Introduction

- Personal history
  - 100 faculty
  - 150+ courses
  - 2 universities
  - Consumer in 3 online courses
- Role
  - Consultant
  - Priorities—graduate online courses / programs
  - Designer/developer

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## Definitions

- Community
- Feedback
- Interaction
- Socialization
- Teacher Presence



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## Definitions

- Community—sharing a connection among a group of students in an online classroom



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## Definitions

cont.

- Feedback—information from the instructor on assignments, discussions, answers to questions.



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## Definitions cont.

- Interaction—communication/dialog between students, student and instructor, student and course content



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## Definitions cont.

- Socialization--Sense of “being” in the online environment
  - “...interaction is directly affected by the quality of the interpersonal relationship that is born of this contact” (Shin, 2002)



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## Definitions cont.

- Teacher presence
  - The instructor sharing his/her knowledge, experiences, expertise, life with the students



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## Research Questions

- How does “community” promote learning in the online environment?
- To what extent is “community” needed to promote learning in an online environment?
- What part do relationships play in an online community of learning?
- What are some technology tools that can enhance community in an online classroom?

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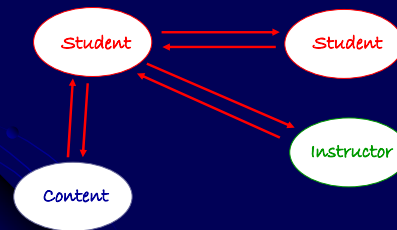
## Literature Review

- Interaction
- Feedback
- Teacher Presence



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## Interaction



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## Interaction cont.


- Based on the literature--Key to learning online



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## Interaction cont.


- Collaborating creates passion for learning (Covey, 1989)



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## Interaction cont.

- We “create knowledge through experimentation, exploration, and the manipulation and testing of ideas” (Stepich, p. 35)



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## Interaction cont.

- Ways to interact online
  - Discussion boards/chat
  - Web conferencing—Adobe Connect--formerly Breeze
  - Wiki--web page that can be edited dynamically directly on the web page
  - Weblogs—“Blog”— individual or group’s representation on the web. When a weblog is related to other weblogs, they become social networks
  - RSS Feeds--syndicating news and the content of news-like sites. Connects weblogs together for socialization
  - Social Bookmarking--is a web-based service to store and share Internet bookmarks

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## Feedback


- Teacher’s goal online is to *prompt* learning
  - Responding to email/phone calls/student questions
  - Maintain discourse
  - Create social presence (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, Archer)
  - Reduce social space



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## Feedback cont.

- “Student learning is related to the quantity and quality of postings in online discussions and to the value instructors place on them”  
Jiang & Ting, 2000




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## Instructor Presence

- “teaching presence is the essential unifying element in an online course” (Garrison)



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## Instructor Presence cont.

- students report a stronger sense of learning community when they also reported that their instructors exhibited stronger ‘teaching presence’ behaviors (Shea)

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## Technology Tools

- Examples of collaboration tools
  - Wiki— <http://eeando.unl.edu/phpwiki>
  - Blog— <http://unlqeeeks.blogspot.com>
  - Social Bookmark—<http://del.icio.us/>
  - Threaded discussion
  - Announcements—Example of [EDAD 903](#)
  - Video introduction—[Short video](#)
  - Web-based collaboration tools—<http://eeando.unl.edu/idts/resources.htm>

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## Course Development Experience

- Role—Consultant

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## Course Development Experience

- Best practices

“Best Practices” is a philosophical approach based around continuous learning and continual improvement. Wikipedia

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## Course Development Experience

- Course Analysis Rubric--CAR
  - Based on national quality design analysis tools
  - Used by team



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## Course Development Experience

- Hurdles
  - Organization





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## Courses developed

- SPED
  - Faculty
    - CM, RP, ME, ES
  - Video
  - Breeze
  - Web lessons
- EDAD
  - Faculty
    - SS, RT, DU, JL, LD, JL, SM, MG, RH
  - Basic design
  - Wanted it to look like old CMS
    - Took, me 2 years to change
- EP
  - Faculty
    - DH, RS
  - Everything linked
    - Students were confused about where they were going
  - I cleaned it up
- NURS
  - Faculty
    - JS, NW
      - Huge PPT files

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## Hurdles cont.


- Views of teaching/learning




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## Hurdles cont.

- Levels of expertise in online teaching and/or technology



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## Hurdles cont.



- Undefined or fuzzy responsibilities



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## Hurdles cont.

- Types of adopters—early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards (Everett Rogers)

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## Student Experience

### Positive

- Cooperation
- Collaboration
- Interactivity

### Negative

- No sense of belonging
- No commitment to group goals
- Did not experience instructor presence or feedback

Student responsibility to interact / respond

- Timely
- Thorough

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## Recommendations

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graph LR
    MO(My Office) --> FPM[Faculty Programs University Course Management System]
    FPM --> SL(Student Learning)
    MO --- MOInfo["8 yrs  
100 faculty  
150 courses  
consumer"]
    Tech[Technology]
  
```

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## Recommendations cont.


- Instructors
  - Know your "audience"
    - Realistic expectations based on student population




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## Recommendations cont.



- Clearly state your role
  - Varies by school/job responsibilities
  - When you will answer email
    - Within 48 hours
    - One day a week
  - How often / when you will be in the discussion board
  - When to expect feedback for assignments/tests



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## Recommendations cont.



- Clearly state maximum/minimum expectations for the students
  - Due dates
  - Assignments
    - How
    - Where
    - when
  - Offer tutorials/how-to's when possible

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## Recommendations cont.

- Students
  - Know yourself
  - Read through the syllabus
  - Understand the orientation / tutorials
  - Familiarize yourself with course content
  - Take responsibility for due dates, assignments, projects, discussions, f2f meetings/web conferences
  - How to get help

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## Questions / Comments?

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