WHILE TEACHING A COURSE INSTRUCTORS ARE EXPECTED TO:

It is important to make a connection with your students just as you would in a traditional classroom. In many cases it can be more important to "work" at this connection in an online environment because we lack the cues and physical space to interact. One of the best practices of online teaching is creating a learning atmosphere that engages the students on many levels. Below are some tips on how to create the beginnings of that sense of community through instructor classroom presence.

Set aside an appropriate amount of time each week dedicated to teaching and managing the online course.
- A good strategy is to dedicate the same time every day for logging in and checking email. This will provide you and your students with the continuity that can be depended upon.

Respond to student inquiries within 48 hours. Responding within 24 hours is highly recommended.
- RCDE has an email response policy that is in your contract, which is reflected in the above best practice.
- Utilizing your Blackboard email function as your sole class email will help to streamline the communication process and keep all of your class inquiries in the same place.
- It is sometimes appropriate to take a question from an email and answer it in a Discussion Forum dedicated to questions and answers or on the Announcements page, especially if the question is one you feel the answer would benefit the entire class.

Provide dated class announcements at least weekly in the online classroom.
- There is a tutorial in the "Before Teaching" section that will walk you through how to create announcements for your class.
- Posting announcements in a conversational tone to go along with your lectures, after you've graded an assignment, or to answer questions is a great way to connect to students.

Provide regular grades and feedback within a course, based on expectations outlined in the syllabus
- Instructions for creating your syllabus are in the "Before Teaching" section.
- It is important to outline when, how, and where you will be providing feedback on student progress in your syllabus and then to follow through in the manner

UtahState University
FACULTY ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR TEACHING

outlined for the students. RCDE is advocating the "Syllabus as Contract" for both students and instructors.

Communicating with students

- In your syllabus you will outline how students are to contact you and how and when you will respond to them. This communication can take place in more than one area of your online classroom, and probably should.
- Utilize the classroom email, discussion forums, announcements, assignment response areas, as well as assessment response areas and even chat as avenues to create a dialog with students.
- Creating an atmosphere of personal and group response will help to create the group dynamic that will make learning more interactive for you and your online students.
- If you are going to be out of reach via email or classroom presence for a time, for example if you will be attending a conference, be sure to let your students know so that when your lack of online presence is felt they will know why.

Update Course Content

- As with any type of course you may need to make adjustments to the course schedule, be flexible and be sure you alert students of changes through your lines of communication.
- Because teaching online is such a text intensive style of teaching we are often writing a lot of instructions and lectures. It is important to proofread these and make changes when you do notice spelling errors or typos. Having a mentor or friend read through these documents can also be good practice (one we often encourage our students to utilize).
- Updating can also occur at the end of the semester in preparation for the next term. You will find more information about this in the "After the Course is Finished" section.

Student Encouragement

- At the beginning of a semester you may notice one or two students who are not participating, first check your Banner roster against your Blackboard roster to be sure that the student in question is still registered for your course. Banner will have the up to date information on your roster information. This is a good practice at during the first several weeks of a term just to confirm that everyone who is supposed to have access to the online class does.
- If a student is enrolled and not participating try sending a personal email to engage the student into the class. This may be all that is needed an you will see participation start up, however a student may not respond in which case there are a couple of options. The first is to drop the student from the course, this is

important if you have a waiting list it will open up a spot for someone more motivated to participate. RCDE can provide dates and assistance with this course of action. The other option is to just let it go and the student will either choose to participate or not.

- Occasionally students drop out of existence during the term for any number of reasons try reaching out to them through email and encourage increased participation. You can also schedule online office hours through the chat tool, or some instructors use AIM (America Online Messenger) or Google Talk (Gmail Messenger) for office hours. Both of these secondary chat features are free and can be accessed on computers or smart phones.

Course Evaluations

- Evaluations for your online class will become available towards the end of the semester. There will be a link that they will click on to access the evaluation website. This link is only visible to them and they have one attempt to complete the survey. Encourage your students to complete these evaluations. The information provided can help you to diagnose what went well and what might require some redesigning for the next term.
- Creating a reflection assignment for the end of the term is also a great way to elicit feedback on how students feel the course went. Reflection is a great tool to help solidify content for students and to provide you with direction for the future. Conducting your own personal reflection on the process of teaching online is also another great tool for preparing for the next term.

Resources for Teaching Online

Blondy, Laurie C. "Evaluation of Andragogical Assumptions to the Adult Online Learning Environment." Journal of Interactive Online Learning, v6, n2, summer 2007. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.134.1309&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Boettcher, Judith V., Rita-Marie Conrad. "The Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips". Jossey-Bass. June, 2010.

Gibbons, Heather S. George Wentworth. "Andrological and Pedagogical Training Differences for Online Instructors." Online Journal of Distance Learning Education, v4 n3 Fall 2001. http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/fall43/gibbons_wentworth43.html

Kimball, Lisa. "Managing Distance Learning – New Challenges for Faculty" The Digital University, Reza Hazemi et al (Eds), Springer, 2001. Retrieved from: http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/vc/Managing_Distance_Learning.doc