

Guidelines for Teaching at a Distance

These guidelines are considerations for delivering successful distance learning course and address both course management and the student's optimal experience and retention.

- **Work on interactivity** -The use of various learning options can stimulate learner participation and interaction--small group discussion, debates, polling activities, dyadic learning partnership exchanges, and one-on-one message exchanges recognizing students messages are some of the activities to use when encouraging participation.
 - Manage course discussion.
 - Post thoughtful discussion questions.
 - Model desired methods of communication.
 - Encourage student collaboration.
 - Foster sharing of participants' knowledge, questions, and expertise.
 - Contribute outside resources in various media formats.
 - Foster group learning.

- **Manage your time effectively** - The start-up of a class is a most important element. It establishes criteria and sets tone and pace. Make sure students realize that the course is moving according to a syllabus and agenda and is not "self-paced." Maintain as much flexibility as you can in the course.
 - Set course agenda/structure but be reasonable.
 - Post course materials promptly.
 - Post timely bulletins about course changes.
 - Get students on board.

- **Respond to students** – Communication is crucial in a distance learning course. The instructor should keep students aware of where they stand with respect to the course evaluation process on a regular basis (i.e. weekly updates of what has been turned in and what is missing) and provide quality feedback on student contributions to discussion, homework, and quizzes.
 - Return student calls/emails within 24 hours
 - Contact students who have not submitted assignments.
 - Acknowledge receipt of assignments.
 - Provide students with clear grading criteria.
 - Remind students about upcoming assignments.
 - Provide examples of assignments.
 - Provide resources for completing assignments.
 - When possible, utilize electronic resources that give students access to information on their progress and performance in the course.

- **Smile Electronically** - Be yourself; a real, caring, genuine teacher. Be fun; enjoy teaching and reaching your students. The instruction is not meant to be polished and perfect. It is meant to be prepared. Reveal yourself by talking to and with your students. Conversational style, encouragement, interactive assignments, revealing who you are engages the students and helps to dispel concerns about geographic distance.
 - Be accessible
 - Engage students
 - Demonstrate high energy
 - Be flexible and open-minded
 - Relate well to traditional and non-traditional students
 - Be a cheerleader
 - Demonstrate patience

- **Understand that technology is not foolproof**- Sometimes technology fails; many things can go wrong when you are hooked up to the Internet. You need to be a proficient computer operator so that you can best answer your students' questions as they arise.
 - Have a backup plan when technology fails
 - Be resourceful
 - Know the college's resources for addressing technology problems
 - Include referral and contact information for these resources in course materials.