

Chapter 3

Faculty's Examination of Virtual Learning Strategies to Communicate With Students

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ABSTRACT

Faculty's examination of virtual learning strategies to communicate with students is essential. Virtual learning is an innovative way to work with student s in higher education. The purpose of this effort is as follows: a) note strategies that can enhance the communication process with students and faculty during the virtual learning process; b) provide a review of contemporary research on virtual learning and activities; c) provide narratives from faculty in higher education that provide virtual learning environments and effective communication strategies to students. Authors from multiple disciplines provide their perceptions of virtual learning and some challenges or experiences in implementing activities to communicate with students in higher education. Their perception of using this type of learning with students is shared and common themes are discussed. In all efforts, there is a discussion of the benefits,

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purpose, and implications of this type of learning. Recommendations, strategies and future directions are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Faculty's examination of virtual learning strategies to communicate with students is essential. There is a connection with students when the professor is engaging and actively involved throughout the life of a course. It is important for faculty to examine effectiveness of the virtual learning strategies used to communicate with students. This close examination can lead to better teaching strategies, better pedagogical experiences, and consistent feedback that can improve learning communities (Miller, 2014; Stavredes, 2011). To understand the role that virtual learning environments play in engaging students in the learning process, it is necessary to explore the role of virtual learning and its effectiveness in communicating with students.

The virtual age allows professors a new pedagogical path to embark upon. The traditional classroom setting is not the only way to recruit students to universities. The contemporary student may want experiences that mirror their level of mastery with technology. When the students view a university as not being on the same level of virtual learning experiences as is needed in society today, he or she may look for other universities to gain this experience, or they may become bored with their education. At the university level, there should be a person, or a team, who has a vision and mission related to pedagogical experiences that encompass the virtual learning environment. Virtual learning is a new and innovative way to work with students in higher education (Hoskins, 2013; Miller, 2014; Stavredes, 2011).

With this type of learning, there are strengths that overpower weaknesses. Virtual learning activities allow the student and professor to talk, see, or work with each other from long distances or in front of a computer from another room (Freitas, & Gold, 2015). While this type of learning activity requires time and energy, without it our educational learning environments would not be able to compete. Children learn to text, Instagram, Facebook, and use iPads at a young age. Therefore, as teachers and administrators, we have to emulate the skills that our new generations seem to already have mastered. It is a must for professors and administrators at universities to embrace virtual learning and provide effective communication strategies within this new type of environment.

BACKGROUND

Over the last two decades, web-based technology has had a dramatic impact on learning and teaching (Chou & Liu, 2005). Gone are the days when the projector, projector table, television, and transparencies are hauled into the classroom to teach major concepts and application. Today, there is the inclusion of Smart Boards in classrooms, which is utilized to enhance teaching during face to face instruction and to provide additional resources and opportunities for interactivity. In addition to Smart Boards, online classes have emerged. The online class is one that is unique and user friendly, if employed correctly. With teaching an online class, activities must be accessible in a virtual format. This virtual format can be utilized distance education courses and programs. Distance education allows instructors and learners to communicate at a distance through a format that is not the same as a traditional classroom (Walker,

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