

Tips for Successful Online Teaching

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Abstract

The seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education, developed by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson, will be reviewed. The use of technology, especially web-based online technology, to apply these principles in teaching and learning will be examined and an example of such an implementation in an online computer class will be discussed. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future implementations will be also discussed.

Introduction

The seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education were developed by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson. The principles first appeared in the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) Bulletin (Chickering and Gamson, 1987). As a result of a two-year research Chickering and Gamson in cooperation with AAHE and a number of higher education faculty and colleagues, concluded that good practice in undergraduate education:

1. encourages contact between students and faculty,
2. encourages cooperation among students,
3. encourages active learning,
4. gives prompt feedback,
5. emphasizes time on task,
6. communicates high expectations, and
7. respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

These principles were initially conceived for face-to-face instruction but later with the advent of information technologies they were implemented for technology-based teaching by Chickering and Ehrmann's paper (Chickering and Ehrmann, 1996). In this paper, the authors described some of the best and most appropriate ways to use technologies such as video and computers to advance these seven principles. How does technology facilitate the above seven principles of good practice?

The Study

An online course was designed and taught with the seven principles in mind. This is a freshman-level 3-hour course and is offered through the Bowling Green Community College of Western Kentucky University. The course (Introduction to Computer Systems) is designed to provide an overview of computer terminology and organization with an emphasis on word processing, electronic spreadsheets, computer programming and databases. Here are highlights of how these seven principles were integrated into the course.

Table 1
Implementation of the Seven Principles into the Online Course

Principle #	Principle	Online Course Implementation
1	Contact Between Students and Faculty is Encouraged	Orientation session (by phone or in person) Student Information Form Email (with meaningful Subject lines) Threaded discussions (Discussion Board activities) Response time policy posted
2	Cooperation Among Students is Encouraged	Threaded discussions
3	Active Learning is Encouraged	Assignment to summarize a current technology article that made the news Assignment to investigate a topic about a technology that is affecting our lives A variety of hands-on practice activities Threaded discussions
4	Prompt Feedback is Given	Prompt email feedback Web-based self-scored tests and quizzes that provide ample and prompt feedback Feedback on assignments is prompt and helpful
5	Time on Task is Encouraged	Syllabus that includes clear objectives, assessments, and expectations posted Rubrics posted Day-by-day class calendar with due dates posted Late submission of work discouraged
6	High Expectations are Communicated	Orientation session (by phone or in person) Student Information Form Weekly threaded discussions posted Excellence encouraged and expected
7	Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning Are Respected	Orientation session (by phone or in person) Computer background knowledge survey Weekly threaded discussions posted Variety of tools available: Blackboard, excellent textbook, textbook's companion website, instructor (reachable by phone, email, postal mail, and personal visit)

References

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, March 3-7. Retrieved July 1, 2005 from <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/7princip.htm>