

# How to inspire success through student interaction

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Get ready to inspire someone to do their personal best this semester. This Teaching Tip includes ideas for increasing interaction in your course. Start with one thing and be consistent. Your choices will impact student learning and achievement.

Before the semester, take an inventory of where and how you have planned your interaction with students and their interactions with each other in your course. Engaging the learner is a must for providing a positive environment for the student, higher retention rates and successful course completion. “We often think new learning should be mainly in the Learner-Instructor interaction (in the form of instruction), and that simply isn’t true. Students need time to process and challenge their new learning. To do this, they need Learner-Content interaction and Learner-Learner interaction” (Senn, 2020).

Our students range from completely self-sufficient to those who need a mentor and others who benefit from coaching, training, and encouragement. Caring is a key part of “embracing and growing a culture of respect, diversity, inclusion and caring” (Goal 5 of [UAF’s Strategic Planning Goals 2019-2025](#)).

Include your students in the planning in the first two weeks of the semester, or watch the [Online Student Experience](#) panel where three students discuss managing online course load, what gets them engaged and actions they like to see in their classes.

Communicate early and often. As students get to know you, they feel more connected to you and your course, which encourages participation in some students.

“I really get more into the classes when there’s forced conversations with the teacher. Especially having the format to talk with the other students or the professor helps.” ~ Micah Schoonover, [Online Student Experience](#) panelist

Ask your students what success means to them. Survey students and then set up times for office hours. Plan your interactions and have students interact with their peers, a cohort or organizations in their field. Each part of your course can contain interaction. Review your past students’

comments at <https://uaf.bluera.com/uaf>. Ask yourself if you should address patterns and decide one or two areas where you can make a change.

You may be the only contact your students have with UAF, your department or your discipline. Share what excites you about your field. Take the time to have a conversation. Schedule a Zoom session where you will be there; let students know it’s okay to pop in with questions, comments or just to chat. Students may see setting up an appointment as one more barrier.

“office hours are less accessible now than they used to be. ... I appreciate when professors have an open office hour, even when virtually, so you can stop in whenever you want without having to make an appointment because that makes it easier for students to follow through with.” ~ [O. Hernandez, Online Student Experience Panelist](#)

Your interaction activities may improve overall student satisfaction and success while reducing the number of intervention steps you need to perform mid- to late in the semester. Your actions are helping to build connections and reduce the rate of dropout.

“Social presence is strengthened when instructors and students interact with each other in meaningful and consistent ways throughout an online course” (Shelton et al., 2017).

## REFERENCES

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