Persistence Project Strategies for Online Courses

Instructional Design & Technology (IDT), which supports online course development at Xavier, has adapted the original Persistence Project strategies to account for the online learning environment and the online course template. Many of the strategies described below will also work for in-person courses. To request additional support with an online course, email idt@xavier.edu.

Activity 1: Communicate your belief that all students can succeed in your class.

- Include language on the syllabus that every student has the potential to succeed in your class. Consider having students use Hypothesis to complete a syllabus annotation assignment – e.g., identify a topic, activity, or assignment they look forward to and explain why; ask any questions they have; etc.
- Throughout the course, verbally reinforce that every student can succeed, especially before challenging assignments or tests. Include these messages in your Canvas announcements.
- Consider policies like flexible deadlines, no harsh penalties for minor issues, etc. Keep in mind that Canvas enables you to set due dates for individual students (i.e., differentiated assignments) and late submission policies.
- Use the Start Here module to set expectations and clearly outline class policies.

Activity 2: Learn and use students' names and have students learn each other's names.

- Use the Icebreaker Discussion. Consider requiring video, especially if there are video assignments later in the course. If you require video for this discussion, it is recommended that you simplify the discussion prompt.
- Use students' names when making discussion replies and when providing assignment feedback.
- Encourage students to set up their profile in Canvas. Request that students add a profile picture and short biography including their majors and interests.
- Encourage students to record their names in NameCoach, so you and the other students can hear the correct pronunciation.
- Add students to support groups with 3-4 members at the beginning of the semester. The support groups are separate from project groups, discussion groups, etc. They are mainly for getting help, especially during evenings and weekends when you may be unavailable.
- Consider using group discussions with 6-8 members per group instead of class discussions if your class has more than 20 students.

Activity 3: Give formative, success-oriented feedback on an assignment or quiz.

- Canvas offers robust tools, such as the Media comment feature, to provide recorded audio or video feedback, in addition to traditional written feedback.
- Consider "revise and resubmit" options for students to improve their initial work. You can reassign an assignment to an individual student after you've added a comment in SpeedGrader.
- Students can respond to comments on assignments, and you can request that students reply to feedback on assignments.
- Consider using a Canvas rubric, if appropriate, and providing both general feedback and specific feedback relating to multiple criteria.

- Create checkpoints or milestones for projects so that you can ensure students are on the right track before submitting the final project.

Activity 4: Get to know your students.

- Use the Canvas Scheduler to set up 15-minute meetings to get to know students as individuals. Include a link to your virtual office in the details area. You can create a personal meeting with Teams or use your personal room in Zoom (see Step 5 under Setting Up Your Zoom Profile).
- Inform students that you are available to meet in your virtual office – during regular office hours or by appointment – to discuss a range of topics, questions, and concerns.
- Use the Icebreaker Discussion to get to know students as individuals. In your replies to students' posts, ask follow-up questions to learn more.
- Add a survey to learn more about students' academic and personal lives. "How can I help you be successful?" is an effective question to ask. Include one open-ended question where students can share any info that they think you AND classmates should know. Include another open-ended question where students can share confidential info that only you should know.
- Annotate your class roster with 1-2 prominent characteristics or facts about each student. Obtain this info from the Icebreaker Discussion and the survey. Refer to these notes when making discussion replies and providing assignment feedback. Include relevant info in your replies and feedback.
- Consider having students write a "Where I'm From" poem or "This I Believe" essay. You can go to Canvas Commons and import an assignment template into your Canvas course. Use the search term "Persistence Project" to find assignment templates produced by Instructional Design & Technology and Digital Media Services.