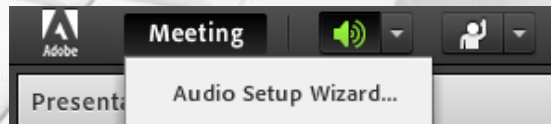


# Welcome to Teaching + Learning Tuesdays

February 19, 2019

2:30 PM

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Teaching + Learning Tuesday



# THE CRITICAL ROLE OF REGULAR & SUBSTANTIVE STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION IN ONLINE EDUCATION

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**SC TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM**

**FEBRUARY 19, 2019**



College of Education and  
Human Development

# OVERVIEW

1. Introduction
2. Key Findings
3. A Closer Look at the Evidence
4. Federal Law & Guidance
5. Recent Developments
6. Q&A

# INTRODUCTION

- New paper released January 2019 – *Does Online Education Live Up to Its Promise? A Look at the Evidence and Implications for Federal Policy*
- Protopsaltis & Sandy Baum, fellow in the Center on Education Data and Policy at the Urban Institute and professor emerita of economics at Skidmore College
- Comprehensive review of literature
- Key finding: Despite its explosive growth, fully online education has contributed to increasing gaps in educational success across socioeconomic groups while failing to improve affordability
- Lack of sufficient interaction between students and faculty is likely online education's Achilles' heel

## KEY FINDINGS

**Growth:** Fastest-growing segment, overrepresented in the for-profit sector.



**Skepticism:** A wide range of audiences and stakeholders are skeptical about its quality and value, largely viewed as inferior to face-to-face education.

**Achievement Gap:** Online students, especially nontraditional and at-risk, underperform, leading to larger achievement gaps.

**Low ROI:** Failed to improve affordability, frequently costs more, and does not produce a positive return on investment.

**Insufficient Interaction:** Key determinant of quality that leads to improved student satisfaction, learning, and outcomes. Students desire, and the online community is also calling for, greater interaction to address this shortcoming.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE

- For 30 years, interaction has been identified as the key for quality - “education at its most fundamental form” (Garrison & Shale, 1991).
- “Distance education refers specifically to learning activities...where *interaction is an integral component*” [emphasis added] (U.S. Distance Learning Association, 2006).
- Transactional Distance & Community of Inquiry
- Learning is an active, dynamic process, and social isolation is a risk factor associated with higher dropout rates. Interaction increases student satisfaction, and by extension, motivation to learn and succeed.
- Interaction  Engagement  Achievement

*Online learning not only allows institutions to serve more students at a lower expense, but it also improves teaching methodologies, enhances the learning experience, and **increases interaction among students and instructors, sometimes even beyond the interaction possible in a traditional classroom.***

Carol B. Aslanian and David L. Clinefelter (2012). *Online college students 2012: Comprehensive data on demands and preferences*. Louisville, KY: The Learning House, Inc.

*Occasionally, people argue that quality is more important than quantity and so it is inappropriate for academic leaders to set minimum expectations for faculty participation in the classroom. They make the point that high-quality feedback once or twice a week is better than minimal feedback four or five times a week. **However, this issue should not be a question of frequency or quality. The participation should be both frequent and high quality for the optimal student experience. Both are important for a good learning experience.***

David L. Clinefelter (2012). *Best Practices in Online Faculty Development*. Louisville, KY: The Learning House, Inc.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE

- In 2012, students cited lack of direct contact and interaction with instructors and students (37%) and inconsistent/poor contact and communication with instructors (24%) as the top two disadvantages.
- In 2015, almost one-third of students (29%) preferred the instructor-led instructional model “where an instructor takes students through their learning activities,” while more than a third (36%) would like to meet (virtually) regularly with faculty to discuss courses and schedule.
- In 2017, most students (57%) cited the importance of being able to regularly engage with classmates and instructors during classes, 27% desired more contact with the instructor, and 22% asked for more facilitated engagement among students. More than three out of four students (76%) found optional virtual office hours attractive.



# FEDERAL LAW AND GUIDANCE

- 1992 – 50 percent rule
- 1998 – Distance Education Demonstration Program
- 2006 – Elimination of 50 percent rule for online programs
- 2008 – Regular & substantive interaction added to Higher Education Act
- 2014 – Dear colleague letter non-regulatory guidance + EQUIP
- 2012–2018 – Office of Inspector General audits
- 2019 – Negotiated rulemaking

**Distance education** means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and ***to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor***, either synchronously or asynchronously.

**Correspondence course**

(1) A course provided by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. ***Interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student.*** Correspondence courses are typically self-paced.

(2) If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, the Secretary considers the course to be a correspondence course.

(3) ***A correspondence course is not distance education.***

- Interaction between students and instructors occurs regularly as a required part of the program.
  - Interaction that is ***wholly optional, initiated primarily by the student, or occurring only upon the request of the student*** (either electronically or otherwise) ***is insufficient***.
- Interaction must be provided by ***institutional staff who meet accrediting agency standards for providing instruction in the subject matter*** being discussed.
  - Interactions between students and personnel who don't meet accrediting agency standards for providing instruction in the subject area are not substantive.
  - The amount of faculty resources dedicated to the program must be sufficient in the judgment of the accrediting agency.
- Educational models that involve different instructors performing different roles may be used to ensure regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors, but an institution must still comply with the above requirements.

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- **OIG AUDIT OF WGU**
- **Applied the following RSI test:**
  - Interaction that was not primarily initiated by the student
  - Interaction with someone who instructs or provides knowledge about the subject matter of the course (instructor)
  - Interaction relevant to the subject matter (substantive), and
  - Interaction occurring with some reasonable frequency considering the school-suggested length of the course (regular)
- **2/3 of the 102 online courses required for its three largest programs did not meet RSI test:**
  - 32 course materials described no substantive interaction with an instructor, 27 courses described a single substantive interaction, while 10 courses described two substantive interactions.

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION
  - House Republican Legislation (PROSPER Act)
- NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING
- INNOVATION + FLEXIBILITY RHETORIC
- IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE
- IDEOLOGY OR EVIDENCE-DRIVEN?

*Arguably everyone wants higher education to be more "innovative," to cut costs and improve quality for students. At the same time, when paying for an educational program, **both students and taxpayers expect that teaching is involved in the provision of educational services.***

*Creating access to programs is a step forward, but only if those programs succeed in **providing meaningful educational opportunities to students with minimal levels of academic preparation** who need to develop their self-discipline, time management, and learning skills—not just have access to a specific body of information.*

*As we seek to improve the quality of online education and reverse its poor record in an effort to ensure that it not only serves more students, but also serves them well, it is critical to promote regular and substantive student-instructor interaction. Otherwise, **we risk blurring the line between education and self-learning** and further opening the floodgates for unscrupulous online colleges to prey on vulnerable students and exploit out federal student aid programs.*



# QUESTIONS?

[SPROTOPS@GMU.EDU](mailto:SPROTOPS@GMU.EDU)

[HTTPS://CEHD.GMU.EDU/PEOPLE/FACULTY/SPROTOPS](https://cehd.gmu.edu/people/faculty/sprotops)



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# Northeastern Technical College



By: Derk Riechers





# Regular and Substantive Interaction: Strategies & Best Practices



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# THE HOW?

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# Interactions Initiated by the Instructor

- ▶ Discussions
- ▶ Assignments
- ▶ Quizzes
- ▶ Gradebook

\*\*\*AI/LMS generated vs Instructor\*\*\*



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# Strategies

- ▶ NETC Online Course Checklist
- ▶ In-service and media
- ▶ Data
- ▶ Master Courses
- ▶ Strategic Review



# NEWS

▶ WCET Frontiers

▶ ITC

▶ OLC

▶ USDLA



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# FDTC's - The What

- Look for ways to engage students
- Feedback in Discussion Board
- Feedback in Grade Book
- Feedback in Drop Box



# FDTC's- The How

- Look for ways to communicate with students
- News Announcement
- E-Mails
- YouTube Videos



# FDTC's The How

- Look for ways to increase frequency in communication with students
- Start a First of the Week Update
- Start an End of the Week Update
- Use both New Announcements and Email





# FDTC's - The Course

- ▶ C.H.A.L.K.
- ▶ Comprehensive online course that covers all of the rules and regulations oversight agencies require
- ▶ All how to guides - discussions, emails, videos, rubrics, checklists, etc in one place
- ▶ Accessible for all faculty, department heads or coordinators both full-time and adjunct online in D2L as a course



# Upcoming TLT Sessions

- March 19, 2019 – Perkins V
- April 16, 2019 – Student Affairs

Want to showcase your expertise? Is there a teaching technique that has been effective in the classroom? Apply to be a TLT presenter!

For more information and full schedule:

[www.sctechsystem.edu/tlt](http://www.sctechsystem.edu/tlt)



# Give us your feedback

- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/February2019TLT>

