

FOSTERING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:

Leveraging the Community of Inquiry framework for online discussions

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Simon Fraser University respectfully acknowledges the unceded traditional territories including, the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) and x^wməθk^wəy'əm (Musqueam) Nations, on which SFU Vancouver is located.

OBJECTIVES

- Define student engagement in online learning
- Explore how the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework supports student engagement
- Apply strategies to enhance social, cognitive, and teaching presence in online discussion forum
- Share your success stories

REFLECTION

What is **one challenge** you've either faced or noticed when it comes to engaging students in online learning?

CHALLENGE

The online learning environment creates many issues and challenges, including engagement and interaction among students and teachers:

- Low participation and interaction
- High instructor effort to maintain engagement
- Difficulty in fostering meaningful interaction
- GenAI Shortcuts

WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Behavioural

What students *do*.
This includes actions like accessing course materials, participating in activities, and completing tasks.



Cognitive

How students *think*.
This includes their involvement in learning, such as self-regulation, monitoring their understanding, and engaging in higher-order thinking.



Emotional

How students *feel* about their learning experience. This includes their interest, motivation, and sense of connection to the course.

ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM



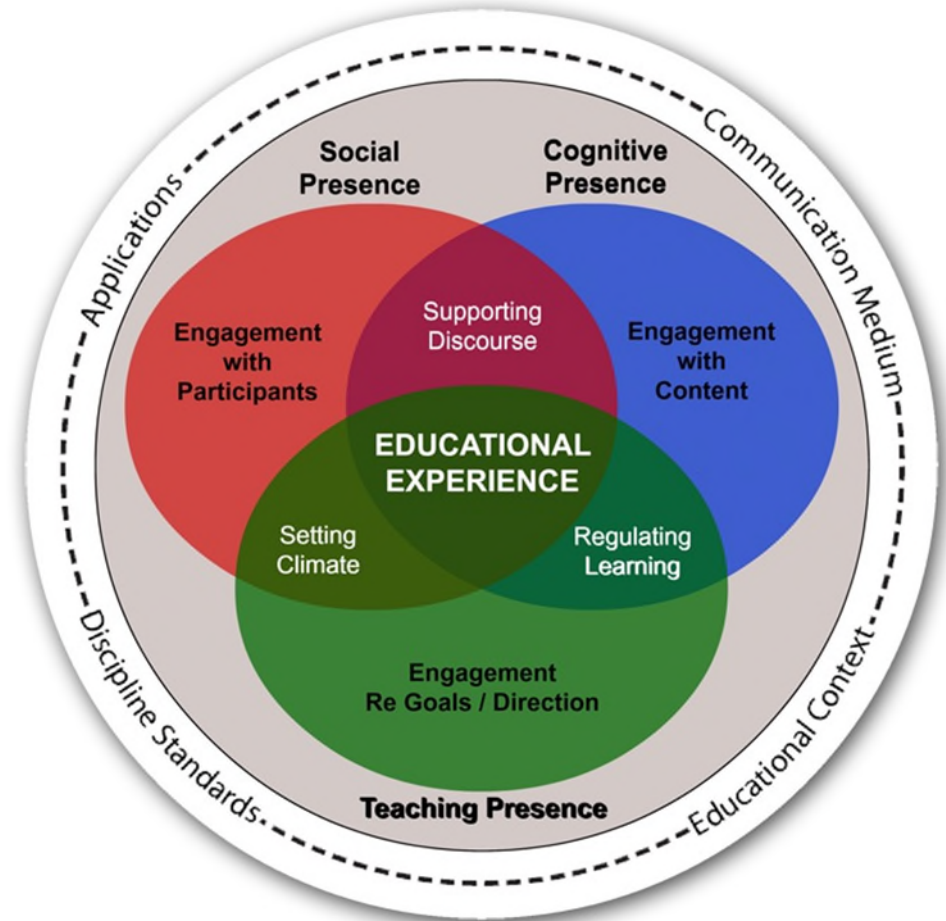
Effective online courses are highly dependent on the success of online discussion (Maddix, 2012, p. 382).

Well-structured forums can foster a dynamic learning context that fosters learning, growth, and community among students and the teacher

(Maddix, 2012, p. 373).

COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

- Developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2001)
- Three core elements:
 - Social Presence
 - Cognitive Presence
 - Teaching Presence
- Essential for creating effective online learning environments



Source: <https://www.thecommunityofinquiry.org/framework>

SOCIAL PRESENCE

Strategies:

- Icebreaker activities
- Informal discussion spaces
- Timely and specific instructor feedback
- Assigning student facilitator roles
- Integrating multimedia elements, especially video, to enhance immediacy and engagement

COGNITIVE PRESENCE

Strategies:

- Triggering–Design thoughtful, intentional prompts
- Exploration–Encourage collaboration through group projects, team-based learning
- Integration–Connect student experiences to course concepts and allow follow-up questions
- Resolution–Provide opportunities for self-evaluation, reflection, and real-world application
- Reducing GenAI Shortcuts–Personalized, experience-based, and reflective prompts require genuine student voice; harder to outsource

TEACHING PRESENCE

Strategies:

- Design—Set clear expectations with rubrics, discussion guidelines, and explicit norms for participation
- Monitor—Check in regularly; notice and respond to quiet
- Model—Demonstrate the depth and tone you want: post a thoughtful, personal first message as instructor
- Coach—Ask follow-up questions; challenge students with 'What evidence supports that?' or 'What's another perspective?'
- Contribute—Synthesize threads at key moments
- Feedback—Provide positive, timely, and constructive feedback

GENERATIVE AI IN DISCUSSIONS

The best defence against AI shortcuts is designing discussions that require authentic, personal, and collaborative thinking.

NO

- Summarize the reading
- Define a key concept from this week
- List three benefits of X
- What are the main arguments for/against?

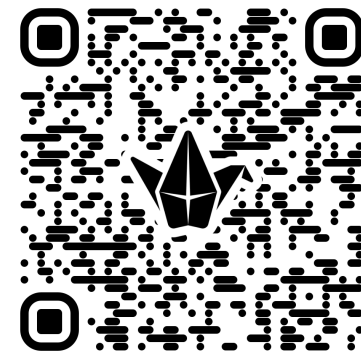
YES

- Describe a moment in your own experience...
- Disagree with a classmate, explain your reasoning.
- How would you apply this in your specific context?
- Reflect on what surprised you this week, and why?

SHARING SUCCESS STORIES

In small groups, share and discuss your experiences in participating, designing and facilitating online discussion forums:

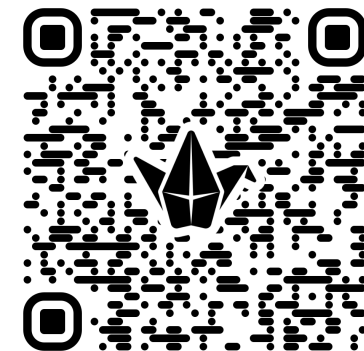
1. Share an example
2. Analyze strategies
3. Share insights



SHARING SUCCESS STORIES – STEP 1

Step 1: Share an Example

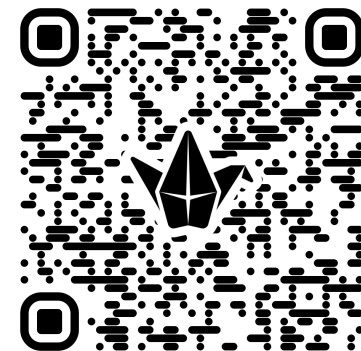
- Each person shares one memorable online discussion forum they participated in, designed or facilitated.
- Briefly describe:
 - The purpose of the discussion (e.g., reflection, debate, peer feedback).
 - What worked well in engaging students.
 - What didn't work as expected and why.



SHARING SUCCESS STORIES – STEP 2

Step 2: Analyze Strategies

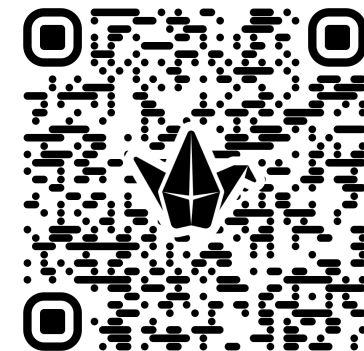
- As a group, discuss:
 - What strategies were used to encourage participation or deeper interaction (e.g., prompts, roles, feedback, structure).
 - Why you chose those strategies or tools for your course context.
 - How these choices affected student engagement and learning.



SHARING SUCCESS STORIES – STEP 3

Step 3: Share Insights

- Summarize your group's key takeaways with a large group.



FINAL TAKEAWAY

- Student engagement as learners' active participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment in online learning environments.
- Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework fosters deeper student engagement by focusing on Social, Cognitive, and Teaching presences.
- Utilize specific strategies to actively enhance Social, Cognitive, and Teaching Presence in online discussion forums, improving overall interaction quality and student experience.

REFLECTION

What is your **key takeaway** from this session?

What is **one strategy** you'll try or rethink after today?

Why it might **work for your context**?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE



QUESTIONS?

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THANK YOU!



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