Notes relevant to teaching from Faculty Connection: Prompting Discussion in Synchronous Sessions

Total faculty participating: 39

05-12-2020

What’s different?

- Harder to read non-verbal cues, even with the camera on
  - Can’t see interactions, body language – different data
- It’s easier in F2F classes to get non-participating students involved
  - Students seem less willing to share/make comments
  - Some are afraid to talk over others
- Have to work harder to engage them

Suggestions/What has worked

- Set clear expectations in advance
  - Send out handouts ahead of time so they can prepare comments
  - Advance notice of session format (e.g. breakout groups)
  - Remind of participation grade (if applicable)
  - Do you expect verbal or chat participation?
    - Note: some students are engaged even when they’re not “participating” – they’re actively listening
- Think ahead of time about how you will sequence the discussion
  - “Chunk” up content & discussion & polls
  - Give them time to think – Prompt: Think: Discuss
- Be available before class starts – have informal discussion, light conversation to get them comfortable, familiar with environment
  - Ask about their experience (general in the current environment)
  - Ask about their thoughts on the readings/pre-work/topic
- Break out into smaller groups – encourage them to discuss themselves, and then ask them to report back after they’ve worked together
  - Assign jobs (or have them self-assign) in breakouts – someone to “kick off” the conversation, moderator, reporter
  - Give a clearly demarcated task
- Encourage the use of the text chat at first, then once they’re comfortable transition to voice
- If you already know/have a relationship with students, call on them by name (depends on situation, relationship, content)
- Use polling features to encourage anonymous input, ease of participating
  - Multiple Choice (available in Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, Webex)
  - Open-Ended (available in Webex)
  - Word Clouds (Share Polleverywhere screen in any tool)
  - Clickable images (Share Polleverywhere screen in any tool)
- Use humor to connect
  - One participant used a clickable image of celebrity faces – “How are you feeling?”
- Use the raise-hand feature to indicate who wants to speak (to avoid talking over each other)
Some indicated having a co-moderator to help with this and/or polls is helpful

- In situations where a few dominate the conversation, ask to hear from someone who hasn’t participated yet
- Panel worked very well – started w/faculty developed questions, then students took over – typed or raised their hands to ask a question
- Use other tools/modes of communication outside of the synchronous session to build community – makes speaking up easier if you’ve been communicating already outside of the session
  - Example: Group.me app