High-Impact Practices in Online Education

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Learning communities
My goals for learning communities are to encourage the integration of learning in class and to involve students in important questions that are relevant beyond the classroom. Students work closely with each other and with me. Learning communities provide for an in-depth exploration of ideas, opinions, and experiences. They also synthesize knowledge by examining the relationship between information and experiences in multiple topics. Moreover, they cultivate peer support and improve the students’ understanding of practices in the field.

In all my courses, I encourage the use of a discussion forum in which students can post their opinion of a topic and also reply to at least two of their classmates. In every discussion activity, I reply to at least a third of the students’ posts. Discussion forums are a great tool for building a learning community and for promoting interaction among students.

Collaborative assignments and projects
I use collaborative learning to help students solve problems and work in the company of others. This method also sharpens their understanding by encouraging them to listen seriously to the insights of others, especially to those of people who have backgrounds and life experiences different from their own. Collaborative projects result in positive learning experiences and provide students with an opportunity to reflect on what contributed to their ability to work well with others.

In the group project I use for HLT 4150, Needs Assessment & Planning Health Promotion Programs, students are asked to form a group based on a common interest in the field of public health and to collaborate in a semester-long project. At the end of the semester, each group is asked to produce a program proposal report, three health-promotion materials, and to make a presentation using VoiceThread or PowerPoint.

Writing-intensive courses
I emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences on a number of topics. This practice has led to an improvement in their critical thinking and in increased confidence in their ability to succeed in their courses.

For HLT 4150, Needs Assessment & Planning Health Promotion Programs, I designed a collaborative group program proposal project. The project requires students to work in groups, choose an organization they might want to work with, conduct a needs assessment of that organization, develop a plan that fits within that organization’s mission, and articulate an evaluation plan for that program. The structure of the full proposal consists of a title page, a summary statement, an introduction and assessment, a program plan (with an integrated evaluation plan after each objective), references, and an appendix: logic model.

Community-based learning
One of my instructional strategies is to enable field-based experiential learning within the community. My idea is to provide students with direct experience of issues in the curriculum and of ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A core element of this practice is the opportunity students have both to apply what they are learning in real-world settings and to reflect in the classroom on their service experiences.

In HLT 3400, Substance Abuse Prevention, students are asked to attend an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) open meeting or conduct a substance-abuse counselor interview and produce a report. In HLT 4150, Needs Assessment & Planning Health Promotion Programs, students are required to conduct a walking-survey community assessment, complete a worksheet and reflection paper, and provide at least three pictures taken during the community assessment.

Diversity/global learning
I believe that diversity and global studies should be both formative and informative. Teaching students to understand and appreciate diversity and global perspectives is a high-impact practice, because it concentrates on personal values and attitudes and on the regard individuals should have for each other. Such instruction also has a practical aspect: interactions among diverse cultures have increased in the modern world, and students should accordingly be prepared by their universities to live and work in global communities.

In HLT 4250, I have designed a final assignment to provide students with the opportunity to learn and develop a global view on adolescent health. I have introduced "Children Full of Life", an award-winning Japanese documentary which covers most of the topics we discuss in class. I ask students to choose at least two sections in the documentary to reflect on. I also mention to students that I want to hear their own in-depth responses including values, experiences, and beliefs to the documentary.