

# Bringing the “discussion” back to the Blackboard Discussion Board

McLennan Community College  
Professional Development Day

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# Higher Education Reauthorization Bill

- Institutions offering distance education are required to have processes to establish that “the student who registers in a distance education . . . program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit.” [HEA, sec 495]

# Why Discussions?

- Teaching by discussion is an extremely effective means of helping students apply abstract ideas and think critically about what they are learning. (*The Penn State ID newsletter December 1992*)
- Discussion helps students find their own voices and develop their own understanding of the subject matter. (*Brookfield and Preskill 1999*)
- When the purpose of a class is to develop problem-solving skills and abilities, the least efficient discussion is superior to most lectures. (*Bloom 1953, as referenced in The Penn State ID newsletter*)

# How to do what we do

- Check the discussion at least once a day
- Respond to all substantive posts by pointing out good points
- In a respectful manner, challenge a point made
- Ask a question to provoke deeper thinking or more explanation
- Solicit one student to respond to or compare and contrast their response with that of another student

# Suggested Techniques for Response

- Expand on the topic.
- Provide a teaching story that illustrates the main idea.
- Offer a different perspective.
- Provide an online resource relevant to the topic
  - (include a hyperlink).
- Offer a method you use in your classroom.
- Provide a summary of the ideas posted so far
  - (good when you come late to the conversation).
- Ask a specific question
  - (but avoid prompting yes or no answers).
- Ask an open ended (on topic) question.

# The netiquette of online discussion

- Focus on the prompt. Be sure to follow the directions in the prompt closely.
- Respond to those who respond to you! This is essential!
- Don't depend on "Me too" or "I agree" posts. Make your posts substantial
- Work to respond with something that adds value to the discussion.
- Post early in the week. You'll get more response and become more engaged in conversation.
- Avoid doing all of your posting at the end of the week. You miss out on interaction.
- Use direct quotations from the text. Include the Name of the text and page number.
  - (Remember not everyone has the same text.)

# References

- Dennis San Diego - Technology and Emerging Learning Environments group discussion at the Sloan Consortium website
- Teaching and Learning Centre at the University of Calgary, ITBL Facilitating Effective Online Discussions Series