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Managing Your Online Presence

Managing Your Online Presence with experts [Flower Darby](#), [Kevin Gannon](#), [April Mondy](#).
Moderated by [Kim Middleton](#) academic director at ACUE.

[00:00:06] Thanks so much for coming today. Our webinar will begin shortly.

[00:01:12] Good afternoon and welcome to this webinar on managing your online presence. My name is David Brailow, Vice President Track for development at the Council of Independent Colleges, which is happy to join with the other associations and with the ACUE team in bringing you this webinar series on effective online instruction. First, we hope that you're well and that you're holding up during this very challenging time. We thank you for all you're doing to keep higher education on task. And for joining this conversation with us today. And we wanted to thank ACUE, with whom CIC has collaborated on an earlier endeavor in support of faculty teaching for putting this important series together to support faculty members across the country as they engage their students in new ways. And now I'll turn things over to Kim Middleton, academic director at ACUE, who will facilitate our conversation today.

[00:02:20] Thank you so much, David. Welcome to all of you from all of us here at the Association of College and University Educators. Today marks the second installment in our webinar series. And I'm privileged today to be joined by three incredibly thoughtful, creative and compassionate pedagogy experts. We're really just leaders in our field. They'll start us off on our conversation on today's topic. Managing your online presence. Before I introduce them and get started, however, I just want to quickly review our agenda for the hour. First, our presenters will briefly discuss the context for this topic of online presence. What exactly do we mean by that term and why is it important? And then how do we create it in our classes? We think it will be valuable whether you're in your first or your fourth week of your online experience. Then the majority of today's session, about thirty five minutes, is reserved for discussion, led by the questions that you submit to our panelists. Our goal is to have an interactive conversation that focuses on this topic and it continues to provide practical ideas and suggestions for your online teaching. So a quick

word about how to then pose your questions. So please go ahead and use that Q&A box at the bottom of your Zoom screen as you do. You might see that somebody else has already submitted one that's similar to yours. If that's the case, you can go ahead and use that thumbs up symbol to highlight that question. It'll save you some typing, but it also helps us prioritize the questions that have the most interest. And then finally, don't forget the chat room window. We'll use that as a sort of one way information space to provide references and resources that come up during our discussion today. If you have technical difficulties, please go ahead. An email webinar at ACUE dot org for assistance. Towards the end of the hour, we'll share how we can continue our conversation at our online discussion board and share some additional resources to support your teaching. And that will also be the place where you can view a recording of the session.

[00:04:12] So the topic for today's webinar and for those that follow in this series or really inspired by the free resources recent recently published by ACUE in our online teaching toolkit, many of you responded to that kit by telling us that you wanted to hear more, more from our experts and more from each other about these six topics.

[00:04:30] So that's why we're here today. And we'll continue to engage in this conversation in upcoming sessions and in the webinar discussion boards. So now, without further ado, let's meet our experts. Joining us today, our Flower Darby, author of How to Be a Better Online Teacher, Kevin Gannon, author of Radical Hope A Teaching Manifesto, and April Mondy, instructor in management at Delta State University. I'm so excited to hear these three start our discussion on this topic. Before coming to ACUE, a top digital humanities projects at the College of Saint Rose in Albany, New York, and have published on a pedagogy that work with my students. Were in a time, however, where that term presence is taking on completely new meaning for all of us. And so I'm really looking forward to hearing the insights that our experts have to offer. So I think we should get to it. So welcome to our experts. Hello. Hello. Thank you for joining us. And Flower, I think you had graciously agreed to start us off this morning.

[00:05:27] Absolutely. It's a pleasure to be here with you all, and I do think everyone for taking the time. I know how prest we all are for time right now. I also want to echo David's wishes that you're doing as well as as as possible. You know, we did really want to start off with thinking about what is online presence for people who are new to teaching online. It may not make very much sense. How do we engage and be present with our online students? So I thought it would be helpful to start today with this community of inquiry framework to ground our discussion. This framework came out of robust research that took place in the late 90s. A team of researchers assessed what goes into effective computer mediated instruction, as we called it then. And they came up with this framework, which has been tested and replicated over time. Again, that that came that research came out in 2000. We've now had 20 years to experiment with it and see how this works. I'm just going to give a high level overview of this framework, including my own personal modification to it based on more recent research. The team of researchers found that in order to have good online classes, you needed three main presences. They called them three main ingredients. I like to think they're depicted here on the screen. The first one is cognitive presence. That's the intellectual work that is taking place in the class. The cognitive processes. I also like to think of this as the planning that you as the faculty member do as you're creating the class, the design, and then how are students interacting with and learning new information in the class. The second presence they defined was essential is the teaching presence, and that is the guiding and the facilitating of student code, creation of knowledge code, construction of new information. But I will say, I think in those past 20 years, we're still trying to figure out what online teaching is, what that teaching presence

involves. And that's one of the reasons that we're here with you today to continue to explore how to be an effective online teacher. There's a third component, which to me is almost more important than the other two, and that is the social presence. How are we interacting with our students as people? It can be so easy to just forget that name in that avatar. Or worse yet, that little gray silhouette of a head is actually a person. And the screen and the remoteness of online teaching really, I should say, intensifies that inherent distance that can happen. But we know and we're all experiencing it right now with social distancing. We know the importance of engaging with people, especially when we're feeling particularly isolated. So the social presence is a very important aspect for me. How are we engaging with each other as people in our online classes? But now there's a circle around the original framework that those three circles in the center that was the original framework proposed by Gearson Archer and colleagues, Anderson as well. And this emotional presence is something that was proposed in about 2012. I think 2012 by Marty Cleveland ends in arguing that there was room for a fourth presence, the emotional presence. And I've really thought a lot about this argument, which is to say that we we there's a lot of emotion in our teaching and learning and online spaces. There is in an in-person class as well. But let's not forget that the emotions impact everything that we do in online classes. And so together with some colleagues at Northern Arizona University, I have proposed that the emotional presence kind of suffuses the whole thing. That's why the circle wraps around the original framework. It impacts everything we do. I want to end with just one quick way that I demonstrate high impact communication. And that's what we're here to talk about today is high impact. How do we get the most bang for our buck as we're trying to be with our students? I got this idea from Michelle Kanzaki Brock, who's doing great work in this space. And it's about just asking your students if they choose to share with you what challenges they're dealing with in their life outside of your online class. Now, more than ever, students are managing so many challenges and stresses and anxieties. You could create a very short, simple survey that could be anonymous or you could invite students to self-disclose completely optional. Tell me what's going on in your life so that if you need a little help or support, I'm aware already that things are happening and I'm going to leave it at that right now. We'll have plenty of time to talk about other strategies. Turn this over to our next panelist. Thanks.

[00:10:32] Make so much Flower. Before we move on. Kevin or April, is there anything you want to add or does that bring up anything for you?

[00:10:43] I'd like to just sort of call out and really lift up the point that Flower made about reaching out to our students was some easy sort of check in our survey. It's a really effective way, especially in this sort of uncertain environment where a lot of our students are feeling really anxious about being in a type of class that they didn't exactly sign up for. It's important for us, I think, to sort of take gage of that and to also signal that, you know, we're aware that, again, these are weird times for everybody. And so we want to try to do our best to meet people where they are. I think it sends a really important signal and again, starts to model that sort of presence. That's so important.

[00:11:21] Agree.

[00:11:21] Particularly when Flower mentioned that sometimes we forget there is a student behind that silhouette, that avatar in the elements, but kind of gaging where the students are can kind of help. Give us a good reminder that we're not the only ones that are dealing with the adjustments the students are as well. But that also kind of helps give us an idea of how we need to be modifying and making adjustments.

[00:11:44] If I'm seeing that I have a lot of students that are struggling with Internet access, I might need to relax some of my deadlines or rethink about the types of assignments I'm giving so I can kind of help give us some information as far as how we need to be structuring things moving forward.

[00:12:01] Thanks so much, April. And that might lead actually nicely into what you wanted to talk about.

[00:12:06] Exactly. Well, thank you for having me to be here. So if we were talking about planning, of course, months in advance with a really sophisticated design, obviously our contexts would be different. Some of the strategies that we talk about would be different. But considering that we are all essentially in survival mode and we're trying to get through the semester, we're all having to make adjustments. I would like to narrow my specific focus on the communication aspect because communication is very important when you're dealing with uncertainties. And as you can see on my slide, I have more for very quick strategies that I would like to recommend as far as how to model communication with your students in this unfamiliar and uncertain time. So communication should be transparent, empathetic, proactive and consistent. So with transparent, just like we need our students, we have to be flexible and understanding and patient with them. They need to be flexible and patient and understanding with us as well. And I think this is a good time for them to see the human aspect that we also have to deal with. So even if it's something like science of the students, hey, I know this is your first time in an online environment. You didn't sign up for this. You know, this is my first time as well. But we're going to get through it. It's not showing weakness or incompetence. It's letting the students know that this is something that is affecting all of us. And it's a time where we can give each other permission to cut each other a break. Essentially being empathetic. Student anxiety levels are at an all time high. Our courses are one more thing that they have to worry about. And it's important when we communicate with them that we convey understanding and that we convey that we are willing to work with them. You know, students have limited access to resources now. They can't go to the computer lab. They can't go to the library. Some of them are at home sharing one computer with other family members and it's creating a lot of stress for them. So every time we communicate with them, we need to be reassuring them that we understand what they're dealing with. We understand what that what they're going through and we're going to work through them. You know, I had students email me apologizing that they missed assignments because they didn't have access to the Internet. So we need to constantly convey that that empathy to put their minds at ease and then dealing with being proactive, anticipating what questions or concerns our students might already be thinking about. So, for instance, if you were doing a major presentation at the end of the semester on research that the students had been working on all semester, they're probably wondering about that. So, you know, even if you don't have the answer, letting them know, you know, acknowledging that can put their minds at ease and it'll cut back on all of the emails that you'll get bombarded with. So something like, hey, students, I know you're probably wondering about that research presentation. I'm still determining what that's going to look like. But I will update you as soon as I have that, you know, determined. Thank you for your patience. Also, if one student e-mails you with a question, email the entire class with the answer, because more than likely, other students are asking that question or have that question as well. And that cuts down also on a lot of the communication. Lastly, being consistent, our students have gone from having no or one or only a couple of online classes to being all online. It's a lot for them to keep up with and it can get overwhelming. They can get classes mixed up. The more consistent we can be, the more that helps them to stay on track. So whether it's sending an email at the beginning of the week with everything that's coming up, doing a midweek reminder,

however, you want to model your communication, the students need to know when they log into your class what to look for and when to look for it. And that consistency will help them stay on track. And it'll also help you to stay on track as well.

[00:15:59] So those four things can really help as far as communicating with the students in this context of our post migration period and trying to get through the semester.

[00:16:11] Great, thanks. April, I saw Flower and Kevin doing a lot of head nodding, so I want to make sure that they have some room to respond.

[00:16:22] I'll jump in. First of all, I loved every single thing that you said. April, it's all so spot on. And that is why. Yes, I was really exuberantly here hearing everything that you said. I do want to highlight the importance and the value of one to many communication instead of one to one communication. And I think we'll be talking more about that today. When you do communicate with your students, which is the best way really to be present with them in this time. You do want to be very efficient about how you do that. And so, again, I'm sure we'll explore additional options for how. But just thinking about being strategic and efficient and yet providing a robust level of communication for all of your students. I think that's really important right now.

[00:17:11] Everything that both of you said is something I would enthusiastically agree with, of course. And I'd I'd like to particularly nod emphatically if I can, April, to your discussion of transparency. That's such an important component of everything that we're doing, especially when we're now in an environment that's a little more depersonalized, a lot less synchronous or perhaps completely asynchronous. All of the things that we depend on, usually in a traditional face to face classroom, you know, the ability for students to just interject a question and vocal inflections, things like that. All of those little cues that we usually use are gone. And so we have to be as transparent and as explicitly and mindfully so as we can in order to help put our students at ease, in particular ones who are struggling with either access to or proficiency with some of the technology, whether it's a learning management system or video conferencing software that we're asking them to use.

[00:18:07] Thanks, Kevin. And I feel like you are beautifully figured this out and now we're going to hand it off to Canada to go forward.

[00:18:17] Well, I've got one particular sort of specific strategy, and it's a really simple thing that we can fold into our courses if we haven't done so already. That gets at some of the things that both Flower and April have talked about in terms of transparency, in terms of empathy and in terms of kind of modeling the type of presence that we can get after in these next few weeks of our courses. And that's to create what I call a parking lot, a place to sort of park things that might not be germane to course content or specific discussions or things that we're having our students do, but items of discussion and conversation that need to happen anyway. So I'm on a campus that uses blackboards, are learning management system. And this is a screenshot of part of a forum that I create on blackboard for all my online courses that I've done now that I've transitioned my face to face courses online to where it's basically got a question if so posted here. And there's a few different reasons that I would recommend this. If you're not doing it already, especially in the weird times that we're in now, we're gonna be answering a lot of questions from students that can feel like that we're basically an I.T. or elementz help desk more than anything else. One way to sort of make this practice a little more efficient is to have our students post their questions on this blackboard forum. And what I tell my students, even if

they email a question to me, I'll ask a key. Please post that on the questions forum or in the parking lot, because chances are, if you've got a question, several other folks in the class probably have the same question. And so it'll do. It's better for me to be able to answer you all at once. But what I don't tell the students is this also saves me from writing the same email 15 or 18 times in the next couple of days. And again, you know, things that could help make our workflow more efficient are things that we should be thinking about in this particularly hectic time. What it also does, though, is it gives us a chance to kind of model the type of presence that we want students to be doing in these digital spaces. Here's a really easy way to jump on a discussion board, to make a post, to see what other people are posting. A really nuts-and-bolts, you know, low stakes. No stakes kind of way of getting people started in a particular online forum. And so if you're using discussion forums and you're using sort of written or text based discussions as part of your new online incarnation of your class, this is a really easy on ramp for students who don't necessarily have the experience maybe and this type of space. What it also does is it lets you bottle a couple of the features of the discussion boards that could be useful to blackboard canvas desire to learn your major learning management systems where you create a forum and whatever the discussion board piece looks like, you could actually subscribe and have students subscribe to that forum. So you can see in the screenshot here, I've already subscribed to this on the left. You could see the option if I wanted to unsubscribe.

[00:21:02] What that does is anytime a student posts something on this forum, I get an email giving the student's name and that they've posted. And so that alerts me that there's a question waiting to be answered that I can get in and do.

[00:21:14] There is a temptation to make it sort of Pavlovian. You know, I get the email and day, oh, I better get in the discussion board. It doesn't have to be that way, but it does. Let me get it in a timely fashion. And also letting students know that they can subscribe to discussions, you know, say they are responsible for leading a discussion thread one week and replying to those who are leaving comments. While a subscription feature might be a really good way for them to be able to be timely and keep on top of those things as well. The the idea of creating, again, just the sort of low to no stakes space to alleviate the type of immediate anxieties that come out of this pivot to online teaching, I think is a really useful one, whether you do a parking lot. Question, discussion board or something else. I think it's important for us to show our students again that, you know, we understand that this is this is quite an abrupt pivot. It's not the best option. It's the least worst option that we have at this point. And so doing the things like transparency and showing empathy and offering to help, you know, I'm here. If you had these sort of specific questions, what are the barriers? What are the obstacles in your way that we could take care of right now? And it also models to other students, too. And I think this is one of the most important aspects of it, that they're not alone if they have a particular issue or, you know, tech related problems. So if they see one of their peers post a question and say, oh, that's the exact same question I have, and I thought I was the only one who couldn't figure this out. Well, now we sort of affirm that this is something that we're all trying to navigate together. So one easy, discrete, you know, low effort tool to put in there, but one that I think sets an important tone and model some important things as our students and ourselves navigate this new space together.

[00:22:54] Thanks so much, Kevin and April and Flower. I read their stuff there that resonates with you.

[00:22:58] Yes, I think it's a great idea because it allows an opportunity for a student to student engagement outside of just regular coursework. Also, if a student has a solution,

you know, they might provide an idea. That's something that we hadn't thought about. So it's a good, good opportunity for them to feed each other ideas. But there have been plenty of times in student forums when a student was given an idea and I'll write that down and use it for the next time.

[00:23:25] I think that's a great resource for a student to student engagement and just for resources for us.

[00:23:31] Yeah, I'll just jump in. I think your your focus here, Kevin, is eminently practical and really pretty low tech and easy for folks who are new to online teaching to learn how to use the discussion forum can be a great tool. I did want to also add to what April was just saying in terms of student to student communication. You know, there could be lots of reasons that your students may hesitate to email use specifically. There could be cultural reasons or preferences or things going on. Students may feel vulnerable about revealing. They may feel insecure that they don't know. But this is a form of providing both culturally relevant pedagogy and also universal design for learning. When you encourage students to jump in and answer other students in that space, when you make everybody feel welcome and comfortable and unafraid to post there, it's just a way to demonstrate caring and support for all of the students who are in our classes.

[00:24:35] Well, thank you for the for to all three of you for getting us started with a really sort of broad and deep set of ideas just to kind of launch the conversation. I can sort of see that these questions are coming in fast and furious. So I think we'll go ahead and do is toggle to the questions that are coming in from people. I see. Let's see if we look. I love this question.

[00:25:00] And it's sort of floated to the top that if you had to pick one in caps, one strategy for presents, what would it be?

[00:25:14] No pressure for me, it would be, boy, one is tough, but all I have to I'll I'll say one. And then let's see if April and Kevin say my other one. One that we haven't talked about yet today that is really very powerful is the announcement tool. Some some learning management systems allow you to click settings so that students can receive that as an email directly to them. I think canvas, if I'm not mistaken, students can elect to get a text message when there are updates. So the announcement tool is again a very low tech simple function to use. It works similar to an email and can be a great way to give that one to many communication.

[00:25:54] Another thing with the announcement tool is you can schedule your announcements to post at a later date. I mean, there have been times when I'd be working on an announcement at 11:30 at night, but I don't want notifications to go to students at that time. So I would schedule for the announcement to go out the next morning, sometimes even days in advance. And that's very helpful. So I agree with Flower. Definitely these announcements will.

[00:26:21] I'm actually going to do two because I'm a rule breaker, so the first but the first one is really is really again, kind of a small thing, but an important one. I think we ought to make clear right up front. You know, what can our students expect from us in terms of communication? So if a student e-mails me, what should they expect in terms of me being able to get back to them? Right. You know, I think that's important for two reasons. One, it prevents a student from emailing me. And then half an hour later, hey, did you get my email? And then 50 minutes later, hey, did you get those two emails that I sent? Right. If

I've said right off the bat, you know, give me 24 hours to respond and if you haven't heard back from me, then you can start bugging me. It makes that expectation clearer, but it also helps us as faculty, you know, manage our workflow. You know, again, we should you know, I'd made the Pavlov joke earlier, but it's very easy when we see these things come up to immediately jump and answer them. And that's not necessarily healthy either. So we need to make sure that we're maintaining our boundaries and balance and not just, you know, an email receive in return machine all day. The second thing I'll mention is anytime that we have a chance to use either audio, video or both in our communication with students, whether it's feedback on different assignments or assessments, maybe even, and discussion boards posting brief videos and encouraging our students to do the same. There's a lot of different ways that you can do this depending upon the type of tools you have in your background and experience. But even just recording audio files and sending students a link to that file out of a shared folder in Google Drive, for example, hearing us and maybe even seeing us adds that depth to that sort of social presence that Flower was talking about. That can be really useful, especially when students tend to feel like all of a sudden they've been dis aggregated and disembodied from their educational experience.

[00:28:04] I agree. And for the canvas users out there, all of my announcements are videos on. There is a built in multimedia feature where you literally just hit the button. It starts recording. You don't have to have an additional software and an IT post right there. And what I'll do is I'll put the video up there because I quickly figured out students, we're not going to read a super long announcement. So in addition to the video, I will put text below it with some highlights of maybe important dates or some really important things that students need to remember. So they are seeing my face, they're hearing my voice, and then they have the option to read as well.

[00:28:42] And if you're a blackboard campus, there is a quick way and the blackboard text out of there to record audio comments as well.

[00:28:51] So clearly, our attorneys are really thinking about this question of prioritizing and in screening things, because the next question is can we overwhelm students with communication? In other words, in an online environment, what is the balance between communicating enough and over communicating and making it a burden for students to keep up with? And then, of course, the associated question, which is how do we avoid e-mail burnout for ourselves? Any part of that that you'd like to take a whack at, please?

[00:29:20] I'll jump on that first. I think it's important, first of all, to communicate to the students how you're going to communicate.

[00:29:28] So if you were going to do weekly announcements, let them know that every Monday morning, look for an announcement from me or every Wednesday, a midweek reminder if you want the students to communicate with you through the elements inbox. Let them know that if you want them to e-mail you from their university e-mail address, you know, some professors have more informal methods of communication and they might use GroupMe, whatever the communication method is going to be. The students need to know that upfront. And then I think it's important to have a pattern. So once a week, twice a week, three times a week. However, often if there is a pattern, the students know what the expectation is. So it's not like they keep randomly getting emails. And then that also kind of helps keep us on track as well. I know that I don't have to respond to that right now. I'll put that in my midweek email tomorrow. And that kind of helps build a little bit more of a structure. So having a pattern and having set times and then communicating that to the students every Wednesday, they're on the lookout for this office. If you have two or three

e-mails that come in on Tuesday, they know they'll get the answer in that Wednesday morning midweek email.

[00:30:41] I love everything you said there again, April. I feel like we're gonna be f.'s after today. I think it's a really valid question and I do think a lot of faculty are drowning in efforts to communicate well with students right now. I certainly have been in the situation before of my students accusing me of spamming them. And of course, the danger there is they stop reading or they stop watching. So it is really important to get that balance. For me, one of the tools that I have found extremely useful is a tool called Remind. You can go to remind dot com and it's a way to send anonymous text messages to your students. You can create a class. And I'll be honest, I learned about this first from my daughter's teachers in elementary school. So it's being widely used in K-12, but it works great for us too. What I've kind of landed on with this tool is I make it an opt in feature. So if there are students who know that they want a little more frequent nudging or reminding, they can choose to sign up for my remind and then they receive text messages from me. But like I said, I have made it required before and some students don't prefer that level of communication. So maybe thinking creatively about how you give students ways to opt into to more communication, that might be another thing to consider as well.

[00:32:04] At all echo April's point, too, about the structure making that explicit and intentional with our students, not me humanities guy. So the idea of structure and standardization kind of makes my soul want to rebel. But what you're teaching Foley online and either completely or mostly asynchronous, there is a rhythm to a course that can provide the type of structure that will help students, especially students who are new to online learning, be more successful. And so again, knowing that, you know, the end or the beginning of the week or the beginning of the module announcement is going to hit on early Monday. I'm going to check back in three days after that and then I'll do something right towards the end to remind everyone of due dates for particular assignments, etc. Those are really that's a really useful thing to put in place. Again, providing some sort of structure in our current moment where maybe students are feeling the lack of structure from their regular schedules that they had before all of this hit. In terms of our own workflow though, yeah. It's easy for us to drown in emails to, you know, zoom fatigue as a thing. You know, my campus is still beating the asume for a lot of the committees I'm on. And there's a different kind of tired that comes out of video conferencing every day. I think the same is true for email. So setting aside specific time slots on your calendar where you're going to do nothing but process and reply to email, go through the inbox, prioritize what needs to be answered. File stuff away for reference. Whatever sorts of rules that you use, I have one that if I can solve whatever the email is asking within 2 minutes, I just take care of it right there. If it's something that takes a little more time, I put it into a later folder and then I check that and my next email processing time to make sure I'm getting back to students. But whatever sort of system you put into place, it can be kind of quick and dirty if you want. Having designated email times and then turning off the email the rest of the workday can be a really useful way again to sort of create boundaries, make sure that you're answering the things that need to get answered. But if you answered email 4 hours later instead of one hour later, chances are the earth will still be rotating and it helps you remain a little bit sane to.

[00:34:07] And I add on that e-mail question because again, I do think it's a real timely and and sort of a perennial problem from faculty teaching online. So I love Kevin's suggestion of letting your students know and this ties into April's point about being proactive in your communication. Let students know when they should expect to hear back from you on an average basis regarding your email. I think this still is not really happening very often. It

could be flooded e-mail inboxes. It could be that it's easy to lose the connection with the people who are in our classes when we don't see them physically in front of us. But I know that online students everywhere still get very frustrated and disappointed by a lack of email response to their they need help. They are reaching out with a question for something. And it's still the case that many online students feel like they are not hearing back from their instructors. So maybe it's a process. Again, communicate right up front. I should you know, this is the time during each day of the week that I respond to student e-mails or I make these three weekly announcements. Love that idea. April, where I will be answering any of the questions that I have received since my last announcement or even maybe it's a copying and pasting a one line response to say gotcha question. I have time tomorrow to answer it. Stay tuned. Anything so that your students know that you are there? Because I know there's been lots of research that shows that students feel like they're launching their question out into a black hole. And if you're not able to get even. I thought about maybe an auto response or something to let them know that you got it. You heard it. You'll get back to them. I think these are ways to also help manage the e-mail flow.

[00:35:48] Yeah, managing your e-mail doesn't mean ignore your e-mail. And that's a valid distinction. And so I appreciate you reinforcing that point. One of the things that I found in my experience is that this 2 minute rule that I have and I borrowed that from James Allen's Getting Things Done. It's about the only part of that system that I still use, by the way, because I'm just horrible at it. But this idea that, you know, if you let these sort of short things linger are things that could be short linger. The accumulated weight of them piles up to the point where you just avoid all of them. And about probably 50 to 60 percent of the student questions I get via email are those that I can write a quick answer to and under two minutes and send it back out to them. So being timely with that and then as you suggest for the more complex questions, say, you know, let me let me think on that a little bit or gather some resources and I'll be back with you by tomorrow. But acknowledging what our students are doing and acknowledging that their communication is important to us is absolutely key. Yeah.

[00:36:44] Fantastic. Excuse me. So since we all are talking about both, you know, what's going on with her students and also sort of how to how to help ourselves. The next question really goes back to one of the suggestions that Flower had earlier, which is about surveying your students. So the question says if you survey students, how do you handle those situations that might require more action steps like reported abuse at home? How do you create boundaries around what students are sharing with you and then whether there is a method that allows students to share information anonymously?

[00:37:22] I'll jump in on that because I think that the form that I use to check in with my students already got shared in the group chat here and I use a Google form to reach out to my students to survey them basically kind of. How are you doing? What? You know, anything I need to know. But also, you know what your technology, what your Internet access. What are the tools that you have to work with? Are you still on campus? Are you at home, etc.. So I think the link to the Google form got shared out already on the chat. So it is something what the student's name on it. But all of the questions I phrased intentionally as is there anything that you want me to know about? Like always giving the student the option to say or not say the things that they think are the most relevant and important? I think we do need to be aware that sometimes students may disclose things to us. So your mandatory reporter status is an important thing to be aware of. And I have also found it really useful to sort of be touching base with the counseling staff on my campus. And then so I let them know that I was doing this with my class and asked them if a student were to say something that I felt like was kind of out of my league. You know, how

do I connect them with you and how do I make that offer to the students? You know what? I'm I am certainly not qualified to be my students therapist, but I am qualified to help my students connect to the resources they might need at this particular time. And so I think that that's really important, letting the student create the space, whether they're going to answer or not answer and then how they're going to answer on this sort of check and form. And I use Google forms just because it's easy to send out, though. Yeah, I made it so only someone with the link can access the form and then I compiled the responses in my own folder. There are a lot of ways that you can go at this. You know, if you use GroupMe or Slack or other sorts of social media for a class channel, that might be one way too. But I liked the Google form because it was just a student to me and no one else was involved in that process.

[00:39:15] Evan got it. I have nothing to add. The importance of understanding that you don't have to be the student's counselor. You don't have to be the expert in that situation. So connecting your students with those resources. I would also I would add, OK, I found something to add that especially I think in this moment here we have an opportunity to reflect on what we need to be doing institutionally differently moving forward. And I feel like online faculty actually are in relative close communication with their students. I would love to see institutions put more into preparing online faculty to deal with these unexpected and potentially highly emotionally charged or very difficult circumstances. I feel like many online faculty. Again, we don't need to train them to how to be a counselor or a mental health expert. But I think that we could be doing a little bit more to help faculty prepare for an unexpected revelation and feel equipped and empowered to deal with that individual at that time.

[00:40:24] I just wanted to give you enough time to answer, but not to force you to answer relayed to at ACUE, we really like to practice our wait time. So the next question is something I know that's near and dear to all of your hearts. Again, a question about accessibility, which comes up in this situation over and over, we know. So the attendees are wondering if you have specific suggestions about what to do with students who don't have access to Internet or computer, especially as we're talking about instructor presence, but also student presence in these spaces.

[00:40:57] That's one of the reasons that I'm so fond of reminding my promise they aren't paying me to keep on mentioning them. But most students today have some kind of a cell phone or a smartphone. And I could imagine that you could even facilitate a simple text chat using something like remind where students might be able to interact and communicate either one to one with you or with a small group or the whole class just in in a way that we all communicate all the time. Anyway, I think it's a really important question and very timely in terms of what we're expecting students to be able to do. I'm in a very rural state and we have many students who take classes here who don't have Internet right now. The others. Kevin. April, do you have other thoughts to add as well?

[00:41:43] Yes. I also teach at a university where we have a lot of students with limited access to Internet because of they live in rural areas. One of the things that I've had to do is simply relax some of my policies. I usually have a no late assignments policy and I'm a stickler for deadlines. I've had to completely throw that out the window. I have had to go in and reduce some of the assignments that might have been a little bit more robust. So not compromising the integrity of their learning, but having to be just a little bit more flexible in this time, knowing that students can't just turn on the computer in the library. They can't go to the lab. And some of them are only working from their phones. I had a student that emailed me because he couldn't write his paper because he only had a small tablet.

So just thinking about ways to be a little bit more flexible with deadlines, with the magnitude of requirements, we really have to think about the student and experience right now because we don't want those requirements to be a barrier for their learning in a normal environment. You know, they could get it done. But right now we just have to be really flexible with what we're asking from them.

[00:42:58] Exactly. That's I think that's the key, right? The the ability to be flexible and compassionate and aware that our students are coming from a variety of places, I think we all have students who struggle with an Internet access. You know, I teach in in Iowa, so we're a fairly rural state, as you might have heard. But even in within the city of Des Moines, a lot of my students struggle with home Internet access, for example, because the digital divide is a real thing. So maybe some of the practical sort of specific ways that you can think about it, if you're having your students do something, ask yourself, could I do this on my cell phone? If a student is, you know, the the check in with students, you know, surveying, what kind of technology do you have access to? Do you have a laptop? Do you have a phone? You have a tablet. How's your Wi-Fi access will help you kind of think about ways that you might have to create alternate means for students to demonstrate the learning outcomes. So if a student only has a phone, can they record something rather than just writing a paper, for example? You know, there are a lot of different vehicles that we can use that students get to the learning outcomes that we have. So be willing to think about ways that they could use the tools that they have if you know, if that's a more practical and honestly more humane way to go about it. Also, think about the things that we're asking our students to consume in terms, of course, content. We don't want to have them uploading and downloading large files. For example, if they're using a cell phone data plan that's going to eat up all their data and add costs, perhaps. So if we've got videos, can we give them a link where they can stream that video instead of having to download a large file? Are there ways that we can make sure that the there are few barriers as possible between the students and the course material that we're trying to have them access? And of course, don't be afraid to reach out to other parts of your university, your department chair, your I.T. office, your academic affairs office. That's what we're doing here in terms of students who've reported that they don't have access to anything or they don't have Internet access. So how can we do a work around with that? You know, there are going to be those cases. It's not necessarily something we can solve individually, but we do have resources that are institutions that should be working on this.

[00:45:02] I want to circle back to both again, excellent points from April and Kevin, but I actually want to really emphasize the need to be flexible right now. As he was saying, you said, April, we should be a little bit flexible. I think we need to be really flexible. I read a post from a faculty member over the weekend posting in a Facebook higher ed group, and she really stuck with me. She wrote that in the past 12 hours, she had lost two of her family members and a close friend to the Corona virus. And she said, I'm just one person all of your students might be dealing with similar in their own personal lives. This is this is unprecedented, as we've all been saying for weeks now. But the more flexibility that we can offer. I love your idea. Kevin, at this recording, something on the smartphone using the tools that we have available to us, an understanding that we have no idea what strains and pressures every single person is under right now. Emphasizing that need for flexibility I think can't be can't be done enough.

[00:46:06] And that's part of the emotional presence that you were talking about, right, flower? I mean, what better way to demonstrate that we are present with our students and acknowledging our own position in all of this, which in many ways is very similar to their own. And so when I suggest to my students, there are a number of ways that you can do

this thing and I want you to find the least stressful in the least demanding way for you to do it. That's not me compromising any notion of academic rigor. That's me adjusting. So learning is still happening in very different circumstances and being intentional to let my students know that I want to be flexible, I want to work with them rather than against them when it comes to doing these things. That's me being present as simply a human being in this community of learners that we've created.

[00:46:47] Love it.

[00:46:50] To that end, I think you're attendees are on the same page, right, they're really thinking carefully about what they what their current pedagogy is and sort of how to be flexible. So one of the questions that's come up really specifically thinks about see the synchronous teaching. And I'm going to read it. I'm trying to talk around it. But let me just read it right. What is your view of the importance of students turning their cameras on during synchronous classes? I appreciate that. Some students do not have cameras. Some may not be comfortable sharing their home surroundings. She turned on cameras. Be encouraged when these issues are not obstacles so that students can also be present. Or is there a better way of having a check in in that situation?

[00:47:32] I think we should leave that choice up to our students, quite frankly. And so I do have some Synchronoss office hour sessions and I invite my students to come into those audio, video, audio only text only whatever way they choose to come in. And I tell them I think presense can look a lot of different ways. And so, you know, the choice that that is most comfortable for you and I think that, yeah, it's nice if you're doing a synchronous thing where everybody can see and hear, you know, one another, that's certainly the optimal. But, you know, as this questioner points out, there are a lot of reasons that we might not get to the optimal. And so I think making clear to our students that this is something that, you know, as you as your circumstances and as your motivations for being in here dictate, that's what you should do.

[00:48:15] Another thing is when you're doing synchronous meetings, such as a zoo meeting with the class.

[00:48:20] When you tell students they are required to turn their cameras on for those that are just uncomfortable with doing that, they may not participate at all. So the more options they have with doing what they're comfortable with, they'll be more likely to participate if they know they're not having to do something where they're required, particularly since a lot of them are at home. Maybe there's a lot of stuff going on in the background and they're just certain things that they don't want to go on camera. So, you know, it's actually better if we give them that option because that will discourage them from not participating altogether.

[00:48:55] And I have a practical suggestion here, because this question came to us or a similar question came to us after our last webinar last week, which was about welcoming online students. We got a lot of questions about how do you teach synchronously or and the way that question came across to us was how do we keep students engaged when we are trying to meet with them synchronous. And I detect a little flavor of that in this question, like, is it better to have them on camera? There's a little bit of an accountability there. I would wholeheartedly agree with Kevin or in April that we need to give students the choice. But here's another way to keep them engaged and accountable, which is much like you'll see in books like Dynamic Lecturing. You want to throw things out at little activities for students to engage in every few moments. And that might look different depending on

what you're trying to accomplish. Might be every three to five minutes, might be every five to seven minutes, but give students something quick to do and they can do that in the text box without turning on their camera. Maybe it's a quick just to think pair chairs, chair where you divide students into a little breakout groups. Or maybe it's a quick poll that you are asking students to do something that will help them stay present with you without requiring any kind of a camera or audio for that matter as well. What if they have a young sibling who's crying in the background? I mean, who knows what could be happening?

[00:50:21] And I would also caution that presence does not directly equate to being synchronous. That there are plenty of ways for us to build presence and to maintain presence in an asynchronous environment. And I think a lot of us are learning in this particular circumstances that doing synchronous is really hard. That's not to say we shouldn't attempt to have some opportunities, but certainly not making them required and certainly not trying to stay to my Monday, Wednesday, Friday, one to 150. We're going to have a zoo meeting every week. I just don't think that's practical and workable. So I think that we should be thinking about how we build students presence asynchronously. And there's a lot of ways that that can look, you know, but regular check-ins discussions, having students engaging together, even if it's a synchronously on a shared project or documents or something like that, those are ways to build that type of regular presence without everyone having a log in at the same time. And I think that those are some things that we ought to be thinking really hard about.

[00:51:17] I do want to add on real quickly again, we I would think that all three of us here on the panel would argue in favor of less synchronous. Just generally speaking, but especially now in this moment as people are dealing with so much uncertainty. One of the things that we can do, it ties back to my earlier suggestion in terms of opt in communications. You can certainly offer of an optional synchronous session, a virtual office hours or a review session that is optional for students to come to. And then even better, you can record your session or your your review session, whatever it might be, and post that so that students can access that later if they weren't available at that particular time. Just thinking of ways to invite students to engage in the ways and times that they they're able to right now, there's a lot of lot of opportunity there instead of, as Kevin said, thinking that you're going to stick with your same class schedule. Really? I don't see that working very well right now.

[00:52:17] So I think we have time for about one more question, and this one, I think really kind of pops off the page when you look at the Q&A. We've talked so much about the necessity of being flexible for our students and that probably can't be said enough. But there is an instructor who asks, what do you do when students are not willing to cut you, the instructor, some slack? And I wonder if there are some proactive or creative ways that we have to sort of encourage our students to really open up a kind of compassionate space themselves.

[00:52:49] I have something to share. And I'll keep it brief. So April and Kevin can jump in. But I really that's a great question. And again, who knows if we ourselves might fall really sick and just be able to be less present? I'm going to come back to April's first point about transparency. The more that we're willing to open up to our students and be vulnerable and let them into our lives, the more forgiving they will be. I'm thinking specifically of a story that I heard from a veteran online teacher who at one point she ended up telling her online students that her mother was on her deathbed and that she the faculty would be a little bit less available so that she could spend those last moments with her mom.

[00:53:31] Her students organized meals and brought them over to her house so that that would be one less thing for them to think about. It takes a lot of courage to be that open and that vulnerable. And I think we're kind of all in that space right now.

[00:53:46] I agree. If there is a student that is not willing to cut slack, this is just a time to remind them that, hey, I'm dealing with this also and not necessarily you know, you may not be comfortable with going into all of the details that are happening in your personal life.

[00:54:02] But sometimes students have a tendency to put us up on this pedestal and they think we have it together and they think we have all the answers. And that's kind of their perception of us. And they simply need to be reminded that this is something that we are all dealing with. We're all trying to figure this out and get through this time. So I would just say that constant reminder and that constant transparency to let that student know that they're not the only ones that are having to deal with this. And and it may be you may just have to ask the student, hey, look, you know, I appreciate, you know, you're sharing your thoughts and whatever, but, you know, can you be a little bit more flexible?

[00:54:39] I'm trying to be flexible with you, but I also need you to be flexible with me. Just simply directly ask the student to cut you that same slack that you're willing to cut them. Sometimes you just have to be a little bit more direct and asking them to be a little bit more understanding.

[00:54:56] I think April and Flower make great points there, and one thing I will suggest to that we think about is that, you know, our students, just as you know, we're in this weird place. Our students are in this weird place. I think our student and you know, and I've done this, too, in the past couple of weeks where I've written that email and sent it out. And about five minutes later, I'm like, I probably shouldn't have sent that email. Right, that there's a little bit of a sharper edge to it or my patience has worn a little thin. I've got us a sixth and a ninth grader at home. And, you know, we're trying to figure out what's going on. Right.

[00:55:24] And so our students may be, you know, communicating less skillfully than they normally would with us. I think it's important to realize, you know, my my university has two thirds of our students are student athletes. You know, half of them, their season canceled. Our seniors are not going to graduate in person. And I think there is a you know, we're grieving what we've lost in terms of our semester and contact with our classes, maybe our research and all these other things to our students are grieving a lot, too. And sometimes that that's going to come out in ways that maybe nobody would have chosen first. But that's just how it did. And so, as you know, we should, you know, be willing to give our students even more of the benefit of the doubt at this point. It doesn't make it easier when we feel like that they're not being very graceful to us. But I do think it is important for us as the professionals in the room to sort of keep in mind that, you know, if our student is angry or rigid, it may not be us. It may be just this larger thing. And then move, you know, maybe tempering our tempering our response to them along those lines.

[00:56:24] Fantastic. Well, listen, I cannot thank the three of you enough for jumping in here and giving us such practical advice, but also really just thinking through what a complex moment we're at as we think about being in this online space together. I know that there are a lot of questions we just didn't have a chance to get to. So just to let our attendees know at our Web, at our Web page, you'll be able to find a discussion board that is moderated both by those of us at ACUE and also our experts over the next couple of

weeks. There you'll also be able to find a recording of today's session if you'd like to view it again and a transcript. So please come ahead and visit and contribute your thoughts.

[00:57:04] We also want to say quick few final words about resources. So those of you who are familiar with us at the Association of College and University Educators know that our mission is student success through effective instruction.

[00:57:16] So we know that many of you might be looking for more online content that serves the varied needs of your students, which we've talked so much about today. Open educational resources, the ones that are free and don't require passwords are available in a variety of locations and a bunch of digital formats like video and worksheets and activities and assessments. Our colleagues at Open Stacks are also happy to support the needs of you and your students.

[00:57:39] So we also want to say that we have additional resources that we reference throughout today's session and they will be available at the ACUE Web site. You'll also be able to find links to key resources and responses at our partners Web sites. And then finally, we just want to remind you about what's coming in the future. Please join us. We hope you will offer our upcoming webinars. The following topics will be covered. Organizing your online courses, planning, facilitating quality discussions, recording effective micro lectures and engaging students in readings and micro lectures. We are incredibly fortunate to be joined again, both by Flower and April, along with Kevin Kelly. Ludy Goodson, Catherine Haras. Alison Snowe. And others. Thank you so much for spending this time with us today. Please stay safe and have a great online class.