



Build Peer-to-Peer Relationships

Kevin Kelly, EdD, Lecturer, Department of Equity, Leadership Studies, & Instructional Technologies, San Francisco State University [00:00:09] I establish peer-to-peer support in my class in a few different ways. I have them sign up for virtual study buddies using an online Google Form, and then they can see the spreadsheet of the different people who have signed up and they can find people who have similar times that they might be able to connect and possibly different areas. I know over distance sometimes it might even be different time zones.

Julie Candio Sekel, Adjunct Instructor, School of Humanities and Global Studies, Ramapo College of New Jersey [00:00:32] The very first week of the semester, I form students into accountability groups.

Julie Candio Sekel [00:00:39] Hi, everyone. I hope you're having a great first week. I wanted to jump on here to briefly explain our accountability groups for the semester and why they're so important. So you'll see in our learning management system that you've been placed into a group with four or five of your peers in this class. This is a gen ed class, but it's really important to help you build community with people who are in your discipline, in your area of interest. So I decided to group you based on your discipline.

Julie Candio Sekel [00:01:09] I tell students not only are you going to be working with your accountability groups to complete an assignment, a final presentation at the end of the semester, but also these are your main points of contact throughout the semester. So you know at least three or four other students in this course, which is especially important in an online class, who you can go to if you have questions about anything in the course, if you want to talk about assignments, but also you're responsible for their engagement and participation in the course.

Julie Candio Sekel [00:01:40] So at the start of each synchronous session, I'm going to ask someone in your group to report in the chat who's missing from your accountability group. And following that class session, it's your responsibility to follow up with that person and let them know anything that was missed, decisions that were made, important announcements. And this is really intended for us to be able to stay connected and help you establish that peer-to-peer support system that we know is so, so important for your success, especially in an online course.

Narrator [00:02:15] Another way to strengthen students' sense of belonging is to build community. Have students form peer-to-peer supports from day one, ensuring each student knows and maintains communication with at least one peer. This practice increases student satisfaction and success online.

Flower Darby, Faculty, Northern Arizona University; Author, How to Be a Better Online Instructor and Small Teaching Online [00:02:34] Peer-to-peer support can be really effective because students, in general, might be more willing to reach out to someone in their situation before they come to you as the faculty. This is especially important in online classes where students need as much support as they could possibly get. So structure groups or encourage students to help each other, and check in on each other, and go to each other when they need help with something in the class, or it might even be outside of class. When we encourage students to support each other, it helps everybody be more successful in our online classes.