Establish Expectations for Your Teaching Presence

The most important aspect of any student's learning is you, the instructor. Students look for you to create an inclusive learning environment and be involved in discussions, respond to questions, provide feedback and encouragement, and reach out when you notice that they may need additional assistance. This does not mean that you need to be online 24/7. Establishing expectations and routines around your online time can help students feel more supported and engaged in your course.

- *Share your gender pronouns.* Model inclusion and send a message that your course is a safe space for students across the gender spectrum by including your pronouns on your syllabus, on your signature line, and in your LMS profile.

- *Schedule your online time.* Establish a regular schedule for when you will log into the course.

- *Offer inclusive office hours.* Remove barriers to students meeting with you by offering a variety of times (time of day and length of meeting), formats (e.g., video conference, phone call, text message, email), and structures (e.g., one-on-one and in groups).

- *Be available at high-traffic times.* Students will most likely be online around the times that discussion posts and assignments are due. Scheduling your time online around students' high-traffic times can ensure that students are able to receive support when they need it most.

- *Communicate your availability.* Let students know when you plan to be online or checking in on their progress. For example, letting them know that you will be online between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. and again between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. will help to manage their expectations for receiving a response to emails. Consider setting up an automatic reply for the hours you are not online. This reply might suggest that students post their question to the question-and-answer forum, see if others have already posted or replied to the same question, or see if other classmates are able to answer their question.

- *Provide a response to student inquiries within 24 hours.* Because online learners must manage their time carefully, timely instructor responses to emails or questions posed in the discussion forums are especially important to them. If you cannot provide a detailed response within 24 hours, consider responding to the student to simply let them know when a more detailed response will be provided.

- *Provide timely and meaningful feedback on student work.* Students are usually anxious to receive feedback on their work, so setting and meeting expectations for when they can expect feedback will help them to manage their expectations. To make grading a bit more manageable, set due dates for times when you are available to provide feedback. If you are teaching multiple courses, consider staggering due dates to allow time for grading.

- *Set expectations for valuing diverse viewpoints.* Engaging students in a discussion about online communication norms and guidelines at the very beginning of a course is an essential step in fostering community and creating a productive learning environment. Decide together on a list of guidelines to help ensure that everyone feels valued and included in the course discussions.