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Strategies to Support Online Student Success

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Abstract

Prior to emergency online coursework caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, health care professional schools programs were already incorporating more online instruction into curricula (Gee, et al. 2017). Numerous current strategies, compatible with health care professional curricula, are presented. Opportunities to reflect on challenges and benefits of online coursework will allow for translation from literature to curriculum development to successful instructional experiences. Incorporation of Culturally Responsive Theory will encourage online students to share their diverse knowledge and perspectives.

Methods

This review of literature includes recent articles found in the University of New Mexico (UNM) Health Science Library and Informatics Center (HSLIC) holdings as well as course materials from Curriculum and Design coursework at New Mexico State University (NMSU).

Results

- Online students who structured their time and study environment and had lower test anxiety reported higher course grades (Stark, 2019)
- Advise students to use campus assistance to access technical, psychosocial and learning support (Simplicio, 2019).
- Technical: <http://it.unm.edu/support/>
- Mental health: <http://shac.unm.edu/services/mental-health/index.html>
- Learning Support: <http://online.unm.edu/current-students/academic-support.html>

Student Factors

Frequency Persistence

- Frequent, consistent engagement with online coursework was the most likely indicator of student success.
- The total amount of time in course material, persistence, was not as predictive of success (Shelton, Hung, & Lowenthal, 2017).

Instructor Approach

- Introductory courses should be taught by highly approachable and experienced online instructors to provide the best communication environment for students who are learning foundational skills from a distance.
- Scheduled contact time with the course instructor opens the virtual office door (Simplicio, 2019).

- Students who were both transfer students and had the largest number of online course credits have the lowest fall to fall retention rate.
- Online students may have the highest outside of classroom commitments which affect their ability to succeed (Glazier et al., 2019)
- Clearly describe the time commitment, technology requirements and prerequisite knowledge required prior to enrollment in the specific course to allow students to make informed choices about their schedule (Simplicio, 2019).

Managing Commitment

- Incorporate instructional texts, videos and other media that include diverse multicultural representation.
- Encourage story telling from students to add their knowledge and perspectives within the curriculum.
- Stimulate dialogue between students who may have different experiences with online collaboration (Woodley, Mucundanyi, & Lockard 2017).
- Peer collaboration with early assignments builds community for online students (Simplicio, 2019).

Culturally Responsive Instruction

Learning Management System

- Kite et. al. (2020) encourage instructors to embrace the embedded interaction tools within the Learning Management System (LMS) beyond its utility as an archive.
- Tools for learner engagement, interaction and collaboration, assessment and learner support are detailed in:
- Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric (<https://www.blackboard.com/resources/are-your-courses-exemplary>)
- UNM Online Course Standards Rubric (<https://cdl.unm.edu/asset/s/docs/unm-online-course-standards-rubric.pdf>)

- Moderate intensity exercise with variable load resulted in the most consistent improvements sustained attention Radel, Tempest, & Brisswalter (2018).
- In their integrative mini review, Kuo, Barnes, & Jordan (2019), discussed the benefits of access outdoor spaces or any natural setting. Attention, problem solving and enjoyment of learning have improved with many varied activities in nature

Neuroscience

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6 min, 40 second Pecha Kucha recording:

<https://youtu.be/ARXRW7BLfd4>

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