Enhancement of Student Engagement and Interaction in Online Courses through Implementation of a Scholar-ignite Program

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Introduction

- Among 2,800 colleges and university surveyed by the Babson Survey Research Group (2016):
  - 63% report that online learning is critical to their long-term strategy

- 71% of academic leaders believe online education is the same or superior to face-to-face instruction
Challenge

- Peer-to-peer learning activities contribute to a feeling of community and connectedness (Ouzts, 2006; Rovai, 2002).
- Social connectedness enhances student satisfaction and learning (Brett and Nagra, 2005).
- How do we implement this learning strategy in an online environment?
Ignite Talks

• In 2006 Bradly Forrest and Bre Petis started Ignite Talks in Seattle, WA
  • Fast-paced talks where presenters were time- and content-limited
  • Generate awareness, stimulate thought, & inspire peers

• American Society for Horticultural Science host an annual Scholar’s Ignite Competition
  • Graduate students
  • 1 slide & 3 minutes
Scholar’s Ignite Online

• Objectives:
  • Develop a Scholar’s Ignite Online assignment where each student acts as the instructor with 1 slide & 3 minutes to present
  • Create instructional “how-to” videos to share with students and faculty
  • Assess student’s perceptions of the assignment and its impact on learning

• Courses:
  • Plant Science Major/Dept. of Env. Hort.
  • ORH4256: Nutritional Management (25 students)
  • ORH4236: Ornamental Landscape Management (19 students)
Scholar’s Ignite Online

• Assignment details:
  • List of topics
  • Instructional videos
  • Students expected to create & upload presentations
  • Grades to be assessed by peers using a 5-criteria rubric:
    • Communication style
    • Comprehension
    • Inspiration
    • Impact
    • Content

• Survey:
  • Rate helpfulness of instructional videos & rubric
  • Opinion on usefulness of assignment components to learning the subject matter
  • Improvement in engagement and interaction with classmates and the instructor
  • Suggestions for improvement
“The ability to motivate employees can be the difference between success or failure as a leader.”
- Gary Grigg

Five ways to motivate people:

1. Enjoyment of the job
2. Tangible incentives
3. Personal achievement
4. Goal internalization
5. Desire for reputation
How Helpful Were the Instructional “How-to” Videos?

Results
Results

What is Your Opinion of the Usefulness of Components to Learning the Subject Matter?

- Choice of topic
- Assignment description
- How to videos
- Grading rubric
- Peer grading
- Being graded

- Not useful
- Somewhat useful
- Useful
- Very useful
- Extremely useful
Results

- 100% of students felt the grading rubric was helpful to very helpful

- 97% of students felt the assignment improved their interaction with their classmates and instructor

- Suggestions for improvement:
  - Create groups to foster collaborative learning experiences
  - Require selection of topics not covered in the course
  - Allow for more time to present
Conclusions

- Implementation of an Online Scholar’s Ignite assignment was highly successful with positive student feedback.
- “How-to” videos were mostly rated helpful to extremely helpful.
- Almost all students (97%) felt the assignment enhanced communication among peers and instructor.
- Peer-grading was found to be the least useful component of the assignment & suggests students are more comfortable with instructor-assigned grades.
- Expanding topics and supporting group submissions may foster collaborative learning experiences.
Questions?