

Teaching Online at UD

Using Isidore with Chickering and Gamson's 'Seven Principles'

Version 1.0 – April 14, 2009, Updated January 26, 2015

Ryan C. Harris Learning Teaching Center UDit – Curriculum Innovation and E-Learning

Teaching an online course that provides the same level of quality and communication that a face-to-face course does is often a very time consuming and difficult task. Many times what works best in the classroom doesn't translate well to the online environment. In order to get the best from your online class and focus students' work we've offered seven principles based on research of good teaching and learning in colleges and universities. We've tied each of Chickering and Gamson's seven principles into the Isidore Learning Management System to provide instructors with ideas for meeting each of the objectives. After each principle is explained we've suggested Isidore tools and approaches to assist you.

The Seven Principles:

- 1. Encourage Contact between Students and Faculty**
- 2. Develop Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students**
- 3. Encourage Active Learning**
- 4. Give Prompt Feedback**
- 5. Emphasizes Time on Task**
- 6. Communicate High Expectations**
- 7. Respect Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning**

From: Chickering, A.W., & Gamson, Z.F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 39(7): 3-7.

1. Encourage Contact between Students and Faculty

Frequent student-instructor contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Instructor concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

Isidore Tools:

- Messages tool
- Announcements tool
- Forums tool

Uses:

It's easy for instructors to stay in contact with their students in Isidore. Instructors and students can both use the site Messages tool to communicate privately back and forth. It works just like regular email – this one is just built right into the site. The Announcements and Forums tools allow instructors to openly communicate with their entire class or start an asynchronous conversation that adds to the learning process. Students should also be encouraged to ask general questions and identify areas that they're particularly interested in to help them buy into the course work.

2. Develop Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.

Isidore Tools:

- Forums tool
- Chat Room tool
- Wiki tool

Uses:

It's simple for instructors to setup small group or site-wide threaded discussions within the Forums tool where students can post and respond to each other. The key to a good discussion lies in crafting good 'reflection-based' questions with specific expectations. Students should be given guidelines as to how best craft their responses and how many posts they're expected to make. Students should be asked not only to respond to a post by the instructor but to also respond to classmate's posts.

Instructors can also configure live text chat sessions using the Chat Room tool for groups to meet online and discuss class or group work. Finally, the Wiki tool makes it easy for a class to collaborate and compose a 'living' document throughout the semester.

3. Encourage Active Learning

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

Isidore Tools:

- Assignments tool
- Forums tool

Uses:

The assignment tool provides a great mechanism for instructors to privately collect written responses inline or through an uploaded file. Students can be given weekly writing assignments that ask them to reflect on the material they're learning via realworld scenarios. The Forums tool also allows students to share ideas or pose questions to the class. Students should be encouraged to guide discussions and share their knowledge.

4. Give Prompt Feedback

Knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. When getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

Isidore Tools:

- Assignments tool
- Messages tool
- Announcements tool
- Gradebook tool

Uses:

It's imperative to provide students with timely information throughout an online course. Instructors should promptly grade and return assignments to students once they've been submitted so students can review their progress. It's easy for a student

to fall off course if they're not receiving feedback. The assignment tool allows for resubmissions in case a student needs to prepare multiple drafts of an assignment throughout the semester. The Messages tool gives an instructor a private mechanism for communicating with students whereas the Announcements tool allows instructors to alert the whole class to a pressing issue. It's also important for students to see their grades online at all times so that they can track their progress.

5. Emphasizes Time on Task

Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one's time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty.

Isidore Tools:

- Schedule tool
- Announcements tool

Uses:

The Schedule and Announcements tools allow instructors to set milestone dates in the class and communicate expected progress with students. Instructors should utilize the Schedule tool to not only set deadlines but also to inform students where they should be in regards to completing course work so that they don't fall behind during the semester. These tools also allow instructors to convey expectations and completion strategies.

6. Communicate High Expectations

Expect more and you will get more. High expectations are important for everyone -- for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well-motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when instructors hold high expectations and make extra efforts.

Isidore Tools:

- Syllabus tool
- Assignments tool
- Messages tool
- Announcements tool

Uses:

The expectations for an online course should be listed very clearly right from the start on the syllabus in Isidore. The syllabus should be the first item instructors direct their students to when beginning the course to ensure that everyone is on the same page. (Some instructors even post a low-stakes quiz in their site where students are asked to answer questions about specific elements of the syllabus to make sure they understand the importance.)

Instructors shouldn't be afraid to utilize the 'Allow Resubmission' feature built into the Assignments tool either. If a student has missed the mark or could do better instructors should inform them where they are failing short and encourage them to resubmit their work. The Announcements tool is also a great way to quickly communicate with the class to set expectations, suggest study tips/habits, or clarify a topic that many students are having problems with.

7. Respect Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily.

Isidore Tools:

- Assignments tool
- Tests & Quizzes tool
- Forums tool

Uses:

Every assignment or course checkpoint in an online course doesn't have to be a written submission. The Assignment tool accepts files in multiple formats so that students can upload audio and video files they've created. Instructors should encourage students to find creative ways to complete assignments. The Tests and Quizzes tool also allows for students to answer questions through a built-in audio recording application. This means that students can answer questions by talking into their computer microphone as opposed to typing in their answers. The Wiki tool also provides a creative approach for composing documents in a public forum.

Some of the text in this document has been borrowed from:

- <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/7princip.htm>
- <http://www.tlgroup.org/programs/seven.html>