

## The Online Learner and the Instructor

Interaction is seen as the “defining attribute for quality and value in the online learning experience” (Wagner 44). There are three levels of interactions that are common in the classroom:

- teacher + learner
- learner + learner
- learner + content

(Wagner 45)



**Dr. Ellen D. Wagner**

According to Kearsley and Moore (2012), distance learning implies a distant and reciprocal interaction between student and teacher. Online learning and e-learning are other terms used in describing distance education. Both terms represent a two-sided relationship between student and teacher which embraces the deliberate goal of helping students to learn through use of the Internet. The online learning experience, comprised of students, instructors, and the course curriculum, require the use of technological tools for accessing the online environment (Barr and Miller, 2013).

That being said, students also need to learn to be more responsible for their learning. The literature on the online learning experience stresses that online learning requires more student responsibility than the face-to-face classroom. In "Lessons Learned about Student Issues in Online Learning," an article from Distance Education Report in March 2005, Jennifer Patterson Lorenzetti discusses several key issues students face and how faculty can help students navigate the online learning environment, among them:

### **Students don't always have the equipment to be online.**

- Keep in mind that some of your students may still be using a 56k dial-up modem, which impacts if the student can easily download a large pdf file or watch a streaming video or hear an audio file effectively.
- Some students don't own Microsoft Office. Office 365 is now available for all students via the My UMassD portal in the Quicklaunch menu. If they prefer to download Microsoft Office to their computer instead of using the browser based applications, the download is also available in the portal.
- Make sure your students have accessed the site and know who to contact when they experience technical issues. We suggest all blended and fully online course sites include a footer with help information on the main course page.

### **Students need communication in the online environment.**

- Clear directions are essential to a successful online activity. Remember, you are not in the face to face classroom where you can "see" if students "get" what you are talking

about or asking for in an assignment. Your directions need to be clearly articulated in the site.

- Be present...don't take over a discussion board, but make sure that students know you are "listening" and paying attention to the thread that develops.

### **Students need feedback about the online learning activities.**

- Students need to know the online learning activity has relevance. Work to reference the online postings in the f2f classroom to show students how the work accomplished online contributes to the course learning objectives and knowledge building.
- Students need feedback—formative and summative—for their online contributions. Online assignments should have clear learning objectives and be assessed by the faculty member.

### **Learn More...**

- [Higher Education: The Online Teaching and Learning Experience](#) by Betty A. Barr, PhD. and Sonya F. Miller, PhD., University of Phoenix