PROACTIVE STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WHILE PROVIDING VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION

The following is being provided by the McDowell Institute as a general guide to help educators enhance student engagement during virtual instruction.

PROVIDE CLEAR PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS ALONG WITH OF PREDICTABLE STRUCTURES AND ROUTINES

- In an age-appropriate manner, clearly explain how you expect your students to interact with you, classmates, and the curriculum through virtual synchronous and/or asynchronous means (e.g., timely response to e-mail communications that you may send, use of the raised hand symbol to be called upon/given the invisible talking stick during synchronous class sessions, video cameras activated during synchronous class sessions).

- Pre-correct for errors by identifying high frequency typical virtual routines that may prove most challenging to students and remind students of the expected behavior prior to initiating work within those structured routines (e.g., remind students 1) to use the raised hand icon to speak before beginning a virtual class discussions, 2) of the ground rules for equitably distributing the workload between classmates before assigning asynchronous small group work, and 3) to have their web camera on and their microphone muted when you or others are speaking at the onset of each synchronous class session).

PROVIDE A REASONABLY HIGH NUMBER OF OPPORTUNITIES TO RESPOND (OTRS) THROUGHOUT INSTRUCTION

- Provide advanced organizers with focus questions for students to be prepared to discuss during virtual class sessions.

- Use polling software or other tools to increase student-active engagement through personal response throughout virtual instruction (synchronous and/or asynchronous).

- Track student engagement by keeping data on the number and types of virtual interactions that occur across students. Look for ways to engage those students that appear more passive in their participation (e.g., during a synchronous class sessions structure think-pair-shares by pairing students up to have brief-structured private chats for 1-2 minutes that culminate in a larger group virtual discussion).

- Build into your course expectations initiation and responses through discussion threads during targeted windows of time including the requirement for students to (at a minimum) 1) read all threads posted during that time frame in tandem with 2) requiring a targeted number of thread initiations and responses to occur by each student during the targeted time frame.

ACKNOWLEDGE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

- Consciously look for opportunities to acknowledge students meeting your established performance expectations. Use judgment in choosing public and/or private praise.

- Explicitly acknowledge effort on the part of students, especially with those students that appear to be either less engaged or struggling with course content.

- Disperse acknowledgement across students through a variety of means (e.g., verbal recognition, private e-mails, chat reactions like "thumbs up") and anticipate that some students will need more frequent acknowledgment as well as explicit encouragement than others.

Constructive Strategies to Respond to Undesired Student Behavior During Live (Synchronous) Sessions

POINT TO PONDER: Muting students or removing them from the virtual room might be an option based on the software being utilized. However, excluding students can have numerous undesired effects. Consider the following least to more instructive continuum of response procedures when possible:

- Provide pre-corrections, as previously noted.

- Use the "praise around" strategy for low-level inconsequential behavior (e.g., brief time off task or forgetting to turn their web camera on) to publicly acknowledge those students who are meeting the class expectations. Be ready to praise the student once they display the desired behavior (e.g., being on-task or turning their web camera on).

- Use visual/gestural re-direction prompts as subtle reminders on the screen in the event of low-level disruptive behavior (e.g., extended time off task or continuing to not turn on their web camera).

- Use the private chat feature to implement a stop-redirect-reinforce procedure for behavior requiring immediate cessation (e.g., undesired responses such as a sarcastic response to a classmates remarks, verbal refusal to follow directions, persistent off-topic comments). Follow up with the student outside of the class session privately to review performance expectations and encourage desired performance in the future.