How to Have an Awesome First Week

The Challenge

We all know that first impressions count. That's why we strive to have a great first class. But how to do that remotely?

How do you create a positive and engaging learning environment from Day 1 that builds a sense of community and excitement to keep motivation high through the challenging days ahead?

A good place to start is by listening to students

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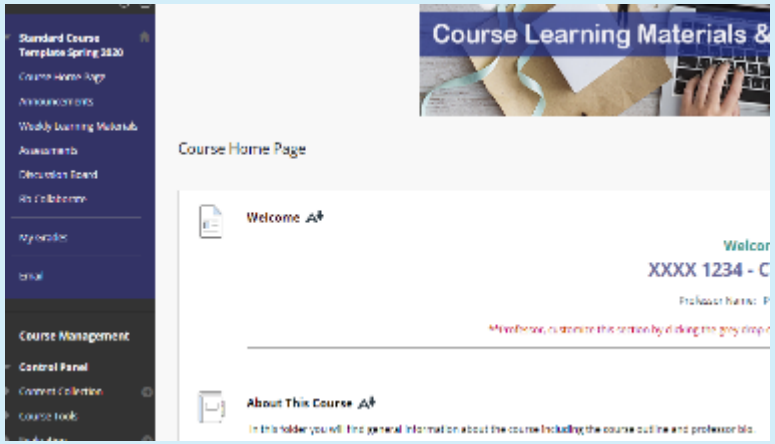
Student Needs

Here are **3 Big Things** that students say they want in their online experience:

Caring and Positive Environment

Connection and Community

Clarity and Relevance



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What You Can Do to Provide…

A Caring and Positive Environment

Students Want

Responsive faculty who are flexible and communicative

Faculty caring about their success

A positive and supportive learning environment that recognizes the challenges they face

You Can

Send a Welcome email from course (students like that you reached out)

Create a welcome video or other fun way to introduce yourself. Students can also share their own welcome videos. Flipgrid is a great free tool for this

Let them know you're aware of the many stresses in their lives now. Provide links to student supports at GBC such as the Covid-19 Information For Current Students

Consider being flexible with extended deadlines and possibly alternative assignments. Also, acknowledge the time zone challenges faced by some students and be open to finding solutions for them

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What You Can Do to Provide…

Connection and Community

Students Want

A sense of community with people reaching out and staying connected

To practice online networking skills to help prepare them for careers

Easy networking

You Can

Create a Welcome Announcement telling them how to engage with you and the course

Highlight the ways that you will encourage networking and community in your course. E.g. Group work, shared activities, teams, forums, wikis, blogs, social networking tools, etc.

Create a group activity or discussion in the first class. Let students begin to network and introduce themselves. Have them complete an easy task together

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What You Can Do to Provide…

Clarity and Relevance

Students Want	You Can
To be engaged with the course	Share your enthusiasm about the course material with them. Showcase some highlights of the course or career-related skills they will gain to help get your students engaged and motivated
Clearly communicated expectations	Talk about the graded assessments in the first class and direct them to a schedule of due dates
Relevant course materials available and easy to find	Make sure all course materials are logically organized and easily found, particularly information about assignments and tests
Easy to read schedules for course due dates	Use our Blackboard course template or follow its suggestions for logical course navigation

Have an Awesome First Week!

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