

1. **Title of presentation:** Building traditional classroom techniques in an online course discussion.
2. **Primary presenter information and curriculum vitae or short biographical sketch:** David Line, Associate Professor, Public Health, A.T. Still University, [davidallenline@gmail.com](mailto:davidallenline@gmail.com) Dr. Line has been teaching and designing courses at A.T. Still University and the University of New England since 2009. He is on the A.T. Still University College of Graduate Health Studies Curriculum Committee and Faculty Council. He has written on the topic of online course evaluation, faculty evaluation, online faculty promotion, and program mapping.
3. **Additional Presenters:** None
4. **Presentation topic theme:** Issues and Trends in Higher Education
5. **Type of presentation:** Best Practice Presentation
6. **Target audience:** Intermediate department chairs and all department chairs transitioning into online education.
7. **Learning Objective(s) of the presentation:** Participants will:
  - a) understand how various traditional classroom techniques can be moved into the online discussion,
  - b) understand the importance of discussions in the online course, and
  - c) understand how to create engaging online discussions.
8. **Abstract for program and website:** Discussions build connections, increase instructor presence, and develop key points in online courses. Discussions correspond to the classroom in traditional education. They can take the shape of speed dating, lectures, seminars, meetings, and various forms of group work. This session explores ways of getting the most out of online discussions.
9. **Keywords:** Online Discussions Connections Points Format
10. **Creative Commons License:** Attribution
11. **Description of the session (300-500 words):** Include the relevance of the session to chairpersons, presentation focus, recommendations that will be made for chairpersons, and how the audience will be involved.

Discussions in online courses increase instructor presence, build connections, and develop key course points. Commonly we consider these discussions to be the equivalent of being in the traditional “classroom.” Unfortunately, discussions can take on a dynamic which is more like speed dating than an academic endeavor. For most online programs the discussion board is the only “public” place where students interact with the instructor and other classmates. These connections are what build institutional loyalty, understanding of course content, friendships, and

professional networks. Because of this, discussions in the online course need to have the dexterity and inspiration of the traditional classroom. Discussions can be a place for meaningful course content to be reviewed, reflected upon, and synthesized. To reach their full potential, discussions need to be created in a manner which facilitates these objectives.

Discussions in online courses can take various shapes depending on how they are constructed. They can be a lecture hall format where the instructor is the sage on the stage. These discussions can be more than a location where the class recites definitions or concepts in their posts. In these discussions the learning can come from processing the information and connectivity can come from creativity. Discussions can be a seminar where the instructor is the guide on the side. In this format the course material is the starting point. The class discusses topics and injects concepts of their own finding with guidance from the syllabus and instructor. Teaching points can be introduced in a summation of the discussion. The instructor can introduce teaching points through well placed posts.

Another format is similar to a cocktail party or small work circle discussions. In this format the instructor can be either the sage on the stage or the guide on the side. In either case the instructor circulates around the discussion injecting comments to the small groups which have formed. The groups can be set up by the instructor or based on loose relationships among the students. Introducing teaching points in this format is a process of repetition. The last format is a meeting. In this format the agenda is set with the discussion instructions. Students bring their perspective or researched content to the discussion. They may have to define, defend, or incorporate their positions. The role of the instructor varies depending on the instructor's personal style.

From this session chairs will increase their awareness of what can be done in online course discussions. The session will explore with participants what is being done in their online courses and how to develop stronger discussions. Additionally, attendees will gain an awareness of how program and course organization impact discussions through classroom size and course modification consideration. Participants are encouraged to review their program options.

Discussions can also incorporate group work, experiential education, and the flipped classroom. They can be synchronous or asynchronous. Building meaningful discussions initially takes more time. However, the rewards for creating meaningful discussions are more enjoyable classes which increase critical thinking from the students.