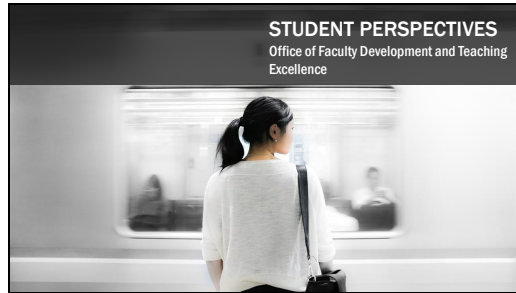# Students and Needs

Slide 1

Hello my name is Alexandra Bitton, I am the coordinator for faculty development and teaching excellence. I have been teaching online since 2008. Our journey toward the best online course starts and ends with your students. In this presentation, I'll suggest some ideas for you to consider as you identify the things that your students will need to be successful in your course.

Slide 2
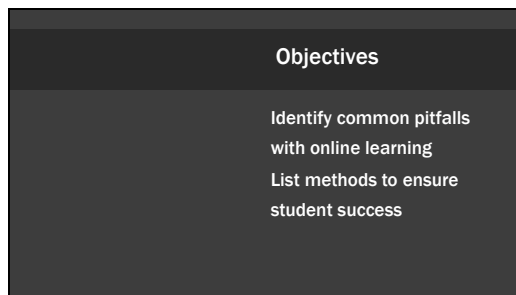
After you view this presentation, you should be able to identify common pitfalls students face when learning online as well as to list some methods to help achieve student success in your course.

Slide 3

Your Students

Think about the students in YOUR class. Are they the traditional college-age students? Are they freshman or seniors close to graduation? Are they working professionals? Do they fall within a particular demographic? Do they have specific goals? How motivated are they?
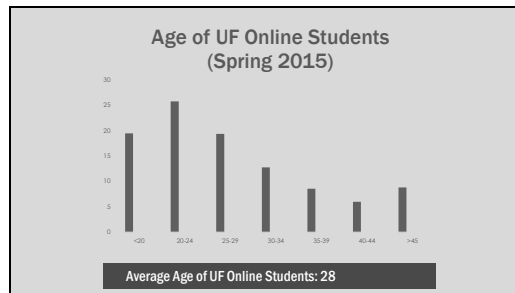
Slide 4

In the past, younger students (under 25) may have found online courses challenging. But this is becoming less of an issue as students now take online courses as part of the high school and even grade school curriculums.

But younger students still face challenges with time management as they may not have developed those skills yet. They may be in a transition stage of their life. Also, they may lack emotional and social maturity.

Our Millennial students have grown up with technology, but they are busy people and may not have the patience to deal with technical issues.

Slide 5

The average age of UF Online students during the spring of 2015 was 28. Older students tend to have greater success in online programs.

Slide 6

One of the things that we have found with the UF Online students, is that because they have made a commitment to get their college degree, they are highly motivated. However, they are balancing work and family as well as their schooling. They don't have the immersion experience that our on-campus students have so it may be harder for them to make the time to do their coursework.

Some students learn well on their own, others require very careful direction. Some students may prefer to learn through readings, other might prefer to learn through videos or social interaction. It's helpful to think about the types of ways your students will want to access the

material. Most undergraduate student learn best with a combination of visual and kinesthetic materials and activities.

Slide 7
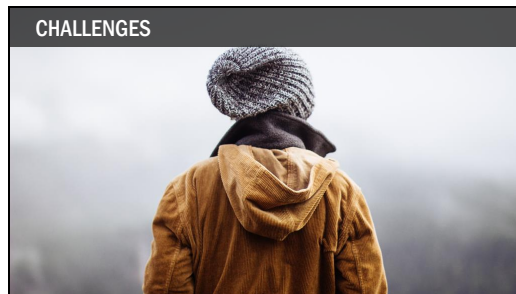
CHALLENGES

So what are the challenges most students face?

Time management. When students can set their own schedule, they may choose to put the work off until it is too late. Freshmen are particularly at risk of failure due to poor time management. But older students need the flexibility to schedule around their work and family commitments.

Students' comfort level with technology can play a large role in their success. Research shows that although undergraduates see themselves as comfortable with technology that their understanding of technology is largely superficial.

Slide 8

- Time management
- Technology
- Motivation
- Sense of isolation

Throughout this workshop, you'll find a lot of focus on engagement and motivation. Student motivation is critical. If they are not logging into the course, then they are not doing the work. We'll provide suggestions to keep students coming back to your virtual classroom.

Successful online courses address students' potential feelings of isolation. Students who feel connected to the other students and their instructor are more likely to login regularly and do the coursework. This is where building a sense of community comes in handy.

Slide 9

Don't forget that there are strengths that your students bring to the course. Not the least of which is enthusiasm. I have often heard faculty say that they don't want to teach online because they don't want to lose that enthusiasm and energy that students bring to the course. In such a case, you'll want to consider ways that you can

channel that energy in the online environment.

Slide 10

- Enthusiasm
- Social media skills
- Prior knowledge
- Personal experience
- Creativity

Many of the younger students of today are comfortable with online modes of communication. With the popularity of social media such as Facebook and YouTube. Students are now more than ever better prepared for the type of interactions common in online courses. Offering students frequent, quick means of interacting in ways that mimic social media will allow students to feel engaged in a learning community.

Adult learners and even college juniors and seniors bring competencies and experiences from the field and their own lives into the course. Students at all levels can offer each other various types of support – both technological and academic – more easily in an online setting. Providing varied opportunities for students to interact and learn from each other's experiences will also improve the overall online learning experience.

Slide 11

We've talked about student strengths and weaknesses. How do we apply this information to an online course? Let's look at the things that students expect to get out of an online course.

Slide 12

STUDENTS' NEEDS

Social interaction
Feedback
Encouragement
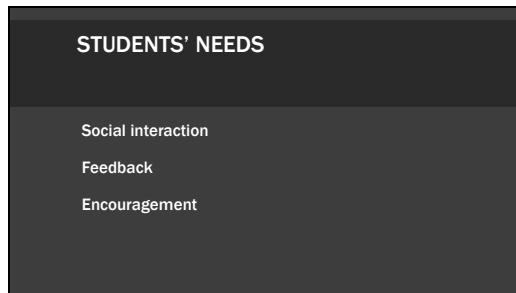
One of the great things that comes from the physical classroom is social interaction. The energy they can get from their peers and the attention from a professor are the big things that bring students to a classroom. Isolation is the biggest challenge with online learning.

They also want to know that what they are doing is correct. And if it's not correct, how can they improve what they are doing. If feedback is not frequent and timely students will not have enough time to re-learn what was not correct and they will not be able to improve. This can cause quite a bit of frustration.

Encouragement is very important. We all want to feel that what we are doing is important and someone notices what we are doing. It takes conscious effort in an online course to let students know that they are doing well. But it is just as important online as it is face to face.

Slide 13

STUDENTS' NEEDS

Students need a guide to help them learn the material in an organized fashion. Organization in an online course is as important if not more important than in a physical classroom. Students are used to websites that make things easy to locate, they are used to Googling anything that they are looking for. They expect instructions and requirements to be easy to find and easy to understand. They don't want to waste time looking for things or trying to guess what the instructor wants.
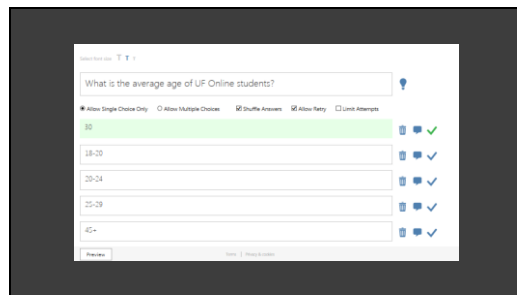
Slide 14

Instruction
Leadership
Organization
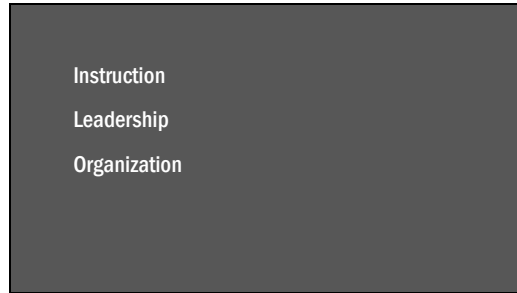
Students need to integrate what they are learning into what they already know. New learning becomes part of our tool set to view and respond to the challenges we face. Opportunities to share personal experience, or to choose topics of personal interest can help to students to engage more deeply with the course material.

Slide 15

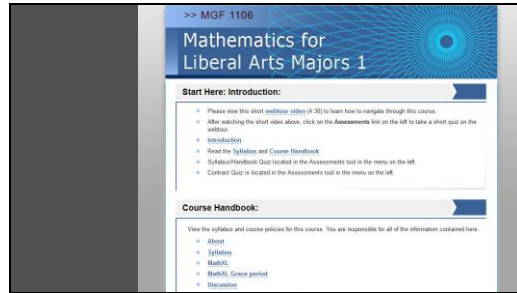What is the average age of UF Online students?

Take a moment to answer the following multiple choice questions. If you missed something, don't worry about it. You can go back and review the information in the slides.

Slide 16

What are the primanry challenges faced by online students? (select all that apply)
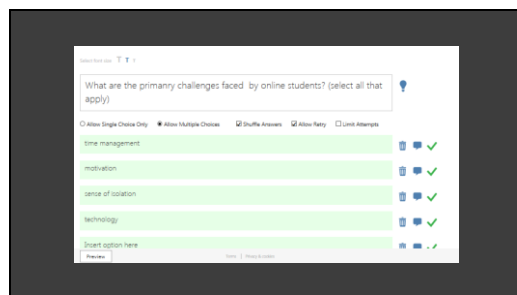
Slide 17

So keeping in mind these things that students bring to your class along with their needs and challenges, how can we create a course online that can support students and provide quality learning? These are some of the practical things that you can do in your course to ensure student success. We'll be going into detail on these items as we move through the TA Institute.

Slide 18
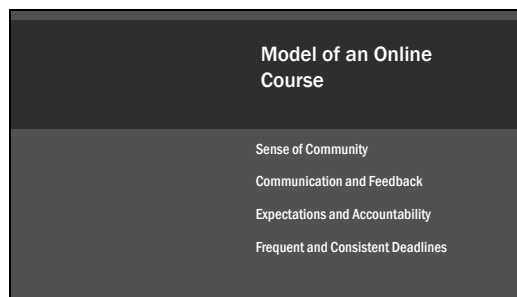
The following are the most important aspects of a successful online course Community Fostering a sense of community within your course is critical. This helps overcome the tendency for students to feel isolated and supports their need for social interaction. Some ways of doing this are through discussion boards, peer evaluations and group projects.

Perceived communication and contact with an instructor is one of the most common factors for success in online learning. Provide students with clear outlines for how they can contact an instructor. This can be through email, the Canvas Conferences tool, Skype, or telephone office hours

With regard to feedback on papers and assessments, you'll want to get a response to the students in less than 24 hours or at maximum between 24-48 hours. If this is not possible due to high course enrollment let students know when they can expect to hear from you.

Set up a discussion board for Frequently Asked Questions and use the "Announcements" feature of the course management system. Remember, you are no longer in a classroom setting where you can answer a question and all of the students hear the answer. In order to avoid having an overwhelming number of emails from students it's important to have clear expectations and guidelines from the beginning.
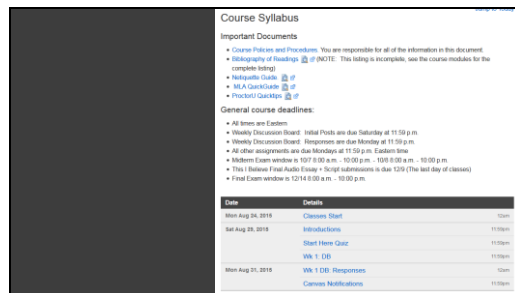
Expectations and Accountability
In an online course it is not enough to simply post a syllabus. A successful course will:
- Post a syllabus and reference deadlines throughout the course.
- Clearly outline expectations for all activities and

assignments throughout the course.

- Keep expectations consistent and unchanged throughout the course.
- Provide step-by-step instructions for academic assignments AND how to use the technologies of the course.
- Instructor and TAs take accountability for the course and frequently "check in."

Slide 19

Frequent and Consistent Deadlines
Without the framework provided by regular classroom meetings, students taking online classes tend to put off doing the work. Provide the student with a framework of regular deadlines to keep them moving through the course material.

- Require students to complete weekly activities such as quizzes, discussions, and projects that require them to login frequently.

- Keep deadlines on the same day of the week and at the same time. Students have a lot of different deadlines and keeping them

consistent will help them to remember yours.

- Students tend to prefer having things due at midnight, although this can be problematic in the event that they have any difficulties with technology as the Help Desk is closed at that time.

Slide 20

Model of an Online Course

Student Engagement

Availability of Assistance

Student Engagement
One of the advantages of an online course is the ability to present materials in a variety of ways to engage the student.

Availability of Assistance
Students are very busy and can get frustrated quickly when technology doesn't work or assignment instructions are unclear. Be sure to provide students with specific information on how to get help. Point them to the Help Desk for technical assistance, give them a course questions discussion board to provide answers to assignment questions. When students feel comfortable that they can get their problems solved quickly, they'll be able to focus on the course material.

Slide 21
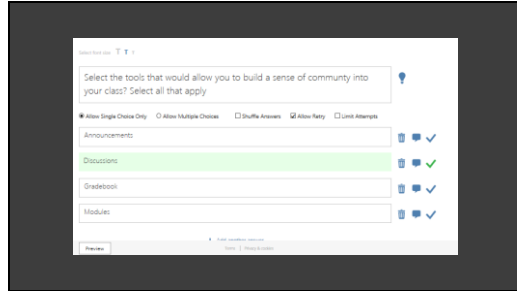
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Slide 23

End

Slide 24