Published on *University of Colorado* (https://www.cu.edu)

What factors contribute to online student success? Part 1 [1]

March 1, 2019 by Sarah North | Office of Digital Education [2]

My dissertation for a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction looked at students' self-regulation and motivation in the online environment. Despite the ups and downs I experienced during the process, it remained a topic I love and am passionate about (despite my own occasional lapse of motivation along the way). As I finished the program in 2019, I reflected back to why I started down this path.

As an online instructor, I was always disheartened when I noticed students lagging behind, dropping out, or appearing indifferent. What I began to learn, however, was that what we might perceive as "boredom" or "laziness" from online students might be something completely different altogether. There are many factors which contribute to any students' success, but online students face more of an uphill battle, I believe. Success in online learning requires more self-direction, more persistence, and more assertiveness than traditional face-to-face learning environments do.

The literature supporting factors for online student engagement and success is countless, and speaks to the importance of the topic.There are a few, however, that are seen over and over again as playing an important role in online student success. I've started by highlighting a few here, and I'll share more in future blog posts.

Good course design and facilitation. Increased student satisfaction and success is often associated with good course design. For example, Kauffman (2015) found that students were significantly more satisfied with courses when the content was relatable and adaptable, readings were varied (i.e. no textbook), discussions and team projects were frequent, and the instructor was an active facilitator.

Feeling a part of a community. The online environment can be quite isolating. Frequent interaction (student-instructor and student-student) and community building increase social presence, and is shown to improve satisfaction and success online (Garrison, 2006; Palloff & Pratt, 2007). These communities don't typically form naturally online, but can instead by fostered through creative and fun introductions, long-term group collaborations, lots of space for sharing, and low-stakes discussions.

Effective feedback loops. Whether feedback is received through an instructor, peer, computer program, or by self-awareness, it is a vital piece of a student's regulation of their own effort and success strategies. A popular three-phase model emphasizes the student's forethought, performance, and self-reflection in a cyclical loop (Zimmerman, 2008; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2009). This points to the importance of constructive instructor feedback, opportunities for peer review exercises, and assignment revisions when it comes to overall student success.

Keep in mind that these strategies are by no means exhaustive, but they act as an excellent starting point for setting the stage for student success. Stay tuned for a future blog post which explores more factors in online student success, such as time and space management, limiting distractions, and persistence.

References:

Garrison, D. R. (2006). Online community of inquiry review: Social, cognitive, and teaching presence issues. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 11*(1). 61-72.

Kauffman, H. (2015). A review of predictive factors of student success in and satisfaction with online learning. *Research in Learning Technology, 23*, 1-13.

Palloff, R. & Pratt, K. (2007). *Collaborating Online: Learning Together in Community.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2008). Theories of self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview and analysis. In Zimmerman, B.J. & Schunk, D.H. (Eds.), *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement (2nd ed.)* (pp.1-36). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zimmerman, B. J., & Cleary, T. J. (2009). Motives to self-regulate learning: A social cognitive account. In K. R. Wentzel & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation at school* (pp. 223-245). New York, NY: Routledge.

online experience [3], online learning [4], Online Education [5]

Display Title:
What factors contribute to online student success? Part 1

Send email when Published:
Yes

Source URL:https://www.cu.edu/blog/online-teaching-blog/what-factors-contribute-online-student-success-part-1-0

Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/blog/online-teaching-blog/what-factors-contribute-online-student-success-part-1-0 [2] https://www.cu.edu/blog/online-teaching-blog/author/38469 [3] https://www.cu.edu/blog/online-teaching-blog/tag/online-experience [4] https://www.cu.edu/blog/online-teaching-blog/tag/online-learning [5] https://www.cu.edu/blog/online-teaching-blog/tag/online-education