

IOWA

Distance and
Online Education

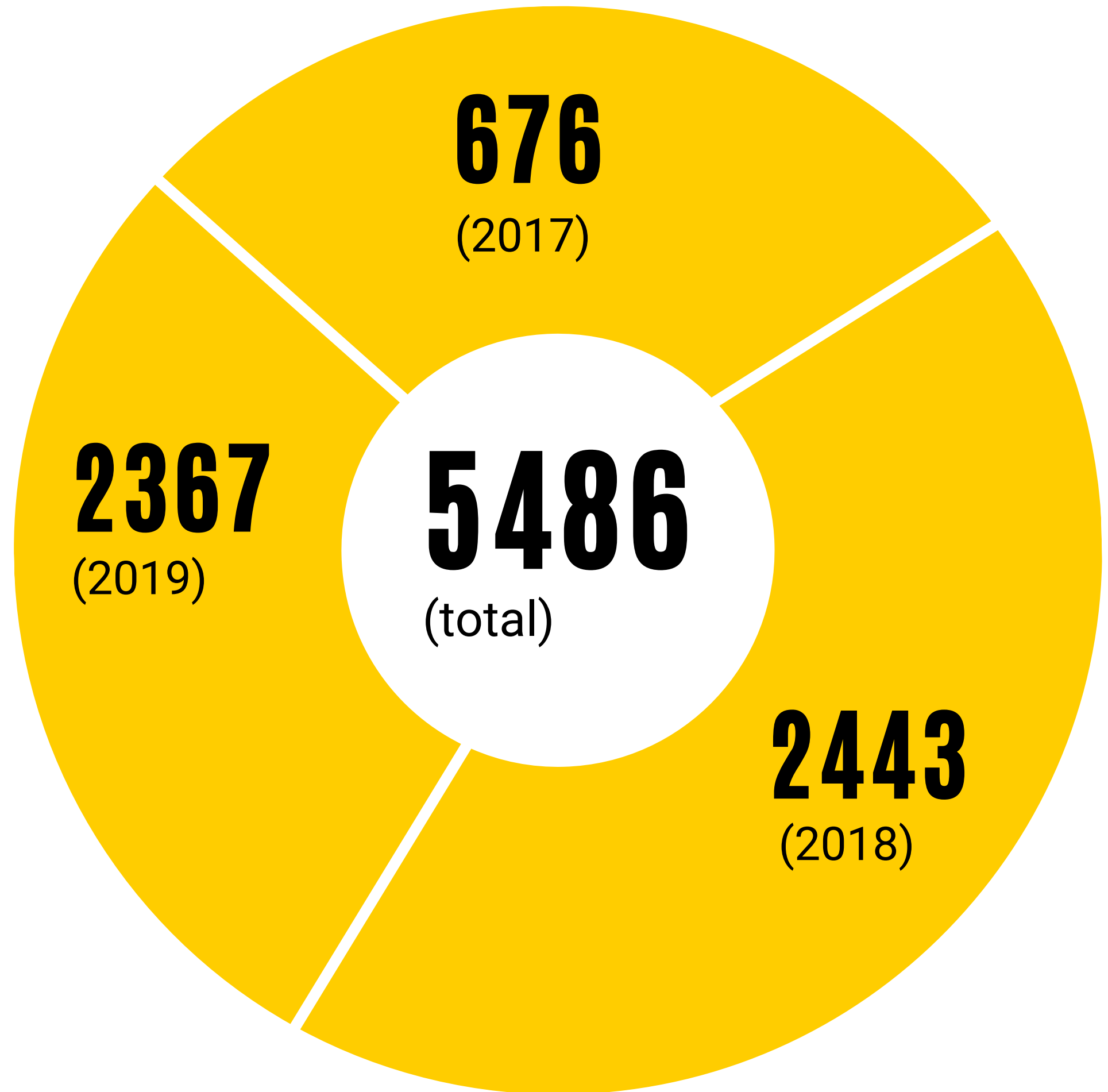
EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION GUIDE

Student Preferences Research



SURVEY RESPONSES

Distance and Online Education completed a 3-year research project seeking student preferences in online learning.



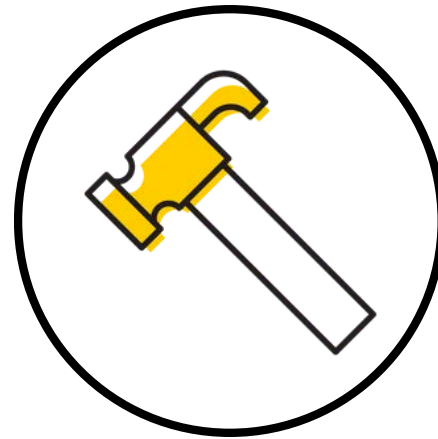
DATA POINT HIGHLIGHTS

Data collected provides a clearer picture of what students at the University of Iowa prefer for online learning.



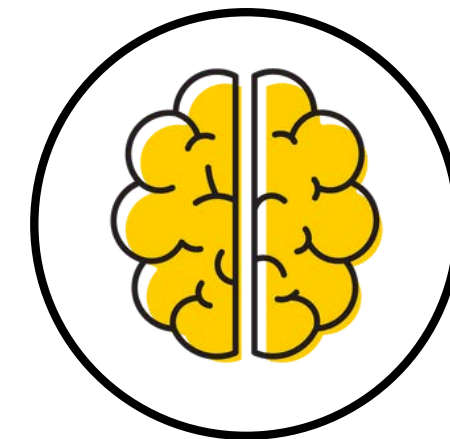
Plan

Content
Teaching Activities
Assignments
Course Organization
Accessibility



Build

Home Page
Module Pages
Videos
Discussions
Group Work



Teach

Announcements
Module Release
Timely Feedback
Engagement
Instructions
Synchronous Tools

KEY FINDINGS



Plan

The Importance of Online Course Organization

Clarity, Transparency, and Feedback in Assessments



Build

Design to Accommodate all Learners



Teach

Communication is Essential

The Value of Student Engagement and Motivation

THE IMPORTANCE OF ONLINE COURSE ORGANIZATION

How do I organize and structure my online course?

At the start of an in-person class, you likely find yourself describing what you would like students to learn that day. Oftentimes you will also explain to your students how learning activities (e.g.: quizzes, small group discussion, etc.) are strategically designed to help them learn. Providing this guidance to students in an online course, where they are often accessing the course materials asynchronously (i.e.: at different times), requires advance planning. Complete the design and build of your online course before the first day of the semester. This intentional approach to your course organization is essential for supporting student learning in your online courses.



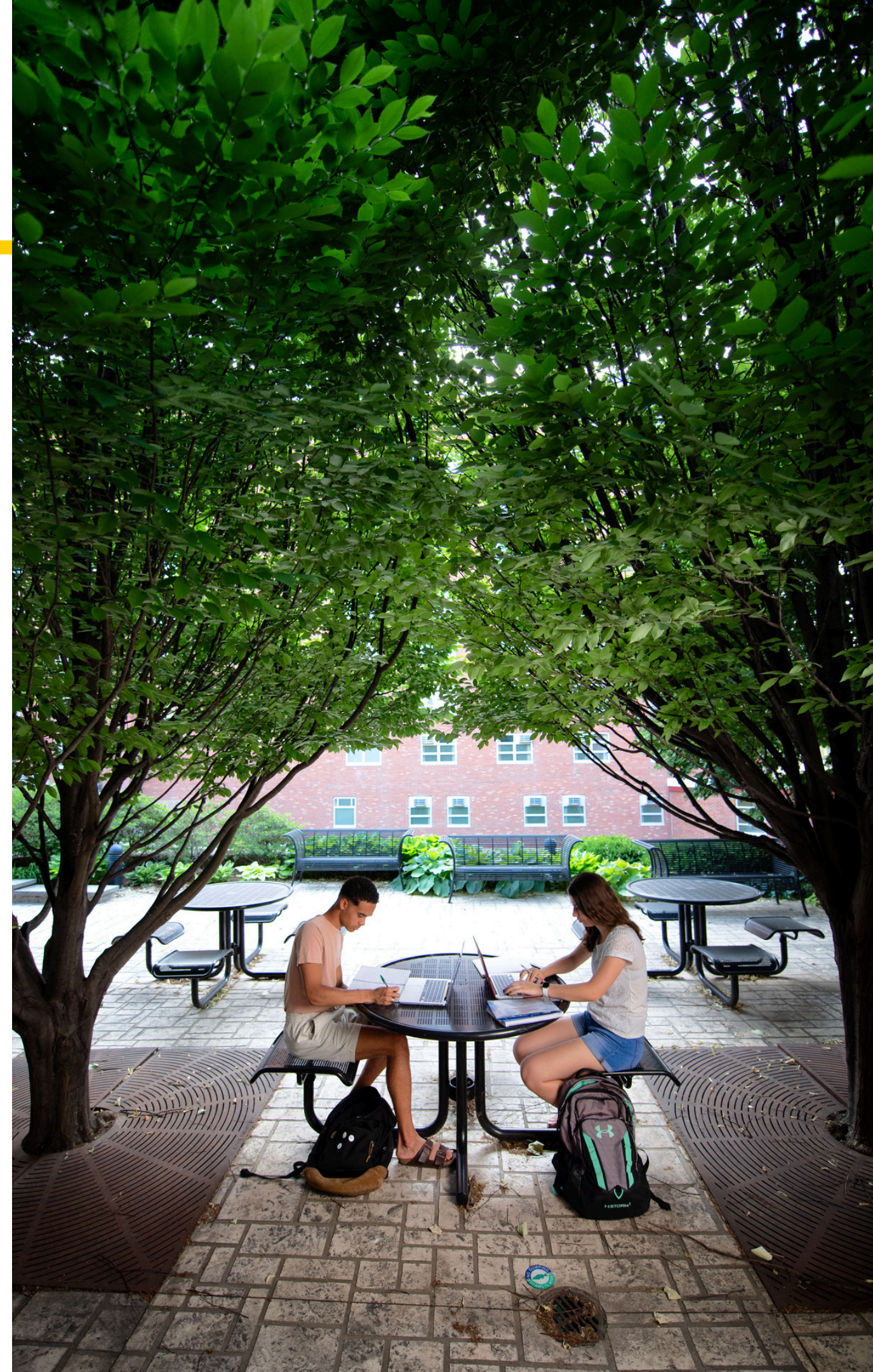
COURSE ORGANIZATION

TELL ME MORE, HOW CAN I IMPLEMENT THESE BEST PRACTICES?

Cognitive science research tells us that breaking content into logical segments makes the information easier to process, learn, and remember. Miller (1956) implies that chunking strategies reduce cognitive load to increase the learner's mental storage capacity. Have you asked yourself how to segment your online course into modules that lead students through consistent sequence? Can students easily find important course information, including their required learning activities each week?

LEARN MORE

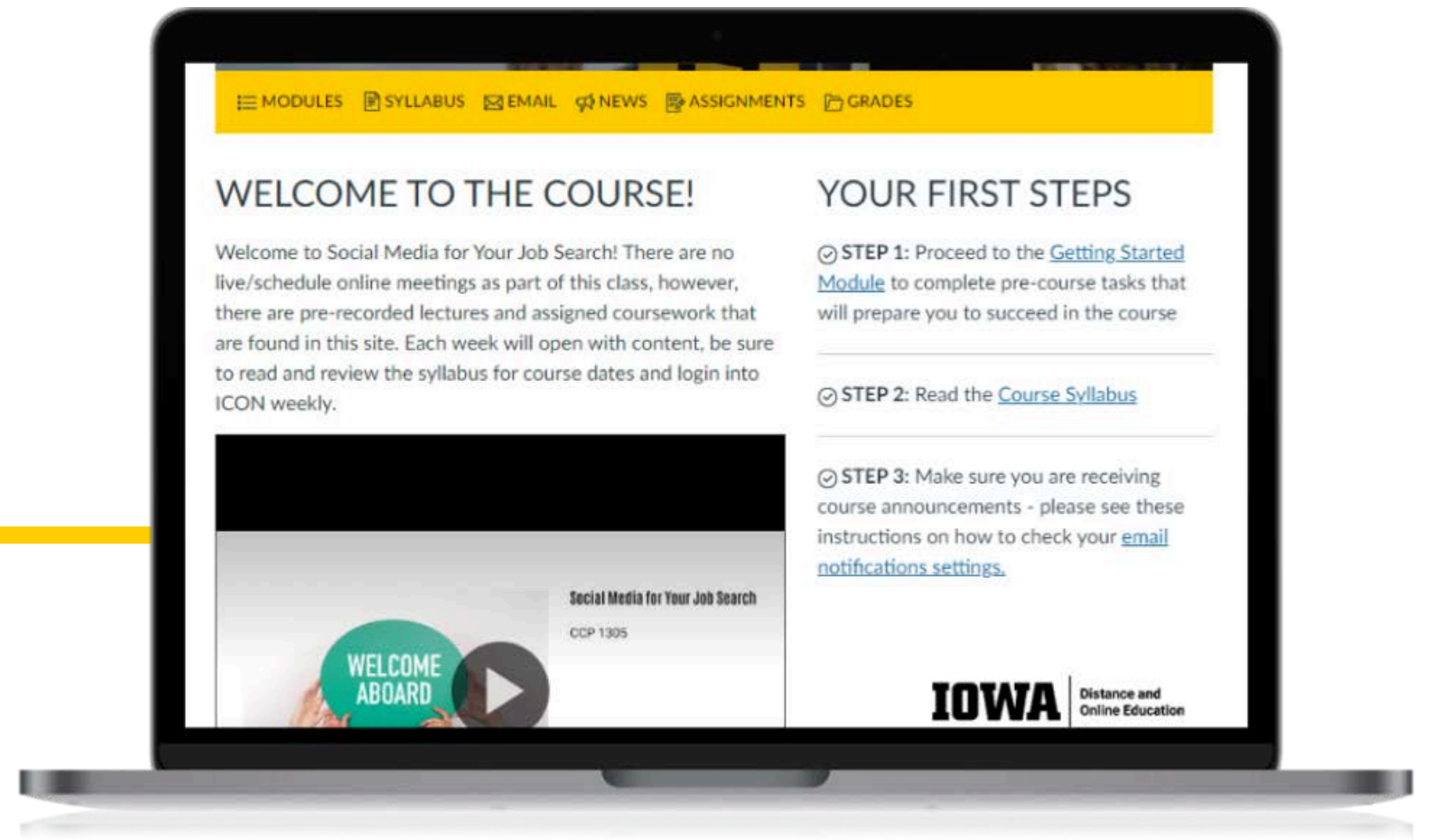
- [Practical Tips to Improve ICON Course Sites](#)
- [What Research Tells Us About Chunking Content](#)
- [Canvas FastTrack: Bite-sized Content Pages](#)



COURSE ORGANIZATION

CAN I SEE AN EXAMPLE?

Explore the Distance and Online Education (DOE) online course sample site. It infuses teaching and learning strategies that are data-driven, supported by theory, and backed up with successful, practical applications.



DOE ONLINE COURSE SAMPLE SITE



WHAT DO STUDENTS SAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA?

- Create a homepage with some basic course information (97%)
- Create navigation links: syllabus, grades, assignments, and discussions (100%)
- Create a page that provides a quick view of the course content overall (98%)
- Use buttons, icons, and content dividers for course structure and pages (97%)

Data Point Highlights



Plan

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Teaching Activities

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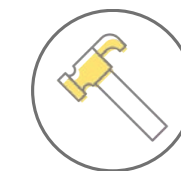
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CLARITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND FEEDBACK IN ASSESSMENTS

What do I need to consider while planning assessments for my online course?

Most of the assessments you already use in traditional, classroom-based courses can be translated online - concept-check quizzes, exams, papers, final projects, and more. Keep in mind that students are often working on online course assessments at different times. Because students are often working asynchronously online, it's very important that your assessment requirements are explicit and clear to students. You should also clearly describe how formative feedback is designed to help student learn, and how culminating assignments/projects help students demonstrate what they've learned.



COURSE ASSESSMENTS

TELL ME MORE, HOW CAN I IMPLEMENT THESE BEST PRACTICES?

How do you scaffold your students' online learning to help them incrementally advance toward mastery of course learning outcomes? How do you help them connect course concepts to practical applications such as personal experiences and potential scenarios in future workplace settings? As you begin designing your online courses, it's crucial to focus on developing activities that stimulate students' critical thinking skills through information exchange, connecting ideas, and applying new concepts (Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, 2000).

LEARN MORE

- Assessment Primer: Goals, Objectives, Outcomes
- Identify Appropriate Instructional Strategies
- Rubrics: An Undervalued Teaching Tool
- Optimizing Student Learning with Online Formative Feedback
- Classroom Assessment Techniques



COURSE ASSESSMENTS

WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES TO HELP ME WITH ASSESSMENT?

- [IOWA Exam Services](#)
- [A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning](#)
- [Seven Keys to Effective Feedback](#)
- [How to Give your Students Better Feedback with Technology](#)



COURSE ASSESSMENTS

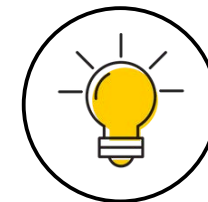
IOWA

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WHAT DO STUDENTS SAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA?

- Design online assessments to help me show mastery of course learning objectives (94%)
- Provide clear instructions to help me complete activities (99%)
- Provide rubrics prior to the assessments to help me understand expectations (97%)
- Implement different formative and summative assessments during the course (93%)
- Provide feedback on project components throughout the semester (97%)
- Provide specific feedback on discussions (88%)

Data Point Highlights



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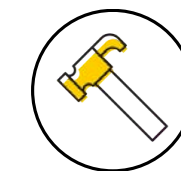
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DESIGN TO ACCOMMODATE ALL LEARNERS

What should I do to ensure that I assist students with different abilities?

You are likely familiar with student accommodation requests. Upon receiving a request, instructors take appropriate actions like giving a student extra time on an exam. Oftentimes applying accommodations in online course can demand a bigger time investment. Images, handouts, Canvas pages, and lecture videos may all need revised. You can avoid this problem by making accessibility part of the routine process for building your online courses. Luckily, these efforts will benefit all your students, not just ones with accommodation requests. Accessibility principles emphasize visual and organizational clarity that benefit all learners. You will become a more effective online instructor for all your students when you take the time to infuse accessibility into your online courses.



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

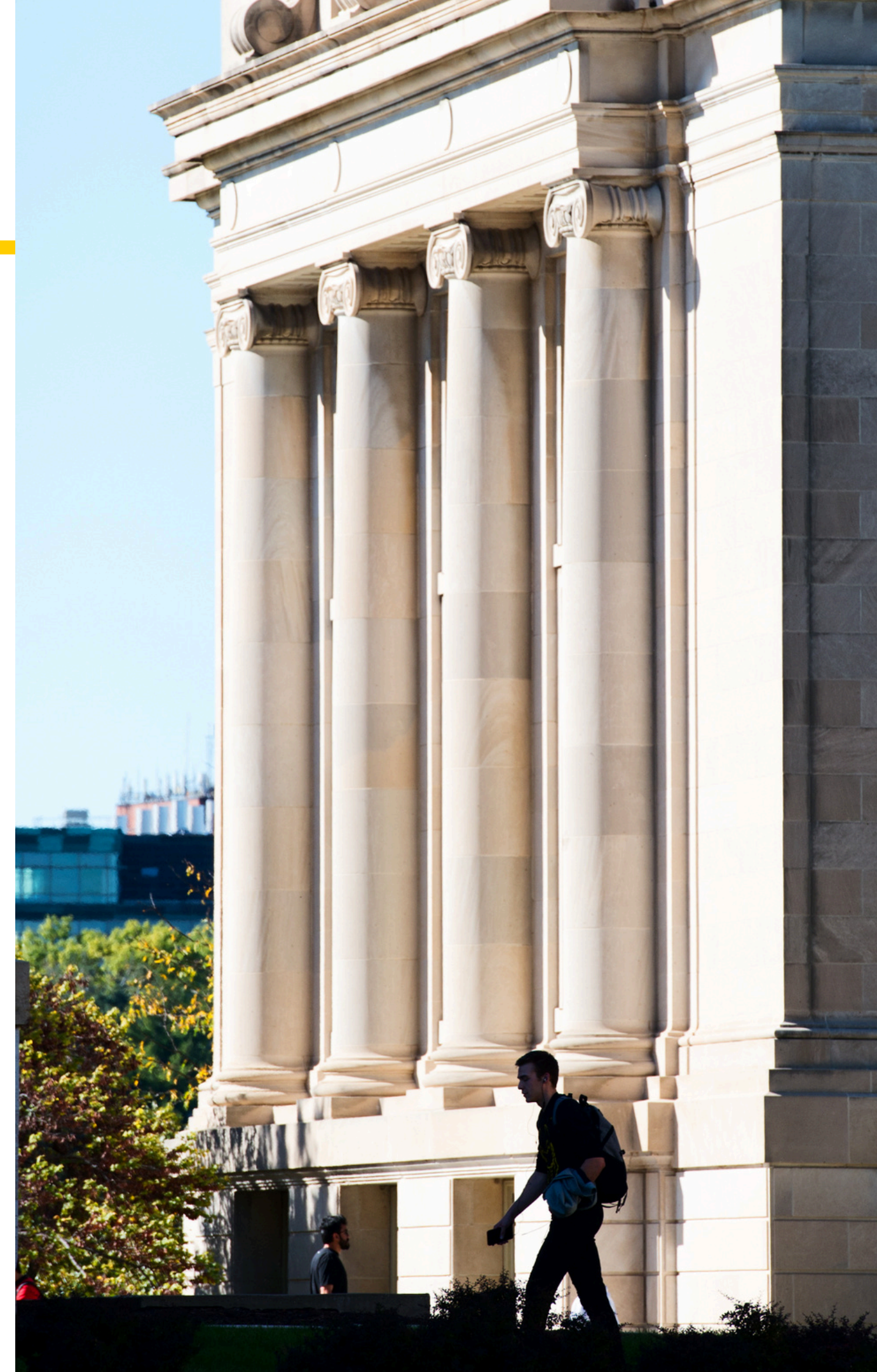
TELL ME MORE, HOW CAN I IMPLEMENT THESE BEST PRACTICES?

Designing and building an accessible course can be overwhelming. You have support in DOE when working with instructional designers, the media team, and course management team ([Coleman & Berge, 2018](#)). Our department provides accessible Canvas templates and closed captioning for lecture recordings when instructors go through our course development process.

ONLINE COURSE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS →

LEARN MORE

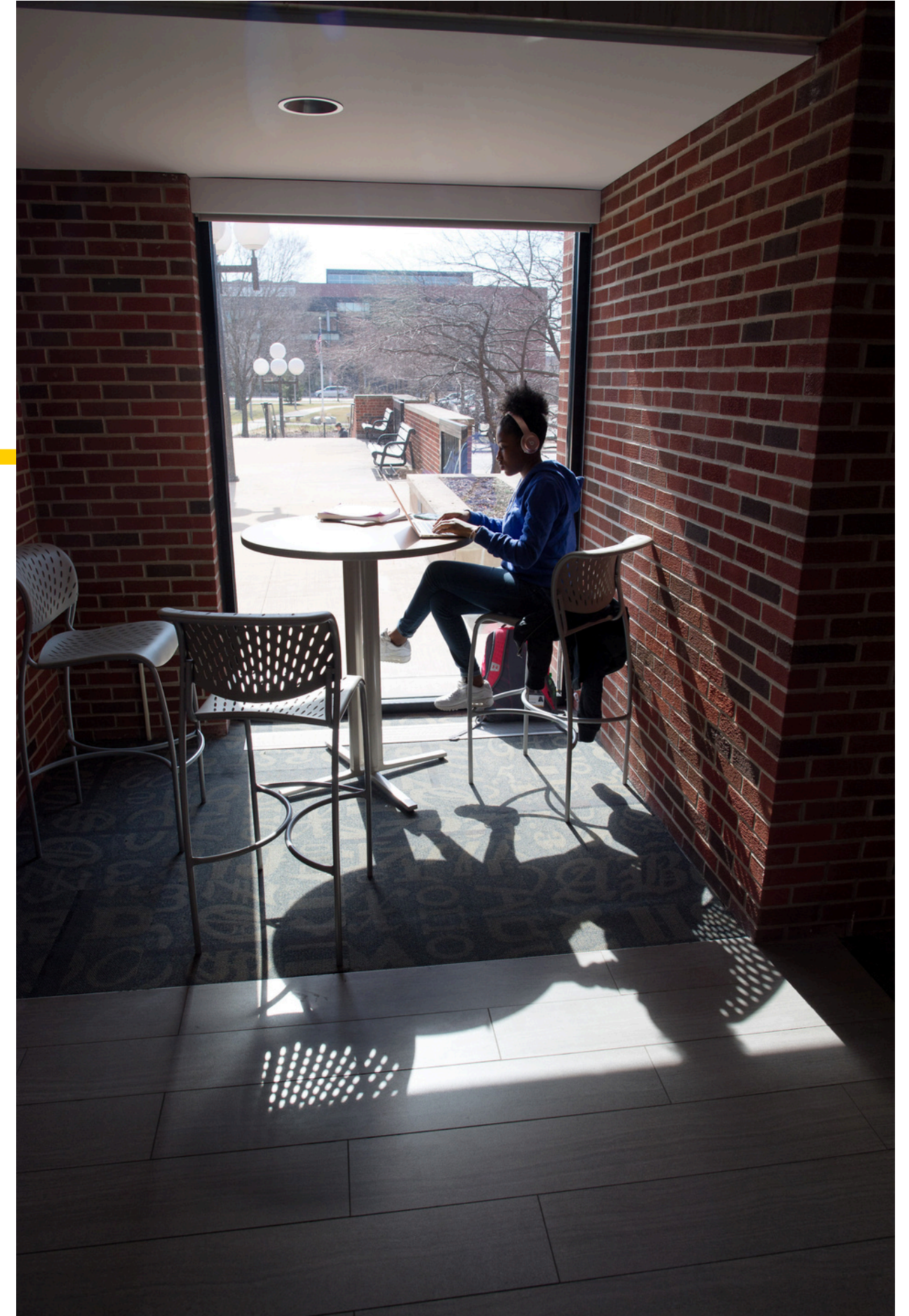
- [Universal Design for Learning Guidelines](#)



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES TO HELP ME WITH ACCESSIBILITY?

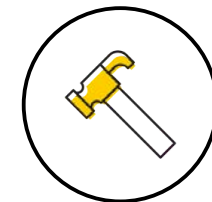
- [Anthology Ally accessibility checker](#) (in Canvas courses)
- [Accessible Documents: Microsoft PowerPoint](#)
- [Accessibility Cheat sheets](#) (Word, PDF, etc.)
- [ALC Engagement Fair 2020](#)
- [IOWA Student Disability Services](#)



WHAT DO STUDENTS SAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA?

- Use contrasting colors to aid with content readability (94%)
- Use easily readable font (100%)
- Make the course accessible on mobile phone and laptop (93%)
- Create lectures that provide related images with minimal text (86%)

Data Point Highlights



Build

Home Page
Module Pages
Videos

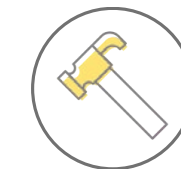
Discussions
Group Work

KEY FINDINGS



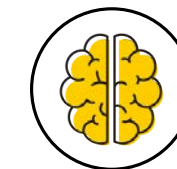
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The Value of Student Engagement and Motivation

COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL

How do I clearly communicate with my online students?

Your physical presence is an essential part of your traditional, classroom teaching. The immediacy of interactions between you and your students brings energy to your class, and helps you quickly clear up students' confusion about course concepts and policies. Do you know how you will translate your effective classroom teaching online? Make a plan to ensure your online course communications effectively support students. Your online teaching presence depends on timely communication, facilitation of online discourse, and well-focused direct instruction.



COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL

TELL ME MORE, HOW CAN I IMPLEMENT THESE BEST PRACTICES?

Your online teaching presence significantly contributes to online students' learning within a community of inquiry (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000). Recorded lecture videos keep your students' attention, and demonstrates the effort you put into creating course materials that make course concepts easier understand (Dinmore, 2019). You can quickly message students regarding their coursework directly within Canvas. The system will automatically send your messages to students' email, while also maintaining an archive of course communications. Post regular course-wide announcements - at least once a week - that summarize lessons learned, highlight outstanding student contributions, and address common misperceptions. The Canvas inbox and grading tools are best for giving feedback to individual students.

LEARN MORE

- [Five Easy Ideas that Build Bridges to Your Online Learners](#)

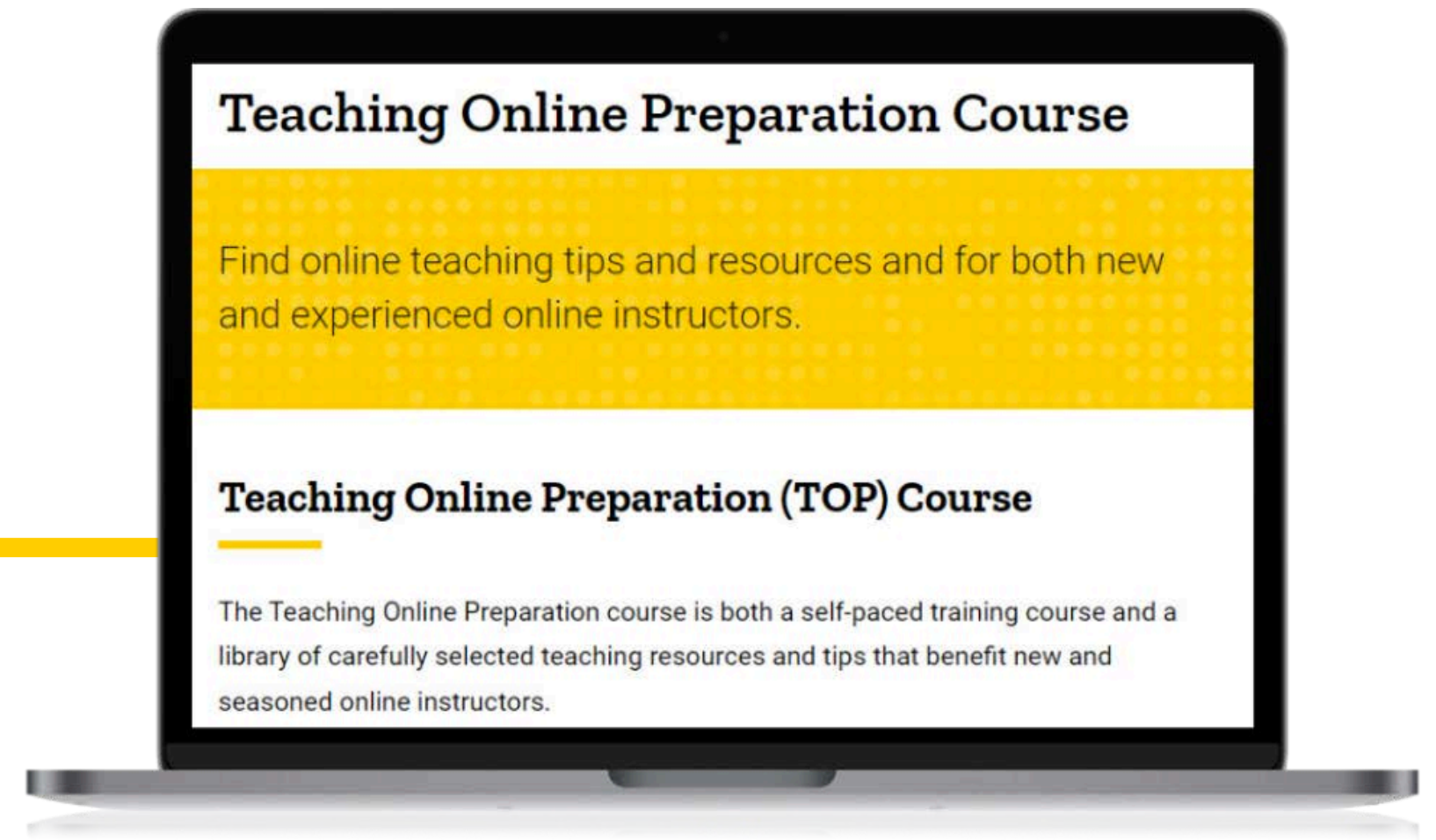


COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL

WHAT ARE SOME DOE RESOURCES THAT HELP ME WITH ONLINE COURSE COMMUNICATIONS?

Distance and Online Education provides a self-paced online training course for faculty new to teaching online. Explore topics that interest you, including tips for engaging students throughout the semester.

TEACHING ONLINE PREPARATION COURSE →



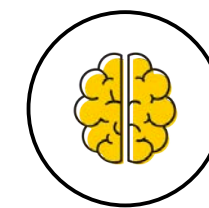
MORE RESOURCES

- [Engaging Media Examples](#) (DOE)
- [DOE Online Course Facilitation Checklist](#) (starting from the "First Week of Class" on page 2)

WHAT DO STUDENTS SAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA?

- Post regular announcements (99%)
- Provide timely emails to assist student learning (97%)
- Lectures and videos used throughout the course (96%)
- Create short videos less than 20 minutes in length (87%)
- Lectures that provide related images with minimal text (86%)
- Lectures with underlined or highlighted important items (99%)
- Lecture videos where the instructor is visible on the screen (76%)
- Use synchronous tools to communicate with instructor and peers (71%)

Data Point Highlights



Teach

Announcements
Module Release
Timely Feedback

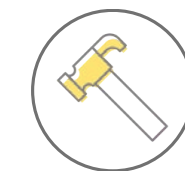
Engagement
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KEY FINDINGS



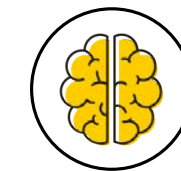
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THE VALUE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

How can I ensure that my online course is engaging?

Remember that students play a large part in how engaging your course is. Have you ever had a class session fail miserably, only to have the exact same lesson work spectacularly with a different section of students? This speaks to the importance of group dynamics and the value of student involvement in the learning process. In the classroom you can quickly modify your approach when students aren't immersed in their learning. How do you ensure that your online students are engaged? Think deeply about your students, their prior knowledge and needs, in order to thoughtfully design a course that sparks their curiosity and encourages them to succeed by collaborating with you and their peers.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

TELL ME MORE, HOW CAN I IMPLEMENT THESE BEST PRACTICES?

Online discussion forums are a common feature in most online courses. They are often used to facilitate student interactions that would normally happen in the classroom, including icebreaker activities to acquaint students with each other. Online discussions can also help surface student misperceptions of course concepts, and expose them to different perspectives, just like classroom discussions. However, online discussions are primarily text-based, which is not likely to capture the passion and immediacy of classroom discussions. A highly engaging online course will often include various collaborative learning activities in addition to the conventional online discussion forum, such as group projects.

Groupwork motivates students, provides a peer instruction opportunity, gives students a chance to look at the problem from multiple perspectives, and helps students become more creative. In her article, [Davis \(1993\)](#) shows that three or four students per group are most effective. Some faculty members prefer to randomly assign students to groups. You may also choose to allow the class to self-select groups. When forming groups consider student performance levels, academic strengths and weaknesses, student backgrounds and prior experience with course concepts.

LEARN MORE

- [Communities of Practice and Social Learning](#)
- [How to Make your Teaching More Engaging](#)
- [Tips for Effective Online Discussions](#)



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES TO HELP ME WITH STUDENT ENGAGEMENT?

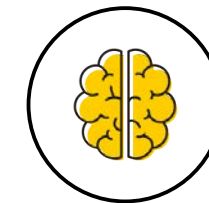
- [Canvas Discussions help guide](#)
- [Canvas Groups help guides](#)



WHAT DO STUDENTS SAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA?

- Provide engaging learning activities (e.g., group work, discussion, projects, etc.)
- Engaging in online discussions makes me feel more connected to peers (74%)
- Online discussions enhance my interaction with the course content (79%)
- Create group work with no more than three participants (92%)
- Provide group meetings virtually (82%)
- Prefer different groups throughout the course with opportunities to meet peers (77%)

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CONTACT US

doe-email@uiowa.edu

