



# Everyone is In: Increasing Social Presence in Online Courses

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# AGENDA

1. what is social presence?
2. why social presence is important?
3. Instructor presence:
  - Before the first week
  - The first week
  - Beyond the first week
4. Student presence:
  - Before the first week
  - The first week
  - Beyond the first week

# WHAT IS SOCIAL PRESENCE?

- How much students feel like their instructors and classmates are “with them” in online classes.



# WHAT IS SOCIAL PRESENCE?



Instructor presence



Student presence

# WHY SOCIAL PRESENCE IS IMPORTANT?

- Lacking of social presence
  - The feeling of isolation
  - Increased stress
  - Disengaged from learning
  - Low performance
  - Low satisfaction and drop out

# INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE



# INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE

- How instructors build social presence in a face to face class?
  - Weather
  - Campus news
  - Local cultural events



# BEFORE THE COURSE BEGINS

- Do not design an online course that you will be “never online”
  - e.g., a pass through for publisher content class.
- Syllabus can affect your social presence.
  - **When create your syllabus, ask yourself:**
    - am I talking to my students?
    - am I encouraging them to come to me if they have questions?



# BEFORE THE COURSE BEGINS

- A welcome email
  - Express your excitement that they have decided to take the class with you
  - Your background
  - Syllabus, text book
  - Start date (*60% students do not know an exact start date of online courses*)
  - Looking forward to work with them

# THE FIRST WEEK OF THE CLASS

- 1. introduction blog, discussion, etc.
  - Share your personal pictures
  - Share your professional information
  - Share your stories
- 2. respond to each student personally during the first week
- 3. set a *Question* discussion thread to let them ask questions about the course
  - enable subscription, subscribe to it, and questions will be emailed to you when they are posted so you don't have to monitor

# THE FIRST WEEK OF THE CLASS

- An introduction video
  - Short video (~ 7 mins)
- Hold a synchronous meeting with your students to let them ask you questions, and to know them.

# BEYOND THE FIRST WEEK

- Provide optimal feedback
  - Always use positive language
    - “Don’t feel self-conscious about ‘thinking out loud’ on the forum. This is a place to try out new ideas after all.”
- Enable voting function in online discussions

The screenshot shows the 'Edit Topic Details' form with the following sections:

- Properties** (selected tab):
  - Forum \***: General discussions (dropdown), [New Forum] (link)
  - Topic Type**: Open Topic (dropdown)
  - Title \***: Please introduce yourself (text input)
  - Description**:
    - Rich text editor with icons for video, image, link, paragraph, bold, italic, underline, list, and font family.
    - Text: Please introduce yourself to others.
    - Text: include the information about your major, your expectations from the course, and what do you
  - Options**:
    - ☐ Allow anonymous posts
    - ☐ A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the topic
    - ☐ Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads
  - Rate Posts** (highlighted with a red box):
    - Up Vote Only Rating Scheme (dropdown)
- Restrictions** (tab)
- Assessment** (tab)
- Objectives** (tab)

Buttons at the bottom: Save and Close, Save and New, Save, Cancel.

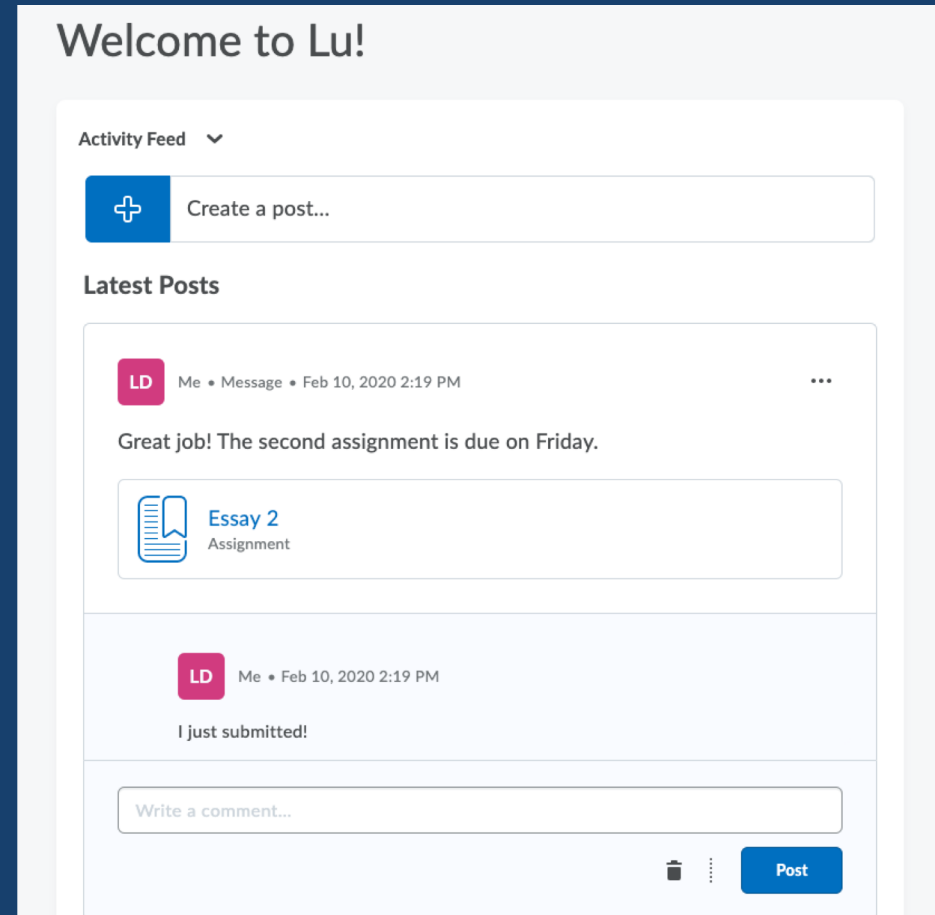
# BEYOND THE FIRST WEEK

- Provide ongoing feedback
  - A summary of trending issues for each unit
    - Common questions
    - Misunderstandings
    - Praise the good part



# BEYOND THE FIRST WEEK

- “Teach” courses
  - using activity feed in D2L Brightspace



The screenshot displays the 'Welcome to Lu!' header in a light gray bar. Below it, the 'Activity Feed' section is titled with a dropdown arrow. It features a blue button with a white plus icon and the text 'Create a post...'. The 'Latest Posts' section follows, showing two posts. The first post is from user 'LD' (Me) dated 'Feb 10, 2020 2:19 PM', with the text 'Great job! The second assignment is due on Friday.' and a link to 'Essay 2' (Assignment) accompanied by a document icon. The second post is also from 'LD' (Me) on the same date, with the text 'I just submitted!'. At the bottom, there is a text input field labeled 'Write a comment...' and a blue 'Post' button, with a trash can icon and a vertical ellipsis menu icon positioned between them.

# BEYOND THE FIRST WEEK

- Purposefully let your student to challenge your instruction
  - Online discussions (one minute paper)



# BEYOND THE FIRST WEEK

- “No shows” or “low scores” in online courses
  - Phone calls
  - Emails



# STUDENT SOCIAL PRESENCE



# BEFORE THE CLASS BEGINS

- Design group projects (*The group projects do not need to be related to the course content*)
  - Let students name their groups
  - Play with your syllabus
  - Create a word cloud to represent what are the most important things that they have learned from the courses so far
  - Randomly putting students into groups and let them figure out why they were put together

# THE FIRST WEEK

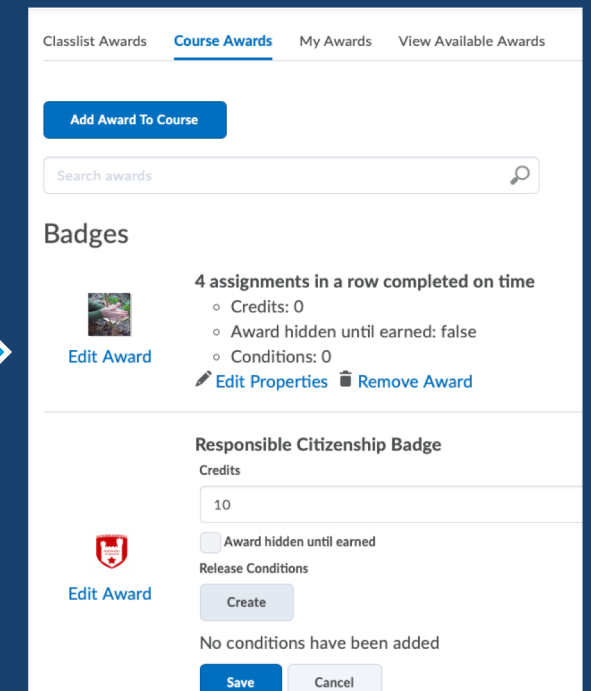
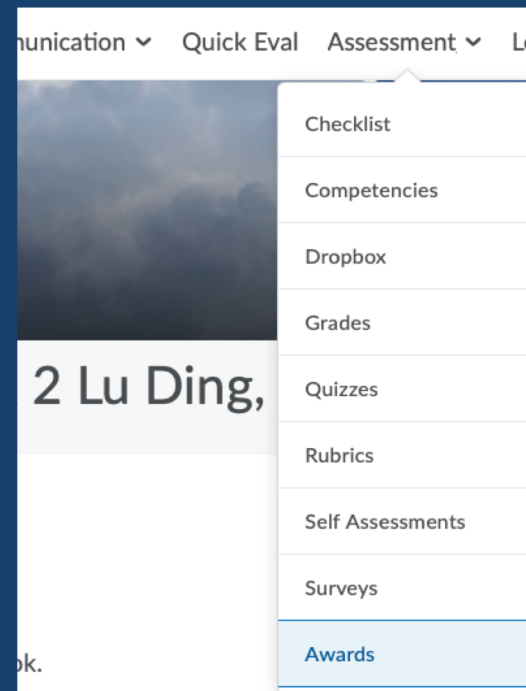
- Introduce themselves
  - Discussion board (encourage picture sharing or creating a video)
  - A live session

# BEYOND THE FIRST WEEK

1. Rediscover student introductions
  - Playing an asynchronous **bingo** game based on their introduction posts
  - Hold another live session to let your students to talk about what they have learned in the course and what they expect more from the course
2. Create a “coffee shop” thread
  - share a piece of joke in the middle of the semester
3. Let your students do video or audio online discussion

# BEYOND THE FIRST WEEK

- Use gamification
  - Enable voting function and give extra points (badges) for social behaviors.
  - Create group projects and ask them to create a sales pitch for their project. Let students to vote for the best project. Declare the winner group.
- Create shared goals.



# TODAY'S TAKE AWAY

Social presence needs to be cultivated from day one (even before day one) and worked at throughout the course to maintain it.

1. Set an approachable tone in your syllabus
2. Use video discussions for introductions
3. Enable up vote function in D2L to encourage peer support
4. Use Activity Feed to “teach”
5. Create a “coffee shop” discussion thread
6. Design some casual group projects in the middle of the semester (e.g., randomly put students into groups and let them to figure out why, gamification)

# QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFO

- Questions?
- Contact information
  - Office: 1009 Booth Library
  - Phone: (217) 581-3716
  - Email: [lding@eiu.edu](mailto:lding@eiu.edu)
  - Schedule meetings through Calendly  
@ [calendly.com/lding](https://calendly.com/lding)

