

2020-2021 FACT2 Task Group Report: Online Student Engagement & Support Models

October 2021

Introduction

Access to education, through quality online programs, is part of SUNY's mission and overall enrollment strategy. As more campuses add online learning to their portfolios, and more students enroll in and complete online programs, SUNY campuses must strategize ways to connect students to their peers and institution, reduce isolation, improve student outcomes, and cultivate online alumni. Across SUNY's 64 campuses, there are examples of institutions developing and implementing strategies that foster a sense of community and provide support for online students. These examples involve efforts from a variety of campus offices including Online & Distance Learning, Technology, and many units within Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. As SUNY campuses continue to offer and develop new online degrees within SUNY Online, it is essential to find ways to improve the online experience and help students attain their educational and affinity goals.

Research shows that connections made in and outside of the classroom reduce student isolation, especially in online settings (Berry, 2019). As such, how students engage and interact in their courses - and the social presence of the instructor needed to facilitate such engagement - will have a significant impact on a student's perceptions of quality and value of online learning. Instructor knowledge of how students are performing requires regular and substantive interaction. Successful engagement strategies are holistic in nature, and involve interaction with the instructor, course content, peers, support staff, the institution, and beyond.

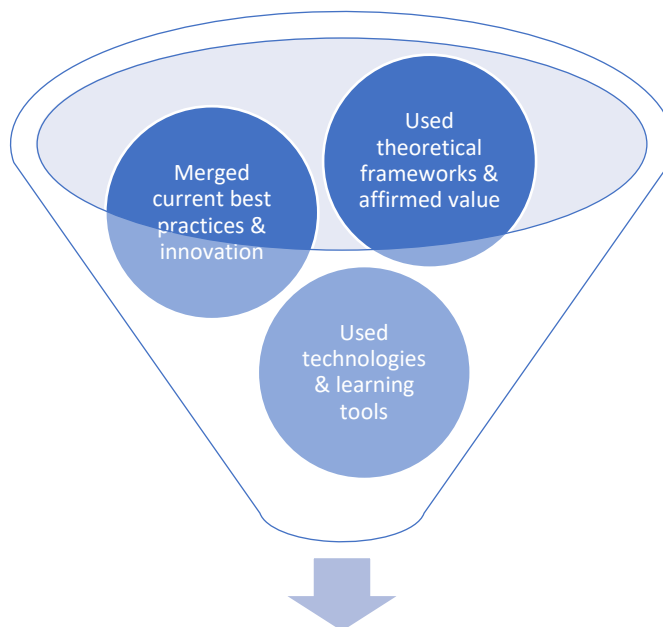
The underlying foundation of holistic student engagement is building a relationship between students for learning. Building of a relationship seems self-evident and awareness of it is not new. John Dewey, renowned philosopher and educator, described similar ideas in his pedagogic creed (1897). Although hardly novel in its approach, the systematic study of these relationships as educational engagement became commonplace within the past 40 years (Ewell, 2008; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; King-Alexander, 2000; Kuh, 2009). This includes a scaling of engagement through disengagement. Engagement is comprised of behavioral, cognitive, and affective. Online holistic engagement is defined as the incorporation of all three components in an online delivery platform. Behavioral engagement involves the meaningful actions of students, while emotional engagement includes students' feeling concerning the educational experiences. Cognitive engagement refers to the degree in which students invest in their educational and academic experiences, including the amount of effort put forth for comprehension and mastery of learned material. This is also known as the meta-construct.

This white paper discusses how to create a holistic model of online student engagement and support services. Findings of the FACT2 Task Force explore and identify current practices of online student engagement and propose new ways of thinking about holistically supporting and engaging online students in the remote environment. Many of the innovative strategies described in the paper are the direct result of campuses pivoting to remote learning during the COVID crisis.

Executive Summary

The FACT2 Task Force on Online Student Engagement and Holistic Supports distributed its work across the following working groups: (1) Social, Wellness, and Engagement (2) High Impact Practices and (3) Academic Engagement. All working groups:

- Used theoretical frameworks (online student engagement, online teaching, and online student support services) to frame their work of creating a holistic model of student engagement and support
- Affirmed that online wrap-around student services and engagement opportunities are vital to the well-being and academic success of online students (student retention and persistence);
- Merged current best practices on student engagement and support with innovative approaches to provide access and opportunities for students in a virtual setting; and
- Identified technologies and online learning tools to create and adopt/adapt best practices in student engagement and support to remote and virtual learning.



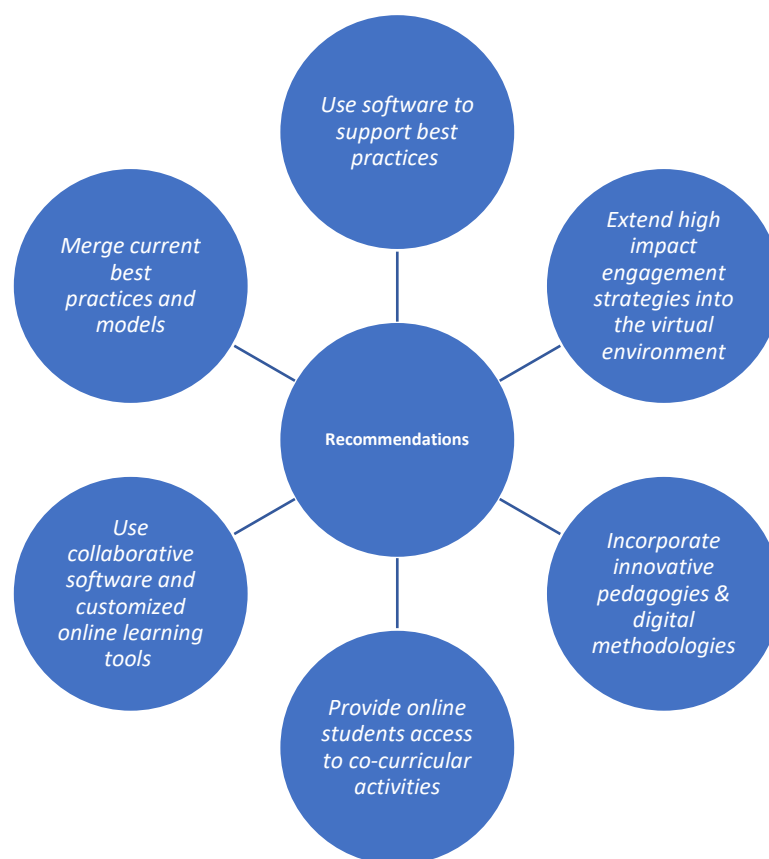
MOSES: Model for Online Student Engagement and Support

The FACT 2 Task Force recommends the following actions for creating MOSES: Model for Online Student Engagement and Support:

- ***Extend high impact engagement strategies into the virtual environment.*** Examples include remote and virtual internships (service and experiential learning activities,) that expand locations and opportunities for students to learn; undergraduate research & field studies that use data analysis software and virtual workplaces to support a create an online scholarly community; virtual class projects and entrepreneurship opportunities that provide online students with mentorship and training.

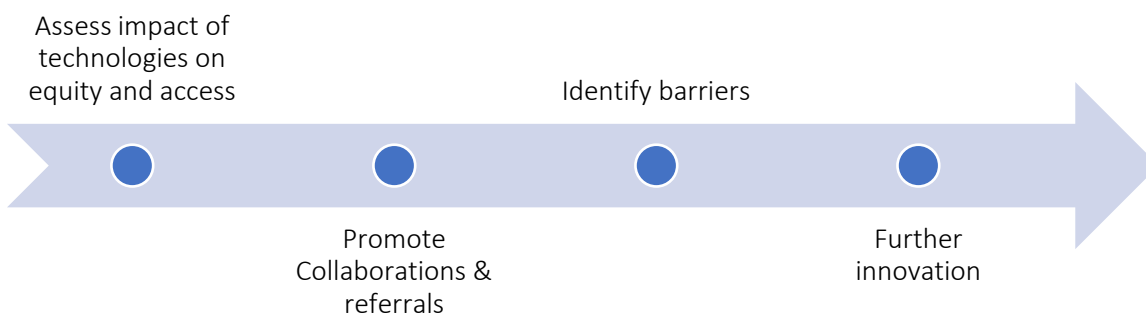
- ***Provide online students access to co-curricular activities:*** (e.g., access to be involved in student clubs and organizations, participate in signature college events, engage with college speakers)
- ***Use collaborative software and customized online learning tools*** (e.g., Padlet, LMS discussion boards, gamification, digital storytelling, blogs, and vlogs, MS Teams, Slack & Taskade, Virtual Reality platforms such as VirBela) as the technical infrastructure to support academic engagement in virtual environments.
- ***Build on existing effective online teaching practices and incorporate innovative pedagogies*** (e.g., digital storytelling, project-based learning, reflective practices)
- ***Scale new digital methodologies*** (e-portfolios and automated assessments) to facilitate the use of high-impact strategies to support student engagement in virtual environments.
- ***Merge current best practices and models*** on promoting student well-being (QPR training, peer-to-peer assistance hotline, effective online communities, peer networking) with the use of technologies (SUNY-branded Crisis Text Line: Student TeleCounseling Network mobile-friendly app)
- ***Use software to amplify student self-service and support best practices*** (Starfish, EAB, Signal Vine Degree Works)

The FACT2 group acknowledges existing models of holistic student supports from both within and outside of SUNY that bring together discrete pieces and initiatives to strengthen online student success including Online Learning Consortium (OLC) Framework, Institutional Readiness (SUNY Online), Achieving the Dream, Strong Start to Finish, Inside Track Coaching, Aspen Institute, Noel-Levitz (SUNYO Coaching).



Furthermore, the FACT2 Task Force believes that the MOSES: Model for Online Student Engagement and Support can be strengthened by:

- Examining how the use of technologies to facilitate online students support and engagement impacts student access and equality
- Promoting collaborations, referrals, and networking on campuses and across SUNY. Examples include promoting the Student TeleCounseling Network and applying the Eduroam principle of proximity and access to other resources
- Evaluating campus business process for organizational redundancies and potential barriers to student success and
- Using Business Processes Mapping results to capture how students are directed/assisted in the online pipeline and data use protocols to identify barriers to student success and completion to identifying implicit biases impacting student access and
- Adding co-curricular and engagement activities and identifying high-impact practices that are not offered virtually, and explore possible solutions/virtual equivalent.



Working Group Recommendations

The recommendations and findings of each of the working groups (and their subgroups) are shared in this section. For a deeper dive into each recommendation, please see the accompanying spreadsheet.

Group 1: Social, Wellness, and Engagement

Mental Health & Wellness

Campuses can be instrumental in the prevention and early treatment of mental health disorders. A comprehensive awareness of the mental health needs of online students is critical to student success.

Untreated mental health issues negatively impact GPA, enrollment, and retention (Healthy Minds and College Life Study).

Data shows that early interventions can yield long-term benefits. Faculty members are now at the front line of responsibility for identifying emotional and mental health issues. To help identify issues and provide real-time solutions for online students offer continued faculty training/awareness. Faculty/staff can then provide students with information and referrals to college counseling staff or community centers for referrals.

The following programs are currently being used by SUNY campuses to provide supportive mental health services to online students. These best practices are grounded in various theoretical frameworks (JED Comprehensive Framework; Comprehensive 3:1 Prevention Framework; and best practices culled from public health approaches).

- QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) is an evidence-based emergency mental health intervention for people at risk of suicide and refers them to the appropriate care.
- Peer-to-Peer Assistance Hotline: Middle Earth is a student-staffed hotline that connects students with peer counselors who are trained to assess a caller's well-being, and if necessary, link students to appropriate mental health services.
- SUNY-branded Crisis Text Line: The 24/7 text service provides a confidential way for students to reach when experiencing difficult feelings such as loneliness, stress, and depression, or having thoughts of suicide.
- Student TeleCounseling Network: The Student TeleCounseling Network provides no-cost telepsychiatry and Tele counseling for students struggling with depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems. Services include remote counseling sessions and are provided by clinicians at SUNY Upstate Medical University's Department of Psychiatry at select SUNY campuses.
- Thriving Campus, a mobile-friendly app that provides every student from SUNY's colleges and universities with access to a network of more than 6,000 licensed mental health services.

Student Success & Support Approaches

When students transition into an online learning setting, they often sacrifice some of the benefits traditional college experiences can provide including a strong sense of community, networking with other students, the emotional support of being surrounded by their peers, and support for basic needs.

The following best practices and strategies can provide these benefits as well as increase traditional key performance indicators for online students, such as GPA, credits earned, and retention rates. They are organized into two main categories of *Establishing Community and Addressing Online Student Needs*

Establishing Community:

- Online communities are becoming an increasingly important part of the online learning experience. Many online students share that they often feel isolated throughout their educational experience. Online communities can provide that sense of community and belonging within their institution. Additionally, these communities can enhance learning, engagement, and success by increasing collaboration between students and facilitating comradery within the community. The presence of activity in an online learning community perpetuates its use by the students. Institutions that are exploring this kind of community must be committed to creating engagement activities, communication mechanisms, and content. Furthermore, students are

more likely to use the online learning community when they know that they will receive a response. Students are more likely to turn to people who are most accessible over those who are most qualified. This means that if a student is looking for advice or opinion, they are more likely to turn to someone who can answer their question quickly. Some examples of this are:

Peer-based Academic Coaching:

- A small group model that fosters student interaction with campus resources, events, and engages them in their online courses using research-based, peer-reviewed strategies for promoting academic success in higher education. Measures of contact and points of contact are monitored by the Academic Coach, and the professional program Supervisor, to ensure the development and attainment of personal goals to connect to the campus and succeed academically. Guidance is provided through weekly virtual meetings where Coaches come prepared to teach mini-lessons that scaffold students towards independence and empowerment in the online setting. Support is provided in the form of ongoing goal monitoring, peer-networking, and peer championship as they journey through another semester. Connections are provided in the small-group setting as students connect with their peers and to the broader community. Accountability is provided through individualized goal development and progress monitoring.

Peer Mentor Programs:

A mentorship that pairs a person who has lived through a specific experience (peer mentor) and a person who is new to that experience. To design an effective program

- Determine why you are starting a Peer Mentor Program: What part of the student experience do you want to improve? (Student engagement at the individual and small-group level to increase persistence and retention rate)
- Determine if you are interested in targeting a specific population: Are you interested in working with a certain demographic of students, or do you want this to be open to all students? (Students who are determined to be at-risk due to GPA and other data-driven identifiers); How will that population be “recruited” into the program? (Individualized recruitment via advisors, instructors, and Accessibility offices).
- Determine the role of mentors: Will the mentor role vary based on the mentor? (All mentors are trained in the art of executive functioning supports and accessing campus resources)
- Determine the primary function of mentors: Will the mentor conduct a lesson on a specific executive functioning skill? Will they facilitate an interactive conversation with the student about their progress towards their individualized goals and barriers encountered? How often will they meet? In what instances will the mentor refer them to campus supports?
- Establish a Training Process: This will ensure that online students have consistent information and supports.
- Design a Matching Process: This will depend on who is being recruited into the program. Eventually, this can become a feedback loop of students who had a great experience in the program their first year becoming mentors.

Addressing Online Student Needs:

It is difficult for students to achieve academic success or personal wellness if their basic needs are not met. Some examples include:

- Supporting food, childcare and/or housing insecurity. A holistic model for student support includes a viable food pantry, access to campus childcare services and/or housing options which could be achieved system-side by applying the principle of proximity and access to college tools and supports across SUNY (e.g. EduRoam access to internet, Library Services)

Career Development, Alumni Networking, Leadership Opportunities

As many online students are post-traditional students seeking career advancement and/or change, career development and fostering alumni connections are central to delivering a comprehensive support model and are crucial to both informed decision-making but also career outcomes. While career education needs to be a campus-wide priority reflected in the institution's strategic plan and embedded in relevant having a central center with expertise to lead active collaboration and partnerships with alumni engagement, departments, and colleges is the most effective and financially sound model. This approach should be available to online students and should be widely promoted and easily discovered on college web and promotional materials.

Examples of models and innovative programs:

- The Binghamton University Fleishman Center for Career and Professional Development has been recognized by both SUNY and globally, including earning the NCDA top career center award in 2017, is an example of a career center on a residential campus that was able to quickly and successfully pivot to online services during the pandemic through both resources and programming. The Center's video library captures the innovative virtual programs from this past year, many of which are collaborations with their Alumni Engagement office, including the CONNECT Employer Treks in New York City, Silicon Valley, and D.C.; the All-In Alumni Lunch Interviews; Alumni Career Connections; and the B-Real Talks supporting diversity and inclusion topics. Their award-winning curriculum, including their internship course and career exploration course, is largely online and serves over 900 students yearly, overseen by their faculty-led Academic Council model.
- SUNY ESF Career Services offers an externship program to connect students to alumni. The program offers students the opportunity to create a half-day, one-day and multi-day shadowing experiences that allow students to spend time with alumni at work. Through observation and conversation, participating students can learn more about a profession, receive career-related advice, and reflect on the ways in which their SUNY-ESF education can prepare them for life and success after college.
- The Stony Brook University Center for Remote Internships & Experiential Learning (SBU Center) was launched by the university's career center to provide practical resources for employers during—and, eventually, after—the pandemic. The SBU Center provides a curated set of resources for employers of any size seeking help in creating and managing remote internships. It has sections to support employers in creating a remote experience, recruiting remotely, and supervising remotely, and also gives an overview of best practices in virtual work.
- The SUNY Oswego offices of Career Services and Development and Alumni Engagement have earned state-wide recognition for collaborative programming and engagement with online learners and alumni. SUNY Oswego's Syracuse campus, in addition to the growing virtual population, fueled a multi-year effort to provide equitable resources to both in-person and online learners. Consequently, both offices quickly moved into a virtual environment, offering the same - or more - resources, programs, events and services. The top initiative during the pandemic was the creation and implementation of the inaugural "Imagine 2021" program - a five-week career development and alumni engagement opportunity, which attracted hundreds of students, alumni, faculty, staff and employer participants, and which was recognized with top honors in several award categories within statewide professional associations.

Coaching and Advising

Emphasis on Proactive, Mentoring Approach:

- Proactive advising/coaching focuses on reaching out to students before they are struggling in their coursework. For this approach to be successful, there must be a strong relationship established between the advisor/coach and student. This can be achieved by having the advisor/coach consistently check in with the student and have a strong referral network with the various student support offices the college offers. These check-ins provide opportunities for students to communicate with their advisor/coach as issues arise. Furthermore, a(n) advisor/coach with a strong referral network becomes a primary point of contact for a student because they know that they will get the help they need. Each of these initiatives is focused on connecting with the student to professionals and services at the institution to increase the feeling of inclusion and support:
 - First Gen Mentoring (B First) - First Generation mixer events of the Binghamton University community and matching up first-gen students with first-gen faculty or staff mentors.
 - Health/Crisis Intervention (C.A.R.E. Team) - (Consultation, Advocacy, Referral, and Education) - works to educate and inform members of the Binghamton University community through caring, advocacy, and supportive endeavors. Our goal is to empower students and attend to their needs holistically through education and personal development
 - Concierge Advising – A single point of contact to whom online students can turn for information, support and guidance who also serves as academic advisor. Finger Lakes Community College and SUNY Oswego are some of the colleges that engage the Concierge Model as an online specific “One-stop” offering administrative, academic and technical support and/or direction to another services.
 - Academic Success Course for students on academic (recovery) probation (unit topics of goal setting, study skills, time (attention) management and organization, campus resources, physical and mental wellness, stress management) [SUNY Online Success Modules, Binghamton’s Watson Academic Success Course] assign to probationary students.
 - SUNYO Success Coaching model - Weekly check-ins with students, communication driven by flags (ex: no log in flag), weekly success tips, readiness webinar series, and networking opportunities.
 - SUNY Empire State College – Each student is assigned an academic mentor who assists students with the creation of an individualized degree plan to suit time to completion, academic profile, and personal goals. This mentor works with cross-functional areas across the college to ensure a seamless academic experience.

Group 2: High Impact Practices

High impact practices (HIP) for engaging and supporting online students are integral to an effective MOSES: Model of Online Student Engagement and Supports. An AAC&U Special Issue article (O’Neill 2010) suggests high impact internships include significant work, reflection, and feedback; High impact internships be linked to learning goals in the major as well as career development; Campuses should

collaborate with career development offices on significant learning experiences rather than just placements; campuses should identify benchmarks on internship quality.

In this discussion, HIP fall into two broad categories:

- Credit-bearing Curricular – embedded in a course for credit that includes a component that is defined as an assignment and/or project through a HIP category. Can be distinguished by certificate or digital badge or can be used for micro-credentialing.
- Non-credit-bearing Co-Curricular – club activities, can be included in a program or exclusive to student activities. Can be distinguished by certificate or digital badge or can be used for micro-credentialing.

Examples of best online HIP practices and tools:

- Cooperative Education - virtual internships (see below): Student motivation for participation in internships/ service learning (stipends). Example of a best practice- Alfred University APEX Program: <https://www.alfred.edu/academics/apex/index.cfm>
- Service-Learning
- Community Service
- Civic Engagement-Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) students working on virtual international community partnerships; and working with community partners for virtually (non-COVID-19 related) to meet in a second space for community building and support networks on a global scale
- Creative Works- COVID-19 related Theater majors are creating virtual theater productions in lieu of live productions; and COVID-19 related Art majors are creating virtual art exhibits in lieu of live exhibits (creation of virtual art exhibit wallboards, e.g., the online tool, Padlet).
- Undergraduate and Graduate Research Opportunities
 - (STEM and others) While many STEM areas have become ‘automated’ in their work and research, data analysis has been an area that needs both exploration and practice. Student practice in data analytics has transitioned into online formats. Student interest in startups, particularly in STEM fields, is rapidly increasing due to increasing media coverage of tech entrepreneurship (e.g., Google, Facebook, Amazon, Tesla, SpaceX, biomedical).
 - Many SUNY campuses now have tech incubators or have partnerships for entrepreneurship development (e.g., virtual trainings, mentoring, internships, etc) for undergraduate and graduate students through START-UP NY or regional startup collaborations.
 - Entrepreneurship (program, class, project): There is increasing participation by undergraduate students in formal extramural entrepreneurship trainings and project development through university or regional business incubators
 - Field Study - -Teacher Education Programs – Student Teaching has migrated to REMOTE teaching and ‘virtual’ observations.
 - International and Domestic Travel/Exchange:
 - i. COIL virtual exchange (Collaborative Online International Learning), a program under SUNY Global incorporates possibilities for both global engagement and collaborative learning in the classroom with a peer institution (<https://system.suny.edu/global/coil-center>). COIL Business students created Social Businesses and Social Business platforms for Sustainable Global issues. Social Business students performed SWOT Analysis as part of their Sustainability Science courses. Business students created mock COIL businesses w/their international partners.
 - ii. Virtual Study Abroad: virtual/online courses in various institutions around the world (<https://www.suny.edu/studyabroad/virtual>)

- iii. International Dialogue Courses which are 1 credit courses featuring facilitated dialogues with international students led by facilitators from the non-profit international exchange organization Soliya. (Cortland) (see <https://www.soliya.net>)
- Virtual Internships
 - General internships: Many successful companies throughout the world do business from remote locations, so it is not surprising that virtual internships reflect these changes in the workplace. Some students have career aspirations that cannot be satisfied in the town or city in which the educational institution is located. These students may be able to serve a virtual internship at an approved site located at a distance. Michael True, a respected authority in the field and host of <http://InternQube.com>, offers a checklist of recommended requirements for designing virtual internship. Important criteria include the need for a syllabus, including assignments, reading, due dates and all course requirements; a course description, published so that it is available to the public; learning outcomes set by the instructor of record; descriptive grading methods and criteria; and summaries of assessment criteria and methods.
 - Virtual Internships (Licensure): credit bearing/non-credit bearing. By discipline: a. Clinicals / Sciences /STEM (use of video tutorials for introduction to discipline as part of REMOTE learning for clinical settings; use of virtual 'telehealth' meetings for patient interactions and data analysis work, b. Education (use of video tutorials for introduction to discipline as part of REMOTE learning for educational settings; use of REMOTE teaching and/or supervised tutorial sessions for student teaching and/or student observations), c. Arts/Music/Entertainment (remote work in planning tours, promotional work), and d. Business (remote work in various areas with data analysis, accounting, marketing/planning)

Considerations when using HIP in online/remote modalities:

- Access to technology and lending laptops ready to connect to Wi-Fi and proprietary software (some offer student licenses), access to low-cost WiFi and low-cost software, training for software use for both students and faculty, as well as remote access to on-campus software packages.
- NC-SARA (the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements) is a voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of postsecondary distance education that maintains strict criteria set forth for ensuring standardization and quality programs for online courses and/or programs. NC-SARA member institutions are required to report learning placements that occurred in states other than New York.
 - It is recommended that institutions keep track of learning placements occurring outside of the institution's home state in order to comply with yearly reporting to NC-SARA (On-ground experiences must be reported for online and on-ground students. Virtual experiences are not reported. This data can be tracked by a career development office or other central office that coordinates internships or learning placements.
- Cross-Campus collaboration for online student research in multiple disciplines for online collaboration and not necessarily for cross-registration/articulation purposes.
- Following-up on student assessment in success for online courses using HIP methods
- Connecting with internship sites: Tools may be used like Purple Briefcase, Handshake, LinkedIn. Videoconferencing tools such as Zoom, Teams, WebEx (State of New York government organizations use WebEx; Students may need technical training in using videoconferencing as well as professionalism in videoconferencing, access to workspace at home.)

- Virtual internships must satisfy the same course and grading criteria as all other credit-bearing courses offered by the educational institution.

Group 3: Academic Engagement

Student satisfaction with their online academic experience has become a high priority among college administrators (Noel-Levitz, 2014). Students who report high satisfaction, defined in large part by their interactions with faculty, tend to stay on track to graduation, which improves institutional outcomes and contributes to student satisfaction (Noel-Levitz, 2014) and is correlated with several outcome measures—such as persistence (Tinto, 2010), course quality, and student success (Noel-Levitz, 2014) Improving how faculty engage with students in their online courses has a clear and direct benefit both to the institution and to online student experience.

The following theories frame the work of the academic engagement working group: Social and Emotional Learning Theories; Constructivism; Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs; Kolb’s Experiential Theory; Bruner instructional scaffolding; Mayer – Cognitive Theory; Backward Design; UX/LX Design and Theory; Media Richness Theory.

The recommendations listed emphasize *authentic learning experiences* for online learning (Charles Bonwell and James Eison, 1991) which includes active student participation in learning experiences. A 2019 study from Harvard University found that students who engaged in active learning techniques scored higher on tests versus students who passively learned material. Engaging in active learning allows students to have a voice that extends beyond the traditional passive lecture-based learning while creating a space for practicing learned material. The approaches can be divided into strategies for pedagogy and assessment.

Pedagogies & Assessment

Examples of best practices and innovation in online teaching and assessment:

Pedagogical Approaches and Strategies:

- Use of Emerging Technologies to support online learning and open discussion (Padlet, LMS discussion boards, gamification for review, digital storytelling, blogs, and vlogs)
- Use of Collaborative Annotation
- Design Collaborative Student Projects (Use of technologies that increase group awareness)
- Engagement via Gamification
- Customize learning tools for continuous student engagement
- Set clear expectations and time requirements
- Make course structure more visual
- Providing content that is relevant with real-world application
- Assign project-based learning with 21st-century skill-based outcomes.
- Professor and students are encouraged to provide and seek constant feedback
- Create opportunities for student agency (i.e., in course structure or assignment choices).
- Active practices particularly salient in the online modality
 - Reflective writing about learning progress
 - Digital storytelling

- Flipped Classroom
- Cooperative Learning

Assessment Approaches and Strategies:

- Use of newer classroom assessment techniques (CATs) for engagement in a low-stakes through high stakes modality
- Use of assessment techniques beyond the traditional rubrics, to include e-Portfolios, digital storyboards, and videos
- Inclusion of digital literacy into ILOs
- Teach and incorporate emerging technologies into courses and programs / Digital Capstone projects
- Scaffolding assignments to promote Higher-Order Learning Skills (HOLS)
- Enabling students to monitor their learning progress (Data visualization tools to track learning are powerful motivators)
- Providing consistent and timely feedback
- Empowering students: emphasizing autonomy and engagement
- Using problem-based and project-based learning
- Actively using Bloom's Taxonomy in assessing Higher-Order Thinking Skills – modification of wording for assessment engages active learning responses for students to demonstrate learned material through higher-level learning and deeper understanding via synthesis and analysis
- Automating assessment collection through LSM/AMS API integration
- Using weekly low-stakes quizzing on LMS as a learning activity
- Using Discussion Boards

Service and Experiential Learning

Culminating experiences are important in order to meet program requirements. Best practices for facilitating these activities include:

- Centralized office to oversee and administer process: Several sources (CUNY, 2016; Hanover, 2014; Huber, 2021 interview; others) have discussed the importance of having a centralized office for administering a service learning or experiential learning program and model. While there are some examples of successful experiential learning programs (e.g. individual capstone courses) successful efforts appear to mimic this centralized structure with either one faculty member serving as both the administrative and mentor roles (e.g. committee member Casucci's IE 592 course) or are sufficiently small that this is not an issue. An important challenge in this regard is how such a centralized group will be funded and structured. The University of Buffalo's ELN is department agnostic and offers elective opportunities for students across the university. Administered by a small staff of approximately 4 individuals, it requires some amount of consistent and available funding, as well as the voluntary support of faculty to mentor students during the experience. However, the structure and the digital platform used to manage student projects and progress can be easily scaled up without significant additional investments in staff and other resources.
- Community Connections: Successful programs have a centralized approach to establishing and maintaining relationships with community partners. This includes initiating and designing community partnerships, building mutually beneficial relationships, sustaining the partnership over time, and ultimately dissolving the relationship (Hanover, 2014). Alternatively, some

programs/courses may require students to identify their own opportunities for experiential learning, though this raises some concerns about equity and opportunity.

- Program assessment tools: There is a clear need for and importance of clear and effective methods of evaluating the successfulness of the program and the student/faculty experience in order to continually improve and address areas of deficiency.
- Experiential /Service Learning Model: The predominant service / experiential learning model being used (i.e. administered by the central office) follows four stages: 1) preparation for the experience, 2) Engagement with the experience, 3) reflecting on the experience, and 4) celebrating the experience and drawing connections to continued learning and growth. (Hanover, 2014; UB ELN website; others)
- System for managing student projects and activities: University of Buffalo's Experiential Learning Network (ELN): <https://www.buffalo.edu/elc.html> has developed a database/project management system to facilitate the administrative and mentoring aspects of experiential and service learning. This was noted to be an essential element that allowed them to quickly and easily scale up their offerings – i.e. this semester they are increasing their student participation by more than 400 students from last semester without any additional investment.

Academic Advising

Online students are diverse and often post-traditional, therefore proactive and holistic academic advising must incorporate anticipatory practices to engage a diversity of online students early and often. These practices can be organized into both affective competence of advisor to create online community combined with thoughtful communication strategies.

Affective Community Building

In order to promote an active and engaged community, institutions should attempt to anticipate student engagement needs. Face to Face students have the benefits of physical cues and proximity whereas remote student are physically distanced from each other. Strategies to encourage affective community building include:

- Electronic resources are not a full substitute; the advisor is the resource
- Tighten the agenda: Shorter, more frequent meetings are better; prepare in advance; advise and empower students; provide self-serve options for students; set future appointments
- Start building rapport early (after admissions)
- Let students know the communication options and how to access advising
- Set expectations and boundaries
- Guidance regarding follow-up (when communication occurs next / how to reach advisor)
- Reaffirm that students they are considered part of the community and the college values them and cares about them regardless of modality / proximity
- Share / refer students to resources like COVID-19 resource pages
- Ask students open-ended questions early in a session to find out where they are
- Embed support in courses when possible (co-requisite)
- Provide Peer-to-peer learning / support
- Use Open Educational Resources (OER) when possible for both financial and accessibility reasons
- Provide 24/7 access / evening hour

- Host scavenger hunts, virtual meet and greets and other fun ways to engage with students
- Send timely communication of support resources (e.g., remind students of tutoring resources during 3rd week of classes)

Communication Practices & Tools

Effective practices involve the use of technology tools and overt engagement strategies to connect with online students.

- **Email Advising:** Email is not just administrative task; try to replicate natural exchange that would occur in person; provide unsolicited information if helpful
 - Be conscious of absence of visual cues, diversity of students / situations
 - Include an infographic with your name, photo, and short bio in your first message
 - Check in messages (How are you? Do have any questions/anything I can help with? Any support I can provide?)
 - Inform students of Open Advising Hours with a link
- **Phone advising:** While there are no visual cues, tone of voice may indicate emotional state; start positive; use humor carefully
- **Videoconferencing:** video showcases visual cues, can provide background info (i.e., photos); accessibility and may be easy to use, however, it's important to have back up plan for disruptions
 - Be conscious of background
 - Offer online appointments to all students
 - Offer instructions on how to schedule an appointment
 - Begin by asking students to confirm their phone number in the event that video conferencing is not possible or technology fails, the session can take place by phone
 - Use the advantages of online meetings: screen sharing and looking at resources together. Students can save links on the spot as well.
 - Provide open office hours on zoom
- **Texting:** Students are drowning in email, if there's a texting function available in the system and student is comfortable with it, use it
- **Video recordings:** Particular platforms such as Zoom/ WebEx/ Panopto/ EAB/ Navigate can be very helpful. They may be used to create / share short videos that explain things many students need to know
- **Social media:** Students engage via social media online, an advisor may have this responsibility as part of the expectations of the role. Time consuming but students appreciate the effort.
 - Posting pictures of pets, Trivia games (department/webpage trivia)
- Admittedly time consuming but students appreciated the effort
- **Cohort meetings:** Create community or simply group students that are approaching various milestones (e.g. comprehensive exam, graduation) and arrange for a cohort meeting to answer common questions, make pertinent reminders.
 - Piazza advising page – advisors using this platform also used by faculty in their classes. Includes a live discussion board where students can interact with faculty and peers. Announcements may be posted, questions answered and link resources like registration information and forms.
- **Success Coaching:** Proactive coaching methods to help students set and reach their goals.
 - Topics include coaching students through adjustment to online learning, providing referrals to/ explanations of resources at institutions (career services, academic tools, health/wellness, goal setting)

Conclusion

Access to education, through quality online programs, is part of SUNY's mission and overall enrollment strategy. As more campuses add more online learning to their portfolios, and more students enroll in and complete online programs, SUNY campuses must strategize ways to connect students to their peers and institution, reduce isolation, improve student outcomes, and cultivate online alumni. It is essential to find ways to improve the online experience and help students attain their educational and affinity goals.

The SUNY MOSES: Model of Online Student Engagement and Supports is proposed to integrate student academic and personal support systems and continuously assesses, optimizes, and uses technology to scale supports. In order to do so, the FACT 2 Task Force on Online Student Engagement and Holistic Supports recommends the following actions:

- Extend high impact engagement strategies into the virtual environment
- Provide online students access to co-curricular activities
- Use collaborative software and customized online learning tools
- Build on existing effective online teaching practices and incorporate innovative pedagogies
- Scale new digital methodologies
- Merge current best practices and models
- Use software to amplify student self-service and support best practices
- Examine how to use technologies to facilitate online students support and engagement impacts student access and equality
- Promote collaborations, referrals, and networking on campuses and across SUNY
- Evaluate campus business process for organizational redundancies and potential barriers to student success
- Business Processes Map how students are directed /assisted in the online pipeline
- Examine data use protocols to identify barriers to student success and completion to identifying implicit biases impacting student access
- Offer co-curricular and engagement activities and identify high-impact practices that are not offered virtually, and explore possible solutions/virtual equivalent

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Appendix

Online Student Engagement and Holistic Support Models Committee Membership

Co-Chairs Molly Mott, SUNY Canton, Associate Provost and Dean of Academic Support Services & Instructional Technologies & Jill Pippin, SUNY Oswego, Dean, Extended Learning

Academic Engagement Subcommittee	Social, Wellness & Co-Curricular Engagement Subcommittee	High Impact Practices Subcommittee
Co-Chairs: Seana Logsdon – SUNY Empire State College Nicole Simon – Nassau Community College	Chair: Michele Forte – SUNY System Administration	Co-Chairs: Adele Merlino – SUNY Maritime Nicole Simon – Nassau Community College
Judith Collette – SUNY Oswego Adele Merlino – SUNY Maritime Liz Shea – SUNY Alfred Andrea MacArgel – Binghamton University Katie Ghidiu – Monroe Community College Meredith Volker – University of Buffalo Katelyn Prager – Fashion Institute of Technology Sabrina Casucci – University of Buffalo Jennifer Goodall – University of Albany Alena Rodick – Empire State College Jill Pippin – SUNY Oswego Sara Oliveria – Binghamton University Cherie Van Patten – Binghamton University	Tai Arnold – Empire State College Nikki Hall – SUNY Brockport Nazely Kurkjian – SUNY System Administration Molly Mott – SUNY Canton Jim Michalowski – University of Buffalo Mele Nelson – Genesee Community College Kelli Smith – Binghamton University Christine Schmitt – SUNY System Administration Olivia Hoffman – SUNY System Administration Susan Deane – SUNY Delhi Candi Griffin-Jenkins – SUNY System Administration Cheryl Hamilton – SUNY System Administration Corinne Shanahan – Monroe Community College	Meghanne Freivald – SUNY Alfred Janet Nepkie – SUNY Oneonta Chris Badurek – SUNY Cortland Vikram Pagpatan – SUNY Downstate Medical University Sharon Bunch – Binghamton University