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Meeting Students Where They Are

Leveraging Social Presence in an Online Advising Team Model Rooted in the CAEL Principles for Effectively Serving Adults

Kathleen Embry, Ph.D.
Online Program Chair,
General Education
For participants to come away with *at least one practice* that can be implemented for their institution.

To Understand and Discuss:

*The Post-Traditional Learner*

*Barriers to Success*

*Social Presence*
The Post-Traditional Learner

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>LABEL</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTIC FACTORS</th>
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</table>
| American Council on Education  | Post-traditional learners (2013) | Age 25 or above  
Are needed wage earners for themselves or their families  
Are military connected  
May have dependents  
Work full time |
| Lumina Foundation              | Today's student (2015)       | Older than 25  
Working while enrolled  
Raising children  
Financially independent  
Racially diverse  
Struggling to graduate |
| Excelencia in Education        | Post-traditional learners (2013) | May need academic preparation or remediation  
Enroll at a community college or part time  
Delay entry  
Live off campus with parents or own dependents  
First generation  
Latino or African American  
Worked over 30 hours each week |

Situational or life factors relate to the unique life circumstances

Institutional factors relate to campus culture and institutional practices, procedures and policies

Dispositional or attitudinal factors pertain to the individual characteristics or qualities internal to the individual

Cross (1981)
CAEL: Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adult Learners

**Outreach**
Conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities.

**Life & Career Planning**
Addresses adult learners’ life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals.

**Financing**
Promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners in order to expand equity and financial flexibility.

**Assessment of Learning Outcomes**
Defines and assesses the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by adult learners—both from the curriculum and from life and work experience—in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.

**Teaching-Learning Process**
Faculty uses multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.

**Student Support Systems**
Assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students’ capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.

**Technology**
Uses technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.

**Strategic Partnerships**
Engages in strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners.

**Transitions**
Supports guided pathways that lead into and end from the institution’s programs and services in order to ensure that students’ learning will apply usefully to achieving their educational and career goals.

**Adaptivity**
Adjusts to shifting external market forces and is able to adapt to the changing expectations of internal stakeholders, students, and employers—understanding the needs of those they serve by developing creative academic solutions.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (2017)
Using just one or two words… how would you define *social presence*?
The research presents social presence as...

... **degree of and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationships** (Short, Williams, and Christie, 1976).

... **a significant predictor of audience satisfaction within computer-mediated forms of communication** (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997).

... **overall perceived learning predicted by perceived social presence in online courses** (Richardson and Swan, 2003).
Based on this research we can assume that advising for online students needs to ensure that students feel genuinely connected to their advisor/s and the advisor-student relationship feels ‘real’.
Serving fully online and geographically dispersed students.

Serving post-traditional students with limited opportunities to connect.

Guarding against transactions becoming task-oriented and impersonal.
Questions to Consider

What barriers do adult/online/non-traditional students encounter at your institution?

How can you establish social presence with advisees when using computer-mediated communication?

What other best practices in advising can be adapted for use by institutions as they look to serving all types of learners?
Step 1: INDIVIDUAL THOUGHT AND REFLECTION

• Consider which of Cross’ (1981) barriers most impacts your students: Situational, Institutional or Dispositional

• Identify the CAEL Principles which can inform your efforts at helping students overcome these barriers.
Step 2: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Considering the CAEL Principles identified, how will you genuinely ‘connect’ with remote students or establish ‘social presence’ with your advisees/students, so that when difficult conversations need to happen, the student will be comfortable working with you.

Step 3: SHARING
American InterContinental University (AIU)

- Est. 1970
- Online Houston Atlanta
- First gen First time Post-traditional
- Academic & Prof. Success focus
- 12,000 students
- High Touch
- 90%+ fully online
- Grad Team Model
Identified Barriers to Success: 
* Situational or Life Factors
* Dispositional or Attitudinal Factors

Identified CAEL Principles:

- **Outreach**
  Conducts outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities

- **Life & Career Planning**
  Addresses adult learners' life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals

- **Student Support Systems**
  Assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students' capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners

- **Technology**
  Uses technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience
Working in collaboration and sitting together as a team, including online faculty
AIU Graduation Team Model

- Team effort
- Consistent & coordinated
- Structured & systematic
- Feedback detailed & constructive
- Individualized support & attention

- Early connection to career focus
- Education as a life goal
AIU Graduation Team Model

- Coordinated outreach
- Fewer redundant conversations
- Improved rapport
- Identification of at-risk students
- Classroom performance indicators

- Action-oriented
- Connect to learning support
- Navigational assistance
- Multiple modes of communication
Measurement of outcomes is both anecdotal and informed by data analysis

Outcomes

- Increased engagement & responsiveness
- Increased student satisfaction
- Greater team collaboration / coordinated effort


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