

Abstract

THESIS: Building Community Among Online Learners

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Online learners are increasing in number, many learners face feelings of isolation. One way to quell those feelings of isolation is the formation of a community around the learner. Using the Community of Inquiry framework, this study engages a two-part design including several instructor interviews and a learner survey to discern which teaching strategies were perceived as most effective at forming community within their course. Using constructivist teaching methods, with active learning assignments, being creative with Web 2.0 technologies, and building a strong social presence were instrumental in learners' perceptions correlating with increased sense of learning community. The findings for this study show applicability to building online learning communities and establishing some best practices for instructors who are new to teaching in a virtual setting.

Keywords: virtual community, online learning, learning community, Community of Inquiry.