

Foreword

Online learners come to our courses in many forms, but to succeed they must be engaged learners capable of quality online interaction and participation. An emerging research base tells us that they must also possess—or develop—a solid online presence. While we have known for some time that an exclusively teacher centric, content driven approach does not work well for many online learners, we haven't yet fully resolved how best to address this issue.

This volume seeks to provide insight into these complex issues via an interdisciplinary dialogue intended to assist instructors considering how to effectively integrate social presence into their online courses. Through research and practical experiences teaching online, chapter authors document the importance of interaction, participation, and social presences even as they identify concrete ideas to scaffold quality, rigorous online learning using these methods. Similarly, those considering the efficacy of online instruction or of building and curating their own online presence will find evidence here to spark their own thinking.

In its totality, this volume seek to assist educators to improve the online learning experience without sacrificing rigor or quality. The evidence offered here suggests that the integration of purposeful interaction, participation, and social presence activities can assist us to do so.

In summary, this volume makes a valuable contribution to the literature on course development and delivery to improve instruction, learning, and satisfaction in online courses. The chapters that make up this volume serve as a valuable resource for stakeholders interested in improving online learning. Those who teach or plan to teach online will find this interdisciplinary volume useful as will those interested in conducting research further exploring issues of interaction, presence, and participation in online courses. Specifically, those looking to make the case for the necessity of active learner engagement in the online learning course will find ample evidence here to support their future research efforts.

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