# Online Courses & Honors Students

These best practices are based on the findings of a longitudinal mixed-methods research study conducted with University of Florida Honors Program students

## 1. Instructor presence is essential

Maintain regular communication outside of instruction including emails, announcements, reminders of upcoming assignments, etc. (Canvas tools can help)

Provide prompt and actionable feedback on assignments, this includes instructor engagement in text-based discussion threads

Present opportunities for 1-on-1 student-instructor connection and engagement (e.g., video or phone-based office hours, video conferencing, virtual meetings)

# 2. Develop activities to support knowledge acquisition

## ✓ DO

incorporate assignments that promote critical and higher-order thinking

anchor text-based discussion prompts around debatable questions and shared artifacts that foster the negotiation of knowledge

## ✗ DO NOT

include media (e.g., articles, videos) without providing context/connection

base grades on check-point assignments (e.g., quiz questions pulled directly from text, unmonitored or superficial discussion assignments)

# 3. Provide opportunities for relationship building
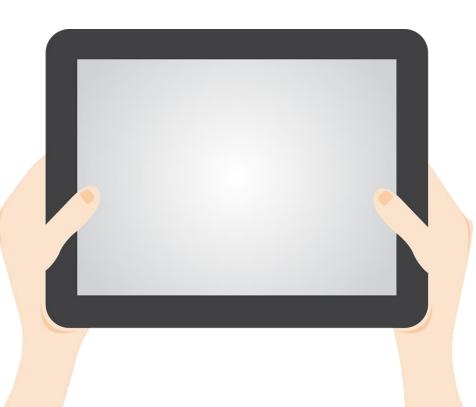
**INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT**

- Students believe unscripted lectures promote learning and connection, they enjoy anecdotes, real-world examples, instructor experiences, and humor
- They fear how they will be perceived if their first 1-on-1 interaction is an emailed question, create a virtual classroom environment where questions are encouraged and supported so students feel comfortable reaching out for help

**STUDENT-STUDENT**

- They want to be acknowledged and valued by their peers but must feel comfortable putting themselves out there, set up activities where they can connect early (e.g., introductions, breakout rooms, learning-based games)
- Honors students benefit from a social climate that supports and encourages probing questions, skepticism, and expressing and contributing to ideas

# 4. Support different learner characteristics

Learner characteristics, specifically gender and ethnicity, impact the way honors students engage in online courses and the level of support needed in this learning environment

Provide a variety of resources to support learning (e.g., supplemental readings, assignment types) and meaningful connections (e.g., ways to reach out to the instructor for help) without the students asking

Build environments where students feel safe and confident among their peers (e.g. small group discussions in place of an entire-class discussion)

Give students voice by allowing them opportunities to share information and lead discussions