

## Engagement as a Predictor of Student Flourishing in the Online Classroom

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**Abstract :** It has been shown that traditional students flourish as a function of several factors including level of academic challenge, student/faculty interactions, active/collaborative learning, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment. With the increase in demand for remote or online courses, factors that result in academic flourishing in the virtual classroom have become more crucial to understand than ever before. This study seeks to give insight into those factors that impact student learning, overall student wellbeing, and flourishing among college students enrolled in an online program. 4160 unique students participated in the completion of End of Course Survey (EOC) before final grades were released. Quantitative results from the survey are used by program directors as a measure of student satisfaction with both the curriculum and the faculty. In addition, students also submitted narrative comments in an open comment field. No prompts were given for the comment field on the survey. The purpose of this analysis was to report on the qualitative data available with the goal of gaining insight into what matters to students. Survey results from July 1st, 2016 to December 1st, 2016 were compiled into spreadsheet data sets. The analysis approach used involved both key word and phrase searches and reading results to identify patterns in responses and to tally the frequency of those patterns. In total, just over 25,000 comments were included in the analysis. Preliminary results indicate that it is the professor-student relationship, frequency of feedback and overall engagement of both instructors and students that are indicators of flourishing in college programs offered in an online format. This qualitative study supports the notion that college students flourish with regard to 1) education, 2) overall student well-being and 3) program satisfaction when overall engagement of both the instructor and the student is high. Ways to increase engagement in the online college environment were also explored. These include 1) increasing student participation by providing more project-based assignments, 2) interacting with students in meaningful ways that are both high in frequency and in personal content, and 3) allowing students to apply newly acquired knowledge in ways that are meaningful to current life circumstances and future goals.

**Keywords :** college, engagement, flourishing, online

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