



# CULTIVATING CONNECTION

## THREE WAYS ACROSS MODALITIES

- **PRACTICE VULNERABILITY:** Be vulnerable with students about learning and emphasize that you are in this together. Ask students to be slightly vulnerable with each other at the start of the term by kicking off a conversation where everyone responds to a prompt that goes beyond name, major, hometown (ex. share a story of a time you felt energized by learning).
- **VALUE YOUR OWN WELL-BEING:** You'll likely need to do for you and your students to make it through the term without burning out. Identify the places where you can pull back to make time for other important aspects of your lives. Talking openly with your students about what you're doing to care for yourself (i.e. "I won't be available for office hours at that time because I'll be out for a run.") can also help students recognize steps that they can take to care for themselves.
- **MEET WITH STUDENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TERM:** Offer "Meet the Professor" slots for 15 minutes at the beginning of the semester to meet as many students one-on-one or in small groups as you can, either in-person (following COVID protocols) or on Zoom. You can offer these for-credit to incentivize.

## THREE WAYS IN-PERSON

- **STRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARING:** Create intentional opportunities for students to share with one another beyond the course material. Take five (5) minutes at the beginning of each class to intentionally connect around a prompt and get in the zone to be in-class.
- **GET STUDENTS MOVING:** Send students out on socially distanced walks for a set period to discuss a text passage or discussion question.
- **CONSISTENT SMALL GROUPS:** Have students in consistent small groups and have them asynchronously interact with those groups during the days when they are not in the classroom. Give them something to work on that requires real collaboration (like submitting a video solution to a case study) to help them bond. If groups are not needed for your course – set-up opportunities for students to identify a "phone-a-friend" for the course that they will regularly check-in with and/or get support from if they must miss a course. Make sure everyone has someone identified.

## THREE WAYS ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS

- **ROUTINE BREAKOUT ROOM INTRODUCTIONS:** Start each session by putting people into breakout rooms of two to three (2-3) for a few minutes and ask them to introduce themselves, say hi and check in with each other so that students can meet new people and feel known in the class.
- **IMAGE CHECK-IN:** Ask students to bring a picture to the class session that represents how they are feeling.
- **EMBRACE PERSONAL REFLECTION AND STORYTELLING:** Invite students to reflect on the content of the course in their personal experiences and provide opportunities for students to share with one another through storytelling and discussion groups. (ex. have students interview someone outside the course in connection with the material and then have them share what they learned from the conversation).

## THREE WAYS ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS

- **PROVIDE OPTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT:** While not required – offer a few optional opportunities for students to call/Zoom in, connect with one another, and ask you questions about the course/assignments.
- **ENGAGING ONLINE INTROS:** Have students post introductions to Canvas before the class starts. These can be text or video contributions where students share about themselves. Consider asking them to answer lighthearted questions (ex. see Inside the Actor's Studio Questions).
- **HELP STUDENTS FIND WHAT THEY NEED:** Create an "I Need . . ." Canvas module that consists of pages that provide students with information about how to get help with the course or access resources at the university (e.g. "I need a rec letter" with information about what you need to write a strong recommendation letter, or "I need someone to talk to" with information about campus, local, and national mental health resources, etc.).