Melissa (*talking to Hope*): So, do you want to try one of your other videos?

Male Guest: Which web browser?

Presenter (Hope): Um, I don’t really need to do this… (talking to herself)

 Can you hear anything? (testing her video)

Alright. Can you guys do me a favor? Does everyone have a clicker? Alright, so, I just want to make sure that this is going to work out. So the first thing that we need to do is set the frequency. The frequency is AA. So if you press and hold the power button until it starts to blink, and you hit AA… you’ll get a real short vote-status green light and that tells you that your frequency is now set to AA. Anyone having any trouble?

Male Guest: *Asks for directions to be repeated again, Hope goes and assists him.*

Hope: So go ahead and hit any button… I’m not sure. Are you guys hitting A, B, C, D, or E? And it’s not receiving my votes. (*Talking to herself*) So why would it be…? (*Responding to someone else, question not heard.*) Um, what do you mean? I created a class. Right here? So, it should work? And I don’t need to do these,… etc.,

*Hope continues to trouble-shoot by changing frequency, updating software, changing out hardware, etc., until it becomes eventually apparent that the i-Clickers won’t be a part of the presentation.*

Suzanne (*not seen in video*): While she’s getting prepared, thank you guys for all coming and thank you for hanging around if you came to the first session. We have some goodies up here for you guys; help yourself. And, just wanted to remind you that this afternoon there’s hands-on labs that are going to be in Hendrix. So, if you haven’t signed up for that, and you’d like to go to the classes today, come on and join us. Sign up on CLEREG and come on over there at 2 o’ clock. It’s from two to four.

Tomorrow we will be at the Academic Success Center beginning at noon with the barbeque lunch, so please feel free to join us for that tomorrow. We have some great speakers there and I’m sure we’ll have a great panel.

Let’s see… Thursday, we will start off bright and early at 10:30 and that will be a streamed session, but you’re more than welcome to come join us at the Academic Success Center; we’ll be sitting there watching a streamed session. But, you could also log in and check it out. Blackboard will be presenting with the Savannah College of Art and Design. Actually, it’s my baby sister…as it turned out, Blackboard had been reminding her to do it, so it’s kind of a small world. She is the E-Learning Development Director at Savannah College of Art and Design; she’s going to be showing one of their courses on how they won the exemplary award on Blackboard this year. So, feel free to join us for that.

Also, Thursday we have a Lunch and Learn with McGraw Hill starting at 11:30. Still have a couple things for that as well. Doctor Patricia Knowles will be presenting. What she does with McGraw Hill connects in Blackboard.

And let’s see, Friday we have Linda Nilson at 9:00, yay! (*People cheer; she must be in the room.*) She’s going to be doing Teaching Gems on the Web and that’s going to be in here at 9 AM. From 9 to until 10, so we’re excited about that, also streaming and recording. Bring your laptops for that session… still seats open for that.

Following that, we will be doing the Digital Media Experience in here where we show you how to use some of those little demos on how to use some of the software that Clemson provides for you.

And following that, we are streaming a session on weeks (*? Hard to understand*) from 1-2:30, and we’ll have a little discussion after that, and there will be streaming of that. And that will all be in here on Friday.

Male Guest: What other is coming up on November 16th, Friday…?

Female Guest: Yes, yes indeed. Well, actually, Friday there are two—you’re in business?

Male Guest: Yes.

Female Guest: That’s really open for business faculty and has to do with online homework, and that’s in 129 Sirrine I think it is…and there’s lunch with that, compliments of Watley. Right after that, well actually, unfortunately it overlaps, so I’ve got to turn into a pumpkin pretty early, but 1:30 to 3:30 is The Tricky Business of Dealing with Cheating, room 214, Brackett Hall. The more the merrier!

Suzanne: Where do they sign up for that?

Female Guest: CIREG/…(*difficult to understand*.)

*Trouble-shooting continues.*

Hope: Sorry guys; I’ll be presenting in a sec. Yea, so I don’t think Clickers are going to work, which is a bummer.

Suzanne: We’ll just have to yell out our answers (*laughter*.)

Hope: We’ll have discussion. Alright, moving on.

Female Guest: Like they do online… “Hold up your hand if you can’t hear me!” (*Laughter.*) If you can’t hear me, you don’t *know* to hold up your hand! (*Sounds of agreement/laughter.*)

Hope: Let me just unplug this; sorry about that. We’ll take those Clickers up later. It was a good idea at the time.

Okay, I’m going to go ahead and get started. My name is Hope Carroll and I work for Teaching and Learning Services. You might have heard of us as Learning Technologies; I always forget to change that… with CCIT. I’ve been here since January. Prior to coming over to CCIT, I taught in Graphic Communications for over six years; that was in the College of Business. So I’ve actually been here at Clemson I guess for over seven years now. And I came to Clemson from teaching at the high school level. I was living in the Raleigh, North Carolina, area and I taught Printing and Graphics at East Wade High, which is right outside of Raleigh. I taught basically grades nine through twelve there. Because it was a vocational class, I had mixed grades in my classes. So, I did teach Computer Applications there, too, and the Computer Applications class was mostly incoming freshman; (it was a little crazy.) But I was just teaching them Word or PowerPoint and stuff like that. I’ve also worked in industry; prior to teaching graphics, I worked in industry shortly. So I did customer service, graphics, and layout; I worked for a newspaper; I did a little bit of sales—that kind of thing. So that’s kind of my background.

So what I’m going to talk to you guys about today is communicating with your students in the online classroom. It can be a real challenge when you’re teaching an online class communicating with them because in the face-to-face classes, you can read body language, you can look around the classroom and make eye-contact with them when you’re talking, you can see if people are on their laptops or if they’ve got their phones in their laps and they’re texting. You can kind of see and read from people what’s going on as you’re talking to them and you know by just kind of looking through the room that they’re paying attention or they’re getting it. But, you can’t see them in an online classroom. And so it becomes a real challenge to try to connect with your students and to make sure that they’re getting it; that they get what you’re talking about; they’re getting the concepts of the class.

So I did have a poll question here. I just wanted to see if we’re all comfortable with saying—I’m not going to ask any crazy questions or anything—but, you know, I’m just interested to see who in this classroom is currently teaching online, or has taught online, or maybe you’re here because you’re interested in teaching online? So, how are you guys kind of positioned? I know Barbara’s taught online before, and there’s a couple of us, Suzanne and Jan, Yahong, and Melissa, and Kara, we all kind of work together with CCIT, so even though we’ve taught the DE workshop online, and we do, that has an asynchronous and a synchronous component to it. I’ll talk a little bit more about that. But, it’s interesting sometimes to see who’s currently teaching online or who’s here because they want to teach online and that kind of thing.

So one good way to kind of jumpstart communication in your online classroom is to start with a welcome message, and sometimes that welcome message is an e-mail, but we’ve actually been kind of walking around this idea of having a video message. I was watching this webinar recently where a lady was talking about how she, to introduce herself to her class, she creates a video. Part of her video (I thought this was a really good idea) was to ask her daughter (who is about eight), “What does mommy do at work?” And so her daughter, you know, basically gave her what she thought her mom did at work. She used that as an intro with her students in her online class to say, “So this is what an eight-year-old thinks that I do all day, but let me actually tell you what we’re going to be doing in this course and what my profession is.

So I thought that was kind of cool as a video intro. Well, I made a video intro about myself, and it’s not real long; it’s about two and a half minutes. But, it’s a little personal so it kind of introduces me and who I am, and I think that’s important in an online class… to let students see where you’re at, what level you’re on. I created this video with Animoto; it’s an online program; it’s free for educators. You get a pro account. You just put a bunch of pictures in, and you add some text. I’m actually teaching a training class on it if you’re interested; you can sign up for my training class. (*To herself*) That’s one of our first babies…Jacie is our first kid, she’s four, and she’s in pre-K at Six Mile Elementary right now. And Nolan is our other baby, and he’s getting ready to be three, but I’m telling you what…temper tantrum boy for real. He’s getting ready to be in his terrible three’s. I love the beach. I love the mountains too but the beach is my preference. So we try to go to the beach at least once a year. We went to Myrtle Beach this year and that was fun.

I love photography; I used to teach digital photography over in graphic communications. That is a friend of mine, she got married over in Savannah and I took the pictures. That was my daughter’s dance pictures that I took at my house. And then just like a few random things that I love… I love cappuccino blasts from Baskin Robins. I love Instagram; I have an iPhone. Coffee and a laptop and social media. I’m also a doctoral student, and we’ll talk a little bit more about this. I’m with Virginia Tech, and I got a graduate certificate in my program kind of along the way. So I think one good way to connect with your students is to connect with them with social media. I have a ton of social media accounts, Pinterest, Facebook, LinkedIn, About.Me, Delicious, you name it, I probably have an account in it. So that’s just kind of a short way to send a welcome message to your students and say, “Hey, this is who I am: you know, I’m a real person, and I have these interests; I have this background. And it’s real easy to make with Animoto. And like I said, I’ll be teaching a training class on that.

So when you start this kind of start this, you’re jumpstarting communication with your students, and one good place to start is with a welcome message. And, whether that’s with a video, it can be an e-mail, it could be something that you add a blank page to Blackboard, and in that blank page, you kind of type up a welcome letter to your students. “Hey, I just want to introduce myself; this is what I expect from you in the next semester. This is what textbook you’re gonna need, you know, these are the requirements.”

One of the things that I talk about, or I used to talk to my students when I taught about GC340, which is Digital Imaging and E Media, part of that course was photography and digital photography. So we didn’t have enough cameras in our program to rent them out or loan them out to students, and so they were required to a purchase a camera, and not just any camera; they couldn’t use their mom’s purse camera, you know, I have one of those Canon Elphs and I keep it in my purse and it’s a really good camera, but that kind of camera wasn’t going to work for concepts and the things that we were going to be learning in class—which was how to meter a scene, and how much light is coming into the camera, and how to control shutter speed and aperture and ISO and stuff like that.

So one of the things that I used to do was I would send them and e-mail, and I would wait until the end of the semester when students had signed up for classes for the following semester and I would look at my student roles, and I would send them an e-mail. So like at the end of the spring, I’d send the students who were enrolled for the fall, I’d send them an e-mail and I’d say, “Hey, you guys have all summer. I know that this is an expensive camera; I know that a lot of you guys are going to be working summer jobs, so you might want to go ahead and tell your parents: there is a camera requirement.” The camera can cost anywhere from $300-700, you know, sometimes cheaper if you get a good deal on Ebay, which I’ve done before. But I also gave them the opportunity to borrow from somebody who took the class previously, which is what a lot of them did. And so I wanted to be able to give them enough time and kind of figure that out, but I also wanted to tell them, you know, “These are the editions of this textbook that I’ll accept. We won’t be reading this thing from front to back, but there is a lot of information in there that you will see represented in the exams in our course. It is important that you pick up this edition or this edition of the textbook.” Um, of course I gave them information on where they can buy a camera, because they have no idea what they’re looking for. I would give them examples of cameras students had bought for the class in the past.

So there’s a ton of information you can include, especially for online students. And, this is for a face-to-face that I was teaching, but there are some really important things that online students need to know. You might put a link in there for student computing orientation; you might put a link in there for the DE website. We do have a Distance Ed website that’s CCIT-sponsored. Or even student services are real important. You know, students aren’t on campus; they don’t know that there are services for them. If they have a disability, for example, they might need to go through student services, you know, for extended time on testing or whatnot. Giving them a link to a syllabus or even if you have a website, just to learn a little bit more about you and what they can expect in the course, or even telling them what their first assignment is going to be so that they can be prepared. It’s kind of like you’re giving them an agenda for that first week or that first day, that kind of thing.

Alright, so, unfortunately this could have been a Clicker question… but we can talk about it. So how would you include your welcome message for your online course? Or maybe this is something you guys are already doing… So, show of hands: how many people think the video might work for them? The video is a cool option. It’s a little dynamic. How many people are already sending welcome e-mails to students ahead of time? Yea, so that’s good… so you guys are on the right track! And I think that’s important to kind of say, “Hey, I know you’re enrolled in my class and I’m looking forward to working with you in the following semester.”

So we’re going to talk a little bit about the importance of communication in the online classroom. And why is communication important? Like I was saying before, you’re not allowed to read body language unless you’re using webcam and really you’re only seeing a facial expression and a lot of times they’re not even looking at the camera…if you’re going to use, if you’re going to let them use a webcam. But it motivates students to engage and participate in a class. So in online classes you kind of have to be a facilitator, and you’re constantly kind of communicating with them and checking in with them and making sure that they are paying attention. Because even if you’re going to meet with them in an online, virtual environment, where you’re kind of face-to-face, but in an online environment… you don’t know that they’re really paying attention. I mean, if they’re talking, they’re maybe just sitting there and they’re listening but they’re not really, because they’re probably multi-tasking. So they could be like texting their friend, checking e-mail, Facebooking while they’re kind of listening to you talk or lecture… so there’s a lot of things that are fighting for their attention too. So it’s good to kind of check in with them.

It also promotes andragogy and heutagogy. This word, heutagogy… and I don’t even know if I’m saying it right, but I had never even heard of this. Until we recently had this Virtual Sloan Conference, it was a three-day conference that we sponsored here at Clemson. We streamed from the Hendrix Center. And I don’t know if you guys, most of you know what pedagogy is…andragogy is peer-to-peer teaching and learning. So that’s when students are helping and teaching and learning from other students in a class. And this happens a lot in online classes, and I am a living example of that. There are so many times that I’ll be in a class and whether it’s an synchronous session in Adobe Connect or it’s an asynchronous class that I’m in, I’m connecting with other people in my class and saying, “Did you understand that assignment?” or “What did you take from that article that we were assigned to read?” And then we’ll talk back-and-forth and we’ll learn from each other doing that.

Now heutagogy is…does anybody, has anybody ever heard of that term? Heutagogy? That’s self-directed learning. And that is big in the online classroom. Because students have to be very independent in the online classroom. They don’t have to always rely on you and you’re not always there to baby-feed them. So they really have to be kind of in charge of their own learning. So that’s where heutagogy comes from.

We’ll let Melissa fix that real quick.

Melissa: Sorry.

Hope: No, that’s alright. We have people in there?

Melissa: Yea.

Hope: Sorry y’all.

Suzanne: We’re also streaming this, so you always run into some interesting things when you’re doing that.

Male Guest: Hope?

Hope: Yes.

Male Guest: On trying to get them motivated, do you just…do you have early deadlines? To kind of make sure that they’re on track right away?

Hope: I mean, I can tell you from experience because I am online student; I’ve been an online student with Virginia Tech since 2009. I’m also kind of a non-traditional student; I’m older, I have a family, and I know what my responsibilities are. But, motivation for me is deadline. It really is. It’s like, if I don’t make this deadline, that my instructor has said, you know, one day past this date, ten points off…two days, twenty points, three days, thirty points… I mean, that’s my driving force. I mean, I have to make a certain grade in grad school.

Male Guest: Do you do like a scale that reduces grade, or just like a cut-off thing? Meet the deadline, or zero?

Hope: Um… I like to give students the option to still turn it in for partial credit. In my mind, if it was me, if I knew I was going to turn it in late and it was nothing I could do about it, and actually this has happened to me before: I’ve e-mailed my professor and said, you know, “There’s no way I’m going to be able to turn that in on time. I just can’t make that deadline; I’ve got too many other things going on.” They say, “I understand, but just keep in mind that I do have a policy, and if you go past this many days, it’s this many points off, and I just want you to be aware.”

And I understand that from the beginning. I guess I just e-mail them kind of hoping that they’ll be like, “It’s okay; don’t worry about it.” You know, like any student that’s going to try. But… what’s up, Barbara?

Female Guest/Barbara: I have in my syllabus that I take a point off for every hour they’re late.

Hope: Yea.

Barbara: It gets their attention.

Hope: It does. It does. And they’re aware, they don’t want a bad grade. I mean, I don’t want a bad grade, I don’t want my grade to be any less than it could potentially be with the quality of the assignment. But, I’d rather have something than nothing.

Male Guest: Yea, the online systems tend to have a… if it’s late, it’s x percent of credit; it’s not exaggerated declining scale. It’s… you choose a rate. And so, I’d be interested in… I like what you say about you get 90 % if it’s this late, 80, 70, then I think zero.

Barbara: And that’s what I’m doing, one point an hour.

Male Guest: How do you keep track of all that when you’ve got a couple hundred students?

Barbara: Um, well I use Turnitin. And Turnitin will not accept late assignments.

Hope: I was getting ready to say: there’s a lot of ways to time-stamp things with dates and time.

Barbara: And so they have to send me an e-mail attachment and I’ve got a date time-stamped. And I’ve got to remind them what time zone we’re in. And sometimes they’ll go on vacation and forget about the time zone difference and I get all these panicked, “I forgot; I’m in a different time zone!” But uh, it adds that little bit of discipline and you can be as flexible with it as you need to be.

Yahong (Female Guest): Yea well, the Blackboard assignment, you can specify the time or day…the time that you want to make the assignment available, or there are also check-boxes and due dates. (*Difficult to decipher*.) Once the assignment is up, you should be able to… (*?*)

Hope (Presenter): Alright, so the third one is ensures student retention and success. And this can be a real issue in the online classroom. There are a lot of students who, if they don’t get it, if you’re not communicating with them on a continual basis, they kind of sleep through the cracks so to speak, and students tend to drop out. They don’t, they’re not… I mean, maybe it’s not that you’re communicating with them enough. Sometimes they have personal issues sometimes because they’re nontraditional students. Life just kind of gets in the way of class and they know they’re not going to be able to make the grade or whatnot. But there is a huge drop-out rate in online classes. And so you do need to be aware that communication and keeping up with them may just help them hold on to the class and stay in the class.

I wanted to read the statistics, this statistic to you guys, “In 2010, there were over 6.1 million students enrolled in at least one online class… that’s a lot of students in an online class. That’s a lot of communication with students in online classes. It takes a lot more communication when you’re teaching an online class than it does with a face-to-face class.

So as some… I wanted to give you guys some personal evidence, and this is my evidence, of student evaluation of a class that I taught in the fall. And this was incoming freshmen, first semester; this was a low-level class. It only met for fifty minutes, once a week, so I hardly saw these kids. And when I did see them, it was a whole bunch of them wanting to talk to me before the lecture got started, and a whole bunch of them wanting to talk to me after the lecture was done, and they were following me to my office. So you can imagine, considering how needy these students were, and they got to see me once a week, you can imagine maybe how needy your online students might be, but they’re not really sure how to connect with you and how to communicate with you. E-mail is real important here!

And, you know, I was talking to my husband about this last night and I know this looks really bad and it wasn’t that I was completely ignoring them—because I wasn’t—I did e-mail them. And a lot of times what would happen is that I would have five students e-mail me with the same question. And so what I would do is I would send an announcement out through Blackboard. I would send a mass e-mail out through Blackboard. And I would say, “I’ve had a lot of questions about this, I just want to clarify.” And I think students wanted personal attention a lot of time; they wanted you to respond to them directly. It if came to them in an e-mail that said, you know, HWAYNE-dash-GC101,-Fall Twenty Tw—and it had that whole Blackboard stream from your course ID, sometimes they wouldn’t really pick up on that. But if it was in response to, “Hey I have a question,” and I was responding to them personally, they’re more likely to open it up and say, “Oh, okay, I didn’t see that you’d already posted that.” And I think a lot of times, that was the deal.

They’re so busy, and they’re multi-tasking. They have so many things going on that they miss that, that that’s in the schedule. You know, don’t e-mail me about that because I’ve already talked about that. And sometimes I would hit them up a bunch of times and they still weren’t processing it. So… obviously, communication is important. And you have to do a lot of it.

So, it’s important to have a policy on communication. That gives your students an idea of what your guidelines are and what your limits are. We typically recommend that you include in your syllabus that you will get back to them within 48 hours of them contacting you, that they can be sure and get an e-mail from you in two days. If they don’t get an e-mail from you, put something in your syllabus that says, “If you haven’t heard back from be within 48 hours, e-mail me again and I promise I’ll get back to you.” But if you’re going to set a policy like that and you’re going to include it in your syllabus, you have to stick to it. I mean it takes a lot of time, especially if you have a lot of students in your class. So just keep in mind that if you’re going to put a policy like this in your syllabus, you have to kind of stick to it. Students will hold you to that. They have to communicate with you.

So what are your guidelines on written communication standards and where do students address questions? And this is something that I saw pretty consistently with the classes that I took with Virginia Tech Online. My professors preferred that if they were class-related questions, if you had a technology-related question, if you had a homework-related question, or an assignment-related question, please post that in the discussion forum. Don’t e-mail me with that question because there may be five other students in the class that have that same question. So if you have these types of, you know, course-specific questions, post them to the discussion forum. I will be checking the discussion forum on a regular basis and responding to any of those questions.

If you have a personal question, than yes, by all means, contact me. And I’ll just tell you from personal experience, sometimes I’ll be like “now if that a personal question or is that a…” Like sometimes I had a hard time with… would other students want to know this? Because sometimes they would be related to the program, or it would be an advisor question, and my advisor happened to be my professor at the time or something like that. So, as a student I got in the process of, if I had a question, what kind of question is it? I would go to the discussion forum first, I would kind of read through all the questions or post my question. If my professor did not get back to me in a few days, then I would actually go to e-mail whether it was personal or not, I needed an answer. So I would go to e-mail in the end.

It’s good to talk to your students sometimes too about what your guidelines are as far as written communication goes. Students tend to write you e-mails like they’re texting you sometimes. They’ll use, you know, “R” instead of “a-r-e,” or “B” instead of “b-e.” So I think it’s important to include in your syllabus what you expect from them. Do you expect a salutation? “Hi, hello Doctor So-and-so.” Then the body of your message, and then to sign off with something, you know, “Best wishes,” “Thanks for your time and consideration.” Do you require that they put a specific subject title in? Let’s say that you’re teaching five classes, and you might in your syllabus say, “When e-mailing me, please make sure that you put GC101, Section 003.” Okay, so I know where this is coming from. That’s really good to kind of include when your students are e-mailing you about things.

And a lot of faculty don’t know about this. Clemson actually has a policy on online interaction. And I took a screen shot; it’s actually on the landing page when you log in to Blackboard. There’s a little box that says, “Notice for Online Courses,” and I know that you guys will see that now when you log in to Blackboard now that I’ve made it apparent to you.

But some of the things that I wanted to point out to you are, I’m not going to read this whole thing, but it does touch on that you can include a provision for instructor-student interaction…So, kind of how you’re going to interact with your students. Are you going to meet every Wednesday from 5:30 to 7:00 in the Adobe Connect room? Make sure that you give them the URL and that they know how to log in.

It also talks down here, there’s been a lot of discussion, not a lot…there’s been some discussion about, what’s the requirement? Are Clemson faculty required to have a synchronous component? No, they’re not. It just says that you will interact in this online course, you will interact with the content, instructor, and class space on a weekly basis. That can be asynchronous, and/or synchronous. So that’s up to you as an instructor. And we recognize, and I think the University recognizes that online classes can be massive… you’ll have 100, plus students. How are you supposed to meet 100, plus students synchronously from 5:30-7:00 on Wednesday nights? You know, sometimes it’s just not possible. I think Clemson recognizes that it can be either/or, and how you define asynchronous or synchronous, which types of interaction are asynchronous or synchronous…we’re about to talk about that actually… Yes?

Female Guest: You know when online classes first started, and this was a number of years ago, but hey, you were alive and well and an adult…

Hope: Yea ☺.

Female Guest: …there was this rule that was discussed about limiting online classes to twenty, maybe twenty-five, and I’m thinking I remember this from a conference that I went to in 1999. What happened? What happened? Why did those limitations of twenty, twenty-five go out the window.

Hope: I don’t know. That’s a good question because we have faculty members campus that are teaching 500 + students at one time.

Another Female Guest: The recommendation hasn’t changed. Like, there isn’t anything that says the best learning happens in groups of 150 people. Like we all know that’s not true.

Hope: Right.

First Female Guest: But it’s done all the time, to the extreme. You know, 500…

Hope: You know what I think happened? Money. I think that’s really what happened. People said, “Oh my gosh, this is a money-maker. Why not let more students sign up?”

Original Female Guest: Because the quality will suffer. *Other people make affirmative sounds.*

Hope: Yea… yea I know. Sometimes money trumps quality (*Laughs*.)

Original Female Guest: No, all the time.

Hope: Yea, yea…I mean I can’t—

Male Guest: You couldn’t divide it if you have three hundred students…you could divide it into three sections of 100 each.

Hope: Yea.

Male Guest: Ten sections of thirty.

Hope: Yea.

Melissa: But even still, trying to have asynchronous discussion with one hundred students… that’s like, 200 e-mails every thirty minutes.

Hope: I mean, our cap with Adobe—we have a web-conferencing tool here that’s available to faculty—but I think our cap is no more than fifty? Or is it maybe--? In the classroom.

Melissa: Yea, it’s fifty.

Hope: Which is one of our synchronous tools… so…

Female Guest 1: So what about our auditorium classes that have 150 some-odd students? Just because you have someone standing in front of you is really no different in terms of quality of learning.

Female Guest 2: Well, they suffer too. They suffer if it’s face-to-face or online. Maybe I simply wasn’t around when they said you should limit your classes to twenty or twenty-five… I was when they said that about online classes.

Female Guest 3: But if you do an instructional design that has a high degree of interactivity, you can’t have 500 students and have a high degree of interactivity. And the policy says that you have to interact with each student at least once a week.

Female Guest 2: And who’s checking this?

Female Guest 3: I don’t know, but that policy came out of VA Regulations. So if you have any student who is receiving VA benefits—

Hope: Right here (*points to slide*) Veteran Administration.

Female Guest 2: Ohhh. Ah, yes, okay. Okay.

Male Guest: So, what is weekly contact? Is it an e-mail to the student, or an e-mail to the whole class? Or a task assignment?

Female Guest 2: I think the intent was that you couldn’t just post notes on the website and give two tests and that’s the end of the course. You really do have to have some sort of instructional activity going on weekly.

Male Guest: Yea, but it doesn’t have to be to one person. It could be to the whole class.

Female Guest 2: Right, right.

Hope: I mean it could be a discussion forum where you post a discussion question and students are kind of interacting and checking and you’re interacting and checking.

Male Guest: What if you a short five-to-ten minute video, which is what I do, to introduce the chapter, the learning objectives, and then a second one follows up with specific, you know, how to do some of these things… does that count as interacting with the student?

Hope: That’s an asynchronous interaction, yes, electro capture is. Our videos are. And we’re going to spend some time to talk about that. But, first we have a question. So, what is your policy on returning e-mails to students? Does anybody in here do it immediately, no matter how many students they have? Anybody do immediately? (Someone raises their hand.) Do you? Good for you!

Female Guest: Is that your policy?

Male Guest: I try (*laughter*.) I’ve got some, I’ve replied to in 72 hours.

Hope: Yea, so I would think a standard probably might be within two days. Do you guys feel like within two days you’ve responded to most student e-mails you’d say? Within two days?

Female Guest: Yea, we say within 48 hours except on weekends. Give ourselves a little bit of wiggle-room on weekends.

Hope: Yea, Monday through Friday. And that’s what my professors did usually. They said that their policy was to return e-mails.

Now, I just kind of have a beef with this (*pointing to option D, “I don’t have a policy*.*”*) Just for a minute, I just want to talk about… I had this advisor (*laughing*) and I was actually ready to change advisors in my doctoral program because sometimes it would take him two weeks to get back to me… on something that was time-sensitive, that I could have been moving forward. I mean, he’s taken as long as almost a month to get back to me on things and I think that’s just a little extreme.

When you’re trying to get things done within a semester’s time and you only have fifteen weeks, when four weeks goes by, and a decision hasn’t been made, you feel like you’re getting behind. And so I, you know, I recognize that my professors are busy. They’re going to conferences, they have presentations, they have research they have to do and articles they have to write, but they’re also an instructor in a course and they’re responsible, you know, for maintaining communication. Especially in an online program it’s very important. So that’s kind of my rant I guess… that I’ve had a hard time with communication with my advisors and with my instructors in my program of study.

It’s been the biggest disadvantage being an online student. Because I can’t walk over to his office and say, “Hey! (*Guests laughing*) That question I’ve been e-mailing you about for like the past, you know, five days. I’m just kind of your stalker now so I need to… get an answer from you. (*More laughing*.) I mean really, I would get to the point where I would e-mail him the third time, or the fourth time in two weeks and I’d be like, “So I haven’t heard from you in like, and I’m pretty much your stalker now. So if you could just get back to me, that’d be great.” I’d call him and leave him voicemails. And it’s different for everyone because there’s another guy on my committee who has an iPhone and I e-mail him and he will e-mail me right back, while he’s at a conference, from his phone. Now that is communication. That’s what I like. And I almost switched to him, but I decided not to. (He’s on my committee though so I can still e-mail him if I need to… if I can’t get up with my other guy.)

So we are going to talking about synchronous communication and asynchronous communication and what is the difference? So first we’re going to start with synchronous communication. And if you’re not sure what synchronous communication is, it’s where student interactions occur in real-time using web-conferencing or chat tools. So you don’t have to be in Skype where you see them on a web cam and you’re both talking, it doesn’t have to be that way. It could be that you’re using iChat or AOL instant messenger and you’re chatting with them in real time. Okay, so it doesn’t have to be that you’re talking to them with audio or you see them on a web cam. It could be that you’re just kind of chatting back-and-forth.

That could be a synchronous interaction. And I think sometimes faculty forget about that. Some types of synchronous communication are using web conferencing or using instant messaging or chat tools. We actually have some tools available to you here at Clemson. We have Adobe Connect and if you’re an employee at Clemson then you automatically have an account. You can go to connect.clemson.edu and sign in with your username and password. We do have training classes on how to create meeting spaces. So basically what you do is you create a meeting room, you give your students the URL. They click the URL, they sign in as a student or a guest/visitor, and they can chat with you in the room. They can share a document, a PowerPoint, they can share their desktop, you can share your desktop. We’re actually using Adobe Connect right now for this presentation for anybody that’s connecting with us online. So it’s a really good web conferencing tool that we have available to Clemson, employees at Clemson.

There’s also instant-messaging. How many people in here use instant messaging? I use Trillion on PC. Melissa and I talk all the time. And I talk with Suzanne; I can’t get Jan to buy in yet, but…

Jan: I’m trying! I can’t get it to work! (*Laughter*)

Hope: But, it’s good. We can work together. It’s an easy way for us to communicate because it’s kind of real-time. They might be in the office across the hall; we have our doors closed. I don’t feel like getting up—yes, I’m lazy—walking across the hall (*laughter*.)

Jan: I want to point out that she said that she and Melissa use it all the time. They are in the same office. (*Laughter*)

Melissa: But, if we have to send each other a link!

Jan: Just saying! (*Laughter*)

Male Guest: In her defense, I remotely take over my wife’s computer instead of getting up and walking over three feet.

Hope: Thanks Melissa.

Melissa: We share links faster than e-mail because it’s like, “Did you get it? Did you get it? Yet? How ‘bout now?”

Hope: Yea (*Laughter*)

Melissa: You use instant messenger, and it’s there!

Hope: It is, and it’s right there! And we do. We share stuff like that all the time. I love to chat. I love chatting. I use it in Facebook. Sometimes I’m at home and my neighbor is right next door to me, (*Laughing*) but she’ll be on Facebook the same time as me and we’ll just start chatting. And we’ll be laughing on there and cracking up and she’ll be sending me links to show me stuff she’s interested in and her and I use Pinterest; I just Pinterest a whole lot. And her and I are very crafty and so her and I tend to share a lot. We’ll be chatting on Facebook and using Pinterest at the same time. So I really like to chat. I really like Adobe Connect too because it does have some good features for sharing. Because you can use a webcam, you can talk, you can use audio, you can chat if you don’t want to talk. You can share documents and things like that, so it’s pretty cool.

So which of these is a tool for me to synchronously—this is kind of easy question—so, which one, tell me guys?

Female Guest: Skype.

Hope: Skype, that’s right. So Skype. So we are going to talk about these next (*motioning toward board*.) So asynchronous types of interaction… an asynchronous interaction is occurs at different times and its really based on the student’s availability, so when it’s convenient for them. And really, these are the types of classes that I prefer to take because my life is so busy. I work a full-time job, I have two kids at home, you know, I’m involved with my church, I, you know, have friends that I hang out with on occasion. So there’s a lot going on and it’s easy for me if it’s mostly asynchronous. Now, a lot of the classes at Virginia Tech now require a synchronous component. We’ll meet like once a week for two hours with Adobe Connect because Virginia is using Adobe Connect too. I’m familiar with Adobe Connect; I can move around in it, so it’s no big deal for me if I don’t have a meeting or have some other thing going on. But, my professors do tend to use it for office hours. Adobe Connect… and I’ll talk about that in a minute.

These are all different types of asynchronous communication. Some of these you wouldn’t think of. You might not think of Dropbox as a synchronous communication or an asynchronous type of interaction. But it could be, I mean, your dropping assignments in there and you’re sharing it with your students and they’re picking it up from a folder and they’re finishing it, and then they’re putting it back in the folder completed. You know, so how is this different from using Blackboard? You post an assignment on Blackboard for a student to download, fill out, and upload into an assignments link. So it’s kind of the same thing.

But when I think of asynchronous communication, and tools for asynchronous interaction, I think the biggie here is Blackboard because there’s so much functionality with Blackboard. And now we have Campus Pack, we have the availability to do blogs and wikis (*points to board*,) in Blackboard so that’s another type of asynchronous communication. Jan actually uses blogs; she uses blogs in her—even though it was a face-to-face class—she uses blogs to kind of see her students submit their assignments. And, she could easily go through and look at their assignments and they could all kind of see each other’s assignments, how they had done things. Sometimes blogs and wikis are good for reflection. I actually used blogging in my class before I came over to CCIT because I knew it was important for E-Portfolio assignments that students know how to reflect on their learning. And so I required that they blog about their assignments in photography class a lot of times.

Female Guest: Journal is the other component… journal is a private reflection area where the blog is open to everyone, and wiki is collaborative. So journal is your tool for

Hope: Private

Female Guest: Private reflection.

Hope: I liked… I liked… my students used the uh, they didn’t use the uh, Blackboard one. They used Word press (*Word Prez? Couldn’t tell*) or Blogger. But I actually had a website that had all the kind of with their blogs linked to it, so they could go to mine and they could look at other people’s and see, you know, how their photography assignments turned out, you know, if they were required to post pictures, not just text. So it actually, that actually came in handy recently because one of my former students was killed in a car accident. And when she took my class I had just started doing the blogging and she was able to kind of keep… I sent the link to her parents afterwards and it was, it was kind of like they were reading… it was kind of like a diary, but it was a reflective piece from her about her interaction in the class and her interaction with her classmates. So that was something that turned out really, well, I was glad that I actually added that component to my class even though it was a face-to-face class.

But lecture capture, I know Kyle was talking about a video that he did that was a lecture capture; even pod-casting is a really good way to communicate with your students. I’ve done… I can’t even tell you how many discussion boards I’ve had to contribute to. A faculty member took one of his student’s advice in one of the classes I took. And I guess she complained to the faculty member… that’s kind of our plane ticket; tell them we don’t like it. So she said, you know, can we not do it a different way? So he decided one semester he was going to let us do group Skyping. So he assigned us to groups and gave us a discussion question and we all had to meet at our convenience; we made up the schedule through Skype and discussed it. There was a person in charge of compiling notes and taking answers. There was a person in charge of kind of leading the discussion and that worked out really well. So that might be something too that you could work out for your students and set up the discussion forum.

So what is your most-preferred form of asynchronous communication in your online course or if you’re getting ready to do an online course? What do you think is something that you would be likely to use? And we’re going to talk more about social media… I think if it was me, Blackboard has so much functionality; I’d be more likely to use Blackboard. Content-management system, even if it was Moodle… kind of one-stop shop for all kinds of tools to interact with my students asynchronously. That’s good.

Alright, so we are going to talk about social media just for a little bit. And I’m going to flip to some of my notes just to make sure that I’m… way down here…nope (*Talking to herself* .) A couple more…

Alright. So do any of you guys use social media? Even if it’s a face-to-face class or are you using any type like Facebook or Twitter for discussion? I think faculty tend to steer away from it… but it actually is a good tool because your students are using it anyway. They’re already on there; it’s what they’re comfortable with. And so, it was interesting, I ran across this study. In twenty-ten, Pearson social media survey found that 4 out of 5 college professors are actually using social media in their classes. You guys, I don’t know who your book publisher is, but Pearson is a textbook publisher. They were interested in trying to find this out and they had a slideshow presentation and I was kind of looking through it and I found this slide that shows where online teachers are actually in the lead for using social media in their online courses which is really interesting.

Um, and I, I use social media. I remember when I was teaching graphics. I came to Melissa and said… I’m trying to find out, you know, I haven’t really talked and told my students to not use their laptops in class. I feel like a lot of them take notes on their laptops but I’ve walked to the back of the class and I see that they’re on Facebook and they’re chatting each other and it’s driving me crazy… And I really want to be able to see who these people are. So is there any way that I could like, friend them on Facebook without using my personal account. And she was like, “Yea, yea, you can create like a Facebook page and they all friend it and you can kind of see who’s online when you’re in class.”

So, you know, there are different ways that you can use social media. I was just to like be sneaky I guess and see what they were doing behind my back but, but I do have a Facebook group page that they’ve all been able to kind of “like.” And they can all kind of see each other on there and I’ve posted pictures. When I, I used to be an advisor for a club and we always did a big like induction and we would take pictures and I would post them on there and they love that stuff… they love it. So even after they graduate, they come back and they make comments.

But we had a DE workshop for dispense (*???)* in the spring. And she was actually talking about how she was talking about how she started using Facebook with her study abroad group. She said that she was posting stuff on Blackboard and they weren’t logging in enough so they weren’t getting their assignments turned in on time and they weren’t, you know, she would schedule tests or quizzes and they didn’t know that these things were scheduled. They weren’t paying attention. And so she decided to create a private Facebook group and they were all in the group and she said that the communication just went like… through the roof. They were all up there anyway; they were talking about this cool café that they visited in Paris, so they were sharing information among each other, right, so kind of andragogy.

Um, but she was also able to kind of keep tabs on them and she could use it to remind them about assignments and say, “Don’t forget, you need to go the Blackboard for this assignment. It’s going to be due. Hey, don’t forget about this test” and whatnot. She said though, this is really funny, that she fought it. She really did. She was like, “I’m not going to do it. I don’t want to do it. I’m not going to use social media. I hate it. I don’t want to be one of those teachers”… but then she was like… “Eh, I’ll try it.” And then she loved it. And now she uses blogs where students can kind of post reflection videos and they can all see each other’s videos. Um, and she’s Skyping with them because it’s cheaper than calling from Paris. So she uses Skype. So she’s really kind of caught on to how social media can work to her advantage.

So what types of social media do you guys plan on using? Or are you using—anyone in here using social media? In the classroom? So you—what are you using, Kyle?

Kyle: LinkedIn.

Hope: LinkedIn, yep. I used LinkedIn a lot.

Kyle: Business… the other is a use my website.

Hope: Yea!

Kyle: Actually I have a lot of content on my website and I just gave an ethics case and it came out of material on my website.

Hope: Cool, so you’re saying, “Read this article or look at this case.” Yea, what… that’s cool. So what do you use Barbara?

Barbara: We set up group pages for some of our majors. And then the students, particularly PhD students… they have their own Facebook page/group. And uh, it’s been good for them to communicate back-and-forth. We use it a lot for marketing and recruiting also.

Hope: Yea, absolutely. And it’s good—I don’t know if you guys are in any Facebook groups, but it’s good—it’s just good to kind of see, like you can stay on top of current events. And with LinkedIn I’m connected to a lot of my students. I can see when they’re changing jobs and what kind of jobs they’re going into. They might have graduated from Graphics, but maybe they’re, you know, doing something different now… like, got into like pharmaceutical sales. So it’s neat to kind of see, you know, people up there and where they go. I’m not a stalker of social media; I don’t want y’all to think that at all. You know, there’s a lot of people out there who just watch and never participate.

But, um, I had a friend who actually—I know this is kind of a side note—but I had a friend who was looking for a job. And she had this—her job offered this service—like, she got like laid off and they gave her this service and she went and met with this lady. And the lady was saying, “You have to be on LinkedIn, your profile pic has to look like this, you need to join at least three groups minimum, and you can’t just join them, but you have to participate in them because employers look at that. That was just interesting to me and I felt like, well, that’s good information, like I think that’s information that even students should know when they’re on LinkedIn. Because, one, they’re learning how to be an adult and act in a professional manner. You know, I think for the most part they understand that they can’t put drunken pictures up on Facebook if they’re going to friend potential employers, right? So they certainly can’t talk about some party they went to about a conference and got trashed on LinkedIn, right? So they’re, you know, it’s good for them to learn these kind of “soft skills” I guess too along the way.

So there’s one more section that I’m going to talk about in today’s presentation on Communication in the Online Classroom and that’s contingency planning. And I think a lot of professors that are teaching online don’t think about “what if?” You know, what’s my backup plan? Because I can tell you because I work for CCIT that sometimes Blackboard doesn’t work. And we have regular maintenance windows when it’s not working and you can’t log in. And we have upgrades where we have to upgrade things or update or run things or you know, test things and it’s not available. And if you schedule an exam on Blackboard within that window, sorry (*shrugs*.) Your students aren’t going to be able to take it. So, you know, you kind of have to have this back-up plan and this contingency plan for communicating with your students when things like that happen. Um, and so just anticipating and planning for some kind of alternate delivery of your course material, that test, or that assignment, or even that announcement is crucial to keeping up communication with them. They have to know what they’re supposed to do in case of a technology fail. And it’s not just Blackboard; you know, sometimes e-mail goes down. I don’t know if you guys remember this: a couple semesters ago, e-mail wasn’t working. It wasn’t working. It didn’t work for like half the day. I thought I was going to die. I was like (*laughter*), “I know my students are going crazy.” They were all complaining about it in the lab. They were like, “I can’t e-mail so-and-so—can you—I can’t do this, I can’t do that.” I was like, “I can’t do it either. So just calm down. It’ll get fixed. You know, we have an awesome IT department.”

So, um, but it is good to indicate in your syllabus what to do in case that happens.

Um, so here’s a really good example for a distance ed. contingency plan that you might want to do. And you might just want to explain to them as with any technology, um, these teaching tools have the potential for problems. Um, we think that it’s always going to be available, and it’s not always available. So, you know, you need to be prepared in the case that this happens.

So, “Make sure that you have a copy of the syllabus, the assignment schedule, and any course material you might need. And we’re not telling you to go waste a bunch of paper, but save them as PDF’s and save them locally to your computer so that you have them so that you don’t have to go on Blackboard to check the schedule every time.”

“Make sure that you have the teacher’s e-mail address, so that you can e-mail them.” And a lot of students do have smart phones. And so if Blackboard’s not working, or it’s down, or if there’s a maintenance window, make sure that they have your e-mail address. That they can e-mail you with an issue or if they can’t connect for some reason.

Tell them that they should know who their classmates are and that they have some of their classmate’s contact information in the case that something like this happens. They could contact a classmate and say, “Hey, are you having the same problem as—just want to make sure that it’s not me and my connection.” Um, but that it’s a school-wide connection. You know?

Kyle: Let me ask this. I’ve had a couple of students… because I like to make them put a picture of themselves, contact information, you know, tell something about them. Why they’re scared to death of accounting. And I’ve had a couple of students every semester say, “I will not put any information about myself on the web in this course.”

Hope: I wonder why?

Kyle: “I will communicate via e-mail.” Privacy.

Barbara: They think that it’ll lead them to share information that they don’t want to give to anyone else?

Kyle: Yea. I mean, they say, “It’s my private information. And I’m not going to put any of that.”

Hope: I mean I could, I could see that where…

Kyle: I haven’t pushed it. Does Clemson have a policy about that, or I mean, you know, you just…

*Murmuring of disagreement,* Female Guest: No, I don’t think so.

Melissa: I mean, a lot of people will make it an assignment worth credit.

Hope: I do that (*raises hand*.)

Melissa: The other thing that I ask them to say is, you know, Hope brought up this contingency planning, but you also want to have an alternate e-mail address. And G-mail is a great alternative; Hotmail is a great alternative. They’re both free. They both have Dropbox functionality where you can store files because not only does, like she said, not only does Blackboard go down occasionally. And when we had a tornado down out at Research Park (*?)* everything went down, including the Clemson website (*laughing*.) So having that alternative form of communication outside of Clemson is also a good thing to have. And for your students as well.

Kyle: I also give them my cell phone number.

Hope: Yea, I’ve done that too. And ask them to text me, not call me. I can handle that a little bit better than my phone….

Female Guest: My idea is, “Know where to get help before you need it.”

Hope: Yea.

Melissa: Yes, exactly. And we talk about in our online courses that actually, we’ll put out a discussion board the first week of class and ask them to put in contingency contact information. “If I can’t contact you at this e-mail address, do you have an e-mail address off-campus that we can contact you at to remind you of assignments that are due and tell you where we’re going to meet instead… have an alternative tool like Skype or anymeeting.com, that’s an alternative for Adobe Connect.

Hope: Yep, so

Melissa: So any of those things.

Female Guest: Actually, the posting photos question. I have a weasel-word in there too or something like that, or a pictorial, (*difficult to understand*) put like Daphne Duck up…

Kyle: Yea, put up something that…

Female Guest: Yea, so we just have something identify.

Kyle: The only way that they can communicate with students at this point is through their school e-mail or through discussion forums… they’re kind of limited. A lot of students I’ve realized will switch to their personal… at the end of school. If we need your school account, we’ve got to check it, but put the, you know, one you prefer.

Female Guest: And I just say that I only communicate with them through their Clemson. I’m too lazy to keep track… it changes weekly.

Kyle: I reply to whatever e-mail you… I just hit reply. But if I initiate contact, I use your Clemson.

Female Guest: Are students allowed to change the e-mail default in Blackboard here? Like, if they want their default e-mail to be Gmail or Hotmail, can they change that?

Hope: Yea, I don’t know.

Melissa: They can use the e-mail forwarding tool, but it only… I could be wrong about this Yahong, but you would know because you’re the queen of Blackboard! But the e-mail forwarding tool, that is just for their Clemson e-mail address. And if they’re forwarding from Blackboard, it goes to the mailing list. Which uses their Clemson e-mail address, right? So, they should get it if it’s forwarded that way. But if the e-mail forwarding gets broken somehow…

Yahong: Yea, because the Blackboard controls enrollment on mainframe. The mainframe list only uses Clemson e-mail addresses. So whatever like the sent e-mail on Blackboard, or send it to Clemson. But because of e-mail forwarding, you can forward. Depending on that option, you could turn it off, forward it to whatever.

Melissa: But on Blackboard itself, there’s not a place to put an alternate e-mail address.

Yahong: Right.

Female Guest: And the only time I run into problems with that was I was trying to set up wiki spaces, wiki. And I sent the invitations out to their Clemson e-mail addresses and they did not respond from their Clemson e-mail address: they were not allowed to join the wiki.

Female Guest 2: That’s strange.

Female Guest: We gave up. It’s just one of those lost attempts (*laughter*.)

Hope: I just want to make sure too that, you know, you can always tell your students or include this in your syllabus that you can contact us. You know, I think a lot of times that, as the instructor you should be the first line of defense if they’re having issues. But they should also know that they can just put in—they can e-mail ithelp@clemson.edu. Or if you’re working for other online institutions or classes, make sure that you know what the Help Desk e-mail is or the link for the Help Desk. Because they can always go there and somebody should get to them right away. Most universities have big support systems.

So one thing that I came across when I was doing research is—it’s also good if you meet with them synchronously. Let’s say that you’re meeting with them on Wednesday at 5:30 on Adobe Connect, and they try to log in and they can’t. What’s your policy on when they give up? Should they try to log in for fifteen minutes and then kind of give up wait, e-mail you, or should they do it for thirty minutes, or should they do it throughout the whole class? Things like that are good to include too on your syllabus.

So I had a question on contingency planning. Do you want your students to notify you if they’re not able to access the course content? I would think for the most part most instructors would say, yes, they should. “I should be their first line of defense; they should contact me.” But there are instructors who say, you know, I’m not tech-savvy. I know I teach an online course, but I don’t know how to trouble-shoot every possible situation, so probably they should just go ahead and contact IT Help. Because IT Help is going to know what’s going on if there’s a system-wide outage on something. Um, you know, or they should wait thirty minutes and try again. So it really is up to you.

Kyle: Restart your computer and try another browser.

Hope: Yes. Those are our recommendations too (*laughing*.)

Female Guest: That’s a good strategy.

Kyle: And I tell them that because most of the time it solves all their problems.

Hope: It does. And browsers all act differently. And if they’re on Mac or PC, sometimes, you know, that can affect it too.

So that’s all I have for you guys. If you guys have any questions, or comments, or feedback, or you can e-mail me if you want to discuss further… I just wanted to remind you that I have an Animoto class. It’s on November 19th at 2:30. Or if you’re interested in how to create an E-Book, you know E-Books are what you read on iPads, I have a class on the 27th at 10:30… coming up. So you can register for those at Clemson.edu/clereg.

That’s all I got for ya!

Suzanne: Does anybody have any questions for miss Hope? Anything that you want to share about your communication?... Thank you, Hope!

*Clapping.*