

Chapter 3: Responsive



On the Tee! The **R** in PARS stands for **Responsive**. This chapter addresses how you can develop an approach to be responsive to your students and be responsive to the work they complete for the course. Continually responding to student emails, discussion posts and writing assignments is a lot of work. It takes strategy and time to show your students how much you care about them. Being responsive encompasses so much more than just communicating with students. Being responsive is about setting expectations and following through to show the students you're right there with them.

Responsive OWI: Theory, Practice, and Significance to OWI

We see being responsive as the end game of the previous two elements of personal and available: take time to work with your students. You have made the class personal, established your credibility as an instructor, and made your course accessible. All of these culminate in your ability to respond and collaborate with students. Just making yourself available is not responding or collaborating—responding is responding. You may set the schedule as the means of being available, but you still have to respond. An example of responding can be providing feedback. Returning papers with your comments or writing notes within 48 hours of the submission deadline. This is important for two reasons: 1) students can see instructor feedback on initial drafts quickly, and 2) students are able to see how they did on drafts so they can revise and prepare for the next assignment. While the

turn-around time is quick, it is important to capitalize on the ethos an instructor establishes by being there for your students and returning their work quickly.

In an online writing course, there are a lot of written responses occurring as the majority of the course can be text-based. Grappling with the volume of text and the literacy load of an online writing course can prove exhausting, but having a strategy and practice for responding to student work helps to combat burn-out and aids in managing the workload. Expectations of both the student and instructor factor into this discussion of being responsive quite a lot. As we discussed the value of setting expectations in the previous chapter, we will continue to discuss setting expectations for responding in this chapter. Instructors need to decide how responsive they will be (the quantity and depth of the feedback they will provide) and what mode/medium (text, digital, audio) they'll use to respond to student work. Instructors should convey how they will interact with student work to the students in their courses.

For example, if you are planning to comment on discussion boards or if you choose not to participate and let the students do the discussing, you should let your students know. If you are planning to provide summative comments instead of in-text comments on a student's paper, this also needs to be conveyed. Students need to know what to expect (in terms of feedback on their work) so that they know how to make the most of instructor comments and guidance. Casey remembers using a discussion board in one of the first CMSs he used teaching online. He posted a question about the reading and asked students to write responses with guided questions: "Pose a question of your own, and go and try to answer a question from two other students who posted in the discussion." Pretty simple. After the first day, Casey logged in and began responding to questions and offering links and supporting resources on the topics. The next day he noticed that one of his students replied to his comment with "Nice try bot!" Casey then recorded an audio file and uploaded it as his response to the "bot" reply with a slight chuckle and noted that he was in fact real, that he was in fact the professor, and that he appreciated the student's "bot" response. When the student posted an apologetic reply, Casey said it was no big deal because most people think he's a bot offline anyway!

Working remotely can be great, right? You can work from home, a coffee shop, outside under a tree, or a library. A few might even be envious when you say, "I teach online," but at times, the reality is that teaching online is a lot more work than teaching face-to-face. In working from home, you have to be disciplined and create structure in the day or risk being consumed by too much work or too little motivation. One of the joys *and* downfalls of teaching online is that the course is always available and students always need a response to some question. Learning and personal growth is happening at all hours; students login and complete assignments on their schedule; instructors respond (at a convenient time for them) to students' assignments, helping them to become better communicators; discus-

sion board assignments that inspire further discussion are ongoing, and so on. Learning is 24/7 and that's exciting and thrilling! But this excitement and continual learning process can lead to burnout in a hurry, especially for the instructor.

Responsiveness, or managing your time and determining when you will be available to respond to students is an important component of being successful as an online instructor, but managing this responsiveness is more than just about posting office hours. Boundaries play a large role in online instruction. Being responsive is about setting boundaries with yourself, your students, and the faculty you support. As Brene Brown (2018) notes, "setting boundaries is making clear what's okay and what's not okay, and why" (p. 39). You cannot be available 24/7 for your students, but you can set aside time each day to address a number of issues and problems that arise. Responding in online courses presents new challenges for instructors, especially those who are used to responding face-to-face, via handwritten comments, or having conferences with students to discuss their writing. Often, instructors will fail to adapt their response approaches to the online domain or they overcorrect their approach and respond more intensely than they do in their traditional face-to-face courses:

Selecting appropriate teaching strategies for managing workload, therefore, is necessary to help instructors best allocate time and find balance in their work and personal life . . . Teaching online gives instructors more flexibility in terms of where and when they can work, but it can also be a trap unless they allocate their time strategically . . . Time allocation strategies are a necessity for online instructors. (Lehman & Conceicao, 2011, p. 90)

It's important to convey to your students how they can expect their instructors to respond and guide them as they complete their assignments. But it's not all just about the students and instructors—there are multiple stakeholders involved in online writing courses. It's just as important for administrators and program chairs to be responsive to those they support. These stakeholders also have a responsibility to provide advisors, students and their instructors with an understanding of what online learning means at their institution.

Responsive Design

How often do you check your phone? How often do you, in mid-sentence, take out your device and check for messages while talking to someone? Or check your calendar, your email, your social network? If you use your smartphone as much as we do, you can't help but check your email. You never know when a student might have a question about an assignment. You tell yourself, "Well, if I answer it now, early enough in the assignment, that will save me and the student time down

the line.” While a quick response mitigates confusion keeping up with responding can also wear you down. Here’s an example: every summer Casey and his family try to take a small vacation somewhere—it has to be farther than a three-iron (a golf club) from campus to count as a vacation. One of the first times he was teaching two online sections of 101 compressed into a six-and-a-half-week summer session, he was terrified he would not be able to respond to the forty students. So, he replied to every email immediately! After a while he realized that his responses were short and more or less band-aids for larger problems the class was experiencing as a whole—essentially, one student would email him with a question, but by looking over the work every student was doing, he could tell all of the students really should have asked the question. He then noticed that if he sat down at a strategic time and responded in a way that would help *all* students, it would do more for the class than just the quick ones he was sending to individual students. He started to choose quality over immediacy. As he did this, he began to notice the number of questions from students begin to dwindle over the semester as the larger emails to the class answered future unasked questions. He even went a few days without getting an email, which caused him to panic and email Michigan State University IT to see if his email account was down. It was working, as were the group emails he had sent out to his classes.

The reality is that online instruction is not for everyone, “For some students and teachers, online instruction is difficult and even exasperating” (Warnock, 2009, p. xxv). Just because something exciting is available all of the time, doesn’t mean being a part of it all the time is healthy or productive. Online instructors run the risk of being overly responsive. The demands of the online classroom, interaction with students, and the sheer volume of work create new challenges that even seasoned online instructors struggle to navigate. One of the greatest challenges for all online instructors is organizing and adapting to the workload of online instruction. Setting times for work is important because “you are not infinitely expandable, and just because the online class is 24/7 does not mean that you are” (Bender, 2012, p. 154). At the start, an instructor new to online teaching may feel very overwhelmed and working harder may seem like the answer. Many new and seasoned online instructors will jump into online instruction with zealous enthusiasm, being available to meet with students with little notice, answering emails at all hours, being visible in the LMS/CMS daily, but this can be counterproductive and sets unrealistic expectations for students while creating an impossible standard for instructors to uphold in the long run. Have you ever gotten an email from a student that read: “Hey, I emailed you two minutes ago? Why haven’t you responded?” We have, and when we first started out teaching online, we may have apologized to that student for our lack of attentiveness. However, such approaches for interactions with students are unsustainable.

We know that at times it’s easy to feel overwhelmed and check out; to not engage with your students’ writing, which is why Warnock (2009) warns new in-

structors of the challenges of feeling overwhelmed by the demand of responding to student writing, “If at any point you feel overwhelmed and unable to do their shorter, informal writing assignments, then you need to adjust your expectations of how much you are going to respond” (p. 124). In other words, due to the huge amount of text and textual interactions occurring in online writing courses, it is necessary that you change the way you respond to your students; not everything you’ve done (in terms of responding to student writing) in your face-to-face classes will work in your online classes. You’ll need to re-think the design of your course.

Specifically, looking at how you respond to student writing is a start. Ask yourself: is your method of response effective? Can it be translated/adapted for an online course? Courses that reside entirely online have a shifted hierarchy from that of traditional learning space where the instructor is no longer the lead in the class. In online courses, the instructor often acts as a coach or a supportive guide but this shift needs to be made clear to your students. Warnock (2015) reiterates this stating, “Teachers should re-consider how their messages appear to their students, beginning with the initial design and practices in course documents” and he goes on to provide a summary of an OWI group discussion in which participants (all online instructors) stressed the need to lay the “ground rules” and communicate how the course works, including expectations for both students and instructors (pp. 156-157). Laying these ground rules actually helps students understand the digital classroom space as a community of learning. We understand that shifting students’ perspective on this role is a bit challenging but it’s important for them to see how learning in digital spaces is different because this type of learning and collaboration is more akin to the types of learning and collaboration they’ll do in real life once they move on to or continue their careers. Convey to your students through the design of your course that

[i]n the emerging world of personal learning connections, the online instructor no longer is the sole possessor of the content knowledge. Providing additional resources, while challenging and questioning the student, is part of the instructor’s redefined responsibilities . . . Teaching online is a dynamic process that involves high levels of energetic interaction and quiet moments of contemplation. (Conrad & Donaldson, 2012, pp. 10-11)

Having enough energy to provide effective feedback comes down to managing your time and resources in order to be responsive to students’ needs and assist in their growth as writers. In your positions as an online instructor, you have the opportunity to be an audience for your students; an objective set of eyes that responds to their ability to craft meaningful texts. Warnock (2009) notes that “A Key to maximizing the teaching opportunities presented in an online environment is to establish yourself appropriately as an audience for your students. You

might assume numerous roles in a class, and these roles shift, but you need to be aware that the way you frame yourself will influence how your students write throughout the course” (p. 1). While it may seem like establishing yourself as an audience for your students seems like an instruction issue, it’s actually a design issue. An unclear audience is one of the design flaws of online learning. So, designing in places in your course when you establish yourself as the audience for their writing can help mitigate this uncertainty for students.

Identifying how you will “frame” yourself is part of determining how responsive you will be and what kind of feedback you’ll provide on the various assignments, from their discussion boards, and peer review activities, to their longer research-based projects. In face-to-face courses, the question of audience is sometimes a challenge for students, but in online courses, this challenge is multiplied because of the lack of face-to-face contact between student and instructor, therefore it is imperative to “establish yourself appropriately as an audience” to help students understand how to situate the work they are doing for your course (Warnock, 2009, p. 1). As the instructor, you are one audience students are targeting, but you must work even harder to get students to understand how to compose a text for the audience an assignment requires.

The design of your course offers a lot of opportunity to get students to understand composing for audience. You can have your students participate in activities where you and the other students in the course act as audience, or you can have your students pair off and use each other as the audience on a specific writing assignment (like writing letters back and forth about a topic or issue). Alternatively, you can build in more of the smaller/shorter writing assignments where you give the students an opportunity to test you out as a reading audience (the discussion boards are great for this!). Warnock (2009) offers some more good advice about the smaller assignment opportunities. He states that though the job of an online instructor requires a lot of interaction and response, “Luckily, in this environment, you don’t *need* to comment on every post, because students do much of that work for you . . . Let the students roam. Let them sustain the conversation with questions and comments” (2009, p. 76). Good advice when you think about the design of your online course. Build in those places where you can practice audience and audience awareness without having to respond to every thing every student says.

You’re probably sitting there going, “yea, well all this is great but this is going to take so much time!” Believe us, we get it. Teaching online is a huge time commitment. As we said earlier in the book, teaching online requires more than just putting your face-to-face class materials in the CMS. Hewett (2015) discusses the challenge of time for online instructors, “Time is a huge issue for OWI instructors—both teachers and tutors—and we are rightly concerned whenever something, including a new response approach, threatens to cause us to expend more time . . . It seems important to recognize consciously, though, that such a decrease

in teaching is caused directly by the teaching load rather than the text-rich literacy load of OWI” (pp. 205-206). To address expectations of the course and to offer students clear guidelines for instructor response time in various areas of the course, and to address the type of feedback students can expect, some suggest laying groundwork at the beginning of the course through the use of introductory phone chats (conference call style) with three to four students and offering follow up synchronous chats throughout the term (Girardi, 2016, p.64). Hewett (2010) states “When essay response is an instructor’s primary contribution to either an ongoing or one-time conversation about writing *and* when that conversation and its attendant teaching occurs entirely online, message clarity seems more crucial, particularly in pedagogies that value dialogue” (p.71). Dialogue, with audience and time, gives you an opportunity to be precise with your responses and makes you a better guide for the course. By being responsive with your design of your online writing course, you create an engaging space that is open to questions and comments from students who will be motivated to interact with the texts and their peers. And by learning where to comment and when to respond will save your energy for the duration of the class so you can be at your best to help your students learn to write and respond.

Responsive Instruction

One thing that new instructors often forget when teaching an online course is the value of balance. It’s easy to get caught up in being present and trying to support students so much that you spend more time in the LMS than you would in a traditional face-to-face class. Warnock (2009) complicates this notion by stating, “Although you should be involved, the level of that involvement differs, both among teachers from conversation to conversation in a particular class . . . One of the tough parts of conducting [online] conversations is that you must participate in the conversation but resist the urge of being constantly drawn into discussions when they are irresistibly good—which, I warn you, happens often” (pp. 75-76). It is impossible to ask instructors to be available 24/7 when it comes to online writing classes. And before you say, “Well I do it when I teach face-to-face.” Think about that. Do you? Do you *really*? In fact, this cannot be achieved in a face-to-face environment, so to suggest it can be created online is a disservice to students and instructors.

What we can do, as educators, is to promote a sense of a Return On Investment (ROI) time. Conrad and Donaldson (2012) note that, “An effective online instructor determines appropriate communication strategies, manages time demands, defines her or his evolving role as an online instructor, and establishes a presence within the online classroom” (p. 13). As Conrad and Donaldson suggest your role as an online instructor is ever evolving and one thing we’ve found that is a key part of this evolution is modeling. Modeling behavior in a digital space

for your students is a great way to effectively use your time as an online instructor. Modeling also helps to create a responsive presence with your students. Modeling expectations is one of the first things instructors should do. You can model expectations in the announcements, the discussion boards, by posting sample student assignments, by talking with students via a video in which you talk about your expectations, etc. Many students enter online courses thinking that they are work at your own pace correspondence-type courses and so it's important to set clear expectations for their responses as well as your own.

Responsive instruction helps to break this correspondence-course mentality because it shows you're in the course and you're with them helping them be successful along the way. It also illustrates that the course is more than a transactional space. That one can go in and out of the online space just as one goes in and out of the F2F classroom. Presence and space go hand in hand so when thinking about your responsiveness as an instructor and how much time you want to spend in the course. It's equally important that you also think about being away from the course. Space in online courses is imperative and being mindful to take advantage of the spaces in an online course can actually prove to be rewarding, “. . . online courses involve greater distance gaps and fewer physical cues (facial and other visual representations of emotion, etc.), both of which can create gaps in understanding. While it is useful to identify, address, and mind the gaps in physical, virtual and cognitive spaces in online learning, we also need to spend some time exploring the productive nature of gaps as well” (Carter & Rickly, 2005, p. 130). By making students feel like a priority and stipulating that you will return feedback and emails on various topics and assignments within a certain time frame, you can create a stable space where students know what to expect when it comes to your availability and their own. Setting up a schedule for returning feedback and grades within a class establishes a routine to help students know where they are in the class and where you are in terms of workload. This is more than just a work-life balance, this is about a work-teach-learn balance that is needed for you and your students to be successful in an online space.

Warnock (2015) adds to this notion of space and presence when he suggests that instructors create space from the start of a course in order to create expectations of responsiveness for students that the allow the instructor to disconnect and reconnect: “Whether OWI teachers provide response windows or give students timing expectations in days or hours, they should create an understanding of expectations of how issues might be resolved . . . Doing so builds appropriate boundaries, trust, and a sense of relationship” (p. 167). Hewett (2010) adds to this noting,

Students also learn to trust their instructors by knowing what teachers/tutors expect from them . . . Students need to know whether they can contact an instructor whenever the platform

makes them aware of the instructor's presence in the online classroom or tutorial setting. If there are restrictions, like the need for an appointment or to honor certain office hours, students should be told when an instructor welcomes such contact. (p. 47)

When you teach face-to-face and you go over the syllabus with your students on the first day, you might say that the document is a contract between you and the students that hold them accountable for behavior in the class, assignments, workload, and so on. For an online course, this is also important for you as the instructor so you are held responsible for being responsive and on time. Don't ask your students to do something you are incapable of doing.

Establishing a routine for your feedback and responses should echo the schedule. Students who meet online have lives like you, but if they know the schedule, they can understand when and how you are responding to their feedback. In Figure 3.1 is a typical week for Casey's summer writing class (normally a project like this would happen over four weeks, but in summer he is dealing with $\frac{1}{3}$ of the time). This is not an ideal timeline as it condenses so much, but each week runs the same in terms of when the project is assigned, when student feedback is due (yours as well!), when the revision plan is due, and when the final draft is due.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Project #1 sent out	Work on draft	Submit to Eli Review for Peer Review Feedback	Peer Review	Peer Review due You (instructor) respond	Revision Plan due You (instructor) respond to Plan	Final draft due You (instructor) respond to final drafts next day

Figure 3.1

Being on this type of schedule helps both you and your students. You know when they have things due for you and when you have things due for them. It keeps the semester in a rhythm that is admittedly fast paced, but it also controls when and how you respond. While you may see this scheduling as one more thing to do, another time commitment, we promise this effort will be worth it and will go a long way in helping you keep your sanity. Here are a few strategies from experts on how to deal with the scheduling and time allocations of online courses:

- Being Organized

- Being Disciplined
- Distinguishing Between Work and Personal Life
- Being Flexible (Lehman & Conceicao, 2011, pp. 91-93)

Additional suggestions include:

- Remember to make time to care for yourself
- Establish priorities and remember it's not necessary to respond to everyone at once
- Ask students to keep email to a minimum (post questions in the classroom instead)
- Establish agreement as to the nature of postings in online discussions
- Delegate work to students (Bender, 2012, p. 156).

While these are all good suggestions, we've found in our experience you need a little trial and error to find what works best for you. We do feel that being organized and having a clear purpose/strategy can help with the time suck that can be challenging for online writing instructors. It's so easy to get overly involved in your course which is why discipline is listed above as one strategy to combat this pull from the online courses you teach. We know as writing instructors that we can sometimes get caught up in giving feedback on students' writing, so much so that it becomes overwhelming for students. The same can be said for online courses, you can be too present and provide too many comments in the discussion areas, post too many announcements and be too available to your students so utilize the above strategies to help you.

Another component of responsive instruction occurs in the feedback you give students on their writing assignments. Part of this individualized teaching includes building a relationship with each individual student in your course. Students need to build a relationship of trust with you as their instructor because they are sharing something very personal with you: their writing. Get to know your students by responding to their writing and to them as students, not just users in the class taking it for a grade. A high level of communication is one consideration for ensuring course success and responding to student writing is one of the most apparent opportunities for building up the communication lines between instructor and student (Conrad & Donaldson, 2012). Additionally, as we all know, "the feedback from teachers is one thing that students count on as crucial to their learning" (Hewett, 2015, p. 190). But we and others see the feedback on student writing to be even more important in an online setting because "[r]esponding to students is crucial teaching work because feedback provides students with their most individualized teaching experience in online settings" (Warnock, 2015, p. 166). Some like to provide audio or audio/video feedback, and providing written feedback on writing is still an option that many online instructors utilize, but due to the context of the online environment, it's important that you are in-

credibly clear and that your tone is upbeat and encouraging.

Additionally building weekly or semi-weekly feedback check-ins with each student about their writing in whatever format works for you helps with the rapport building that Glaizer (2016) and others stress as a key to persistence in online courses, “Building rapport is really about building relationships—and that is not done in a single shot . . . Similarly, rapport building should not be a superficial effort” (p. 5). We think instructors need to develop a responsive strategy as to *how* they give feedback on students’ written work. Students can’t hear the tone of your voice or see your body language and eye contact like they would in a face-to-face student/instructor conference, so it’s imperative that you proofread, edit, and revise your written feedback for clarity, “Given this reading load [2.75 times greater than a F2F course], a teacher’s incomplete or underdeveloped thought in an email or discussion post can lead to multiple problems of student comprehension and teacher *ethos*. Instructors must carefully proofread their own work for content and clarity; this work places them in the role of *modeling* communication behavior and *strong writing skills* . . .” (Warnock, 2015, p. 157). Developing instructor *ethos* is a key to success as an online instructor, so we suggest the following advice when giving feedback on student writing:

- Be clear and concise—tie in your feedback with the objectives of assignment.
 - ▷ Maybe even have some standard feedback ready and waiting that you have prepared ahead of time that you know will work for online feedback.
- Use a conversational tone, as if the student were in your office and you were walking them through your comments and their paper.
 - ▷ We like to start feedback off with, “Hi Karen, looks like you are off to a good start. If you notice in the first paragraph . . .”
- Include links to examples you reference—the course is online, so take advantage of the medium.
 - ▷ Make sure the links you share are accessible and ADA compliant—not all students have access to every site.
- Make video or sound recordings so students can hear your voice accompanied with your written feedback. Even if you only do this once at the beginning of the semester, they will hear your tone and voice and apply it to all written feedback going forward.
 - ▷ If you make a video, be sure to close caption it, and if you do only sound, make sure you also give students a script.
- Reference discussion posts or other writings from students in the class that have shared their texts with the course to build the peer-to-peer learning space.
 - ▷ Your students are an amazing resource! Help them help each other!

- Make a screencast of you going over feedback students give each other (remove the names) so you can talk about what good feedback is. This can also give you a good idea of whether or not the students understand the assignment.
 - ▷ Again, close caption the video so it is accessible.

We know that these are only a few, but by trying some of these helped us to better communicate with our students about what the course is about and also conveyed how much we cared about their growth as writers.

In addition to building the relationship and nurturing the communication lines with your students you also want to reduce their stress by communicating with them effectively in regards to how quickly you'll respond to their written work. We noted this above but we can't stress it enough! Communicating response time can reduce students' anxiety and help them feel more at ease while awaiting your feedback. Further, communicating response times helps the instructor set realistic expectations, human expectations, for how quickly he/she will respond because it's easy to get sucked into instant thinking (the course is online so everything must happen instantaneously!). "One reason for establishing feedback timing is to aid students in their writing and planning, but another important reason is for the teachers' benefit. OWI teachers do not want students to have unreasonable (maybe on a human endurance level) expectations of response" (Warnock, 2015, pp. 166-167). As seasoned online writing instructors, we know how hard it is to limit yourself or cut back on trying to anticipate and solve problems before they happen, so it can be just as challenging to set limits with yourself as it is to set limits with your students. We also know from experience that students can be aware when you're not fully engaged and if you respond too quickly with unclear comments or feedback that is too vague. Being responsive in your instruction is about working *with* your students, not *against* them.

Responsive Administration

Being a responsive administrator is not just about sitting around and waiting for faculty contact, it is also about answering and returning small email queries about assignments and scheduling. Being responsive is supporting students and faculty, even when they cannot see you. It is about setting up a schedule that works to minimize miscommunication. Being a responsive administrator means responding to faculty when problems arise and getting your faculty what they need in terms of skills and resources before problems arise. Just as a teacher would respond to a student who had questions and concerns about a class, as the administrator, you must respond to the needs of your faculty. This does not mean that you are available 24/7, but it does mean that you are ready to help faculty get the skills and resources they need. You have to understand that just because your on-

line classes may be accessible 24/7, that does not meet you or your faculty should be. Casey has caught himself sending emails at crazy hours assuming a faculty member is awake—he used to be like his students who said they emailed him a few minutes ago and were patiently awaiting a response! As an administrator, you want to be supportive, not presumptuous and exploitive of faculty time.

Admins also need to provide excellent professional development opportunities for faculty to improve their many skills. These opportunities can be seen as attending workshops across campus or having guest speakers come to your department to discuss distance education. Casey sets up these opportunities so faculty can put these lines in their CVs and write about their experiences for the review process. At MSU, there is a healthy population of faculty and staff who teach and research distance education—multiple lunches and workshops on new pedagogies are available for faculty who teach online from departments all over campus. There are also workshops and tutorials for how to use various course management systems like Desire2Learn, Google Sites, Google Classroom, and others. These types of workshops are helpful for faculty to update their skills on various platforms that are free to the university—these are also platforms that students are familiar with from working with them in other courses. If there are no workshops available, see if you can bring in guest speakers from nearby universities that have strong distance education programs to present their best practices to faculty, answer questions, and even set up a workshop for the entire campus (we recommend the entire campus because you might get more funding for the speaker and workshops if you make it available to all faculty). You can also have presenters via video-conference and ask them to discuss new and exciting opportunities with distance education—this will also put the presentation online so anyone can attend and you can record it so faculty who couldn't make it can access it later.

Your faculty are an asset! Samantha Bernstein and Adrianna Kezar (2016) make an excellent observation about the perception and role of non-tenure (NT) faculty in the university:

For example, unlike tenure-track faculty, contingent faculty have little or no involvement in curriculum planning or university governance, little or no access to professional development, mentoring, orientations, evaluation, campus resources or administrative support; and they are often unaware of institutional goals and outcomes. (para. 19)

Invite all of your faculty to contribute. Invite tenure and non-tenure faculty to be a part of the conversation. Casey has been pretty lucky to be at MSU where NT faculty are engaged in lots of service via search committees, advisory councils, merit review committees, and college and university level committees that are a great way for all faculty to see how the university works. We also believe you need

to involve NT faculty in your curriculum committee. What are your program's learning outcomes? What are your learning goals? Being responsive is also about responding to the needs of your program. It is about being aware of the amazing skills and talents of your NT faculty in a way that supports their careers and enriches the experiences of your students. As an administrator, you are doing more than just scheduling. It's not about making faculty and students happy, it's about everything you do that supports their efforts to improve as colleagues and as students to be successful in and beyond the university.

If you do this, then faculty will also acquire new skills that they can also apply to new software and hardware. We talked about using software to make videos for online classes in the personal section of this book, so making sure faculty have access to such software like Camtasia or Quicktime so they can make their own videos is essential. Software includes video conferencing like Skype, Google Hangouts, or Zoom. If your university has a deal in place with Zoom or Microsoft, they might also have workshops or tech support for the software—it would be a great thing to have someone from tech support come to your program and work with your faculty to solve problems before they arise. If they don't have such support, dig through the mountains of videos online that can help. And if you can't find any, as you become more proficient from using the software on your own, make your own videos and help educate and support your faculty. We both have made countless how-to videos for a variety of software and websites because we couldn't find what we wanted.

Hardware is also important when it comes to teaching online. You will need to make sure that faculty have up-to-date technology to make videos, hold video conferences, upload large video files, and enough storage to hold them. Larger hard drives can help backup whatever content faculty store in the cloud like courses and large video files. A good camera and microphone can help faculty make clearer videos that allow greater understanding of text being spoken in the videos. With better cameras and recording equipment comes better quality and better accessibility for students. See if there are recording studios on campus or nearby where your department can book time for faculty to record and make videos for students. Build up a library of videos used in previous online courses so new faculty can get an idea of what they can do, how to do it, and why it is so important. If someone in your program is amazing at some of these things, incentivize their cooperation and willingness to help. As the administrator, you must support your faculty, and in doing so, support students. Responsiveness as an administrator can take on a lot of different forms but the most consistent form is how you respond to your instructors to make them feel like they are not alone.

As we've stressed a lot in our sections on administration, you must find ways to support your online writing instructors. Responsive administration is very similar to responsive instruction but your audience is your group of instructors instead of students. Much of what we said about responsive instruction can be

applied to administration. Creating a practice for how you'll respond to your instructors is just as imperative as creating a practice for how you'll respond to your students. You can't be all things and be available all the time for your instructors. Therefore, you'll want to teach them some self-sufficiency and provide them with a list of university resources they can access when they can't access you. We also have found that supporting instructors can look very different at different institutions so it's best to create a strategy for responding to your instructors' needs that works for your institution. For example, some institutions have robust training and resources for people who are new to online teaching but other institutions have zero training and very limited resources (usually just resources on how to use the CMS) so figure out what your institution has so that you can determine what resources you can rely on that are already available and what resources you'll need to make in order to have an arsenal of pre-made videos (as noted above). And of course, we highly recommend you send new online instructors to The Online Writing Instruction Community (www.owicommunity.org). We're big on not reinventing the wheel and we suggest you take on that mentality too since we all know how overloaded administration jobs can become.

Final Thoughts

The goal of being responsive is to help you maintain a high level of interaction with your students while not getting buried under the avalanche of emails and essays. It's about finding a balance—a good understanding of how an online course works so you can teach students. Just as you would get breaks between classes for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, schedule these into your calendar and make sure you are still you while teaching. We know this sounds obvious, but you will be surprised how checking your email can dominate your day. Remember, you won't see them in class on Monday or Tuesday or any day of the week, but you will see them via email, through their discussion posts, through assignments they turn in, or through a scheduled video conference. If you host office hours with a digital conference space that is open for any student to log in, schedule some writing time or grading time during these hours just in case no one shows up. We have a friend who hosts online office hours with his computer camera pointed to a sign that says: "Hey, it's too nice for us to sit inside today. If you are online and want to talk, text me at this number ###-###-#### and I'll be back in less than a minute!" You can still be responsive to students without being online all the time.

For the Hole in One!

If there is one thing to take away from this chapter that is planning a responsiveness strategy for your administrative style, course design, and instruction is

essential for success as an online instructor or administrator. We hope you see that you need to set expectations with your students and faculty in order to create a process of response that is doable and works for you in the long run. So, create a schedule that works for you and stick to it! In addition to planning out time to assess and respond to your students, you also need to plan out time for office hours and to answer emails. Further, if you design your own courses, you'll also need to schedule some time to work on improving or making changes to your course(s). However, you also need to consider planning and scheduling out time that you're not going to work; an essential step that most new online instructors miss. Scheduling downtime, professional development time, exercise time, mental health time, etc., is just as important as scheduling time to respond in the discussion boards or to comment on your students' essays.

For more practice and application examples, please visit our site: www.owicommunity.org.

Drive for Show, Putt for Dough!

Being available—The Master Scheduler!

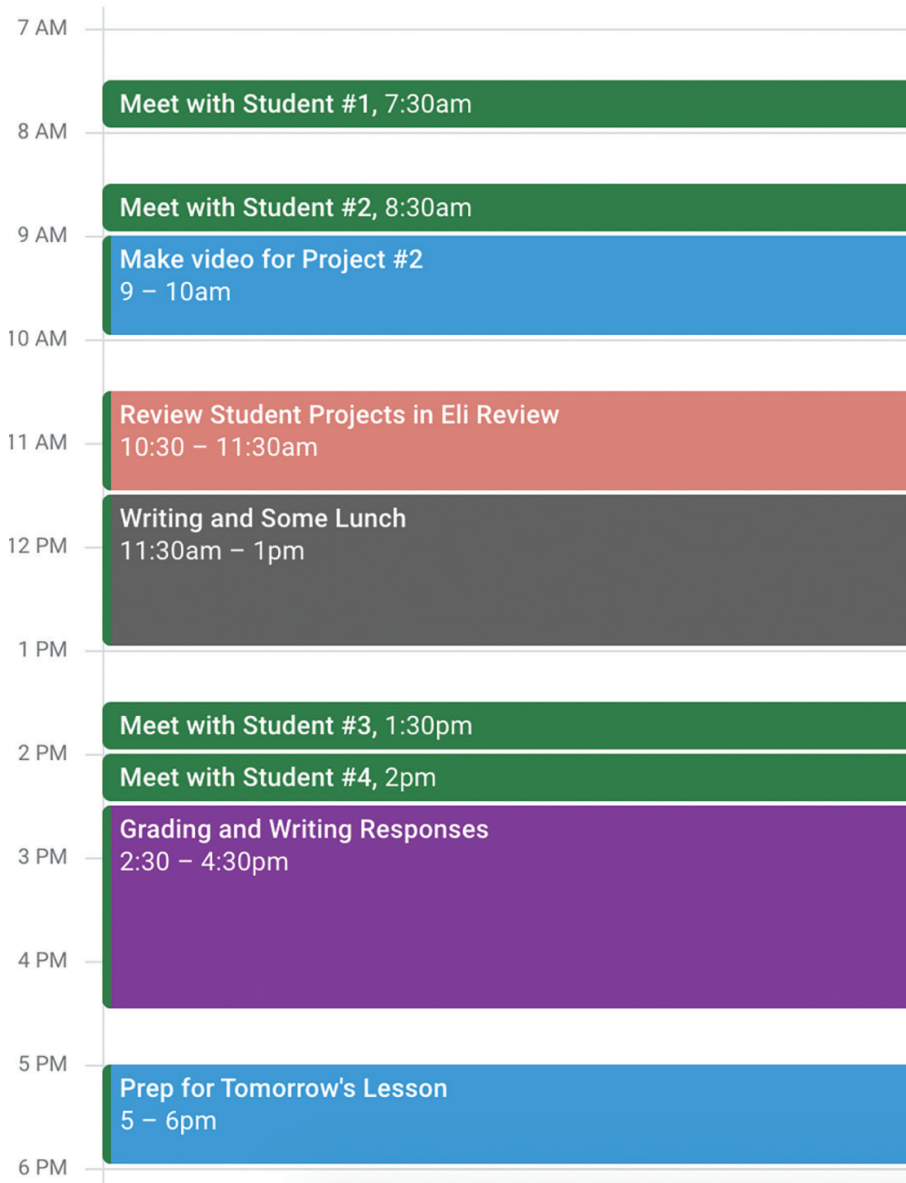
(Casey)

Part of working with students in courses that can last anywhere from 6 to 16 weeks is that we be responsive to them. We have been fortunate to see a number of approaches with concern for not over-extending your availability—by that we mean being responsive without being on call. This is also important in terms of location as not all of your students may reside in the same time zone as you do or even in the same country.

Set the time zone for your class when it comes to due dates. Create the course schedule in your Course Management System (CMS) and stipulate certain hours that you will be online (morning for students who are well ahead of you in terms of a time zone and in the afternoon for students who may be behind you) so everyone has an opportunity to utilize your availability.

Below is a sample of what my normal day may look like while teaching in my summer six-week course. Schedule it the way you would if you were on campus and had face-to-face office hours and meetings. This establishes a routine for you and your students. When they see the times you are free, they have the opportunity to plan their schedules as well so they can set aside time to meet with you. This is not just about making yourself responsive, it is also about being open and personal. The PARS approach is built to overlap as each supports the other. As you do this, you build a stronger pedagogy and a digital, personal, and accessible bridge to your students.

Different colors afford me the opportunity to plan my day so I know when I have video conferences, when I need to work with my other computer for video production, set aside time for my own writing, and create time for me to respond to student writing, reviews in Eli Review, and student feedback.



I organize my schedule the same way I do when I have face-to-face days on campus. Being responsive is one of the key steps in reaching students. I have far too many examples of evaluations where students noted how the schedule helped them to stay on task, how my emails were prompt and strategic, and how surprised they were that I was personal and responsive. By being a master scheduler, you can create an open and accessible space that allows for student success.

Figuring Out a Plan: If at first you don't succeed . . . keep working at it!**(Jessie)**

I'll admit it. I'm really not good at working from home, like seriously, not good at all. I have little skill for managing time, and setting boundaries/expectations with my students. I am the instructor who's always checking her email (like 20 plus times a day!), the instructor trying to head off problems before they escalate, the instructor who wants to be über supportive for her students because she knows the challenges of feeling alone when taking a course online.

In reality, students probably like me a lot because I respond to their queries so quickly and I get them the help they need with little delay. However, my constant availability is not healthy; it's a sickness. I'm the always responsive and available online instructor, but recently, I've been trying to mend my evil ways.

I have spent the last ten+ years teaching online and I am just starting to get to a point where I have a regular schedule; I've failed multiple times trying to come up with something that works. The sheer number of planners, planning systems and calendars that I've gone through in the last few years, proves that it takes time to find out how to manage it all and with practice, you can get a system that works for you.

My latest quest to master my schedule is inspired by the fact that I'm burnt out, running on zero, have no energy left. I can't keep up the pace I've set anymore. I'm starting to realize that a schedule = freedom.

I've been working on prioritizing and I've been trying to pick the top three things that would make me feel like I had a good day, and that I was productive. I set aside time in my morning (during or after breakfast) to plan out my day and pick my top three priorities for the day. I also have begun meshing my personal schedule with my work schedule, which is helping. In the past, I've always kept these separate, but now I schedule out meetings for work, tasks for work, time to write professionally, exercise, do the laundry, etc., all in one place.

Every single day I fill out a schedule (yes, by hand!) that looks something like the following figure:

This is what works for me, but it wouldn't work for everyone. Developing a system takes time and skill. I've only been really working on it in the last year. Prior, I wasn't managing my workload or giving students a realistic idea of what it means to take a class online. While all of the experts say it's important to set a schedule, I was just putting one foot in front of the other and dealing with the day-to-day ebbs and flows that come with online teaching.

In finding your own unique schedule, I encourage you to experiment and figure out what kind of system you want to use:

- Will you do research on being productive or setting up a daily routine?
- Will you assess your current process and figure out what is working and what is not?

- Will your schedule be electronic or paper-based?
- Will you put both work and personal items in your schedule?
- Will you plan it out daily, weekly, monthly?
- Will you share it with others, like your family members?

Three Priorities:

1. workout
2. respond to student essays
3. work on C&C article

Daily Mind Dump

- Exercise
- Grade wk. 2 DQs
- House chores
- Respond to student essays
- Email about PARS book
- Participate in Week 3 DQs
- Laundry
- Walk dogs 2 times
- Work on C&C article
- Prep. dinner



6-8 a.m.	Breakfast Walk dogs House chores
8-10 a.m.	Work on C&C article, start laundry
10-11 a.m.	Email, course questions, grade wk. 2 DQs
11 a.m.-1 p.m.	Workout, lunch, shower
1-3 p.m.	Respond to student essays
3-5 p.m.	Grocery, dinner prep , continue laundry
5-7 p.m.	Dinner, house chores, veg out time
7-9	Email, walk dogs, bed

Considering these things and more is a great way to start to work on finding a system that works for you. I encourage you to do this sooner, rather than later. I would hope that you don't just jump into online teaching full force and start creating bad habits and unrealistic expectations for yourself and your students.

My advice: Don't wait nine+ years to realize what you've been doing isn't working. Start figuring out a plan today!

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