Go Low!

While having a plan is always great when it comes to playing golf, you also have to do your research to better understand how the course works in terms of layout, speed of the greens, wind, weather, and other factors. This is where a caddy can aid in your research and give you the chance to not only prepare but also feel confident to improvise.

We like this chapter by Julie Watts because it explores how online student orientations (OSOs) can be complex, but when working with students to prepare them for courses and expectations, this hard work at the front of the semester will alleviate more headaches down the line. Utilizing community of inquiry (CoI), Watts engages in building and maintaining relationships between students, content, and learning in a way that is structured but also rewarding for those involved.

Chapter 17. Fairway Finder: Implementing an Online Student Orientation

Julie Watts
University of Wisconsin-Stout

Abstract: A course-embedded, learning-focused online student orientation (OSO) can be consequential for online learners, helping them to take ownership of their path through a course and enabling them to use OSO strategies and skills in subsequent online classes. Drawing from an OSO used in an online technical and professional communication graduate program (Watts, 2019) and using the community of inquiry theory (Garrison, 2016), this Fairway Finder OSO helps students identify behaviors and skills they need to succeed as online learners and what behaviors and skills they should expect from peers and the instructor. Interactive learning opportunities are provided that enable students to continuously reflect on how they can move beyond surface learning and achieve deep learning (Phillips & Graeff, 2014). The Fairway Finder OSO helps instructors to achieve PARS—personal, accessible, responsive, strategic—learning experiences for students (Borgman & McArdle, 2019).

Keywords: online learning, online student orientation, community of inquiry, deep learning

While research has eroded misconceptions about the "digital native," illustrating that working and playing online are not the same as learning online (Brumberger, 2011), we are only beginning to understand how to best prepare students for online writing classes (Stewart, 2021). One often-overlooked strategy is the online student orientation (OSO; Melonçon & Harris, 2015). OSOs showing online students how to navigate their learning management system (LMS) or discover university resources are prevalent (Taylor et al., 2015; Wozniak et al., 2012), yet OSOs providing strategies for becoming informed, reflective online learners are less common (Cho, 2012). A course-embedded, learning-focused OSO can be consequential, becoming (to extend Jessie Borgman and Casey McArdle's golf analogy) a "fairway finder"—strategies helping students chart their path through a course.

Drawing from a study about an OSO developed for an online technical and professional communication graduate program (Watts, 2019), students identify behaviors and skills they need to succeed as online learners and those they should expect from peers and instructors, using the community of inquiry (CoI) theory as a framework (Garrison, 2016). The OSO's interactive learning opportunities

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enable students to continuously reflect on and devise how to move beyond surface learning and achieve deep learning (Phillips & Graeff, 2014).

This chapter describes what I call the Fairway Finder OSO, analyzing how it helps instructors craft personal, accessible, responsive, and strategic (PARS) learning experiences (Borgman & McArdle, 2019). The Fairway Finder OSO prepares students "to learn how to learn" online and is useful for students with all levels of online course experience (Levy, 2006, p. 226).

Theory and Practice

The 2021 State of the Art of OWI Report shows that OSOs for online learners are not widely offered, with only 22 percent of respondents reporting any orientation to online writing courses (CCCC Online Writing Instruction Standing Group, 2021, p. 34). Typically, online programs requiring OSO participation identify overcoming technological barriers or discovering university resources as OSO goals. OSOs based on learning theories, helping students learn *how to learn* online are less prevalent (Wozniak et al., 2012).

OSOs addressing technological barriers often prompt students to complete LMS tasks, helping mitigate high course-withdrawal rates and buoying student satisfaction (Taylor et al., 2015). Such OSOs coupled with student services information also contribute to student satisfaction (Jones, 2013). While face-to-face orientations have long acknowledged complex social development and learning issues (Perigo & Upcraft, 1989) and despite literature characterizing differences between online and face-to-face learning environments (Baker, 2010; Gerlock & McBride, 2013; Moore, 1993), OSOs orienting online students tend to focus on easy-to-assess and remediate LMS and resource issues.

Yet learning-focused OSOs—especially the course-embedded variety, which contribute to higher rates of course and program completion (Taylor et al., 2015)—provide online students benefits. Philipa Levy (2006) embedded a two-week OSO into the beginning of a 17-week online course and incorporated OSO tasks throughout the semester. Students wanted more orientation tasks at the beginning of the semester, more synchronous communication throughout the semester, and those tasks that focused on "critical reflection and dialogue" were particularly important for developing students' "'learning to learn' capabilities" (Levy, 2006, p. 236). Studies show that theory-driven OSOs tackling students' challenges learning in online environments not only improve student satisfaction but impact learning outcomes (Watts, 2019; Wozniak et al., 2012).

Community of Inquiry (CoI) Theory

The Fairway Finder course-embedded OSO uses CoI theory, encouraging students to identify and nurture behaviors and skills they need to cultivate and ask for in others to succeed as online learners (Garrison et al., 2000). Online courses

should be communities of inquiry—places where students move beyond surface learning (characterized by rote memorization) to achieve "deep and meaningful learning" in which they synthesize concepts and apply ideas (Rourke & Kanuka, 2009, p. 23). A vibrant CoI features members working to achieve social, teaching, and cognitive presence (see Table 17.1).

Table 17.1. CoI Social, Teaching, and Cognitive Presences

Social Presence	Acknowledges that engaging with others fosters learning (Wang & Wang, 2012) CoI members cultivate social presence by sharing beliefs and values, cooperating to create trusting learning environments, and collaborating around common intellectual tasks (Swan et al., 2009).
Teaching Presence	Accomplished through course design, discourse facilitation, direct instruction (Anderson et al., 2001), and timely, constructive feedback (Shea et al., 2010) Students contribute to teaching presence by self-regulating their learning (Zimmerman, 2008) and participating in coursework (Akyol & Garrison, 2011).
Cognitive Presence	Characterized by students' sustained interaction with, reflection about, and application of course content; students "question their existing assumptions" and need to "construct" and apply "new knowledge" (Stewart, 2017, p. 71) Instructors scaffold students' critical inquiry by setting up complex problems, helping students explore and integrate relevant information and apply/test ideas (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005).

Instructors and students can ask questions like these to analyze their own and others' behaviors and activities relevan Photo of a very hilly golf course fairway. There is tall rough brown grass in the front and to the left. There are many ominous looking blue and white clouds in the sky. t to these presences:

- How do my actions and messaging help cultivate *social presence*?
- What behaviors related to *teaching presence* is my instructor enacting, and how can I take advantage of these?
- How can I complete coursework to develop my *cognitive presence*?
- How can I scaffold coursework, enabling students to practice and achieve *cognitive presence*?
- How can I assign student groups intellectual tasks to cultivate productive *social presence*?

Students with varying degrees of online learning experience find the OSO helpful:

> Prior to learning about this model, I could recognize that something in an online course was not working, but struggled to articulate or even really pinpoint the cause. Now I have both a framework and a vocabulary to not only identify what works

> and does not work in an online course but to discuss it. (Watts, 2019, p. 263)

While the Fairway Finder OSO is structured in a 15-week semester course, it also could be integrated into shorter courses or stand alone.

Fairway Finder OSO and the PARS Framework

The Fairway Finder OSO features a PARS sensibility. Its activities are *strategic*(S) in that students grapple with online learning concepts before wrestling with course content and then twice more during the semester. The balance of individual and group activities is an *accessible* (A) way for students to tackle OSO concepts, working individually and collaboratively to devise meaning and test their knowledge. Students receive *responsive* (R) peer feedback and individualized instructor feedback. The OSO is a *personal* (P) learning journey set within a community: Each participant is responsible for their own and others' teaching and learning.

Week 1: Discovering and Defining the CoI

Week 1 introduces the Fairway Finder OSO, with few other activities scheduled. Students recognize the OSO importance and are incentivized to complete the activities (see Table 17.2).

Students view a slideshow lecture explaining CoI, illustrating the theory to them not as an abstract concept but as a tool they can *use*—helping them to identify, measure, and reflect on their own and others' activities and behaviors. To apply CoI, students read a blog article and post to a discussion board. Students share their experiences and position themselves expressively, focusing on the work (the presence) one needs to invest to collaboratively create a CoI. In the individual response papers, which receive instructor feedback, students further comment on CoI applications.

Table 17.2. OSO Week 1 Learning Goals and Activities

Week 1 Learning Goals	Learn about the CoI theory. Discover how social, teaching, and cognitive presences can be manifested by CoI members.
Week 1 Activities and Materials (Appendix A)	View a ten-minute slideshow explaining CoI. * Read "Five-Step Strategy for Student Success with Online Learning" (Morrison, 2015), and post to a discussion board about how the article strategies inculcate the presences. Write an individual response paper analyzing "CoI Framework: Establishing Community in an Online Course" (Lambert & Fisher, 2013) to illustrate the application of CoI.

**If you teach graduate students, consider also assigning Chapter 2 "Theoretical Foundations" and Chapter 3 "Community of Inquiry," found in E-Learning in the 21st Century (Garrison, 2016).*

Week 8: Applying Community of Inquiry Concepts to Learning

During Week 8, students return to the Fairway Finder OSO, using CoI to reflect on and self-monitor their skills and behaviors while providing feedback to others (see Table 17.3). Students write a CoI reflection and plan, which receives instructor feedback, encouraging reflection about how they have cultivated (and could improve) cognitive and social presence and how they could better leverage teaching presence.

Students participate in a discussion board sharing features of their plans, stimulating whole-class discussion. To critique CoI behaviors and activities, students need to feel part of a safe, trusting learning environment. Schedule this critique after members have established trust, and integrate student reflection and instructor feedback into the course before Week 8 to further this "trusting influence" among CoI members (Peacock & Cowan, 2019).

Table 17.3. OSO Week 8 Learning Goals and Activities

Week 8 Learning Goals	Apply CoI concepts to course activities. Check in with CoI members to provide feedback about their CoI behaviors and skills. Devise self-improvement plans to help CoI members achieve the presences.
Week 8 Activities and Materials (Appendix B)	Write a 750- to 1,500-word CoI reflection and plan. Participate in a discussion board analyzing plan features and ideas.

Week 15: Reflecting on Our Community of Inquiry

Students revisit the reflection and plan and devise a final response, discussing how the presences were practiced and achieved (see Table 17.4). Responses can be paired with portfolios including revised coursework that indicate where presences are evident:

- *Teaching presence*. Essay that received useful instructor feedback.
- *Cognitive presence*. Poster project displaying survey data analysis.
- *Social presence*. Collaborative proposal project illustrating various student contributions.

Final responses and portfolios can be used in course or program assessment (Watts, 2017).

CoI members are responsible for student learning, and instructors take the OSO journey with students. This shared experience distinguishes the Fairway Finder OSO from others that simply orient students to technology or university resources. The Fairway Finder OSO encourages instructors to cultivate their teaching presence and guides students as they practice achieving social and cognitive presence.

Table 17.4. OSO Week 15 Learning Goals and Activities

Week 15 Learning Goals	Apply CoI concepts to course activities. Analyze how students have "learned how to learn online."
Week 15 Activities and Materials (Appendix C)	Submit a final response paper to the instructor. Students use CoI concepts analyzing how they have "learned how to learn online." Compile a portfolio containing selected, revised coursework. Students reflect on their learning journey and point to places in their work where presences are evident.

Conclusions and Takeaways

Students should be responsible for their learning but also know that they can succeed by participating in a community of learners. The Fairway Finder OSO gives students a vocabulary to analyze and reflect on their learning, helping them succeed. Consider the following takeaways to implement the Fairway Finder OSO:

1. *Integrate the CoI framework* variously, "naming" cognitive, social, and teaching presence when explaining readings, tasks, and assignments. When I use audio feedback to respond to student work, I explain that I use this medium to cultivate teaching presence. When assigning collaborative projects, I state that this cultivates social and cognitive presence.
2. *Incentivize OSO activities* by awarding points, providing feedback, and engaging in CoI activities throughout the semester.
3. *Ensure OSO activities are collaborative*, so CoI members share ideas and provide and receive feedback. Students should receive peer feedback and individualized instructor feedback.
4. *Continue to update the OSO*, allowing instructors to consider how PARS allows for different iterations of orientation content.

The Fairway Finder OSO prompts CoI members to experience a *personal* (P) learning journey that occurs within a community. Activities characterized by instructor and peer feedback help students grapple with OSO concepts in an *accessible* (A) way—they work on their own and with others to devise meaning and test their knowledge. Students receive *responsive* (R) peer feedback and individualized instructor feedback, showing the value of student contributions and enabling them to learn from others. CoI members participate in *strategic* (S) ways: Activities are assigned throughout the semester and culminate in a semester-end reflection. This course-embedded, learning-focused OSO orients students to online learning environments, giving them ownership of their path through the course.

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Appendix A: Week 1

Discussion Prompt: View the video introducing the community of inquiry theory and its application to online teaching and learning. Then read through the blog post, "Five-Step Strategy for Student Success with Online Learning," which identifies behaviors you should carry out to help you become a high-performing online learner.

Take a moment to post your response to the following prompts: (a) Tell us how frequently you have enrolled in online courses and what your experiences with online learning have been. (b) Briefly discuss how the CoI concept introduced in the video aligns with the five-step strategy proposed in the blog post. (c) Name and define one "strategy" (it doesn't necessarily need to be one mentioned in the blog post) that you think could be used to cultivate cognitive, social, or teaching presence in this class.

Response Paper: Read through the attached Lambert and Fischer (2013) PDF, which uses the community of inquiry (CoI) theory to frame its study. Respond in writing to the following 3-part prompt: (a) Think about the reading strategies you've read about this week in the "How to read an article" PDF; then describe the strategies you used to read the Lambert article. Comment on any challenges that you faced understanding the content of the article. (b) What do you believe were the most important findings communicated in the Lambert article? (c) Analyze how you believe one or more of these findings relate to you as a student in this online course.

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Appendix B: Week 8

CoI Reflection and Plan Prompt: During Week 1 of this class, we spent time reading about and discussing the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model analyzing how to "learn how to learn" online using the facets of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. *Teaching presence* is achieved by properly designing and organizing the course, facilitating discourse, providing direct instruction, and offering feedback about student work. *Social presence* is defined by the premise that interacting and engaging with other students and the instructor helps to foster cognitive presence and deep learning. *Cognitive presence* is characterized by students tackling a complex problem, often by researching, reflecting on it, and applying it in meaningful ways.

Write a 750- to 1,500-word CoI Reflection and Plan explaining how you have experienced social, teaching, and cognitive presences thus far in the course. Reflect on how you have cultivated cognitive and social presence and the ways you have leveraged the teaching presence offered to you. Conclude your draft with a set of recommendations about how you, your peers, and your instructor can improve the social, teaching, and cognitive presence of this course.

Reflection and Plan Discussion Board: Feel free to use the CoI Reflection and Plan document that you submitted to your instructor as a starting point for posting to this discussion board. Respond using complete sentences to the following questions: How did I perceive social, teaching, and cognitive presence exhibited in this class so far? What improvements do I see necessary for our community to achieve deeper social, teaching, and cognitive presence? What specifically do I need to do to help my community achieve this and what do I ask of my peers and instructor?

Peacock, S., & Cowan, J. (2019). Promoting sense of belonging in online communities of inquiry in accredited courses. *Online Learning Journal*, *23*(2), 67-81.

Appendix C: Week 15

Final Response Draft: Please respond as thoroughly as possible to the prompt, and draw examples from your experiences as a student. Your Response should total between 750-1,500 words in length and should be drafted into complete sentences and well-developed paragraphs.

During Week 1 of this class, we spent time reading about and discussing the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model analyzing how to "learn how to learn" online using the facets of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. *Teaching presence* is achieved by properly designing and organizing the course, facilitating discourse, providing direct instruction, and offering feedback about student work. *Social presence* is defined by the premise that interacting and engaging with other students and the instructor helps to foster cognitive presence and deep learning. *Cognitive presence* is characterized by students tackling a

complex problem, often by researching, reflecting on it, and applying it in meaningful ways.

Analyze the ways you have "learned how to learn online" throughout your time this semester. Use the CoI concepts of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence to frame and/or inform your analysis.