THE ONLINE COURSE LEAD-IN: REIMAGINING THE FIRST WEEKS OF SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

In Spring 2020, the traditional mode of content delivery in postsecondary education switched overnight from face-to-face to online. As a result, knowledge about best practices in online pedagogy became crucial. To address the challenging task of re-envisioning teaching practices and learning in a new medium, this article proposes a heightened focus on the beginning portion of the online course experience. At any level of education, maximizing the first weeks of a course can set the necessary foundation for student success. When a course is transitioned to an online environment, getting started can seem daunting, for both the students and the teachers. We propose using a course lead-in, a strategy that uses retention theories to consider potential student barriers and serve as a guide to prepare students for success in online learning. Sample items from the proposed course lead-in are also shared within the article.

Keywords: instructional design, retention, course lead-in

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, educators across the globe were asked to reconceptualize their teaching methods as learning universally shifted to an online modality due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, there was an increased emphasis on teaching pedagogy in online learning, which created the need for educators to be proficient in multiple media. This sudden shift provided an opportunity and responsibility for educators to create and model to their students some of the best practices in online pedagogy. With opportunity comes challenges, and one of the main challenges was how to transition educators, at all levels of education around the world, to be effective in a remote, or online, environment regardless of their prior experience or desire to teach online.

For years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, as online education in the postsecondary space grew, so did concern about student withdrawals and dropouts (Bawa, 2016; Fetzner, 2013; Hart, 2012; Muljana & Luo, 2019; Murphy & Stewart, 2017). A withdrawal or dropout from a postsecondary institution is typically categorized as a student who does not complete their degree program (Hart, 2012). The reasons why students leave a degree program varies, ranging from personal to academic and external factors (Bawa, 2016). Given the immense opportunities for and growth of online education, it is imperative to address online course design and delivery and how both impact students' persistence and success (Allen & Seaman, 2017; Kumar et al., 2017; Lemoine et al., 2019).

This article proposes a unique, exploratory approach to course design and delivery to address some of the challenges facing online educators in postsecondary education. Building from the theoretical retention models in this field, we propose that those who are designing and delivering online courses focus on the portion of the course we are calling the course lead-in. We define the course lead-in as the initial components or module within a course. We will outline how the course lead-in can be structured to address the challenges associated with online course retention and student engagement. The course lead-in is still

in the development and pilot phase of application, yet it is our hope that sharing this strategy now will allow online educators to implement these ideas and begin to modify them for their own use.

The course lead-in approach is grounded in the educational concept that the first weeks of school contain critical moments to build classroom community and connections with students and form a foundation for learning that impacts student engagement and success (Wong & Wong, 2005). We will provide examples of constructed modules and template language that have been built as a sample course lead-in to illustrate how these ideas come together in a learning management system (LMS).

We will begin with the notion that "online learning environments provide an unprecedented opportunity to increase student access" (Shea et al., 2005, p. 1). Within this context we analyze current trends and potential barriers students face when learning in an online modality. We also consider how access and retention compare and differ in online educational environments. Bawa (2016) mentioned that despite the increase in potential access and enrollment, there is a pattern of poor retention of students in online courses. With the recent shift in postsecondary education to online learning, retention has become a top priority for many educators across the globe. This provides an opportunity to evaluate the various barriers that online students encounter and identify potential theories that contribute to the poor retention level of learners. Over the past decade, studies have indicated that there are several reasons why a postsecondary online student may drop out of a course or program, including personal matters, job-related concerns, less experience with online courses, midsemester motivation, or specific issues with the online program. While we can likely add additional COVID-19 related factors to that list, our work focused on some of these traditional factors to develop an intervention and tool to mitigate barriers to retention.

Some of the common barriers for online students include technical ability, motivation, and social interaction, which can be addressed through orientation or early intervention (Bawa, 2016; Ortiz-Lozano et al., 2018). We believe educators should be providing students in a course with an enhanced onboarding experience that takes into account retention theories for distance learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Retention Theory

In order to propose a solution to the common barriers online students experience, we explored various postsecondary retention theories dating back to Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975) through Park's (2007) revised model. Tinto's Student Integration model, one of the most utilized theories in higher education retention, focuses on the importance of the initial commitment to the course or program as well as overarching goals. However, Tinto's theory does not completely address online courses or the nontraditional student (Radovan, 2019). Therefore, other theoretical models such as Kember's Model of Dropout in Distance Education (1995), Bean & Metzner's Nontraditional Student Attrition Model (1985), Rovai's Composite Persistence Model (2003), and Park's (2007) revised model of dropouts from distance learning provided additional insight into the student's relationship with the external factors impacting the reason for their dropout or withdrawal. Table 1 provides a synthesis of the components of the seminal retention theories in the field.

The findings from the retention models highlight the need to address student barriers from multiple angles. The common themes across the retention models include entry characteristics and social integration. After reviewing these theoretical models, we took into consideration notions from each to address the first weeks of an online course. For example, incorporating concepts from Tinto's model of the whole student while keeping material applicable and relevant as well as considering entry characteristics across a spectrum led to the idea of scaffolded, adaptable tools and self-reflective activities. These activities and tools allowed those who may be more prepared than others to continue while allowing those who needed extra time to prepare at their own pace. Finally, social integration through student-to-student, student-to-instructor, and student-to-materials needs to be addressed early to form a sense of belonging. In addition to reviewing the retention theory components, additional student barriers ought to be considered when discussing a transition to online and remote learning.

Student Barriers in Online Learning

Retention theories formed a foundation for

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF RETENTION THEORIES

Model/Theory	Theorist	Overview	Components
Kember's Model of Dropout in Distance Education	Kember (1995)	This theoretical model focuses on persistence in online courses versus traditional face-to-face courses. This model is traditionally used with working adults.	Kember's model includes: • entry characteristics • prior educational experiences • social integration • external attribution • academic integration • academic incompatibility • GPA • cost/benefit It also takes into consideration the familial responsibilities, motivation, ability, and prior educational experiences as well as institutional support.
The Nontraditional Student Attrition Model	Bean & Metzner (1985)	This theoretical model focuses on understanding the dropout processes of nontraditional students and adult learners.	Bean & Metzner model includes: • Students' background • academic variables • academic outcome • environmental variables • social integration variables • psychological outcomes
Composite Persistence Model	Rovai (2003)	This theoretical model builds on Bean & Metzner's and Tinto's models to reframe Kember's model to identify factors specifically related to online student retention.	Rovai's model includes: • entry characteristics before admission to college • student characteristics • student skills • and after entry into college • external factors • internal factors
The revised model of dropouts from distance learning in organizations	Park (2007)	This theoretical model builds on Rovai's model to focus on support factors.	Park's additions include: • perception of familial and employer support • relevance of material

our own understanding of what may occur when a student enters an online classroom. Beyond those theoretical frameworks, additional student barriers to online learning exist. The complexity of addressing retention components and student barriers in an online environment requires a consistent yet customizable pathway for educators to implement to surmount them.

To overcome some of the most common barriers in online education, Bawa (2016), mentioned the importance of orientation style programs since "one of the biggest deterrents to online retention is the over-estimation of student capabilities with respect to the demands of time, commitment, and technical skills required in online learning" (p. 7). Therefore, in developing a strategy to address student barriers, students need to be provided with an online course experience that allows for self-reflection and the evaluation of their skills while providing the necessary tools to address any gaps that may exist. During the first weeks of an online course, teachers should emphasize the amount of time and technical skill required for an online course and provide resources for students to "skill-up" at the start of the course, if needed.

Rovai's composite persistence model (2003) visually synthesizes key internal and external factors that are discussed by other retention theories and allows for the consideration of barriers in online education (see Figure 1).

Rovai's composite persistence model (2003) combines existing retention theories to examine the student characteristics, skills, internal factors, and external factors that may contribute specifically to

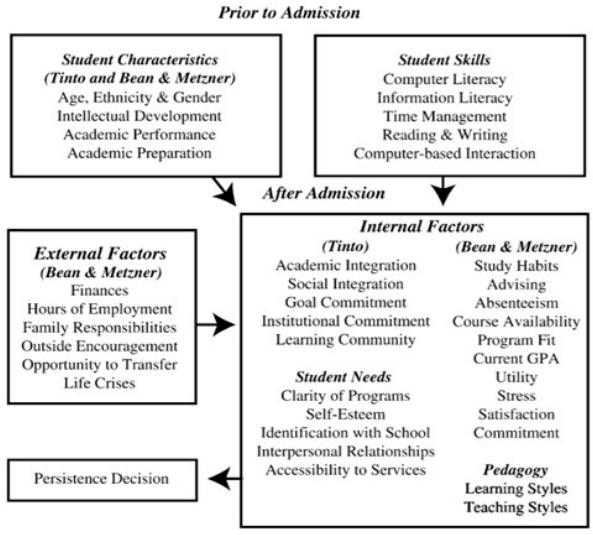


Figure 1. Composite Persistence Model (Rovai, 2003)

a distance education student persisting in an online course or program. Because Rovai used the lens of distance education to build the model, our focus began with some of the barriers identified in this model as a starting point. Rovai used "admission to college" as a factor in his model; however, since we are looking at the microcosm of an individual course, we adjusted the process to look at factors that may occur before and after the start of an individual course.

The composite persistence model lists student characteristics and skills as factors that exist within a student before admission to a program. These range from age, ethnicity, and gender to academic preparation and computer literacy (Rovai, 2003). External and internal factors are defined as potential challenges to persistence that may occur after admission to an online program. Rovai (2003) pulled from Bean and Metzner (1985) to define external individual factors such as finances or money, hours of employment or work obligations, outside encouragement, life crises, opportunity to transfer, and family responsibilities. Figure 1 also highlights internal individual factors that range from student needs and pedagogy used in courses to factors such as stress and the social integration of the student (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Tinto, 1975). Using Rovai's model as a launching point, we examined which of these factors could be addressed in a course lead-in that mirrors the "first weeks of school" and specifically tackles some of the challenges online students may face in this modality.

As we have discussed, several components and factors led to the development of our course lead-in, yet we acknowledge that every aspect of the retention theories or student barriers cannot possibly be addressed. The purpose and goal of a course lead-in is to serve as a bridge to prepare postsecondary students for online learning and take into account that each student is coming into a course with internal factors, external factors, and program/curricular factors when they begin a course. The course lead-in aims to prepare a course so the student feels connected socially, recognizes the applicability of the material, and feels supported through scaffolded learning opportunities to get started. To get to that goal, a course lead-in includes four components to help prepare both the student and the teacher. We chose to target student support at the beginning of the course, because research shows that intervention measures are most effective when introducing students to an online learning environment (Hermann et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2011; Muljana & Luo, 2019; Murphy & Stewart, 2017) and can lead to lower withdrawal rates and encourage successful course completion (Murphy & Stewart, 2017).

COURSE LEAD-IN

Making the Connection

Connecting back to the instructional design roots of education, the course lead-in serves as a tool to set up, enhance, and lead the student through the preparatory phase of online courses. The course lead-in process uses the knowledge of student retention theories, student barriers, instructional design standards, and effective practices to provide a foundation for online student course entry. It connects the effective practices proposed by Muljiana & Luo (2019), such as early self-assessments of prior knowledge, establishing procedures, and entrance orientation techniques for online readiness and technological skill, as well as Quality Matters standards such as course navigation, how to get started, a placeholder for policies and procedures, computer skills, digital information literacy skills, and the prerequisite technical knowledge needed to start an online course. The sections below highlight the four aspects of the course lead-in and provide examples of how they can be used within a learning management system.

Organization, Communication, and Participation

We recommend that the home page or landing page of the online classroom be standard across all courses, although it can be personalized and customized while still keeping the navigation of the course consistent. For example, the home page can include course specific welcome information (course description, instructor name, objectives, etc.) but still create a clear link for students to get started and specific course lead-in features that relate to the course (see Figure 2).

When students select "Click Here to Start" or "Get Started," this will take them to the module for the course lead-in. The course lead-in should

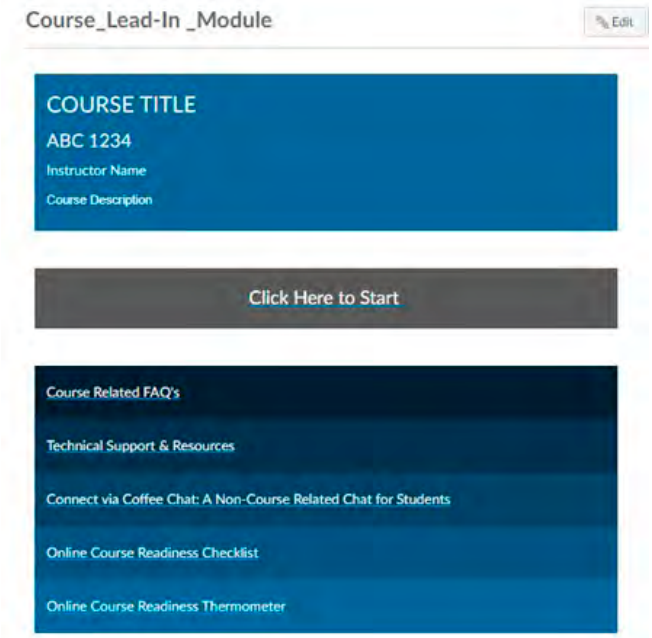


Figure 2. Sample Course Lead-in Home Page

include the four main components such as the online course readiness checklists, online course readiness thermometer, course-related FAQ, and a virtual Coffee Chat space. However, these components may not be the only items students need to complete before they get started in the course; therefore, additional items may need to be added, such as a syllabus quiz or student introduction. Figure 3 shows a sample table of contents for a course lead-in.

The course lead-in supports the organization of the online course and communication and participation within it. Communication and participation from both the teacher and the students encourage learning interaction, and increase students' critical thinking skills, learning

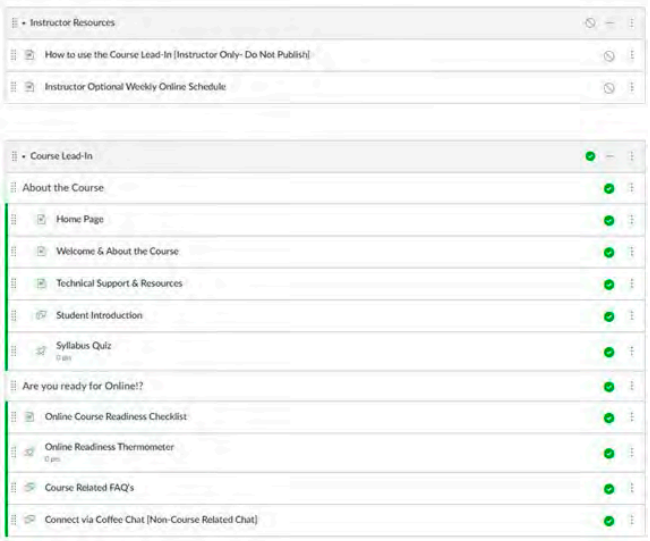


Figure 3. Sample Course Lead-in Table of Contents

performance, and overall satisfaction with a course (Yuan & Kim, 2014). These components are critical to effective online instruction. Sun & Chen's (2016) research review concluded that well designed courses prepared teachers and students and motivated interpersonal interactions while building a sense of community and paying attention to technology.

We recommend online educators walk themselves through each item of the course lead-in so they can experience the course lead-in as a student. Furthermore, educators should take screen captures or screen recordings of themselves completing the course lead-in activities as a demonstration video or virtual guide to help students through this process. This modeling serves as an effective online pedagogy tool that benefits the learners in the course. Communication about the course lead-in items and modeling its navigation can be sent to students via school email prior to them entering the LMS in case they are having trouble getting into the course to start the lead-in items. This initial demonstration has the potential to help remove initial barriers to entry related to technological savviness that a student might experience while trying to access the LMS.

Online Course Readiness Checklists

The first component of the course lead-in is the online course readiness checklists. These are documents housed in the course that can also be sent directly to students to help them get started

before the first day of class. These checklists serve as the foundation for the course lead-in, as they provide the students and teachers with basic information to get started in the course. The online course readiness checklists can be modified for any course, school, or department and can include links to places such as the LMS, the technical support department, and any recommended tools such as internet browsers or video conferencing services. The goal of these checklists is to provide generic resources that are available to teachers and resources that students may need to access while learning online.

Student Online Readiness Checklist

The student online readiness checklist serves as a basic guide to identify if the student has the resources required for online learning to be successful. This checklist not only allows students to see what they will need for the course but also how to reach out and let their instructor know what they have or do not have at the onset of the course. When providing links to helpful tools, it is important for teachers to ensure that the links are connected to tools that embody the effective online design principles previously discussed. Even without links, the checklist can help the teacher refer students to appropriate services to ensure they have what they need.

The tasks in the student online readiness checklist range from identifying if the student has access to a reliable internet connection and a computer, laptop or similar device, to more online learning strategies such as creating a calendar for the term or setting alarms and notifications for assignments and exams.

An example of Student Online Readiness Checklist Items (*=recommended):

- **technical resources**
  - reliable internet
  - computer, laptop or similar device
  - webcam
  - speakers
  - printer, ink, paper, and scanner
  - internet browser (Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari)
  - access to the schools Learning Management System (LMS)
    - *login username and password*
  - person or service to help with technical concerns (i.e., school computer staff or product support pages)
- **time management**
  - comfortable space for learning
  - calendar (digital or physical) of due dates*
  - notification or reminders for exams*
- **academic**
  - course textbook (required reading material)
  - advising/counseling*
  - School tutoring services*

Teacher Online Course Readiness Checklist

The teacher online course readiness checklist is focused on instructional content and requirements, techniques for humanizing the learning environment, and effective pedagogical practices. Online instructors need to be able to engage their students, be good organizers, provide students with materials and links from the start, inform students how to navigate the LMS, and be flexible (Sun & Chen, 2016). The items in this teacher-facing checklist are designed to help ensure that teachers are able to meet these criteria and help teachers prepare their online course with a focus on the course lead-in items as well as national quality standards for online courses. Courses become significantly more effective with quality instructional design and prepared instructors (Sun & Chen, 2016). This checklist can also be adapted to any course, school, or department.

An example of Teacher Online Readiness Checklist:

1. Identify universal online course resources at your school such as:
   a. Learning Management System technical support
   b. Testing
   c. Tutoring
   d. Mental health support
   e. Writing center
   f. Library access
   g. Online services guides
   h. Name, phone number, and email of a contact person for online students
   i. Free tools to assist distance students' success

2. Introduce yourself to allow for students to connect with you professionally and personally.
3. Develop flexible deadlines and key milestones for course assessments.
4. Develop a story for why the subject is important to you and how students can use it in all disciplines (depending on the level of the course).
    a. Update the Welcome & About the Course
5. Identify critical assignments that may require additional assistance and prepare resources to address possible concerns.
6. Review or create materials for examples, templates, etc.
    a. Review materials for copyright and accessibility
7. Update the Online Course Readiness Checklist to customize to your course.
    a. Specifically, if students need particular resources to be successful
8. Review the Online Readiness Thermometer questions and goal setting to either rewrite the statement or customize it to your discipline.
9. Prep the Course Related FAQs based on previous knowledge of course content or anticipated questions.

Checklist Summary

In online education, communication and preparation is key as students and teachers must communicate in order to navigate the technological aspects of the learning environment (Hicks et al., 2019). The more often instructor-student interactions occur, the more students engage in the course and have a successful online experience (Sun & Chen, 2016). Using the student online readiness checklist as an initial interaction point with students can help to facilitate learner readiness. Additionally, it ensures that the first interaction between instructors and students is focused on support and guidance for students. Making a good first impression can lead to increased learning and student satisfaction (Hicks et al., 2019). However, before an instructor interacts with any students, it is imperative they have professional development and training related to online course design and instruction (Sun & Chen, 2016). This level of instructor readiness can be determined using the Teacher Online Readiness checklist, which also acts as a tool to determine what additional support or training may be necessary in order to be an effective instructor of online education.

Online Course Readiness Thermometer

The online readiness thermometer is used to determine the students' preparedness for an online course. To encourage persistence, this type of assessment is extremely important as many students may not have considered their readiness for online learning. Examining student readiness through self-assessment is necessary and has been an aspect of online programs since the mid-1990s (Martin et al., 2020). There is a lack of valid readiness instruments that can serve as admissions tools for online programs or courses (Farid, 2014; Wladis & Samuels, 2016). However, the purpose of the thermometer is not for admissions or assessment, but instead it is designed as an opportunity of self-reflection for the student. Student self-reflection practices in online settings are an element of effective online instruction (Biel & Brame, 2016). The online readiness thermometer can also be used to help the teacher learn more about their students' perceptions, confidence, and overall feelings about learning online. Instructors' interactions with students through facilitating and guiding their learning is considered a crucial factor in student outcome (Yuan & Kim, 2014) and the thermometer can serve as a pivotal interaction between instructor and student.

Many students experienced a forced transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and may not have been prepared for the differences in learning the online modality offers. The online readiness thermometer is not only helpful in emergency remote and online situations, but it can help any students learning online for the first time. Additionally, the use of self-reflective "I am/can/know ___" statements can be adapted to the education level of the student. In the postsecondary environment, the results may or may not be shared with the adult learners and the spectrum scale language can be updated to reflect a postsecondary audience. Sharing responses encourages students to reflect and set goals for themselves to prepare for the course. The purpose

for adult learners is to allow for students to consider their perceived skills and abilities and assess where they excel and where they need assistance.

This online readiness thermometer can also be used by the teacher to help determine group work, teams, or partners. It serves as a guide and lets the teacher know where the student is in their perceived readiness in order to scaffold the support given to students around using technology. Finally, having students complete the online readiness thermometer activity as a quiz within the LMS is a way to introduce quizzes into the course in a low-stakes environment acting as practice prior to a formal quiz or exam. Educators can also implement the readiness thermometer at the beginning of the semester and reevaluate at the middle or end to assess if the students' perceived readiness for online learning has shifted. The online readiness checklist may also bring up many aspects of the online learning modality that students who are new to online learning may not have been exposed to, thus additional questions and dialogue may arise after its use.

Course-related FAQ

After exploring some components of the course lead-in, students are beginning to familiarize themselves with the online environment. Underneath the options for the students to get started is a place for students to ask questions, the FAQ discussion. The frequently asked questions (FAQ) discussions should stay open the length of the course. This FAQ discussion is meant as a fluid document that can be revisited throughout the life of the course and be transferred from semester to semester (removing student specific information).

An FAQ discussion forum provides timely answers for students, often addressing some of the external program factors that may prevent students from feeling comfortable as they enter the course. It also serves as a place for students to simply view questions and answers that they may not have felt ready to ask themselves. An FAQ discussion forum provides flexibility in responding to messages and allows students to view comments whenever they like or need (Onyema et al., 2019). It removes communication barriers that exist between the instructor and students and provides a place for discussion among peers (Onyema et al., 2019). When this type of discussion board is open, academic performance and motivation improves, versus when there is no discussion board (Amano et al., 2019). Amano et al., (2019) also concluded that the discussion board created a sense of community and provided hints to solutions to the problems that peers were also facing in the course, which leads to an increase in course participation. As an educator, it may be wise to think back to some common questions received in prior courses and have them prepopulated in the forum. Overall, it serves as an information tool for the teacher on identifying what areas of improvement or clarity are needed in lessons as well as an opportunity to clarify student misconceptions (Sindhgatta, et.al., 2017).

A sample welcome message in the FAQ discussion can look something like this:

Hello students! I am excited to have you in this course and would like to open this discussion for questions regarding course concepts. In this space you can post questions or challenges you may be facing when it comes to content presented in the course.

If you think you may be able to help a fellow student out, please feel free to respond to a post. This is a course space that will be open the entirety of the time we have together. All I ask is that if this is of a personal nature, please send me an email so we can address it one on one.

Finally, the FAQ discussion forum provides a space to engage in social dialogue and learn from other students and recognize some of the technical aspects of the course. Embedded in this FAQ dialogue is the opportunity for asynchronous instructor presence (Anderson, 2004). One of the main challenges in online learning is establishing and developing a sense of belonging (Sun & Chen, 2016). Encouraging purposeful and collaborative interaction is a step towards building an online community for students and instructors. Having this ungraded, open space to engage and problem solve with the instructor and other students can provide an open door for communication and clarification in an online setting.

This FAQ discussion can also be a form of scaffolding to help students connect content-specific ideas. As with the readiness thermometer, if there will be discussion boards required throughout

the course, having the FAQ discussion can help students, in a low stake environment, explore the options for contributing to this type of activity. Although, to ensure that the FAQ discussion stays in the realm of course material, it would be wise to provide a separate space you create to allow for students to discuss noncourse related questions.

Coffee Chat

The coffee chat is the final item of the course lead-in and it is a nonacademic space for students to connect. This provides students with the opportunity to build a community and social network outside of the course content. These informal student-to-student interactions are largely undervalued in online education but serve an important purpose in online collaboration and communication (Contreras-Castillo, et al., 2004). Liu et al. (2009) suggested that the development of integrated social interactions can be an additional way to improve retention rates among online students (p. 173). Students can share external opportunities such as internships, events, or activities that may not be related to the course but can be applicable to the major or profession postsecondary students are engaged in. Contreras-Castillo et al. (2004) found that these informal interactions can positively impact students' sense of belonging and overall course satisfaction. The coffee chat is the portion of the course lead-in designed to address some of the individual factors that may impact student retention by focusing on social and community development.

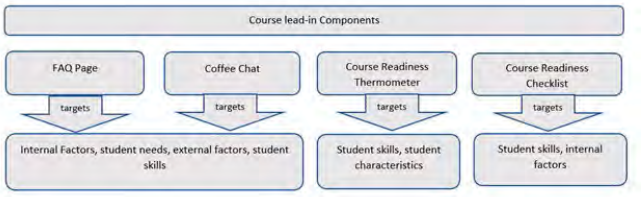
A sample welcome message for a coffee chat can be:

Hello Students! This area is a bit different from the Course FAQ. For this chat, it is an open space to ask and explore questions that do not have to relate to course content. For example, if you know of a good resource, study tool, or are interested in meeting up (virtually) to study before an exam or assignment, you can connect with other students using this discussion forum. Feel free to share your experiences and tips for learning online as well. This is a student space to explore! All I ask in this forum is for professionalism and respect among students and if it is of a personal nature, please send me an email so we can address it one on one.

Connection to Student Barriers

The course lead-in is designed to address student barriers in online learning that may impact their retention in a course or program. While it is impossible to address every barrier to learning in a course lead-in module, Figure 4 highlights the specific barriers from Rovai's composite persistence model (2003) that we are targeting with the course lead-in components.

Figure 4. Course lead-in Connections to Rovai's (2003) Composite Persistence Model



It is our hope that the course lead-in assists both students and educators in overcoming some of the potential barriers to online learning while also illustrating how traditional pedagogical strategies used in the first weeks of school are modified for the online modality.

IMPLICATIONS

As the traditional mode of content delivery switched from face-to-face to online overnight, knowledge about best practices in online pedagogy has never been more crucial. It is necessary to review our own online courses and instructional strategies to ensure that we are modeling highly impactful methods for students in every course. As the media we teach in shift and change, it is necessary that our methods as educators also continue to shift. This chapter addressed retention issues that often plague fully online courses by proposing a heightened focus on the aspects of the course we are calling the course lead-in. This method builds from the foundational idea that the first experiences in any classroom are key aspects to building a connection between the students, the instructor, and the content. Without those connections, we believe students are more likely to drop from online courses or become disengaged. Addressing the internal and external barriers that students face in an online environment is necessary before true learning can begin in any course or

classroom. Our careful examination and reframing of some of these traditional strategies will not only enhance our own teaching but provide excellent models for the students we teach.

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APPENDIX

ONLINE READINESS THERMOMETER: POSTSECONDARY QUESTIONS

Question/Statement	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree
I am good at setting goals for myself.			
I meet deadlines I set for myself.			
I finish projects and tasks I have started.			
I can keep myself on track and on time.			
I have thought about my reasons for taking an online course.			
I learn quickly.			
I can learn through audio/visual materials.			
I need to read text materials to learn.			
I am good at using critical thinking to solve problems.			
I am good at figuring things out on my own.			
I like to learn in groups.			
I like to learn on my own.			
I am good at digital communication (email, instant message).			
I am willing to meet people virtually I may never see in person.			
I can navigate programs on a computer.			
I am good at searching the internet.			
I know how to download and open files.			
I know how to install software on my computer.			
I know where I can get technical support.			
I have a space that is comfortable for me to complete assignments.			
I am willing to spend an equivalent amount of time on my online courses as I would in my face-to-face courses.			
I can keep records of the work I have submitted.			
I keep up with upcoming assignments.			
I submit assignments in advance.			
I know how to use a printer.			
I can turn off and on a webcam			
I know how to connect to the internet.			

Note. Adapted from the Online Readiness Questionnaire by Penn State University http://tutorials.istudy.psu.edu/learningonline/ORQ/ORQ.htm.