



## 10 Ways to Build Learning Communities

Learning communities are built upon students' interaction with their peers and instructors, and thrive on engaging dialogue. Here are 10 ways to foster learning communities at a distance:

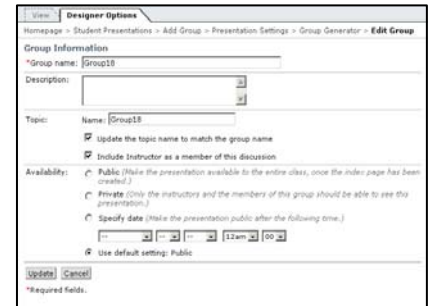
1. **Establish clear expectations** and requirements for online activity.
2. **State when and what students should expect from the instructor** in terms of presence via feedback and interaction.
3. **Make online discussions relevant**; articulate outcomes and show their relationship to learning activities and course goals.
4. **Model discussion activity** and techniques for furthering dialogue.
5. **Provide examples** of who was participating appropriately; if discussion is insufficient be sure to let the class know.
6. **Use synchronous activity** (e.g. chat) to negotiate meaning and spark personal connections.
7. **Promote dialogue**, not just speech; avoid online discussion prompts that call for a single, purely fact-based answer.
8. **Focus on the academic nature** of the dialogue; encourage students to include references in discussion postings.
9. **Set up team projects**, collaborative assignments, or peer review groups. Have student groups interact with other groups.
10. **Mail a weekly announcement** to the class as a group to wrap up a discussion, introduce a lesson, indicate due dates, etc.

## WebCT Tip of the Day: Online Groups

Use the **Student Presentations** tool to group students into teams. You can add students to groups manually or randomly compose groups determined by group size or number of groups. The Student Presentations tool allows each group to post and share files, and can create a private Discussions topic folder for each group.

To generate new groups, add and enter the Student Presentations tool:

6. Click **Generate Groups** from the **Actions** menu.
  7. Choose to divide the course by number of groups or number of students per group (**Figure 1**).
  8. Choose how you wish to divide any remaining students.
  9. You can also create a private discussion for each group.
  10. Click **Generate** to finish.
- For more info on this WebCT tool, call the TETC at 863-6127.



**Figure 1** Options for generating groups.

## This Month's Workshops and Trainings

Title	Date	Time	Place
WebCT Intro	10/7	10am-11am	LC 218
WebCT Communication Tools	10/14	10am-11am	LC 218
WebCT Grades	10/14	11am-12pm	LC 218
Presentations w/ PowerPoint	10/28	10am-11am	LC 218
Design Basics for PowerPoint	10/28	11am-12pm	LC 218
WebCT Quizzes	11/4	10am-11am	LC 218
Respondus for WebCT Quizzes	11/4	11am-12pm	LC 218



This newsletter was published for Distance Education by the Technology Enhanced Teaching Center at Utah Valley State College.

### For more information on this newsletter or how you can contribute:

Technology Enhanced Teaching Center, c/o Jared Stein,  
Mail Stop 149, Utah Valley State College  
800 West University Parkway  
Orem, Utah 84058-5999

To sign up for these workshops and more, visit our website:  
[www.uvsc.edu/disted/tetc/workshops](http://www.uvsc.edu/disted/tetc/workshops)

---

---

### Mail To:

## Drop By the TETC in LC227

We offer an open-access curriculum development technology lab for all UVSC faculty. Our normal hours are 10am-4pm, M-F. You can drop in and use the equipment, or **make an appointment to receive some one-on-one training and help.** We've got slide, print, and document scanners, audio/video equipment, a DVD↔VHS converter, and more!

### *Did You Know?*

DE Development is always looking for new projects and ideas to enhance your Dist Ed course. If you have an idea, or problem you want to solve, give us a call!

### *On Topic...*

Barab, S., Thomas, M., & Merrill, H. (2001). *Online Learning: From Information Dissemination to Fostering Collaboration*. JI. of Interactive Learning Research. 12(1), 105-143.

Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in cyberspace: Effective strategies for the online classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.