

## **INCREASING SOCIAL PRESENCE IN ONLINE LEARNING**

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Social presence is defined as the feeling of community a learner experiences in an online environment where learners express their emotions and feelings to interact with one another in a way that promotes their learning. Socially interactive learners leads to them being engaged learners. Learning management system developers, instructional designers, instructors, practitioners, researchers and scholars all recognize that a major growing trend is improving the social presence experience in online learning. With the growing number of online courses being offered, improving social presence helps stimulate learner experiences in the course, thereby improving learning. This study focuses on how increasing social presence in online courses increases overall student satisfaction with the course. The logic behind this is because improved social interaction in online courses will enhance learner to learner interactions as well as learner to instructor interactions. To increase student engagement, structuring online courses so that students have opportunities for regular interaction with each other is vital. Seven methods are introduced to increase social presence in online classes through more effective social interactions. It is found that increasing social presence by incorporating these practices increases overall student course satisfaction, which has implications on student retention in online courses.

