Welcome to the Fostering Community micro-course with Karin Spader, part of the Enhancing Online Education professional development series from the Center for Teaching, Learning and Mentoring.

Hi everyone. In this presentation, I'm going to break down this concept of interaction in a variety of different ways. I think that it's helpful to take a concept like engagement or interaction and break it down into different pieces. And when we do that, we're better able to think about how to create new exciting forms of interaction in our online course. So let's take a look at how we can do that.

Online interactions can come in several forms. On this slide, you're seeing three different forms of interaction. On the left part of the slide, we have student to instructor interactions. Here you see an image of a student talking to an instructor. This may be the way that you're used to doing interactions directly with students when you've taught in-person. But online, student to instructor and student to instructor interactions come in a little bit of a different form. First of all, student to instructor interactions can be one-to-one, but they can also be one-to-many. Things like using Canvas Announcements means that you're essentially talking to students, but you're sending one message to all of them. This might be like an -- an an front of the class announcement. So Canvas Announcements or one really good way to engage student to instructor, from the instructor to the students. Another way, of course is through giving feedback on student work. Right here, you're targeting your feedback specifically to individual students. But while you're grading work, you might also think about keeping a summary list of the common errors that you're starting to see across the across student work. Then you can take the opportunity to record a short video and address some of those pinch points, as I refer to them in, as in the material. Of course, you can still have one-on-one direct interactions with your online students. I always encourage faculty to have virtual student learning hours or students support hours. I also recommend that you clearly explain to students what students what those hours are for. That they have easy access to any conferencing software like Zoom or even Microsoft Teams. That's another tool that we use across campus. So there's a lot of different opportunities to engage with your learners one-on-one. But student to instructor is one form of interaction that's very important in online environments. Students want to know that someone is there.

Then we have, here in the middle, we have student to content interactions. Now this is a type of interaction that may be more prevalent, I suppose, in the design of an online course. And we're here talking a little bit more about facilitation of an online course. So one of the things that you can do is to frame the material that learners are going to be going over. One of the things that I like to do is as a new module releases, I will record a short video that provides a kind of contextual overview. And you've seen, you've seen that in our asynchronous content and the unit content itself, I'll put setting the context or something to that effect. That, but basically this gives you an opportunity to help students find ways to interact with that content by giving them the frame. In the next slide, we'll look at some ways that you might be able to frame the content your students are exploring around the Wisconsin idea. So another thing that's really great about online learning is that content, because it's digital, gives us a lot. It opens up a lot more opportunities for interaction. And on this image underneath the student to content bubble, you see a student reading a tablet. And although this is seemingly a really simple way to turn what used to be passive learning experiences, reading a book into something that has more interactive interactivity behind it. Now, you can have text that's hyperlinked. You can have students explore additional, perhaps real-world applications or watch a video to learn more, listened to a podcast to explore another perspective related to that content. And those are the kinds of interactive elements to the content that you might be able to add in a module overview, video or announcements. Even think about the ways that you might even be able to make the content that already exists for your online course into something that's a little bit more interactive for students. Simply by framing that opportunity and giving students additional resources that they can explore.

And now, on the far right of your screen, we have student to student interaction. And I left this one to be the last one that I talked about for a reason. Usually when we hear the word interaction, I think the first thing that we actually think about is this kind of interaction. Perhaps you're familiar with standing in front of a class and delivering a lecture. And then you have a pause moment where you ask students to reflect on the material and maybe turn to their partner and discuss it. Or you have students divide up into small groups and work through an activity or applied case study or something like that. So in online environments, we can still do these kinds of things. We just have to utilize technology. If you think back to the first recorded video that I made for you, I talked a little bit about participatory learning environments. And the importance of technology is that kind of mediating factor to allow us to, to participate, to be engaged. And so that we can connect with other learners. One of the most common ways that we utilize student to student interactions and online courses is through the Canvas discussion forum. And while this is probably never gonna go away, there are a variety of ways that we can make these discussion forums more or less interactive. One of the first things that I always do is to divide students into smaller groups. And in this course, you have had the opportunity for both a whole-class discussion and a small group discussions so you can experience the difference there. But realistically, whenever I have a group of students over probably even seven at a max, I'll divide them into smaller group discussions. I just think that there's more opportunity for developing relationships and digging deeper into material when you have fewer people that you're trying to interact with. The research bears that out as well. There's a variety of student perspectives on the value of the discussion forum. But much of the learning sciences literature has found a lot of evidence that students do dig more deeply. They critically evaluate material they gain to benefit from exposure to varied perspectives. There's a variety of benefits for learning. The discussion forum has. So I guess I will say, despite some students dissatisfaction or dislike of the discussion forum. Another thing is that discussion forums, and we're gonna be looking at a variety of resources for how to structure and facilitate a discussion forum in the next part of the unit. So I'll leave you to learn more there. But ultimately, student's needs some kind of structure. But they also want to have agency over what it is that they're interacting. Discussing, interacting about. Discussion forums, however, are not the only way. They're just a really popular one and really valuable for you to gain better insight into how students are learning the material. But there's lots of other interactive activities that you can use. I've used an activity where I'll have students work on a group slide in Google Slides. And so each group has their own slide. You can even create a template. Maybe it's a pro con grid or something like that. In each group is responsible for filling out their slide. And then you can put all of those slides together and share it out in one deck. And students can use that as a study guide, um, or other kind of support material for other work that they have. I think an often miss the opportunity for student to student interaction is also feedback on draft work. So any major project that I have in a class, I always have it be an iterative process where students have to turn in multiple stages of a project. And at each stage they're sharing that with their small group mates in getting that feedback. And by both being responsible for creating something to share and being responsible for providing feedback, students start to develop a sense of accountability with one another, which also deepens the interaction. So think about these three different forms of interaction. While you are thinking about the strategies be, I guess we're going to say facilitative techniques that you're going to carry out throughout the semester, the term, however long your course is.

Okay. And lastly, the Wisconsin Experience. So the Wisconsin Experience is the University Wisconsin-Madison's vision for a total student experience. And it combines learning inside and outside of the classroom. And it encourages students to engage in these four different areas of growth, both intellectual and personal growth. So if you want to learn more about the Wisconsin Experience, I encourage you to go to wisconsinexperience.wisc.edu You can dig in and see lots of examples of this in action. But ultimately, the Wisconsin Experience is broken into these four different parts. And you might think about how you can encourage students to engage in some of this growth as it relates to your content. Perhaps you can use it as an add-on kind of flavor to a particular discussion forum. If, especially if students are maybe looking at examples of the content in and around themselves, you might be able to tie in the Wisconsin Experience in this way. If you're asking students to go out and look at the world around them, you might be embracing the Relentless Curiosity. If you're asking students to present sensitive perspectives or personal ideas, you might recognize how that's connecting them and helping them develop Empathy and Humility. If you're asking students to learn new skills and demonstrate or teach new skills to other students. You're engaging them in that Intellectual Confidence. And perhaps you have service learning or project-based learning in your course. You might connect that to Purposeful Action. So this is just another lens that you can take with you as you are shaping and guiding your students through your course material.

Alright, so now you have some more tools for thinking about how to facilitate interaction and engagement in your online course. The next thing you're gonna do is read an article from Martin and Bolliger. And it's going to talk about these different types of interactions. Student-to-, excuse me, instructor, student-to-content and student-to-student. And it's presenting a study that they did looking at how effective students found those different forms of interaction or types of engagement. And throughout that article, there's a bunch of additional ideas that you can look out and take away from in the activity that you have for this for this unit. So let me know if you have any questions at all.