

Ghosting in Online Courses: Data and Strategies to Save the Academic Journey

Excerpted chat from March 30, 2022, webcast

Part 1: Context and Background

12:09:57 From Steven Morris: Better engagement within the LMS

12:09:59 From Saraliz Jimenez: Reduce my drop rate

12:09:59 From Vanessa Ford: Ensure ALL students are seen/heard for who they are and the unique experience and identities they bring to class

12:10:04 From Silvia Bustamante: focus on student success (students' perception of success)

12:10:08 From Rick Robb: We are working on Retention and Persistence

12:10:09 From Brigit McGuire: That students will say at the end of the course, "I belong in higher education."

12:10:11 From Shari Colby: Create a safe space for all students

12:10:14 From Ryan Faulkner: Connecting with students

12:10:23 From Silvia Bustamante: Increase completion rates

12:10:26 From Cara Nissen: connection and engagement with students

12:10:27 From Shelby Ellis: creating a better relationship with students now that the majority of advising appointments are virtual

12:10:31 From Kathleen Donnelly: Engagement, translate knowledge into practice

12:10:39 From Silvia Bustamante: Motivate students to continue regardless of roadblocks

12:10:48 From Joseph Jacob: increasing student engagement

12:10:49 From Antoinette Pinder: Goal 1: Improve their research ability

12:11:19 From Paul Raptis: Reach out to students who stop showing up.

12:11:28 From Rolanda Hardin: Retention/Completion

12:11:31 From Jay Price: to be honest, having a response to administration when they chastise us for high DFW rates when most of those are due to ghosting

12:11:35 From Jeff Behn: Understand and mitigate reasons for ghosting

12:11:37 From Marijke van Roojen: Understanding barriers to access/participation; Community building; retention of historically marginalized students.

12:11:40 From Dawn Davis: My goal as an administrator is to make online faculty, and my student support team, aware of this phenomenon and how to navigate it.

12:11:41 From Sam Ownbey: Create a sense of community and belonging between distance learners and their university

12:11:47 From Dawn Morton: communication as a person - accent on the individual

12:11:54 From Julia Bell: I no longer collect birthdate, could be considered PII (Personally Identifiable Information)

12:11:56 From Laura Cruse: Some of our institutions block personal connections, like sharing cell phone numbers.

12:12:02 From Rolanda Hardin: student academic success: maintaining motivation, support and encouragement

12:12:04 From Amma Marfo: Creating space for students to articulate their goals, to help students feel supported in pursuit of their goals, and to present resources that are relevant/attentive to their goals

12:12:06 From Elizabeth Riley: Engaging students, helping students feel excited about what they are learning, helping them feel valued and encouraged

12:12:08 From Colleen Kadleck: helping students succeed in the class

12:12:09 From William Tinker: Encouraging student interest in course material via easier access to the instructor

12:12:14 From Betsy Dunham:

1. Make personal connection with each student
2. Teach strategies that are easily implemented and they can take with them
3. Provide social and emotional support and uplift students to provide increased self esteem

12:12:17 From Benjamin Rops: making a connection, network opportunity, and overall student success

12:12:23 From Ruth Neese: How to better engage with students who come from different cultures or who are ESL.

12:12:25 From Sam Ownbey: Increase engagement between student and instructors and among the students themselves

12:12:41 From Jeff Behn: How to encourage students to communicate

12:13:17 From Adria Battaglia: I love that, Jan. Here's my orientation survey for my online, asynchronous course in case it's helpful to others: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1wrAQ-HcT6Lf0K248shUCKy5BtHRwz3CPhC-laW15Ds/edit>. Like Jan, I use it to also send individual notes to students.

12:13:18 From Ryan Van Dusen: I created a Google Voice number that I give to students.

12:13:19 From TABATHA DRAGONBERRY: I give them a Google Voice number

12:13:25 From Ryan Van Dusen: I text from that number

12:13:25 From Cynthia Hamlett: 👉

12:13:27 From Christine Williams: I use a google number that doesn't reveal my actual number and I place on syllabus

12:13:39 From Maureen Stivala: I google voice also

12:13:40 From Cynthia Hamlett: Same here!

12:13:56 From Dr. Drew Gordon: Be honest with your students & let them know that you want to help them & connect. After all, "people don't care how much you know unless they know how much you care!"

12:13:59 From Suzanne Williams: I use Google voice too!

12:14:07 From Mary Mattson: provide connections for students in a course section to discuss ways to bring course concepts alive for them.

12:14:36 From Megan Raymond: Love this Drew "people don't care how much you know unless they know how much you care!"

12:14:51 From Cindy Moreau: Goals. 1, Better relationships 2. Retain the students 3. Understand the why's they ghost

12:15:20 From Christine Williams: I submit a form requesting students to tell me things about themselves, I list out several questions

12:15:27 From Bernadette Curry: Intro of self and each student in first class is vital

12:15:40 From Antoinette Pinder: Goal 2: Build community in my courses

12:17:54 From Dr. Drew Gordon: Find ways to connect with them & use the connections to link them with their fellow students.

12:18:32 From Dounia Chayabaynou: Goal 1 increase student engagement & responsiveness. Goal 2 better know our generation Z needs. 3 Communication methods and strategies for effective communication

12:18:58 From Mary Mattson: 25 students in an online class who are predominantly fulltime students who work and have families; probably 4-5 ghost, 1-2 unexpectedly midterm or later; 2-3 within the first few weeks of the term. The course is an entry level required course for education majors. Honestly I would like for the rate to be 0 for ghosting.

12:19:12 From Dr. Drew Gordon: I require my students to do a discussion post in the first week that is to be a video of themselves introducing themselves to everyone.

12:19:18 From Cara Nissen: we also have student success alerts and they go to their academic advisor/dean so they can reach out to a student who is not replying to the faculty

12:19:40 From Jef Bauman: Does your college have an attendance/participation policy where students are administratively withdrawn or dropped from an online course?

12:20:10 From Dr. Drew Gordon: Yes, Jef.

12:20:44 From Latifa Ouanaim: Our students do not accept that we enforce attendance policy. What do you do at your college?

12:20:46 From Dr. Drew Gordon: It makes a drastic difference in them being engaged, Jef.

12:20:50 From Jay Price: Jef, we have a Student Early Alert System university wide https://www.wichita.edu/services/studentsuccess/Faculty/Student_Early_Alert_System_SEAS_.php

12:20:51 From Brianne DiPasquantonio: Great point- perception is reality!

12:21:18 From Mary Mattson: I begin the course with an online discussion where we share conversations about who we are. I too share my personal cell, but I do ask them to respect my evenings after 8 pm and weekends unless they experience an emergency.

12:22:05 From Jeff Behn: I think the pandemic's effect of shifting in person courses to online has reinforced DLS #2

12:22:42 From Claudia Arends: One of the things I do in my online course is contact students directly and open up a discussion on why assignments may be late or missing content and start a dialogue this way. it has worked for a majority of my "at risk" students, most put effort into improving assignments once they feel valued, painful for me to learn each time they feel nobody cares

12:22:47 From Jef Bauman: We do, too. Subterm Classes-8 week. No participation in any one week without communication warrants the drop/withdraw. We utilize a Student Success system. to raise interventions or kudos as well

12:23:10 From Mary Mattson: We have no auto drops

12:23:34 From TABATHA DRAGONBERRY: Mental Health and Burn Out because my students are respiratory therapists during pandemic -

12:23:37 From Jeff Wiltzius: I am sorry, but going above and beyond and contacting someone besides the student about the student not showing up is illegal.

12:23:39 From Mathew Chetnik: One of the challenges we've experienced is that students in online classes have stated "the class is scheduled at the same time as my job, and it's not fair you expect me to participate"

12:23:59 From Claudia Arends: Worst is how to loop in those students that don't respond but stay with the course and then eventually drop

12:24:04 From Mathew Chetnik: because many of them are actually "listening" to class while they are in work - waiting tables, retail, etc.

12:24:05 From Colleen Kadleck: the problem I see the most is students expecting the flexibility we have seen in the pandemic (shift to online or hybrid learning) inside individual classes—so the students expect to move to online learning if something is going on in their life, when that is not an option for face-to-face classes—one colleague says it is “restaurant” school where students feel they can order up the class in the format they want on a day-to-day basis

12:24:07 From Carol Kelkis: Do you find students want to focus on content of the course rather than connection with the instructor?

12:24:13 From Cali M.K. Morrison: @Jef, I see your point -- unless they have a FERPA waiver for that person.

12:24:15 From Mary Mattson: Some students are embarrassed by their personal problems.

12:24:23 From Teresa Knight: Students have huge problems - especially health care workers. They are often overwhelmed and are not able to put school as a priority.

12:24:39 From Cynthia Suarez: ^

12:24:51 From Dounia Chayabaynou: students with psychological issues

12:25:00 From Suzanne Williams: Students spiraling in the shame cycle who hide from our outreach

12:25:14 From Jef Bauman: Teresa knight!!! Yes! I realized students who are working are overworked because of the pandemic stressors.

12:25:18 From Dounia Chayabaynou: students feeling that they do not fit in the community

12:25:21 From Claudia Arends: I find students want both connection with instructor and connection with course, I am teaching earth and environmental sciences so they are eager to learn but some gaps in keeping them on track to meet course outcomes

12:25:33 From Mary Mattson: Exactly academic lack of confidence; shame

12:25:39 From Ryan Van Dusen: I teach active duty military students. They deploy, have duty, go to the range, etc.

12:25:49 From Victor Morawski: Why would any student sign up for a synchronous class which conflicts with their work schedule?

12:26:01 From Dounia Chayabaynou: lack of motivation and interest in the course

12:26:08 From Claudia Arends: It seems students become tired from the assignments. I'm not sure how to build in breaks for mental processing since we only have a limited amount of time in the course

12:26:26 From Jeff Behn: A lot of our students don't realize how much time and energy our online courses require

12:26:33 From Jeff Behn: They think they can do it during the weekend

12:26:35 From Cali M.K. Morrison: @Victor, it may not have conflicted when they registered, but that is very much an obstacle for hourly workers.

12:26:42 From Nicole Ravas: what Jeff said!

12:26:55 From Jeff Wiltzius: All studies that I have seen show the two main reasons students withdraw from classes are work and family. There are very few things that we as educators can do for personal circumstances.

12:26:56 From Jef Bauman: 👍

12:27:12 From Antoinette Pinder: Agreed, Jeff!!!

12:27:13 From Monique Liles: Yes, having the syllabus available at registration can help students decide if now is the time to devote to a particular class.

12:27:16 From Cynthia Suarez: 2nd-ing Cali's comment. Student's commitments are very likely to evolve over the course of a term

12:27:17 From Sam Ownbey: The course may also be required for their degree and/or they need to be in a certain amount of hours for financial aid

12:27:39 From Claudia Arends: For me I have a range of students; military, working family members, single parents, older adults, high school students, all in one course often...participation is not related to their outside circumstances either

12:27:49 From Nicole Ravas: I teach an accelerated online course; students are stressed anyway, and are not ready OR don't realize challenge of truncated schedule.

12:28:15 From Mary Mattson: The Star Student doesn't want to be "one of those" troublesome students

12:29:14 From Dr. Drew Gordon: It is vitally important that the students of today need more positive reaffirmation & encouragement due to the world being so negative.

12:29:23 From Joseph Jacob: star students could crash if not managed successfully

12:29:38 From Jeff Behn: @Nicole - we try to prepare our new students with webinars and orientation, but the people who need to know the info aren't the ones who attend and participate

12:29:38 From Claudia Arends: A lot of times I have students experiencing hardship but they end up being the students earning the highest grades because they say they need help, they know they need help, but what about the students that don't show an obvious hardship or need for help? Anyone have strategies that have worked there for the silent students?

12:30:18 From Vanessa Ford: RELEVANT and REAL WORLD is key!

12:30:52 From Antoinette Pinder: Yes, giving encouragement goes a long way!!!

12:31:51 From Rick Robb: I offered that "pre-grading" option and it worked well. — even if they didn't take advantage of it. Just knowing seemed to help.

12:31:52 From Dawn Morton: yes Vanessa - adult education must be relevant to the world they live in

12:32:09 From Antoinette Pinder: I publicly praised a student who was doing very well in the course and juggling being a single father.

12:32:17 From Jay Price: Great point. So often, the only time we reach out to a student is when there is a "problem"...we as educators also have absorbed that "reaching out = problem"

12:32:34 From Mary Mattson: It is always a difficult balance between small and large scale assignments. The small ones require more frequent online presence; the large ones require long term time management. I always try for a balance and in large scale assignments require due dates for parts of the assignment.

12:33:23 From Cali M.K. Morrison: @Mary do you scaffold your assignments? Where it's smaller, more manageable pieces that end up being a greater whole for the culmination?

12:33:44 From Nicole Ravas: Jeff Behn, unfortunately often true....

12:33:51 From Jef Bauman: How do we get adjuncts to adopt these practices?

12:34:07 From Mary Mattson: Yes totally, and I try to piece the parts with concepts we are learning at that point to build to the final project.

12:34:13 From Ruth Neese: That is the major question, Jef.

12:34:21 From Jeff Wiltzius: About your star student - last semester I had 3 students in a night class that had a "B" going into the final. They showed up for the final review. They did not show up for the final, and ended up with a ":D", in the course. None of them cared or even contacted me. I teach Economics, a no show, no call in the private sector does not end up with an "F", it ends up in fired! We need to teach student responsibility.

12:34:27 From Claudia Arends: Yes reaching out, I make a point of personally addressing student work in each assignment regardless of their performance, and I participate in the discussions, I give them ideas for moving forward or trying to match their interest to the course material, seems to help but I find they aren't always reading or engaging in time... frustrating, even when I do this three times a week

12:34:27 From Sam Ownbey: As someone who works with online students and is also an online student, I always appreciate when an instructor requires due dates for smaller parts of the assignment

12:34:44 From Sam Ownbey: It makes keeping up with assignments so much easier and the final product comes out much more polished

12:35:00 From Robert Foran: I delineate the difference between due dates (flexible/formative/low stakes) and deadlines more set in stone/final assignments/summative).

12:35:09 From Rick Robb: In our English department we began requiring adjuncts to take a practicum before they could teach a given course.

12:35:24 From Carol Kelkis: So hard not to take that personally!

12:36:27 From Cali M.K. Morrison: @Robert I love that delineation between due date and deadline!

12:36:43 From Dr. Drew Gordon: That's correct. They are dealing with pain. Interestingly enough, you had nothing to do with it as the professor, but they are just trying to vent & it comes out like it is directed at you.

12:37:08 From Claudia Arends: In my online course I use a "response" assignment, which is a personal space for them to comment on what they think of the feedback they received from the instructor and from their peers, this has minimized conflict in the course each time, and they earn points each week for making the response, works great!

12:37:08 From Mary Mattson: That is good to meet with them privately; I also try to really validate them in online chats to help them become more positive.

12:38:29 From Mary Mattson: It is difficult when they monopolize the conversation and keep meandering off topic. I try to pick a salient point and validate that one point.

12:38:43 From Christina Dryden: @Julie, love the idea to let 'feisty phantasm' tell stories in the right setting. That's a great outlet.

12:38:53 From Christine Williams: I bring real world events into the virtual classroom being mindful of what is happening too as it can be stressful but it is the way to connect them to a course that they have to take and not part of their major, ie, sociology

12:39:26 From Mathew Chetnik: One of the things I've been advocating for is the need for the university as a whole to think about how we "orient" students to "being students" because most don't know "how to student"....I feel like ghosting or some of these behaviors appear because WE haven't done a good job of orienting them to what it means to learn at the collegiate level. We spend significant time talking at orientation about "joining groups/clubs" or "safety on campus" but we spend very little time teaching them skills/strategies/approaches to be successful in the classes BEFORE they go into the classes. too often blame is assigned to them when really its our responsibility to teach them from a university perspective not just "in the class while it's going on"

12:40:07 From Marijke van Roojen: Mathew, I agree, that's on us

12:40:09 From Taylor Elliott: I'm in grad school now and 100% am the Star Spirit. Once had a whole meltdown at my husband because I got an A instead of an A+ on an exam.

12:40:13 From Ayla Moore: +1 Matthew! My sentiments exactly.

12:40:20 From Christine Williams: Another idea I had was to have students use a profile picture that represents something about themselves, and then change it going forward for different topics. Students will not put cameras on!!!

12:40:31 From Rick Robb: Great point, Mathew. I think there needs to be more in the way of helping students to understand their job of being a student.

12:40:32 From Luke Owens: I wonder if we look at these archetypes in a circle, does Star Spirit easily flip over to feisty phantasm? :)

Part 2 – Investigate

12:40:32 From Ayla Moore: I cringe at the student deficit model that gets echoed

12:40:55 From Claudia Arends: Good point, students need to be taught how to learn too, and with so many different learning styles that can be a challenge to provide personalized education, there we need to rely on advising to help that development

12:41:15 From Jeff Behn: I agree Matthew - I also struggle with the getting jaded and falling into the "These students are adults - they have a responsibility as well" trap

12:41:29 From Vanessa Ford: Connection is SO critical! Especially for online students (I was one once) who need to feel they belong and are part of a community!

12:42:06 From Cali M.K. Morrison: @Vanessa This is why I also advocate for all online educators to actually be online learners as well- walk a mile in the shoes!

12:42:12 From Mary Mattson: Matthew, I so agree with you. A million years ago I taught learning support students, and they were required to take an orientation course that provided organization study skills along with expectations in terms of a home/school balance. I rarely had ghosting students then because we had common understandings in a course.

12:43:25 From Maggie Siebens: And in extreme cases, school trauma follows people through adulthood

12:46:44 From Rick Robb: In Creative Writing workshops we had to find something genuinely good before we were allowed to critique our classmates.

12:46:49 From Remona Boodoo Frye: Although it's sad to admit, higher ed is full of egos. It is in the teacher's best interest to support their students. The sooner some realize that, the better.

12:47:11 From Vanessa Ford: How are you feeling the course is going for you? What's working? What's not?

12:47:32 From Cali M.K. Morrison: What has drawn you to this major?

12:47:33 From Jonathyne Briggs: What challenges are you facing with the assignment?

12:47:41 From Sharon May: What's getting in the way of your success in this class?

12:47:43 From Monique Liles: What are your goals from this course? Your major?

12:47:47 From Reginald Garcon: You can first ask the student why they are interested in a particular program

12:47:47 From Meg Stephenson: Are you enjoying the course? Tell me how you feel about the coursework?

12:47:51 From Pamela Holt: pose it as an opportunity

12:47:52 From Camm Lounsbury: Let's talk about your goals for this program. Where do you want to be in five years?

12:48:01 From Olivia Torres Jojola: Do you feel like you're being fulfilled in this program?

12:48:04 From Christine Williams: How can I help you this class. Can we meet one to one to further discuss

12:48:11 From Monique Liles: Provide other options for student to meet their goals.

12:48:13 From Shari Colby: What can I as an educator do to help you excel in this major? What resources might you need to meet your goals?

12:48:14 From Antoinette Pinder: Your strengths are in the following courses, how about identifying a major that is related.

12:48:22 From Jef Bauman: Have you had a chance to review your grade? What questions do you have about them?

12:48:25 From Joseph Jacob: I recognize you may need assistance how can I assist you?

Part 3 - Innovate

12:49:57 From Nicole Ravas: love the 5 C's model :)

12:51:08 From Kendra Soliday: Love the framing of a support model, rather than a deficit. It totally changes the engagement.

12:51:11 From Mary Mattson: How do you handle the student who ghosts, then reappears after you locate them, agrees to a reasonable support plan for makeup and other supports, then ghosts again and comes back during exams and wants extensions

12:51:56 From Jef Bauman: How do you get contact hours with online courses with BITE size lectures?

12:52:01 From Maggie Siebens: I agree, Kendra. Focusing on a positive approach to accountability

12:52:18 From Claudia Arends: What I have done in the past Mary is reiterate the original plan and agreement, then ask why this was violated, take it as a case by case basis.

12:52:31 From KATHLEEN MCLELLAN: How many of you use resources like Student Success programs and the Library to help overcome some of these issues?

12:53:29 From Olivia Torres Jojola: What was the mentorship program mentioned?

12:53:31 From Dawn Morton: instead of long lectures, multiple shorter snips are better

12:53:49 From Jef Bauman: Online Student Experience Coordinator here at the College.

12:54:12 From Julie Delich: Mentor Collective

12:54:27 From Vanessa Ford: University Relations Director at Mentor Collective here. Happy to talk with anyone about our work. But learning from all of you has been amazing!

12:54:51 From Mathew Chetnik: Kathleen - We've developed Student Success Workshops on a lot of the common challenges that student say they are struggling with, all presented online, 30

minutes each, presented by upper-class work study students....we do 250 workshops a year....just started last year, and still getting some traction but faculty are starting to refer students to them when they share what they are struggling with which is great.

12:56:13 From Dawn Morton: I make it a practice to contact each person individually as they begin the course, then ask for them to do videos or a picture powerpoint of their fav pics of family, work, etc.

12:57:15 From Claudia Arends: What about those students who are afraid to show themselves online and in videos?