



Facilitating a Sense of Community

Norwegian Competence Network
for Student Success
NTNU, Trondheim, Norway
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2. Overview

My **premise**: Attrition for **academic** reasons may be OK. **Social** reasons? No.

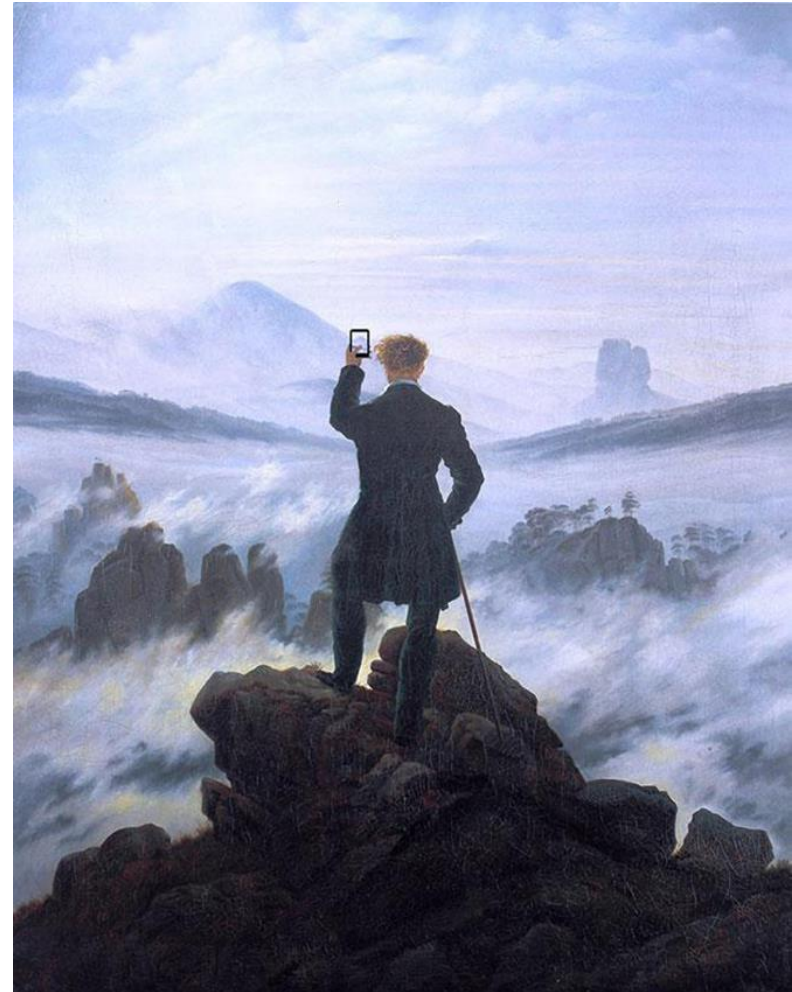
My argument: If educators adopt the proactive stance of the facilitator, they can help students create a sense of community that supports their well-being and learning and prevents drop-out

9:20 My presentation

9:50 Breakout conversations

10:00 Q&A

10.15 End



3. The Educator's Challenge

- Both **academic** and **social** matters (Tinto et al.)
- The social is **not just fun** and games.
- **If classes are facilitated**, the social may support the academic



4. The Facilitating Educator

- A class: Your **PowerPoints** from last year
- 20-30 mins, then time for **student digestion**
- This digestion needs to be **facilitated**: initiated, monitored, completed (Ravn, 2023)
- You deliver **content** and facilitate **process**
- **To facilitate** is to guide the conversation in a group so people feel included and outcomes are produced (class, learning)



5. Receive Students, Promote Psychological Safety



- Show up in class 10-15 minutes **early**
- Fix **technical** set-up
- **Greet students** as they arrive
- You're **hosting** a party!
- **Chat with some** in front: "Are you doing okay this semester? Is the reading tough? Are you off to work after class, or can you play?"
- Start class **on time**. Provide **overview** and structure.
- Have students **introduce themselves** to their neighbors (repeat)

6. Simple Learning Processes

- **Silent reflection**, note taking (2-3 min)
- **Pair and Share** (talk with neighbor) (5 min)
- Dyad: a. **Explainer & Questioner** (2 x 3 min)
- b. **Three points** – from today's lecture. Write and tell.
- **Trios** (standing) (10 min)
- **If repeated**, new partners! "Turn to your other neighbor" "Someone in the row behind you or in front of you." "Get up and find someone new." "Take five steps away from your seat."
- **Take-aways**: 3 x 3 mins: Note three things. Share with neighbor. Sample.



7. A Sense of Community: Simple Things You Can Do



- Dispersed classroom? **"Move up here, please, in the front of the room"**
- Increase circulation: **"Find new seats** next time and meet your new neighbors"
- **You fill up the rows** in the front, as people arrive. Soon they'll do it on their own.
- **Learning names:**
 - A. Bring empty **name tags** or labels for students
 - B. Smallish class: **Introductions round** the room, several times
 - C. Larger class: **Meet and greet** (walking about).

8. Facilitating a Sense of Community: More Things to Do

- **Strengths spotting:** Dyads. Tell your partner how X went (e.g., writing last week's essay). Partner listens and identifies three things you did well in that process (= your strengths).
- **"Energy?"** Dyads. Explain what gives you energy in this class. Readings, lectures, classmates, friendly behaviors, what?
- **Meet and greet.** Say hello to new people, party-like, 5-10 mins after lunch. Add a serious question, like: "What was interesting this morning?"
- **Walkabout.** Write a question or a problem. On the floor, take it to three people and write down their questions, suggestions, interest, critique, etc.



9. Facilitating Lunch

- A. In class, divide students into **triads**
Send them off to the cafeteria:
“Eat together and get to know each other”.
- or B. Identify a **shared table** in the cafeteria: “Everyone, eat there”
- Tell them how to **make space** at a cafeteria table when there isn’t:
Latecomer stands by the table for a minute, untroubled.
When one more person arrives, they start a new table nearby.



10. Facilitating Beyond the Classroom



- **Interest triads: After class**

“Some of you may want to hang out and talk about today’s class.

When I leave, you form triads and chat for 20 minutes.

Then you break up and form new triads, until you need to go.”

- **Before next class:**

“Some of you early risers may want to discuss next class’ readings before we meet.

Show up half an hour before class, form triads in the hall and talk until class starts.”

11. Some Niceties of Social Behavior



Maybe share these simple social principles with your students:

- “If someone comes near you, **look up and say ‘Hi’**, even if you don’t know them.”
- **“Include the next person in your conversation:** ‘Hi, we were just talking about X. What do you think about X?’”
- **“Keep lunch conversations non-private”** (No-go: “Oh, you know Louise? She was my sister’s best friend! Do you know that she blah blah...”)
- “When you’re in a group, stick to topics that **exclude no one.**”



12. Wrapping up

- Educators can **facilitate classes**
- By simple and more complex **learning processes...**
- ...that **bring students together**, beyond the cliques that tend to define college drop-out.
- In particular, proactive educators can reach into students' social spaces and **facilitate out-of-classroom interactions**, aiming at a deeper sense of community.

13. Digest



Pairwise conversation:

- “What is your **best experience** with facilitating a sense of community?”
- “What caught **your attention** in the presentation?”
- **Share** 7-8 minutes, until called back