Re-Designing Your Course For Remote Instruction

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How you can adjust your content delivery...

SUPPORTING ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Challenge: Making content as accessible as possible to remote students.

Student Perspective: When content is pre-recorded, students have the ability to watch it as many times as they need and at a pace that works for them. Shifting content to before class also opens up more class time for students to ask questions or to engage with content on a deeper level. Additionally, for students that aren't able to attend synchronous sessions, pre-recorded lessons are often much more effective than recordings of synchronous sessions.

Recommendations:

Move towards a "flipped-classroom" model of instruction for online courses wherever possible. It may not be possible for you to shift all your content online, but even the small step of recording a single lesson (or part of a lesson) and uploading it for students to watch ahead of time can go a long way in enhancing student learning.

Consider alternative options for participation credit. Be mindful of students who can't attend synchronous sessions. Perhaps an additional assignment or discussion board prompt could fulfill this need.

Re-Designing Your Course For Remote Instruction

How you can adjust your content delivery...

CREATING ACTIVE SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Challenge: Finding ways for students to engage with each other and with the content during live sessions.

Student Perspective: Even the most interesting and engaging instructors often struggle with keeping students' attention throughout the entirety of an online class. It's much easier to get distracted when the instructor can't see or hear you and you're already on a computer/phone.
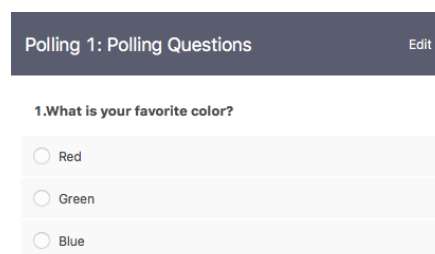
Recommendations:

Build in more activities that utilize "breakout rooms".
Even if a live session isn't explicitly a "discussion section," integrating moments for students to collaborate around a problem or discuss a prompt during class can dramatically improve their interest in the content, and break up long chunks of lecturing.

Try using the Zoom polling feature.
It requires some set-up in advance, but Zoom can be used to ask multiple-choice questions and records responses. Use it to quiz students on material or to gauge comfort levels with a concept.

Polling 1: Polling Questions   Edit

1.What is your favorite color?

○ Red

○ Green

○ Blue

Launch Poll

Conducting Engaging Live Sessions

Finding ways to engage students during synchronous sessions, even if you can't be in the room with them.

ENCOURAGING COMFORTABLE COMMUNICATION

Challenge: Getting students to speak up during live sessions over Zoom.

Student Perspective: Many students are resistant to asking questions in front of a class for fear of sounding dumb or ignorant.

Recommendations:

Warm them up. Building in time at the beginning of class for students to respond to a simple prompt in a way that's comfortable for them (whether that's on-mic or through chat) can drastically lower the barrier-to-entry of asking questions later on in the lecture.

Allow students to ask questions privately during lecture. Zoom already allows for meeting participants to privately message any other participant; encouraging students to message you or a TA/CA directly during lecture with questions is an excellent way to increase engagement.
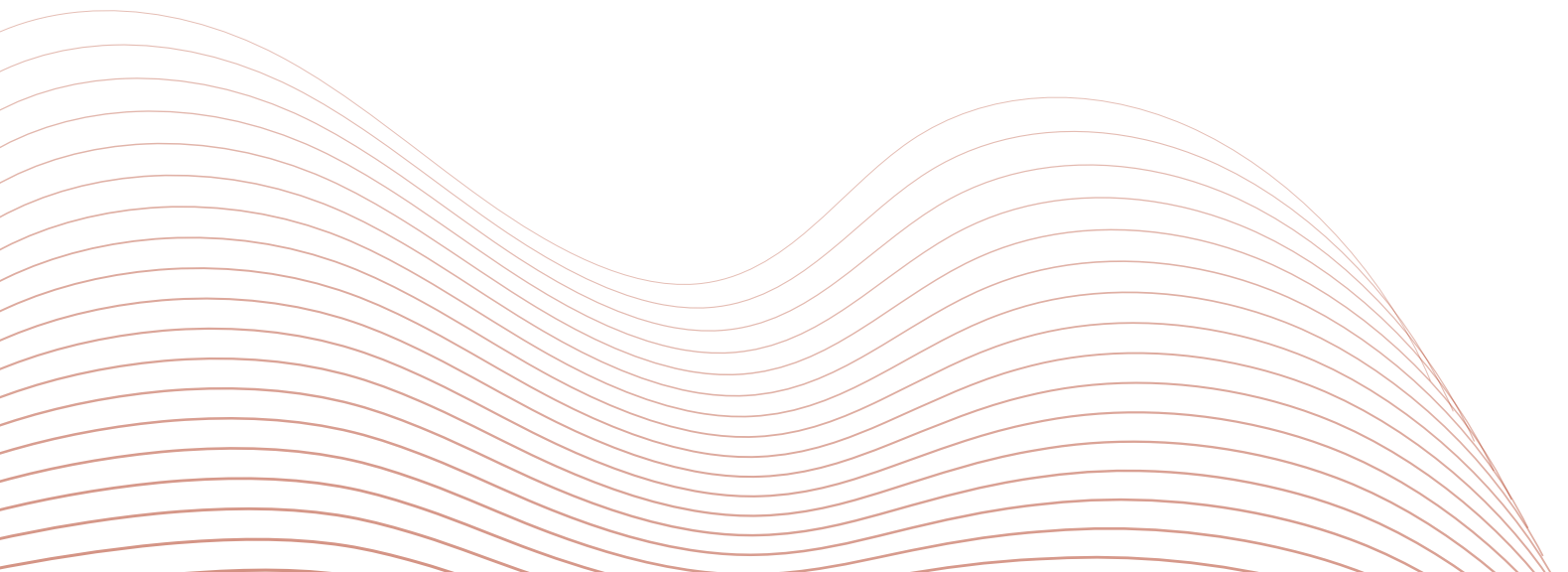
Conducting Engaging Live Sessions

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FIELDING QUESTIONS IN LARGE CLASSES

Challenge: Even if you can get students to speak up, it can be really difficult to sift through a flood of messages in chat to get to the most important questions to answer.

Student Perspective: Many students are more comfortable asking questions and responding to prompts in chat, but it can be frustrating if a professor doesn't seem to acknowledge or see your messages.

Recommendations:

Designate a "question-taker." Since it's extremely difficult to simultaneously teach a class while monitoring the chat feed for questions, having a TA/CA (or potentially even a student volunteer) to collect questions throughout a class and bring them up to you at an appropriate time can help relieve some of that burden.

Consider Zoom "Webinar" mode. Webinar mode has a designated Q&A to organize and keep track of student questions, along with other useful features for larger classes. If this sounds interesting to you, contact tech services about this option.
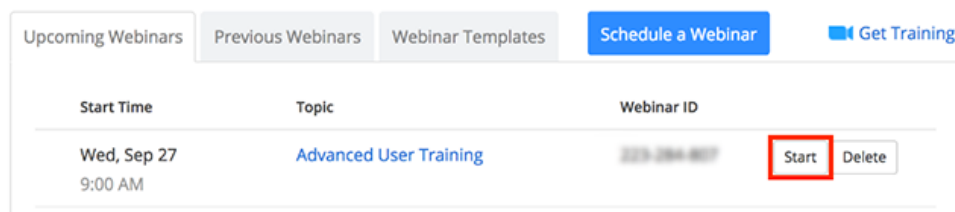
Conducting Engaging Live Sessions

Finding ways to engage students during synchronous sessions, even if you can't be in the room with them.

RUNNING EFFECTIVE BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Challenge: Getting students to speak up when placed in breakout rooms over Zoom.

Student Perspective: Sometimes you'll place students in breakout rooms and they'll be able to hit the ground running on whatever prompt or problem they have. Other times it can be awkward to break the ice; a group might all be struggling with the same concept, but nobody expresses it for fear of being the only one.

Recommendations:

Designate student "ice-breakers." If one person in every group has the role of breaking the ice and sharing their comfort level with the material/prompt at-hand, it can help the rest of the group open up and collaborate. Identifying student volunteers that are comfortable doing this job and spreading them out throughout the groups can help make for more fruitful breakout sessions.
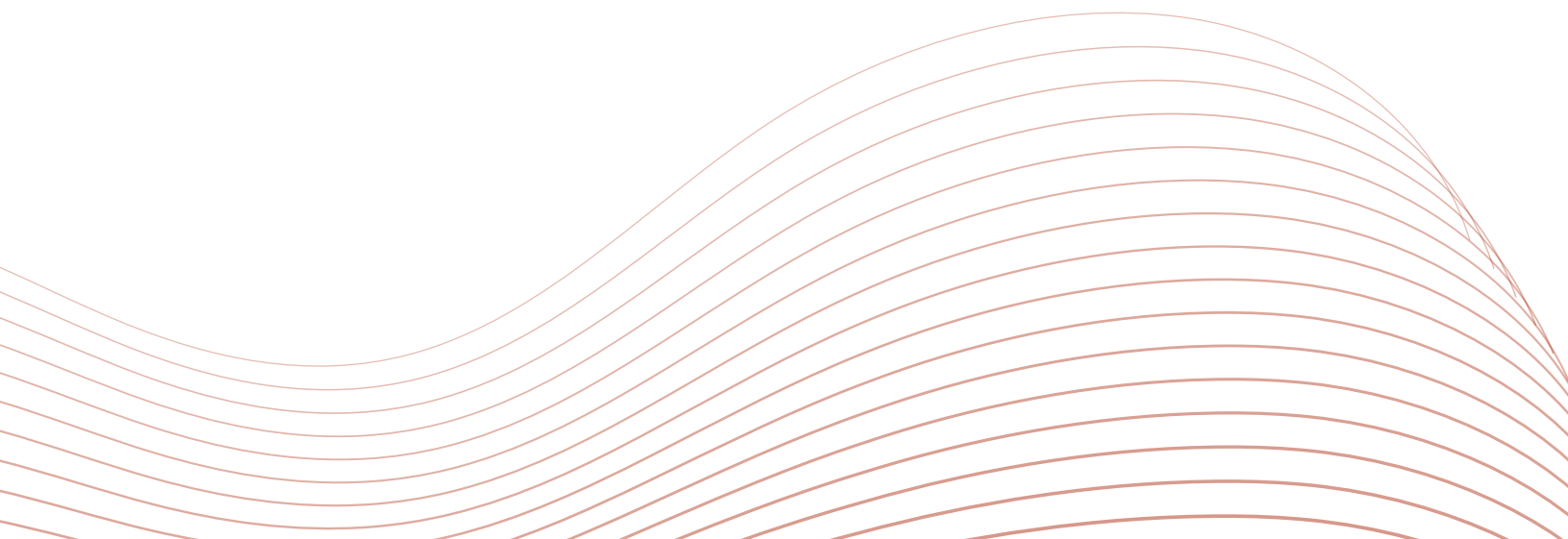
Making the Most of Office Hours

Capturing the experience of attending an offering many students rely on to be successful.

OFFICE HOUR ACCESSIBILITY

Challenge: Running Office Hours in a way that gets to everyone's questions.

Student Perspective: Virtual office hours present new opportunities in lowering the barrier-to-entry (you can now attend office hours from the comfort of your home), but also may pose additional challenges in making sure every student is served equitably.

Recommendations:

Use Queue@Illinois to organize questions. Queue allows for students to submit questions to office hours ahead of time, helping TAs and instructors make sure they get to every question while cutting down on redundancy.

Schedule office hours in a wide range of time slots. Being mindful of students who may be attending from different time zones, opening up office hours to more hours of the day will help reach as many students as possible.

Queue@Illinois   👤 Alexis Aracely Vasquez (aavasqu2)   Logout ⚪☀

Open queues

ACE 474
Office Hours - One-on-One Support with TA and Prof
📍 Online (using ZOOM)
❓ 0 Questions

ACE 476
Office Hours - One-on-One Support with TA and Prof
📍 Online (using ZOOM)
❓ 0 Questions

ACES Advising
🚫 Online Advising
📍 NA - meeting virtually
❓ 7 Questions

CARE
CARE Online Tutoring and Peer Advising
📍 No location specified
❓ 2 Questions

CEE 201
Office Hours - Prof. Kontou
📍 Zoom
❓ 0 Questions

CS 101
Lab & Discussion Sections
📍 L416 DCL
❓ 0 Questions

Making the Most of Office Hours

Capturing the experience of attending an offering many students rely on to be successful.

SIMULATING THE OFFICE HOURS ENVIRONMENT

Challenge: Recreating the small-group interactions that take place during typical in-person office hours.

Student Perspective: During in-person office hours, depending on the number of students in attendance, it's not uncommon for students to group up and to work on different things in parallel while the TA(s) jump from group to group providing support.

Recommendations:

Use breakout rooms strategically. In an office hours context, breakout rooms can be used to separate students into working groups, or to pull an individual student or group aside to answer their questions personally. However, it's also important to note that many students attend office hours to hear other questions being answered, so keeping things in one main session as much as possible is preferred.

Explore proximity-based virtual environments, like Gather.Town. A platform like this one (which is also free for use up to 50 people) can also simulate being in the same space and allow participants to communicate with those only in their immediate area.
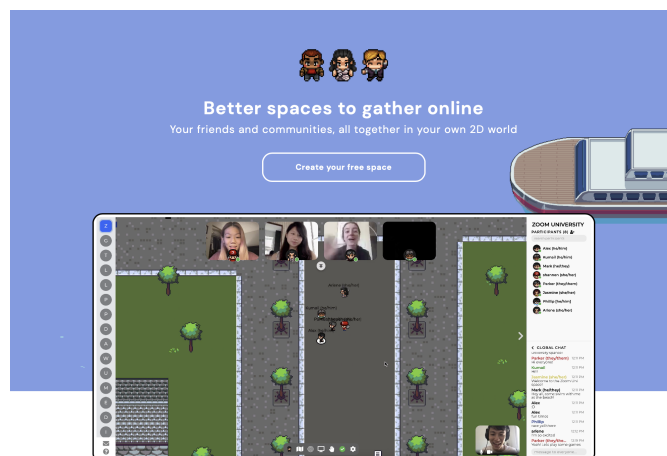
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FACILITATING STUDENT COLLABORATION

Challenge: Ensuring students can meaningfully work together over a virtual call.

Student Perspective: Since much of engineering education requires students to work out complicated, multi-step math problems, it can be extremely difficult to work with others remotely when you can't see each other's work in real time.

Recommendations:

Encourage students to build their own document camera phone holders. These simple, DIY constructions use a cell phone as a document camera, allowing students to share their handwritten work on a call while also being able to communicate with teammates.
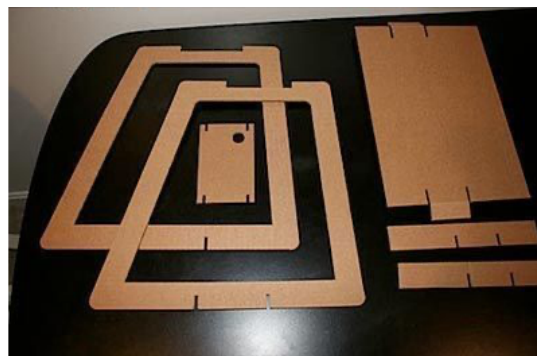
Additional Avenues of Engagement

ASKING QUESTIONS AND STAYING CONNECTED

Challenge: Providing asynchronous avenues for students to ask questions and discuss course content with instructors and peers.
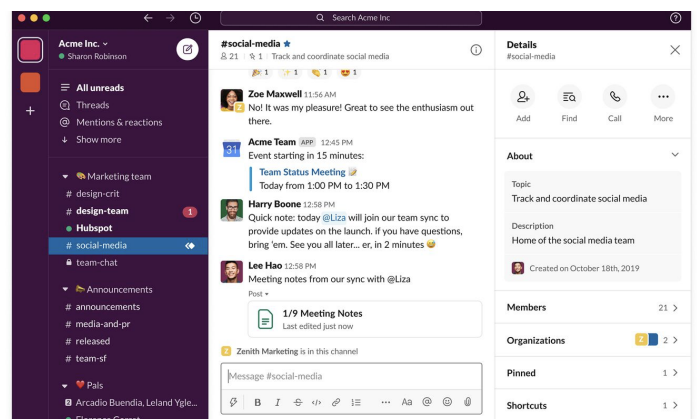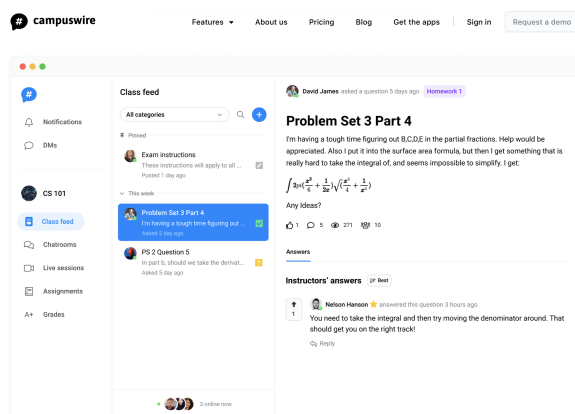
Student Perspective: Students were able to talk to instructors easily before or after a regular class. And they feel that instructors are becoming less accessible.

Recommendations:

Q&A platforms are great for asynchronous online discussion outside of class. Existing Q&A platforms such as Piazza, CampusWire allow public or private discussions, which create additional channels for communication with instructors and students.

Threaded/channeled chat platforms. Featured in Microsoft Teams and Slack, messaging functionality also makes students stay connected with their peers and instructors more easily.

Starting Zoom session early and ending it late. We encourage instructors to start their zoom session 15 minutes before it starts and end the meeting late for students to ask questions.

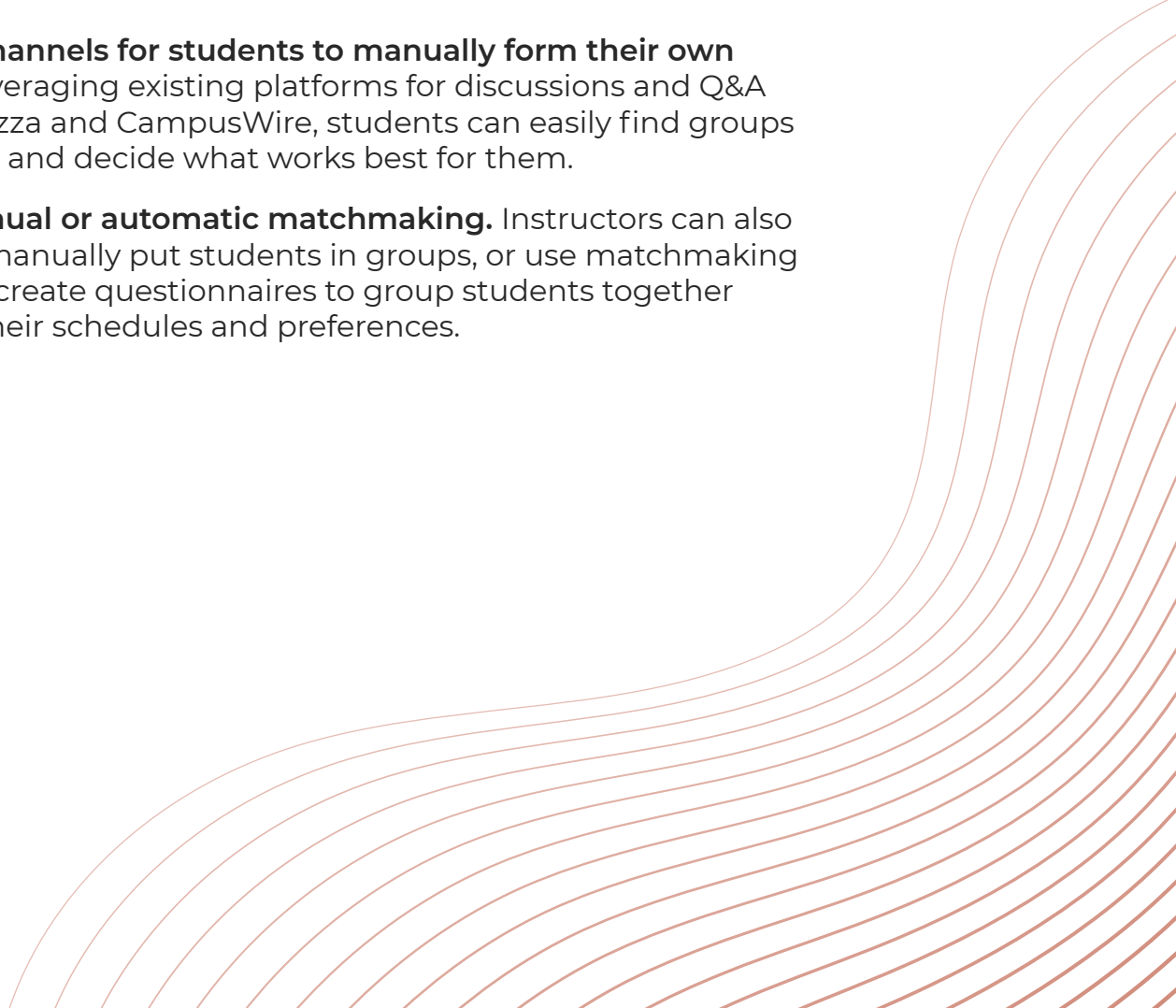# Encouraging Peer-to-Peer Interactions

STUDY GROUP FORMATION

Challenge: Finding and forming study groups is becoming more difficult and students need support more than ever.

Student Perspective: Student study groups are normally formed by a group of students attending office hours together or meeting during class. Based on different schedules and different preferences, either students work on the same class materials together or be in the same room studying different things at the same time and hold each other accountable.

Recommendations:

Creating channels for students to manually form their own groups. Leveraging existing platforms for discussions and Q&A such as Piazza and CampusWire, students can easily find groups themselves and decide what works best for them.

Opt-in manual or automatic matchmaking. Instructors can also choose to manually put students in groups, or use matchmaking services or create questionnaires to group students together based on their schedules and preferences.
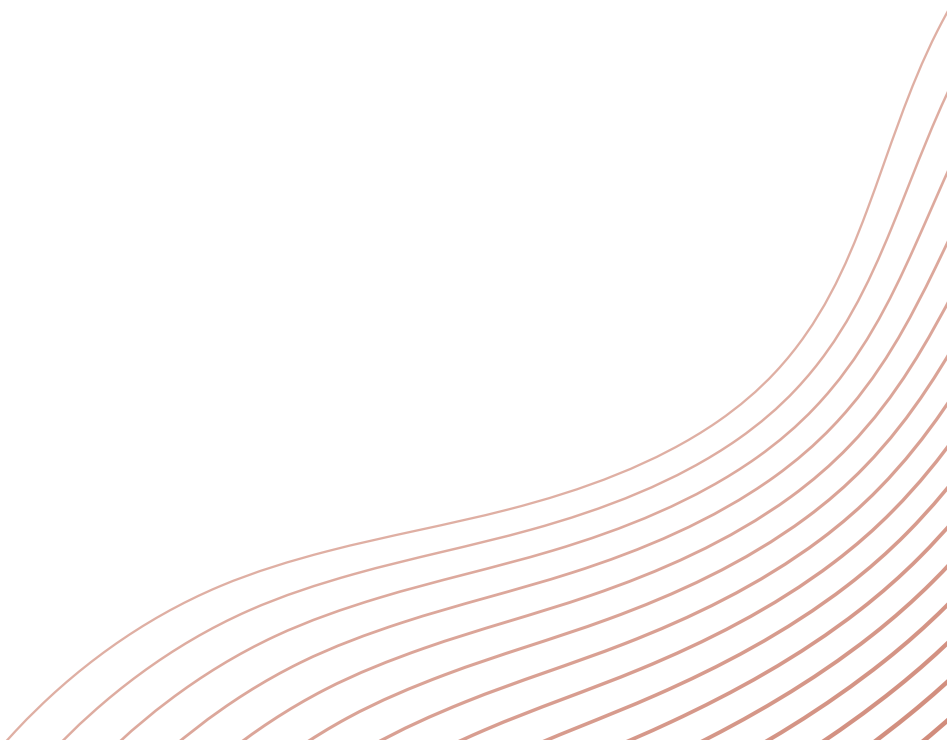
Encouraging Peer-to-Peer Interactions

OPTIONAL STUDY SESSIONS

Challenge: It's also less likely for students to find a group to study for an exam.

Student Perspective: For students who are individual learners and do not rely on peer support at the beginning of the semester, it would be challenging for them to find study groups to join when it comes to exams.

Recommendations:

"Student-Only Office Hours". We encourage instructors to schedule optional student study sessions for those who do not have a steady group to work with. These "student-only office hours" can be hosted on a weekly or bi-weekly basis throughout the semester.

Zoom breakout rooms:
https://answers.uillinois.edu/98840

Zoom polling:
https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/213756303-Polling-for-meetings

Zoom webinar:
https://zoom.us/webinar

Queue@Illinois:
https://queue.illinois.edu/

Gather.Town:
https://gather.town/

Piazza:
https://piazza.com/illinois

CampusWire:
https://campuswire.com/

Microsoft Teams:
https://answers.uillinois.edu/78265

Slack:
https://slack.com/help/categories/360000049043#intro-to-slack