Numerous researchers have described models for learner persistence and academic success as involving social presence and interaction (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1975). According to Rhoades (2012), faculty play a critical role in learner completion rates. Helping learners build social relationships and develop interpersonal skills impacts their educational outcomes (persistence and graduation) and overall satisfaction with their higher education institution. Additionally, there is a positive effect on career readiness because learner develop the professional skills
necessary to be successful in their chosen field. There are relatively low cost initiatives that can be implemented to create environments where learners can interact with their peers, faculty, and other professionals which will help to build competency and self-efficacy among online learners.

The purpose of this best practices session is to describe numerous methodologies employed by an online psychology program to enhance learner engagement outside of the courseroom. This talk will provide an overview of the Psychology learner connectedness program that is offered every term, include discipline-focused Webinars, Success Labs, a Psychology Club, independent research opportunities, and more. Attendees will learn about the challenges and successes of developing a “student activities” model in an online environment and leave with key takeaways that will assist them in the development of their own online model, which can be utilized for secondary and post-secondary learners who attend on the ground or online educational institutions.

References


