Maximizing Active Learning in the Online Learning Environment Using Structured Skills Challenges

This presentation will introduce an innovative web-based teaching approach made possible through a new web-based learning environment, ApprenNet, that engages students in realistic learning activities. This method provides students with rich opportunity for practice answering tough questions in a problem based learning format (PBL). Using PBL supports the activation of prior knowledge and its elaboration. In this approach, the processing of new information within the PBL framework is facilitated by discussion and exploration of a relevant problem and leads to higher level cognition. This learner-centered approach encourages students to “conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem.” (Savery, 2006) Students receive and give peer feedback and value the rich opportunity for learning that this tool provides. Representative student comments include: “Once you have the other two layers of learning from researching on your own and watching peers’ answers, the expert video is incredibly helpful. It allows you to see how practitioners approach and conceptualize the problems.” We have utilized this approach in both graduate and undergraduate programs, in hybrid and fully online courses, presenting students with ethical and leadership challenges that are currently faced in practice. This presentation will provide an overview of this project, detailed description of skills challenge scenarios and learning outcomes.


Learning Objectives:

At the end of this presentation, attendees will
1. Discuss strategies to engage students in active learning.
2. Describe the essential components of structured learning activities that support development of higher level cognition.
3. Identify steps to incorporate similar structured learning activities in their own courses.