Virtual Break Rooms in Online Learning: Building Community and Handling Email Overload

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**Description**
Instructors often complain about participants emailing questions on a regular basis during their course of study. This round table discussion aims to discuss the benefits of using virtual break rooms in online environments to provide students an avenue to ask questions, build community, and alleviate the inefficiency of multiple repeat questions. Researchers will also provide in-depth insight in individual instructor-peer participation and peer-peer participation and provide tips to instructor on content design improvements based.

**Background**
Instructors experience students emailing questions on a regular basis during their course of study. Typically instructors report three types of questions:

**Similar Questions:** Instructors receive the same questions from multiple learners. Instructors address the issue and email to all the participants.

**Repeat Questions (FAQs):** Instructors receive similar questions every semester. Often instructors have reported compiling email replies of FAQs in their inbox. Each semester when a similar question is asked, they simply cut and paste the information and mail it to all.

**General Questions:** Questions that arise over the course of the semester.
In either case the best technique to combat this situation is to create a discussion thread.

**The Problem**

This discussion aims to relate the benefits of using virtual break rooms in online environments. We will also provide tips to instructors on content design improvements.