



Creating a Culture of Learner Engagement and Participation to Increase Class Attendance

Cheryl Abel, PharmD; Aimee Dawson, PharmD; Kaelen C. Dunican, PharmD
Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences: School of Pharmacy (SOP)- Worcester, MA / Manchester, NH

BACKGROUND

There is a known negative correlation between learner absenteeism and their performance in pharmacy school.¹⁻³ Lack of learner engagement and absenteeism accelerated during the pandemic which led to learning disruptions and challenges when returning to in-class instruction. This growing problem was identified as a contributing factor to poor learner performance within the SOP. In 2022, faculty were charged with creating a culture of learner engagement and participation to drive class attendance.

Introduction to Patient Care I is a didactic course required in the first semester of an accelerated Doctor of Pharmacy program. This course is in a position to establish a culture of engagement that can be carried throughout the learners' academic tenure. Consistent participation was expected and a component of the course grade. Participation was assessed using a variety of tools including quizzes on the course learning management system, audience response software, written reflections and in-class worksheets.

OBJECTIVE

Describe methods utilized to increase learner engagement and participation in an accelerated Doctor of Pharmacy program with a distant campus.

METHODS

A retrospective review of course grades from Fall 2022 and Fall 2021 was conducted

A comparison of categorical data from 2022 and 2021 was conducted using a Fisher's Exact Test and continuous data was compared using an unpaired t-test.

RESULTS

Table 1: Overall course performance (grades)

	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Difference (95% CI), p
Overall course grade	85.33%	87.75%	+2.42% (0.80 to 4.03), p=0.004

Table 2: Participation in weekly Blackboard (Bb) assignments

	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Difference, p
Completion rate of Bb assignments	95.2%	98.5%	+3.3% p<0.0001

Figure 1: Completion rate (%) of online weekly Bb assignments and in-class participation assessments

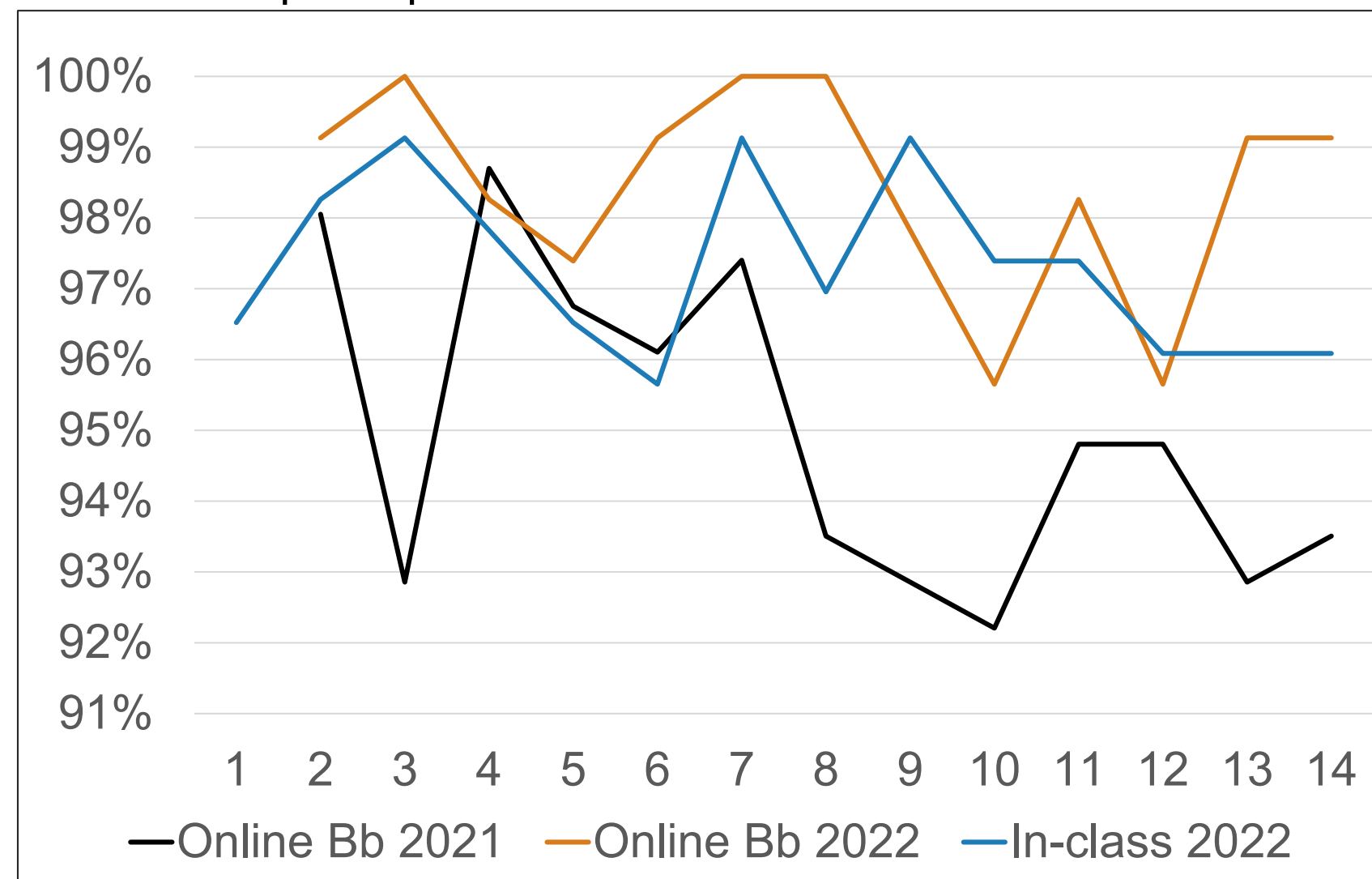


Table 3: Number of missed in-person assessments

	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Make-up assessments (n)	15	4

DISCUSSION

Active engagement in class correlated with higher overall course grades and completion of weekly assignments. Faculty found participation points easy to implement. A limitation was that students could obtain participation points using technology (audience response software) while not physically present in class. In-class worksheets or written reflections were more work-intensive for faculty but reduced likelihood of dishonest participation and were not impacted by technology failures.

In-class participation remained high with over 92% of students attending class each week. Students were permitted to miss up to 5 classes without impact on course grade. This may explain why in-class participation declined at the end of the semester.

CONCLUSION

Learners were more engaged in class which resulted in increased overall performance and increased completion rates of online assignments. Interventions targeting in-class participation are encouraged.

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