USE INTEGRATIVE COURSE DESIGN WITH ACTIVE, OBSERVABLE & MEASURABLE
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (“S-L-Os“)

- SLOs indicate what a student should be able to do as a result of having taken your course.
- SLOs are written with active verbs, generally at the critical thinking level, such as: “Students will analyze/synthesize/evaluate/create....”
- SLOs must be observable: “Student will evaluate the effects of X on Y by writing....”

USE MULTIPLE WAYS OF PRESENTING INFORMATION

- Pictures, graphs, film/video, charts
- Audio (voice, music, sounds)
- Text
- Color
- Kinesthetic

“CHUNK” INFORMATION

- Information should be presented in shorter segments, rather than in longer, narrative form as in a lecture.
- Think of presenting information more as an annotated outline, where the information is focused specifically towards the learning outcome(s).

CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS
Since online courses generally have less opportunity for faculty-student interaction, expectations for how to succeed in the course, how grades will be determined, what it means to “participate,” and course policies and procedures need to be spelled out very carefully and as explicitly as possible.

RESOURCES
It’s imperative that students be provided with the resources available to help them with the course, including student support services, where to get technological help, and even mini-modules on how to use the technology. (Often the latter can be provided by linking to the manufacturer’s website or the course Learning Management System [LMS].)

ESTABLISH “PRESENCE”
One of the major reasons that students drop out of online course is due to the feeling of isolation and disconnection. It’s important that they feel connected both the instructor and to the other students.

Establishing instructor presence in the course can be done in a number of ways:

- Use a welcome video and/or home page. Share a little person information, as well as why you love your subject and what you want students to get out of the course. Be encouraging.
- Use short videos or other introductions to each module or lesson.
- Send out a welcome e-mail.
- Participate in the online forums, chat rooms, and video tele-conferences.
• Use students’ names in responses: “Jesse may an interesting point when she wrote....”

CREATE A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS
This is where students create a sense of their presence, as well as their positive interdependence.

• Give the students an ice breaker activity so they can “meet” one another. For example, have them post a brief bio to the course website or on Facebook.
• Put students in study groups. Let them give their group a team name. Have them exchange e-mails.

GENERATE & FACILITATE DISCUSSION

• You don’t always have to use textual prompts for discussion. Consider giving students pictures, videos, or other audio-visual material to which they can respond.
• Start the discussion with your own question, or assign a student to start with one.
• Give students roles to play during the discussion.¹ Someone can be the facilitator, someone else the “fact checker”, someone else “devil’s advocate.”
• The instructor should comment periodically, re-direct discussion when it gets off-topic, ask someone to summarize the main points thus far, etc.

PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNING

• Use “Just in Time Teaching” (JITT) where students take short quizzes before the next unit/module/lesson. These quizzes can cover the previous information, the reading for the next lesson, or even just be a “knowledge inventory” of what students already know about the next topic before they have even read anything. This feedback on their prior knowledge and/or retention of knowledge can help you to intervene, as necessary.
• Make the learning interactive: besides quizzes, use interactive demonstrations²; completion exercises (fill-in-the-blanks); have students create online posters and/or presentations³; poll students using Twitter or PollAnywhere.

ASSESS LEARNING & PROVIDE FREQUENT FEEDBACK

• Use the online Midterm Feedback Form available on EEE or create your own feedback tool to get formative input from your students about the course.
• Give students frequent, short assignments with letter grades, +/-, or points to let them know how they’re doing.
• Use rubrics so students know how they will be assess and to which they can refer when they get back their grades.

¹ The TLTC has a number of handouts on how to make group work more effective, including assigning roles. We also have numerous handouts on discussion techniques.
² Many national organizations such as NSF have repositories of online, interactive materials. A Google search can yield many free resources.
³ See the TLTC’s handout on online resources for ideas of free & proprietary tools students can use.