

Community Building Plan

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Building community will take a more concerted, intentional effort in a remote environment. While I think many of the students will already know each other, I don't think many will know me and I worry about those who know no one else. My goal is to get them comfortable working and interacting with me and each other as soon as possible; this is particularly important for the stat majors in the course since we'll all be carrying over to STAT 370 in the spring.

Prior to first class:

Welcome Email

The first component of my community building plan will be a welcome email. It will, briefly, welcome them to MATH/STAT 360 and let them know the Moodle page is up and ready to go. I'll also include a copy of Homework0, which is designed to kick start the community building while also getting them used to the various systems (Moodle, Gradescope, etc.) employed in the class, and a link to the welcome video (where I showcase the aforementioned systems and introduce myself).

First week of class:

Homework0

The first homework assignment will be assigned right off the bat and will cover no probability whatsoever. It's designed to get them plugged into Gradescope, Moodle, R/R Studio, and the course in general. The assignment will, for the most part, be done during the first week of class. Among the tasks are (more information on some of these is below):

- Take the "Getting to Know You" survey (on Moodle in the "Orientation" tile)
- Watch the welcome video
- Sign up for a virtual one on one office visit (via the scheduling tool on Moodle in the "Orientation" tile)
- Read the syllabus (posted on Moodle) and take the syllabus quiz (on Moodle in the "Orientation" tile)
- Visit the Math Fellow(s) assigned to the course (Zoom link on Moodle)
- Post on the "Introduce Yourself" discussion board (and comment?; on Moodle in the "Orientation" tile)

Survey

The survey I've used in other classes can be used here, too. I may end up moving some questions to the Introduction Discussion Board, but that's something I'll iron out later. The questions I've considered using are:

- What is your major(s) and area(s) of academic interest?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What, if any, experience do you have with probability?
- What, besides an A(!), do you hope to get out of this class?
- What are you interested in (these may be used in examples and/or questions on assessments)?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about yourself?

Welcome video

I plan on using the welcome video to introduce the students to the course and to me. In addition, I'll show them how the Moodle page is organized and structured and how this mimics the structure of the material in the course. From Moodle, I'll navigate to and briefly demonstrate Gradescope and R Studio. I'll also show them how to access the e-book, the reading schedule, and the list of suggested problems.

Math Fellow(s)

The Math Fellows were an integral part of the learning experience and community when I taught this class last fall. I'm going to require each student to make a virtual visit to the Fellow(s) in an effort to build a bridge between them.

Introduction Discussion Board

The survey is for me, but I also think it's important for the students to get to know each other. To facilitate this, I'll have them post some information about themselves (e.g., preferred name, pronouns, major, location, etc.) with some things optional in case they don't feel comfortable sharing. I may have them comment on or respond to x number of posts, too.

Virtual Office Visit

In a similar fashion, I'm going to set aside 5 minutes or so for each student to make a virtual visit to my office. This should happen after the survey has been completed so we can discuss responses, as needed.

Ask Me Almost Anything (AMAA)

The portion of the welcome video where I introduce myself focuses on what I think they should know about me; the AMAA allows them to decide what they wish to know (within reason). This may be conducted via a Moodle discussion board or over Zoom; in either case it can be done in a synchronous or asynchronous fashion (or both) depending on where in the world the students are located.

Beyond the first week:

Group Work

This may be done in a synchronous or asynchronous fashion, depending on the location of the enrolled students. If it is conducted in a synchronous manner, I envision this being done in breakout rooms of 2 or 3 students where I am available to provide help and guidance, as needed.

Math Fellow(s)

As I mentioned above, the Fellows were extremely helpful to the students when it came to content. They also provided a space for students to work with each other and form connections. Replicating this in a remote fashion seems to be a challenge, but my hope is that a static Zoom room will suffice.

Discussion Boards

My hope is that, in addition learning probability, I can also help them become more self-sufficient learners. I'd like them to help each other learn. To that end, I'm going to strongly encourage the use of a discussion board for homework questions and another for general questions. My plan is to have them post their questions there and let the other students answer. I'll have to check periodically to make sure there is no misinformation, but I don't want to be the person on whom they rely. That's a fine line to walk but I'm going to try.

Homework Collaboration

I always encourage students to work together on homework as long as they give credit (my cover sheet has a place to list people with whom they worked). This, in conjunction with the office hours held by the Math Fellow(s), works to get students working together and, invariably, helps them feel connected (misery loves company, right?).

Office Hours

I always have a subset of students that I end up bullshitting with in office hours. I'm concerned that may go away in the remote environment. I'm not sure how I'll do it, but I want to be very intentional about letting them know that office hours are not just for probability questions or even academic questions. If they just want to talk, we can do that, too. Maybe I'll set aside some separate "Bullshit Hours" in addition to "Office Hours".