



# Active Engagement Techniques in an Online Learning Environment

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## ABSTRACT

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College has made it a priority to encourage student involvement and increase engagement within online courses. To accomplish this, we have used many of the tools available within Desire2Learn, as well as utilizing outside resources through the LMS.

## ROTATING GLOSSARY WIDGET

This widget allows you to showcase a different glossary term every time the student accesses your course homepage. The terms are pulled from your textbook's online resources (or the D2L glossary if you have typed the definitions here).

**Rotate Glossary Words**

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS:** Required basic statement for proprietary funds for governmental units and for public colleges and universities. Also required statement for nongovernmental not-for-profit organizations.

**Tip:** If you refresh the screen by clicking F5, you'll see a new glossary word.



**Rotate Glossary Words**

**RECONCILIATION:** As used in state and local government accounting, reconciliations are required between fund statements and government-wide statements. Specifically, a reconciliation is required between the governmental fund Balance Sheet and the government-wide Statement of Net Assets. Also, a reconciliation is required between the governmental fund Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances and the government-wide Statement of Activities.

## POP-UP WIDGETS

Encourage your students with “pop-up” widgets – these widgets are restricted to appear after a certain task has been accomplished (such as first submission to the dropbox, taking a quiz, or completing the course). These are set up by creating restrictions. For instance, the widget below would appear after the student submitted their first dropbox assignment (complete with a dancing animation).

**Congratulations!**

Congratulations on completing your first assignment. Please continue your hard work in the course. Your assignment will be graded in the next 48 hours - you can view my feedback via the dropbox.

## USING TAGXEDO IN YOUR WIDGETS

Tagxedo is a site that's used to create word clouds. Some of our instructors have begun importing the weekly discussion responses into Tagxedo and then posting the word cloud into a widget. This lets the students have a quick view on which topics stood out the most during the weekly discussion.

In this example, the discussion was regarding Western imperialism and influence in Asia and Africa:



**Tip:** Tagxedo offers a few benefits over Wordle.

1. You can choose different shapes for your word cloud (can be more interactive and engaging).
2. When you embed a Tagxedo word cloud, you can click on individual words in your word cloud and it will use your preferred search engine to bring up additional information regarding that topic.

## RSS FEEDS ON YOUR D2L HOMEPAGE

You can insert RSS Feeds of your favorite websites, to update students of the latest articles. All you need is a site that has the option of a “feed”, and then use a site to create an embeddable code. There is an awesome pdf “How-To” located in the D2L Community, which will be linked through the QR code at the bottom of the poster.

**RSS Feed Example**

[CNN.com Recently Published/Updated](#)  
CNN.com delivers up-to-the-minute news and information on the latest top stories, weather, entertainment, politics and more.

- [Movie poster featuring a slimmed-down Melissa McCarthy draws ire](#)  
Wed, 12 Jun 2013 10:59:22 EDT

## HALLWAY HANGOUT

The “Hallway Hangout” was created by one of our faculty members, Dr. Anneliese Payne. This area is located on the Discussion Board, and gives students a chance to connect with each other. Hallway Hangout consists of three key topics:

- Meet ‘n’ Greet – allows students to introduce themselves
- News from Your Classmates – provides a place for students to share updates in their lives
- Interesting Tidbits – a place for resources, statistics, or just interesting information (that pertains to the course)

**Hallway Hangout**

The Hallway Hangout is the place to share the news you might share if we saw each other on campus. Do you have news to share? What about amusing anecdotes? Have you read any good books? Did you find any resources others might be interested in seeing? Heard any good (clean) jokes? If something you have on your mind isn't directly relevant to this class, but you think your classroom colleagues might be interested, this is the place!

**Meet 'n' Greet**  
0 messages - 0 unread  
Take a few moments to post a brief introduction here. Start a new thread and tell us a little about yourself. Share a picture (or video) if you have one.

**News from Your Classmates**  
0 messages - 0 unread  
Any news you'd like to share? Here's the place.

**Interesting Tidbits**  
0 messages - 0 unread  
Great resources, surprising statistics, or just plain fascinating. Do tell!

## VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

Several of our instructors host virtual office hours via Adobe Connect Pro. Some of the benefits that we've noticed using “webinar-format” for virtual office hours are:

- The students know how to reach the instructor (all the student needs to do is click a link)
- The instructor can work through problems with the student via screen-sharing or the whiteboard options
- Students can collaborate with each other (if needed)
- The instructor can record his/her virtual office hours



Use this QR code to find a copy of our poster and available helpsheets!