



# Meaningful Engagement in a Virtual World

Kate Ganczarz - Director of Information Technology / Team Leader

Amanda Pacanovsky - Director of Insights & Innovation

Sam Villanueva - Director of Institutional Research

**Baldwin Wallace University**





01

## Program Overview

‘SoConnected’ powered by Sococo



## Rationale

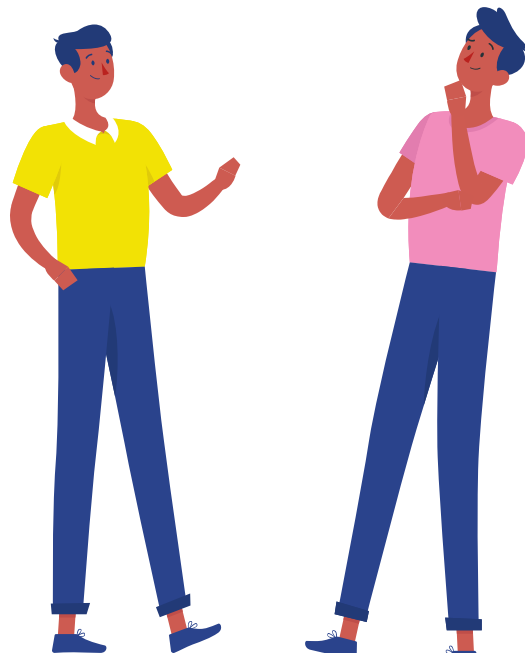
As student affairs practitioners, we know that student life is so much more than 1-hr meetings and drop-in office hours. That's why we've created an opportunity for students to connect virtually **24/7** through our program, 'SoConnected' powered by Sococo.



# ‘SoConnected’ is a game changer!

As we’ve moved completely virtual at **Baldwin Wallace University**, a small, **private liberal arts school** of **3,500** students, we’ve had our fair share of online meeting invites, complex links and confusing passwords. Not anymore!

‘**SoConnected**’ is our solution to simplifying the many online meetings housed within Student Affairs. The **engagement platform** is powered by Sococo, and allows students to connect day or night for meaningful, virtual opportunities.



# One site houses an entire campus, including...



## Student-Led Programming

Organizations offer one-time and recurring events.

.....

## Staff-Led Programming

Staff, including Graduate Assistants, plan speaker series, performances, and more!

.....

## Drop-in Virtual Rooms

Additional rooms span student's general interests to captivate anyone at anytime!

# What is Sococo?

A user-friendly, online space for teams to come together to connect side-by-side. On each customizable map, students & staff are presented as avatars who can move between virtual rooms to video-conference.



# Welcome to one of Sococo's many layouts!



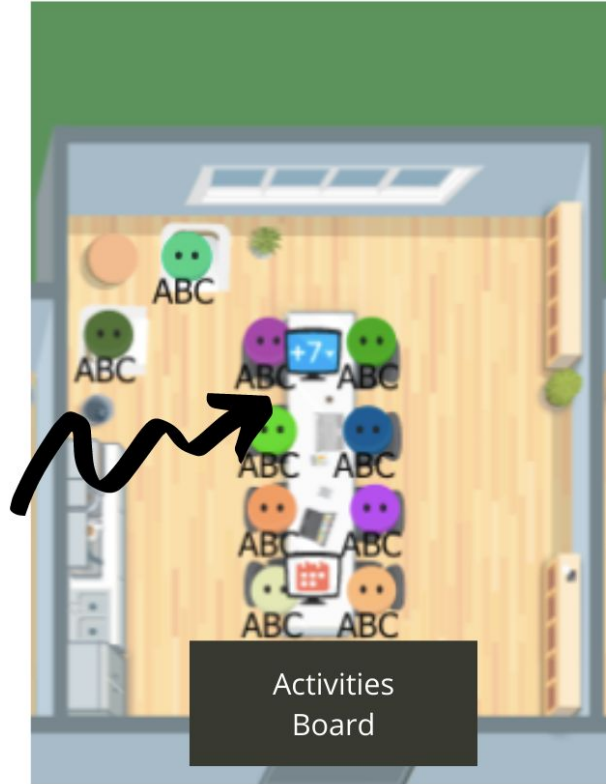
# Zoom in to learn about each virtual room!

Hover over a user's avatar to see who's connecting in real-time.



# Click on any computer icon to video-conference

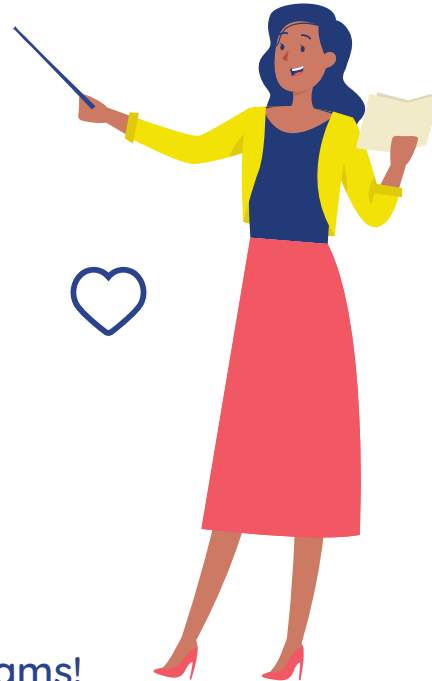
No more complex links & confusing passwords!



- Each organization can decide when to meet while using the same link every time.
- From scheduled meetings to impromptu late night chats, students can gather in one place - virtually, of course!

# Our programs include...

- Diversity, equity & inclusion roundtables
- Collaborative, fitness challenges
- Health & wellness programs
- Volunteer opportunities
- Live performances
- Monthly book clubs
- Board game nights
- Esports tournaments
- Culture nights
- Scavenger hunts
- Cooking classes
- Art & crafts
- And many more student-led and staff-led programs!



# Drop-in virtual rooms for just about any topic!

## Film Festivals

Pop the popcorn. It's movie night every night!

## Harry Potter Fans

Wizards and Muggles are welcome here!

## Wanderlust

It's time for another adventure. Grab your virtual passport.

## Proud Colors

A community for queer and allied students.

## Poetry Slam

Breathe in experience, breathe out poetry.

## Entrepreneurship

Passionate about starting your own business? Let's brainstorm.

# Outcomes

Students who engage with 'SoConnected' powered by Sococo will...



## Connect

Develop meaningful  
relationships with  
staff and peers



## Construct

Construct an identity  
with a positive sense  
of self



## Grow

Develop personally  
and professionally  
through experiences

02

## Research



Astin's Theory



Tinto's Theory



Online in Higher  
Ed



Social Network  
Analysis



# Astin's Theory of Involvement

.....

**“...proposes that meaningful educational engagement in college stimulates increasing cognitive complexity, leading to learning and development.”** (Student Development in College: *Theory, Research and Practice*, pgs. 34-35)



Simply put, the more involved a student is with an activity (i.e. sports, clubs, schoolwork, etc.), the greater the chance that a student will grow and develop, both in mind and in personality.



Read all  
about it!

# Main Principles of Involvement Theory

## Involvement

"...the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects."

1

## Continuous

"Regardless of the object, involvement occurs along a continuum."

2

## Measurable

"Involvement has both qualitative and quantitative features."

3

## Relationship

"Student learning and growth is directly proportional to student involvement."

4

Read all  
about it!

# Tinto's Theory of Persistence



Also known as "**Tinto's Interactionalist Theory**"

"...postulates that academic and social integration influence a student's subsequent commitments to the institution and the goal of college graduation.

The greater the student's level of academic integration, the greater the level of subsequent commitment to the goal of college graduation."



This theory correlates to Astin's model such that, in order for students to be successful in school, they must **commit** to a certain **level of involvement**.

## Main Focus:

**Retention**; namely, how to make sure students continue on to graduation after their first year

.....

## Dissent:

**Too broad** of a spectrum: does not take into account all factors of student accountability



Read all  
about it!

# Online Communication and Interaction in Distance Higher Education: *A Framework Study of Good Practice*



## Initial Query

.....  
"Which modes of  
online  
communication and  
interaction  
influence the  
learning process?"

~  
"Strategies that  
should be  
implemented?"

## Research

.....  
Researchers  
studied over **900**  
different  
documents, cases  
and articles



## Data

.....  
Information  
received from this  
study was mixed;  
qualitative and  
quantitative  
responses due to  
the enormity of  
sources amassed

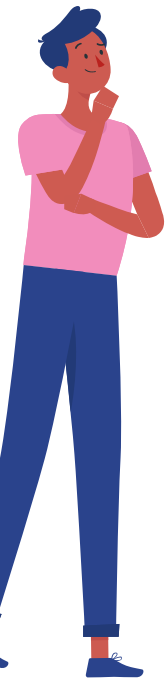


## Conclusion

.....  
Effective Distance  
Learning requires  
clear and constant  
**Peer-to-Tutor,**  
**Peer-to-Content,**  
and **Peer-to-Peer**  
communication

## Applicability?

Interactions with tutors (professors, advisors, etc.) and with educational content, without constant interaction with peers, will **stagnate** student learning and growth, not matter the distance: in-person or online.





Read all  
about it!

# Social Network Analysis and Learning Communities in Higher Education Online Learning: *A Systematic Literature Review*



## Communities of Practice (CoP):

"...a process by which newcomers enter a group and eventually evolve into experts by learning and adopting practices of the group."

## Social Network Analysis (SNA):


"...an interdisciplinary technique for investigating relationships between entities or nodes in a network; allows for visual representation of data... and can be applied at the individual (micro) and/or aggregate (macro) level."




## Communities of Inquiry (Col):

"...a guide for online learning practice and research and is used to inform methodologies and approaches to online learning design and delivery; consists of three intersecting elements-- social presence (SP), cognitive presence (CP) and teaching presence (TP)."

## Summation:



With proper inclusion of students' attributes, level of participation and learning, SNA can be fully integrated with both learning communities (Col and CoP) in a way that would permit the advancement of online higher education, allowing for more quantitative data to be compiled instead of relying solely on qualitative analysis. However, without the **student component**, without the relational factor and the **level of commitment** of said students, research data within this field will remain **unbalanced** and mostly **theoretical**.



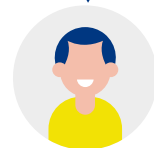
# Correlation...

**One note is abundantly clear between the theories, the data, and analysis results:**

There is **no** growth or advancement of a student's mind or identity without that crucial component of relationships, of peer interactions.

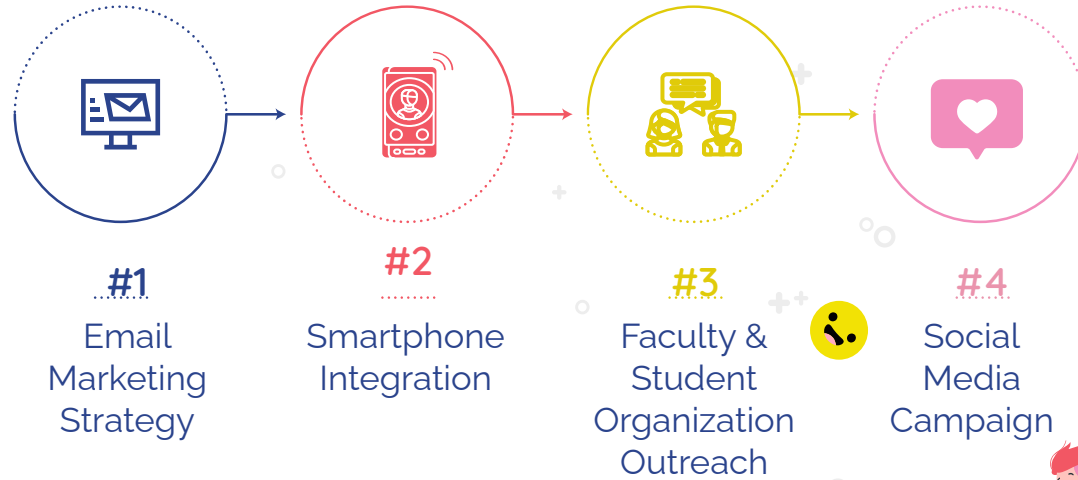
There is **no** goal of graduation or willingness to persist past the first semester without daily communication of some kind with their professors, their advisors or their colleagues.

No matter the medium--distant online learning or in-person education, students need that feeling of connectedness, of belonging, in order to fully realize their goals of achievement and matriculation.



03

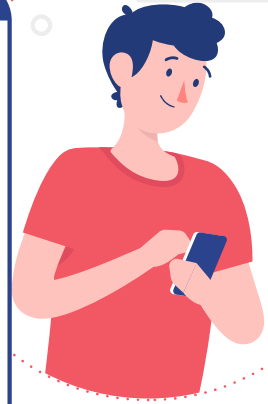
## Publicity



# Targeted Email Campaign

Students will receive target emails based on interests such as major, clubs, hobbies, and previous activity involvement. Students will complete a survey at the beginning of the semester to designate their interests.

Emails that are tailored to individual interests will make students feel special and will improve event attendance. Emails will also include a schedule of upcoming events on SoConnected so students can view all of their options.



# Smartphone Integration



1

Students will receive push notifications on their smartphones to remind them to log in to upcoming events. These notifications will also include links to the SoConnected event so students can connect wherever they may be located. Events have easy integration with web calendars such as Outlook, iCalendar, etc.



**First-year students especially need help with scheduling and time management. By automatically receiving event reminders, student participation will drastically increase.**

# Faculty & Student Organization Outreach

## Outreach

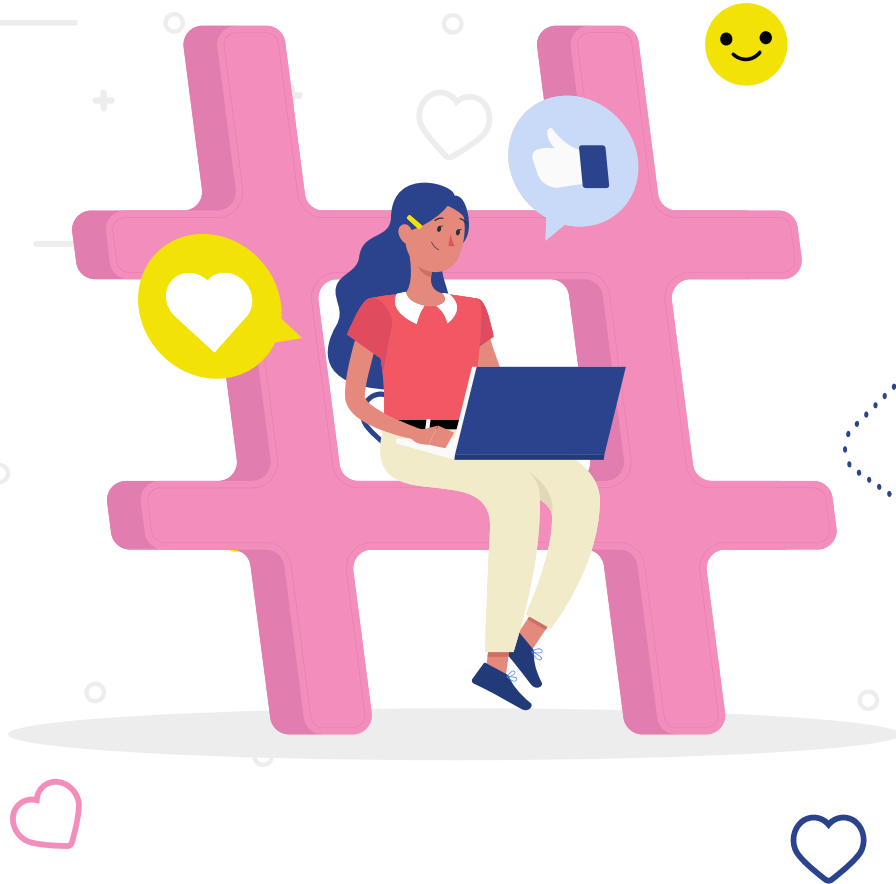
Faculty members and student organization leaders are key touch points for students.

- These leaders will hold and promote all of their events within SoConnected. Faculty are also encouraged to remind students of upcoming events on the event bulletin, especially with first-year students.

## Registration

Leaders should emphasize the importance of registering for events. Registration is **vital** to raising student attendance. Registrations links to events will be available on each student organization page, the event bulletin, and emails to the students.





## Social Media

Social media is an integral part of marketing. SoConnected's promotional video will appear on....

- TikTok
- Youtube
- WeChat
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram



Student organization handles, administrative offices' handles, and more will be tagged to increase the reach of video



# Thanks!

Do you have any questions?

[kganczar@bw.edu](mailto:kganczar@bw.edu)

**Credits:** This presentation template was created by Slidesgo, including icons by Flaticon, and infographics & images by Freepik and illustrations by Storyset

# References

## [Linked Document!](#)

\*\*(If hyperlink does not work, link can be found below)

Slidesgo.com  
Powtoon.com  
Sococo.com

\*[https://bw0-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/svillanu\\_bw\\_edu/EdRa6EiqZEdHpWr8QXqkKkoQB081hqpHLWcWT-Vxzg-vpXA?e=T7tgmh](https://bw0-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/svillanu_bw_edu/EdRa6EiqZEdHpWr8QXqkKkoQB081hqpHLWcWT-Vxzg-vpXA?e=T7tgmh)