Recent studies show a lot of room to improve student engagement. WICHE’s 2013 survey found course drop-out rates of 19% in face-to-face courses and 22% in online courses. Administrators and instructors work hard to tackle this problem. At Instructure, we partner with educators to improve student engagement and success. One of our recent studies provides some unexpected insight.

A study on the effects of video in Canvas revealed something that initially seemed too good to be true: Canvas courses that included video had lower attrition rates than those without video. Learning researchers like Richard E. Clark have strongly argued that video itself, like any medium, does not directly impact student outcomes such as grades, but in our study, we discovered video impacted an unexpected outcome—retention!

Big claims require extra analysis to validate, so that’s what we did. If you’d like to geek out on the statistical details from our study, we published two posts about the results and our analysis:


FOR EVERYONE ELSE, LET’S JUST TALK ABOUT THE HIGHLIGHTS.

First, we found that as instructors build a greater variety of learning activities into their blended or online courses, their course drop-out rates decreased. Further analysis revealed that video was particularly impactful on learning. In higher education, large Canvas courses (100+ students) that used ten or more videos saw higher course completion rates than large courses that used no video.

As mentioned above, instructor effort in general has a positive impact on student retention, so we decided to focus on video by controlling for all other LMS activities, and we found courses that used ten or more videos had a 5.8% lower attrition rate than non-video courses (p < .001).
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Student Engagement by Using Video

Video itself likely isn’t some magic bullet to increase engagement and decrease attrition. Rather, the magic comes from what video enables in large courses—social connectedness. In small classes, students have many opportunities to connect with their teachers and other students face to face. However, as classes grow, opportunities to connect can shrink as students feel like just another face in a vast crowd. Video can counter the disconnect that students may feel in large courses. Borup, West, and Graham (2012) found that video increases the sense of humanness and decreases the sense of distance online. "Many students [felt] that video-based communication made their instructors seem more real, present, and familiar...".

Diving deeper into our data further confirmed the impact of video as we noticed that even larger courses (150+ students) saw an even greater impact on retention when ten or more videos are used.

At Instructure we’ve doubled down on the potential of video to engage and retain students by connecting them to instructors and each other. That’s why we built Arc.

“Arc is a brilliant tool which has the potential to change education forever. Students, teachers, and parents can now use Arc to interact with video lessons and distill the knowledge that they really need to master. It allows for collaboration and reduces cognitive overload. Students are in total control of their learning.”

- Nikos Bogiannidis, Dean of Learning Technologies at Haileybury (Australia)

We’ve heard countless success stories from teachers and students using Arc. Our goal with Arc is to not only help you counteract disengagement, but to help you get even more out of video by creating active learning experiences.

So what is active learning (besides a buzzword we’ve been saying for years)? It’s anything that promotes analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of what you’re trying to teach. It matters because it’s several times more effective at helping students learn. The Arc platform encourages active learning by allowing students to engage with the content, interact with the video, and find new ways to collaborate with each other.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ARC, VISIT www.arcmedia.com