The ABC’s of Discussion Board Responses

Discussion boards are a significant element in the teaching and learning process between instructors and students. It is through the discussions where students have the opportunity to exchange ideas with one another and where you, as the instructor, are able to build from the material to make relevant connections. Consider using a mental checklist, with the mnemonic cue, ABC, in your discussion board responses with students. It may also be helpful to share this "ABCs” mnemonic strategy with your students for them to apply in engaging with their peers.

The ABC mnemonic is:

A: Acknowledge the contributions of the person to whom you are responding

B: Build on the ideas of the original poster by adding your own thoughts or analysis

C: Contribute to the discussion by asking a probing question that deepens understanding of the material and/or provide a supplemental resource

Here is one example of the ABC’s of discussion board responses in action:

This technique can be used within and across disciplines, as each response should naturally acknowledge a student's post and extend the conversation beyond the baseline of the prompt.

Practicing the ABC approach with colleagues on your team, can be an excellent way to develop your skill with this strategy.