Expert advice on networking in hybrid mode

Today, **interpersonal relationships are essential** for extending access to **employment opportunities** for students, said a specialist in **educational trends.**

Julia Freeland explained that one of the **biggest challenges** for teachers is ensuring that **students** can access valuable **networks** of **teachers, peers, and well-known figures** in their fields.

Speaking on a panel entitled '*The power of networking and connectivity'* at **Tec de Monterrey's National Teachers' Conference**, Freeland said that **hybrid classrooms** must be **structured** so as to put these relationships within reach.

*"When we teach**, we must purposefully rethink the way we're connecting our students to these networks,"** said the panelist.*

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8 tips for networking in hybrid mode

Freeland shares **tips for building relationships** with and among **students in hybrid mode**:

- Build familiarity with students.

It is essential **to know the names of your students and conduct a daily check-in** at the beginning of each class.

Try to have video messages ready to share with the class if you're absent.

  - Introduce yourself and get to know your students' backgrounds.

Create a **biography sharing your work as a teacher and mentor**. You could **use video tools** to produce this.

Students could do a **personal timeline exercise,** or you could ask them to write **short essays** in the style of **"This I believe"**.

- Provide brief advice when requested.

Provide **quick but constant mentoring** so that students have the **opportunity to broaden their horizons** and/or life goals.

- Create a thought-out cohort design.

Start **small group activities that foster and accelerate the development of** a **sense of trust** among students.

These activities, whose main objective is **developing trust** rather than a product to be submitted and/or evaluated, **should be short.**

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- Plan group work to include accountability.

It is very important that **group work** balances **group interdependence** with a sense of **individual responsibility.**

Julia recommends **assigning rotating roles** to keep student **morale** high and improve **engagement**.

- Foster opportunities for students to be leaders.

Encourage **question and answer sessions** led by the students themselves rather than just answering their questions directly.

If you have **students with expertise** in certain areas, you should **provide them with opportunities and/or spaces** for them to support their classmates.

- Create opportunities for interaction with industry leaders.

Try to **have guests from the same industry** or **who work in related areas** provide **feedback and** real-life **experiences to your students.**

Assign **student-led interviews** so they can meet people and make **connections** in industry.

- Make use of educational technologies to promote connectivity.

Take advantage of **different technological tools** to have **interactions** with those students who are out of reach because of time and/or location.

Create a **culture of emotional and instrumental support** through those **communication channels** (chat, WhatsApp, Remind, etc.) available to you.

*"It's not only the **technology**; it's **how you adapt your model** to it."*

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Why are these networks so important?

The expert said that current educational systems **commonly** underestimate the **power of networks and interpersonal relationships** as resources are focused on **learning**.

*"We all have stories, personal relationships, mentoring, and even random encounters that **opened doors to possibilities that led us to where we are today,"** Julia explained.*

According to the researcher, **universities** tend to put **more emphasis** on **what** students know than **who** they know.

However, it is argued that **opportunity exists at the intersection of these two areas**, as statistics show that **50% of jobs come about through personal connections**, in the United States at least.

*"We must **prepare** students with the **skills** to enter the **job market**, but we should also be thinking about the **connections** they have access to,"* she said.

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What are the benefits of these types of relationships?

The expert pointed out how having **students** develop **diverse and positive relationships** early in their careers can help **shape their professional interests.**

Similarly**,** having **access to support networks reduces** the **possibility** of student **disengagement** and helps **develop a sense of belonging**.

"Peer and faculty relationships are the biggest indicators of a **positive college experience***,"* Freeland stressed.

Likewise, industry networks should be given credit **as** they can **help position graduates within a** flexible job **market** because of their **breadth and diversity.**

Finally, the long-term **benefits of social capital have effects on career options, risk reduction, and graduate longevity**.

https://twitter.com/ChristensenInst/status/1399697466514104320

How can you promote networking?

*"Our research continues to show that **networks are more powerful and have further reach** than individual mentors,"* Julia said.

This being the case, the researcher explained **how universities can expand the power of networks** by **fostering three types of relationships**:

- Student-faculty relationships

By creating storytelling check-ins for students to get to know their teachers and creating opportunities for mentoring.

  - Peer relationships

Through projects that allow for collaborative relationships and individual development.

  - Student-industry relationships

Making use of online connections to replace weak ties to industry that would otherwise be out of the reach of students.

"When we teach, we must purposefully rethink the way we're connecting our students to these networks."

Who is Julia Freeland?

The expert is the director of educational research at the **[Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation](#)**, where she works on **disruptive innovation** topics in education systems.

Holding a BA from **Princeton University** and a **JD** from **Yale Law School,** she is now an expert in the fields of **blended learning and skills-based learning.**

Her **research** aims to highlight **new approaches and tools** to expand **students' ability** to navigate through new **networks of peers, mentors, and professionals.**

The National Teachers' Conference

This is the most important annual event for **Tecnológico de Monterrey's** undergraduate and graduate faculty.

Teachers from all **National Schools** meet to share lessons learned, best practices, and experiences. **Activities** and **forums are set up to** address important issues for the next school year.

[David Garza](#), rector and executive president of Tec, thanked teachers for all their work this year.

*"Tec de Monterrey stands out thanks to the **enthusiasm** and **dedication** that you have all put in. Thank you for your **commitment** and I look forward to you continuing with the same **great passion** for educating future **leaders who are going to transform our country**,"* he said.

The **National Teachers' Conference** is being held virtually from July 5 to 8.

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