UC Irvine School of Education

Behavioral Guide Rails to Improve Student Engagement

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Public Service Building 270 (next to UCI Parking, above the UCI Police Station)

Abstract: Online learning management systems, such as Canvas, have enabled students to complete large amounts of coursework online. By many accounts, this has vastly increased student engagement, active learning, transparency of learning outcomes, and student feedback -- but it has also vastly increased the workload. Basic support mechanisms for helping students manage this workload are lagging behind other industries, where automated guide rails are common and help to prevent user error. For example, our banks notify us when we have a low balance, our email clients suggest when we have forgotten to include attachments, and our cars alert us know when we might be approaching a collision. Educational technology might operate similar instruments for guiding behavior when a student begins to slip, and moreover, for proactively supporting the student's ability to keep track of their workload. In this presentation, Motz will describe a smartphone app he developed, called Boost, that deploys automated data-driven interventions at scale, providing tools to help improve student behavior and success.

Bio: Ben Motz is Director of Indiana University's eLearning Research and Practice Lab and a Research Scientist in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Indiana University. His academic training is in Cognitive Science, with emphases in experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience. He spent the first 10 years of my academic career as a teaching faculty member, and his teaching philosophy was heavily influenced by the science of learning. But more than simply translating psychological principles into his instructional practices, he has been increasingly involved in experimentally assessing the effects of these practices, and whether behavioral research would reveal benefits as predicted by psychological theory. Over time this research has become more tightly intertwined with learning technology, and his current appointment reflects a collaboration between IU's Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences and IU's Information Technology division. In this role, he spearhead the development of new technologies and multidisciplinary research studies to inform our understanding of how students learn, and how to best support student success at scale.