



## Industry Challenge

The past year has all of us taking a harder look at how technology does—or does not—serve students. At its best, online learning has the power to break down barriers and provide new ways for students and faculty to interact and learn. But evidence suggests that students—online and face-to-face—have become less engaged and more anxious. And so the challenge remains: how do we engage students more fully, equitably, and successfully in their learning? We believe part of the answer is to make supporting technologies engaging and easy to use so that all learners can participate more authentically in the online experience.



## Our Solution

Harmonize is a new kind of online discussion and communication platform that supports every learner by helping them engage more fully in conversations with their peers. Students can jump right into conversations without tedious technical instructions. Most are delighted by the visual design of Harmonize, which makes each post more vivid and memorable. Harmonize borrows the social media metaphors familiar to most students and allows them to post a broad range of content, including text, images, video (supported by auto-captioning), audio, embedded URLs, code snippets, and more.

Harmonize also delivers new efficiencies to instructors who appreciate student activity reports that speed evaluation as well as tight integrations with LMS gradebooks and plagiarism detection software. Innovative features such as video and image annotation, chat, question & answer features, and more extend how instructors can use Harmonize to support curricula—whether in a synchronous, asynchronous, or hybrid classroom setting.

An IMS TrustedEd App, Harmonize is also WCAG 2.1 A and AA compliant and incorporates robust privacy features to assure that your institution can comply with FERPA and other data policies.



## Learning Impact

As we have added features to Harmonize over the past year, we have focused our attention more directly on how to get students talking to each other. Most engagement strategies rely on asking a student to submit a required number of posts and comments. Typically, students meet this standard exactly; very few use the discussion platform to go “above and beyond.”

To address this, we delivered a feature that lets instructors set multiple due dates for a discussion topic. We have found that students who are asked to visit a topic more than once not only have more to say but remain engaged longer. This feature is unique to Harmonize and encourages deeper, more consistent student participation.



## Return on Investment

Online learning shows no signs of slowing down. Harmonize is helping institutions reach and engage more students and meet federal rules mandating “regular and substantive interaction” in online courses. Ultimately, we deliver a powerful discussion platform that is helping students build community, stay engaged in their learning, and hone their skills. Over the next year, we will continue to examine how online conversations work, how we can encourage better communication, and how we can design metrics that evaluate the nuances of student performance.

“Using Multiple Due Dates within Harmonize has become an integral part of my course, allowing student conversations to live and breathe across time in ways that most discussion assignments can’t match. Multiple Due Dates takes student postings—which often feel as if they are written in a vacuum—and turns them into opportunities for further engagement. By creating steps across an assignment window, Multiple Due Dates doesn’t simply reward the first to post or the most loquacious, but the student who pauses to observe the conversation in progress and takes the time to reflect before entering the discussion.”

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