


# Chapter 11


## Developing Engaging Opportunities for Online Doctoral Learners

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### ABSTRACT

*At an online university, doctoral students complete doctoral coursework and conduct original research supported only by online interaction with the committee. There is a need for further engagement to assist with completion rates. The purpose of this chapter is to review the engaging opportunities that doctoral students experience while successfully completing an online doctoral degree. The chapter begins with background information concerning the degree completion rates for doctoral students and online doctoral learners, as well as a review of interactive and communication tools to further enhance student engagement. The review reveals that social media and other technical advances help boost learner commitment. The chapter continues by reviewing three challenges related to doctoral student engagement, including facilitating and maintaining student engagement, maintaining wellness, and applying theoretical models for engagement. The chapter concludes with the*

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*recommendations for engaging doctoral learners.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

At an online university, doctoral students complete doctoral coursework and conduct original research supported only by online interaction with the committee. There is a need for further engagement to assist with completion rates. The purpose of this chapter is to review the engaging opportunities that doctoral students experience while successfully completing an online doctoral degree. The chapter begins with background information concerning the degree completion rates for doctoral students and online doctoral learners. The background information continues with a review of interactive and communication tools to further enhance student engagement. The literature shows that social media and other technical advances help boost learner commitment. The chapter continues by reviewing three issues related to doctoral student engagement. The issues are demonstrated by the challenges faced, facilitating and maintaining student engagement, maintaining wellness, and applying theoretical models for engagement. The chapter concludes with the recommendations for engaging doctoral learners through practices using technology, developing a supportive relationship with students, understanding students' unique needs, and practicing teacher presence throughout the doctoral journey.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Completion Rates for Doctoral Learners**

Doctoral education plays a pivotal role in advancing knowledge and professional practice across various fields. Pursuing a doctoral degree enables individuals to develop advanced problem-solving skills, engage in original research, and contribute to the evolution of their professions. In general, the completion of a doctorate prepares individuals to help shape the future of their chosen field through such activities as original research contributions and applied practice. For example, a doctorate in education prepares educators to shape educational policy, introduce new approaches to teaching and learning, engage in leadership positions and effect meaningful changes in educational systems, thereby positively impacting students, teachers, and communities. However, despite the benefits, doctoral candidates face many challenges that may hinder program completion. In seeking to understand the

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