



Gies Business

# Fostering an Authentic Space for Learner Voices, Engagement, and Community

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# Our Purpose Today

Can we just all agree that engagement is important?

Engagement in low & high enrollment courses: what does it look like.

Pilot studies: comparison study of levels & depth of engagement, focus group of learners at end of semester

Faculty perspectives

# Themes

A word cloud of various themes related to education and community. The words are arranged in a non-uniform, overlapping manner. The colors of the words are: blue for 'belonging', 'learning', 'community', 'success', 'faculty', 'connectedness', 'engagement', 'rapport', and 'modality'; red for 'satisfaction', 'course', 'design', 'disengagement', and 'loneliness'; and green for 'proactive', 'feedback', 'identity', 'voice', and 'authentic'. The word 'engagement' is the largest and most central, while 'loneliness' and 'disengagement' are the smallest and positioned at the bottom.

belonging learning satisfaction  
community success feedback  
course proactive  
learner faculty connectedness  
rapport identity  
design engagement  
voice disengagement modality  
loneliness authentic



# Modality Changes Engagement





# Context

Low enrollment course - Masters level course in an online student personnel cohort based program. Twelve students in fall semester of their last year. Comparison, earlier course in program sequence that used traditional engagement strategies using the LMS.

High enrollment courses - Masters level courses in the iMBA program. Data analytics courses focused on processing business data to gain actionable insights. Fall 22 had nearly 400 students. Previously used LMS discussions minimally.

# Humanizing Online Courses and Engagement Platforms

“Humanizing online teaching ensures the non-cognitive components of learning are addressed through instructor-student relationships and community, allowing connection and empathy to drive engagement and rigor.”

“Instructor-student relationships lie at the heart of humanizing, serving the connective tissue between students, engagement, and rigor.”

# Authentic Spaces

1. A space where learners can *connect*, support, encourage, and challenge one another.
2. Promote learners to take personal interest in contributing to the learner community.
3. Allows for learner reflection and learning.
4. Introduces the *human element* into the digital learning space.

# Generating Learner Voice

Does learner voice = learner active participation and engagement?

Power relationship between the faculty and learner can diminish the learner voice.

One approach in online learning is to use digital technologies to minimize the status difference and promote learner voices.

Providing a community centered space where learners can interact with each other, faculty, and content without barriers (time, depth, voice) will promote each learners' voice.



# Bringing An Engagement Platform Into The Virtual Classroom: Building An Authentic Space

“When digital technologies are brought into the classroom, the lecturer may have to relinquish some of their authority (thus impacting on the ‘rules’ and ‘division of labour’ nodes) in order to enable enhanced learning.”



# High vs Low Enrollment Courses

**Initially:** Humanizing the faculty, common ground behaviors

**Throughout course:** Attentive behaviors, model ongoing interest, personalized instruction. A living community.

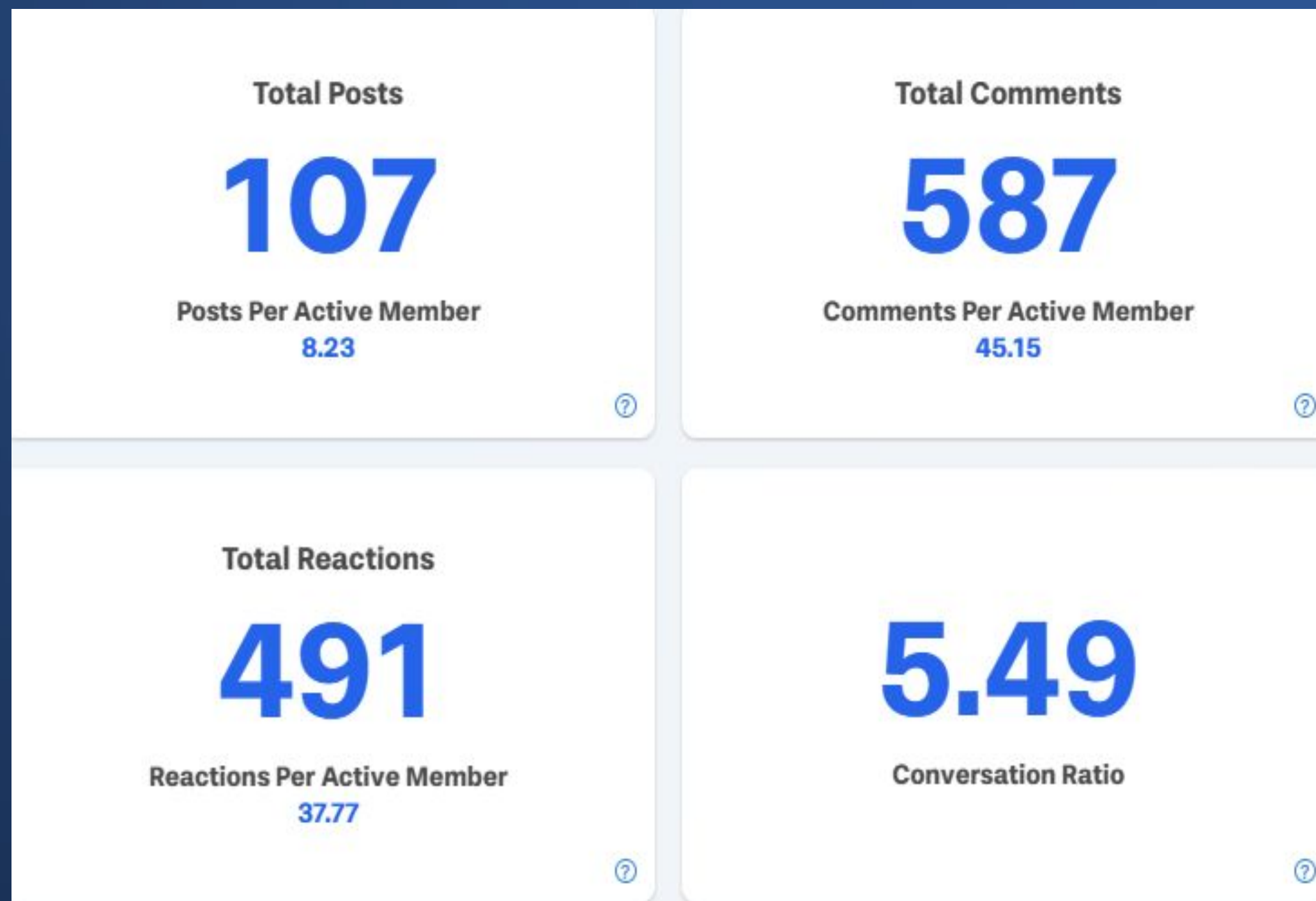
**At the end of course:** Attention to lagging, less engaged students.

Different strategies are required based on the levels of learner engagement.

**Faculty role:** nudge learners with lower levels of engagement, reinforce highly engaged learners, monitor discussions for students who are struggling or reaching out.



# Engagement In Low Enrollment vs. High Enrollment Courses

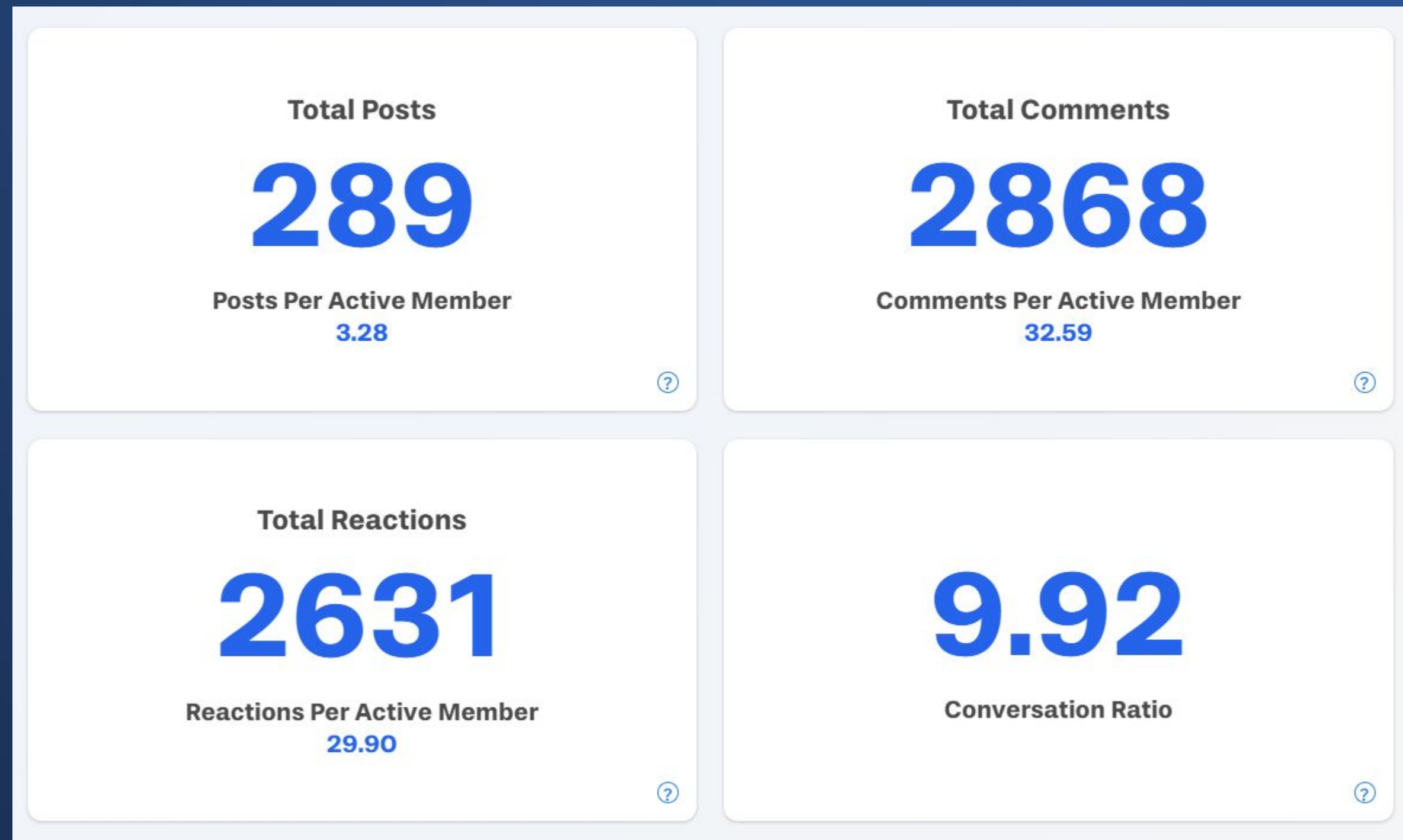


*How does this compare to traditional LMS discussion posts for comparison course?*

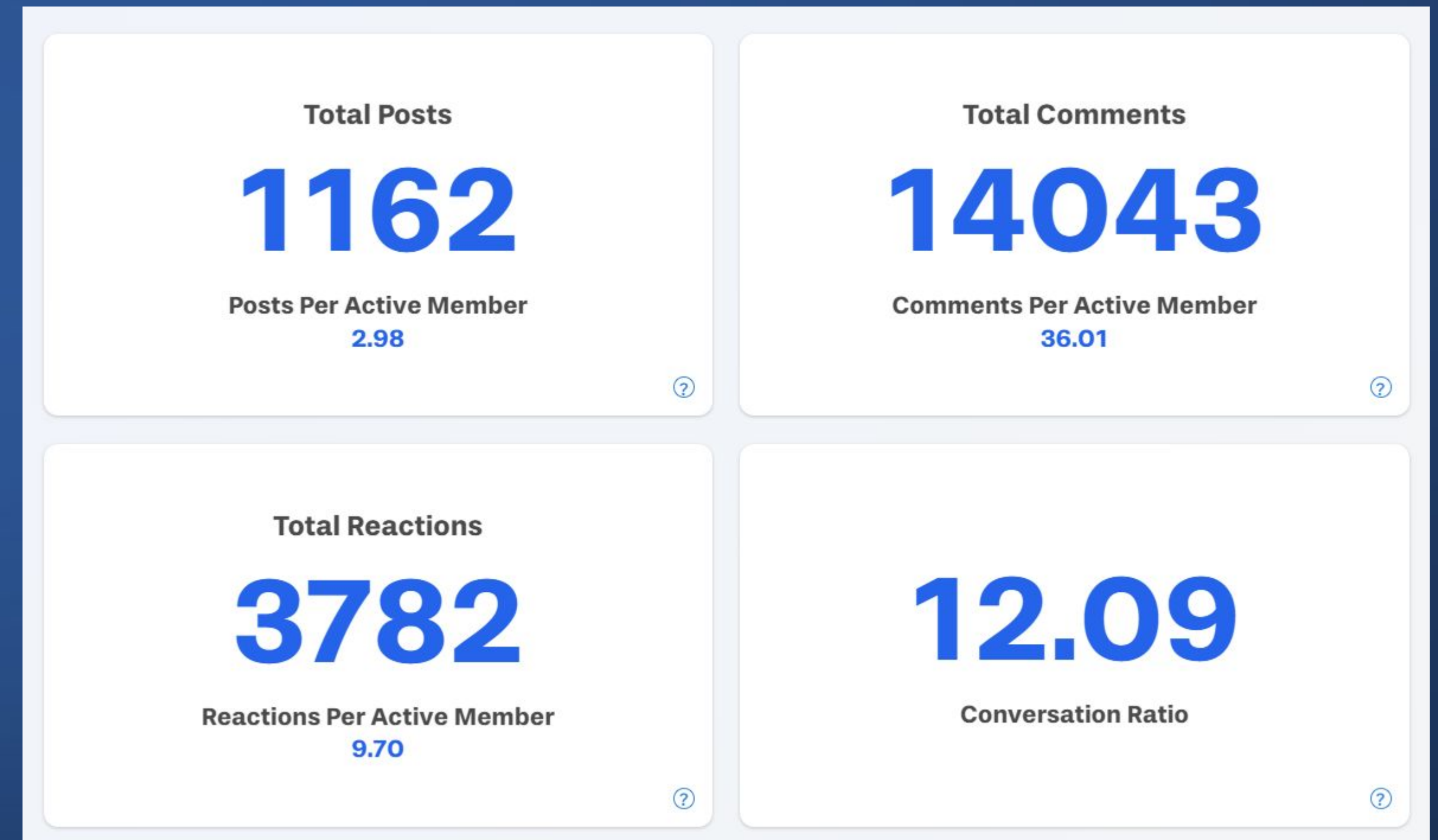
- *4 discussion posts with a required response to a classmate.*
- *48 total posts.*
- *48 total comments.*
- *Same 12 students.*



# Engagement In Low Enrollment vs. High Enrollment Courses



Fall 2021 ACCY 569 - 99 students

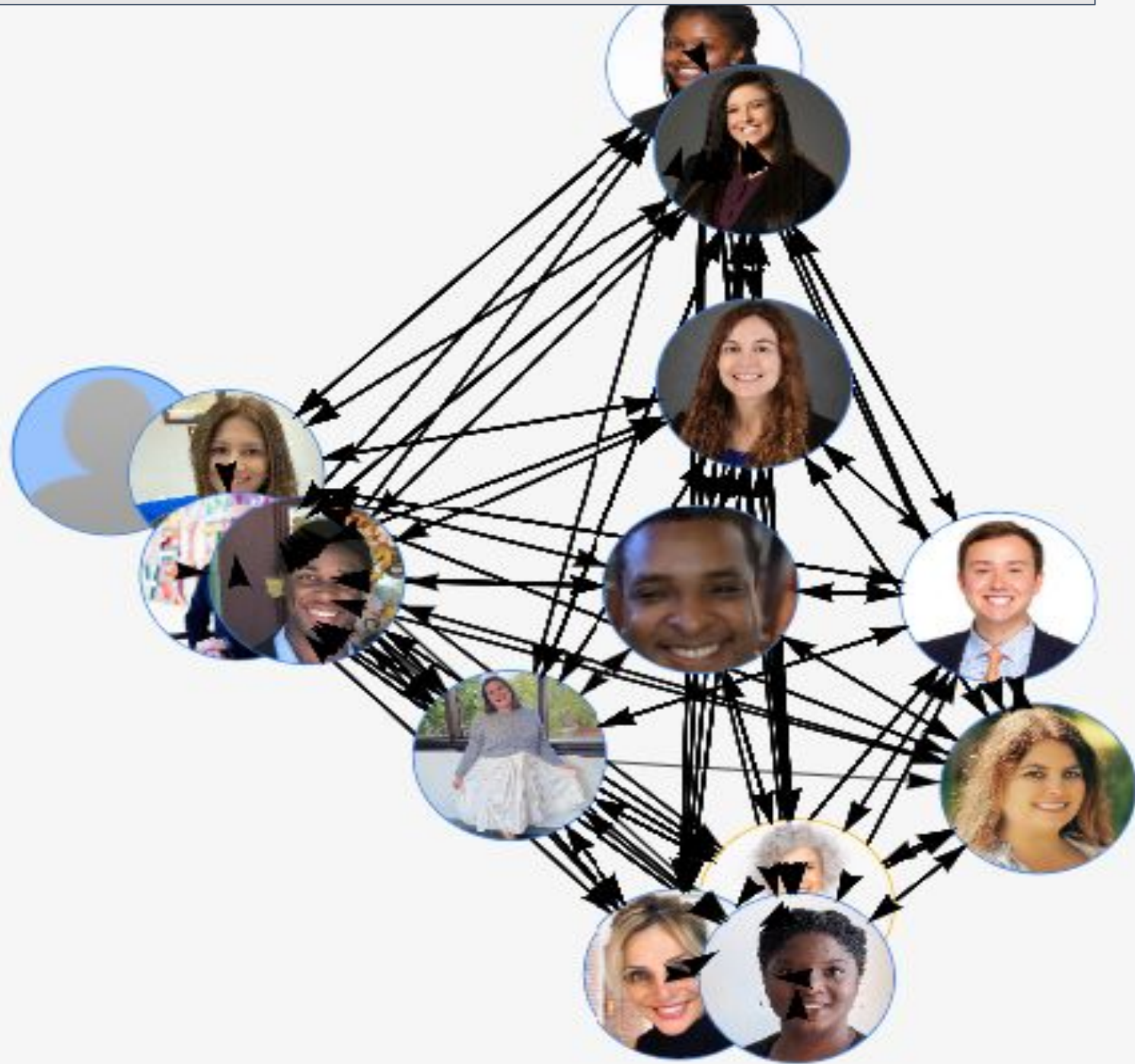


Fall 2022 MBA 563 - 400 students

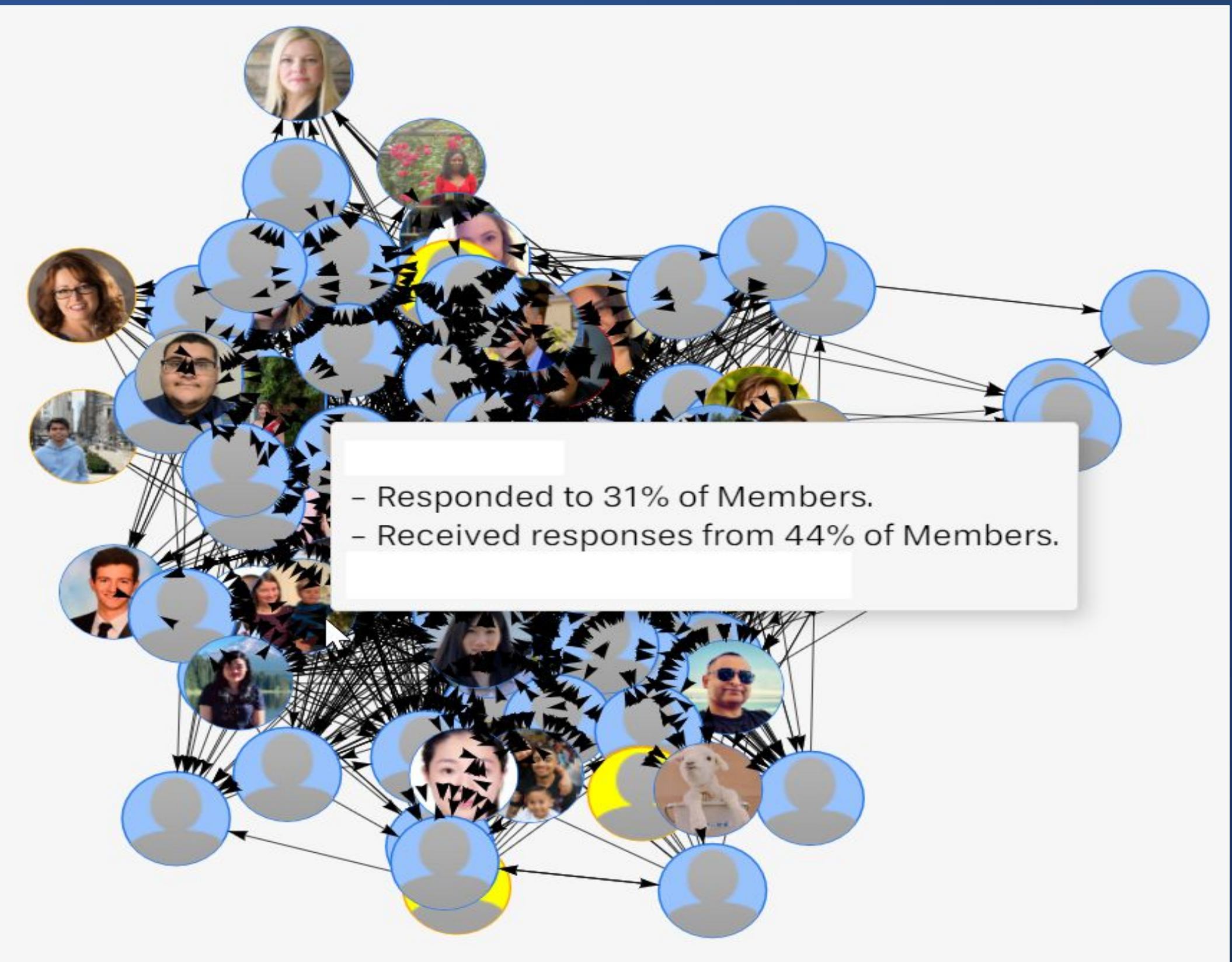


# Cultivating Relationships, Connections, and Rapport

- Responded to 90 % of Members.
- Received responses from 90 % of Members.



Fall 2022 EDH 6931 - 12 students



Fall 2021 ACCY 569 - 99 students



# Student Voices



Felt more like a conversation.

It literally felt like an organic discussion instead of a forced discussion post that I had to complete. It felt like we were having a round robin in a classroom.

We became closer as a cohort. We became closer as professionals.

I felt like our relationship with each other was deeper. Learned more about each other's experiences.

I enjoy reading through other students' contributions and comments. I would say Yellowdig certainly enriched my learning in the course.

Normally in Canvas, I was worried about how I would sound. Was I educated enough? Smart enough? I could be more myself in our community. I felt more laid back like we were together in a room. More relaxed. *(from a returning adult student with a nontraditional education path).*

Loved that Dr. S checked in on me when I took a week off from posting.

Personally, I enjoy Yellowdig more than I thought I would. It's easy to engage, share thoughts, hear others and become involved. Reading others posts has been enlightening and useful when running code or finding places to learn how to work with these tools the most.

# Discussion & Wrap Up & Raffle

