Examples of changes that happened to my online course(s) as the result of student feedback

The following examples are from my English 103 online classes.

Activity:
I used to have students do a journal entry on a weekly basis reflecting on how each week went.

Answers:

Week 1:

- “There wasn't much pressure on the assignments this week because there weren't any points attached. I did enjoy Carr's article which we evaluated because it made me think how the internet has impacted my own life. When I first began this course I wasn't sure if I was going to be interested in any of the discussion posts, but after completing week 1 I think it's going to be an interesting course. I look forward to what this course has to offer.”

  Posted on Jan 13, 2015.

- “I have done quite a few classes online and so far this is the easiest class I have had regarding turn in dates. I like how you have it set up for Monday thru Sunday. Makes a hectic life less complicated trying to remember when something is due. I am able to remember that I have until Sunday to turn in my assignments. I think this week went pretty well. It was not bad at all regarding the assignments and discussions. However, the Padlet Wall is going to take some getting used to. I have never had a teacher use this but I think it is pretty neat. I look forward to our future assignments in this class.”

  Posted on January 18, 2015

- “Week one had a mixture of feelings. I felt overwhelmed through half of the week. This is a learning process because it has been a while since I have been back in school. I know organization and time management is key. I am hoping that once I get into a routine, things will feel more comfortable. Then I start to panic because I know most classes ease us into things and if I am overwhelmed
now, how will I feel in one month? Once again I need to stay focused and keep my eye on the prize.”

Posted on January 18, 2015

•  “I must admit that at this point I feel a bit overwhelmed. There is so much information from this course and the layout is far different than what I am used to. I have taken many online classes, but this one is going to take the most getting used to. I am having a hard time with how information is related as far as assignments, due dates, and general information. When I log in and see that there are 6+ updates for the day I panic and think I have missed a deadline or crucial information. The activities were nice. Not too hard, but there were more than I expected for the first week of school. I hope to adjust quickly and get on a strict schedule to help stay on track.”

Posted on January 18, 2015

What I learned and changed:

Though most students were somewhat satisfied with Week 1 and perhaps even excited, I realized the following:

•  I was stressing out some by sending out too many updates. In my exuberance to get to know my students, I was overdoing my announcements, and I wasn’t categorizing them or identifying the level of importance. Based on this thinking, I began to name my announcements as “Just for fun” or “Watch this for fun,” or “Just a little extra help on Week 2” etc. That way, if students logged in after 48 hours and saw three “just for fun” announcements, they would not stress that they had fallen behind.

•  Yes, the first week of school did have lots of activities, and this had to be done for management of wait lists. Week 1 was not graded, but the activities sent me signals regarding students’ interest to stay or drop. Though I didn’t reduce the number of activities, I made sure I explained to students as to why Week 1 was heavy.
The following examples are from a journal-entry activity in a Hybrid class (Posted on Aug 31, 2015):

My prompt: “This journal is a private communication channel between you and your teacher. Is there anything you would like me to know about you that you can't share with the class? Is there something extra I can do to ensure your success? Do let me know. I'll do the best I can.”

- “I am a full time worker and full time student this semester. After the first week of school, I've realized that it is hard to go to school and work full time. By the time I get home I am exhausted to do the homework. Today, I had to leave work early to come home and finish my homework that is due tonight. :( I am also a little nervous about taking this class. On the syllabus it shows the percentage of each essay and it worried me. I do not feel confident in my writing. English is my second language and I feel that my vocabulary isn't as strong as it should be.”

- “Currently I am in the middle of getting divorced and my emotions are constantly changing. Somedays, I may enter class happy and a willing participant to engage in conversation. Other days, I may just want to sit back and just listen. Also because of my divorce, I have very few items and a computer is not one of those items. I'm not anticipating it because I have numerous ways of getting to a computer, but there might be a time that I may need and extra day to turn an assignment in. I work full time, school part time, and am raising 2 kids, so maybe if my schedule doesn't line up with my resources, I may not have access to a computer from time to time.

What I learned and changed:

- I opened the due dates of essays and explained that though I would be happy to extend due dates, the school required that a semester begin and end at a certain date; hence, as learning had to be accomplished in a span of sixteen weeks, due dates had to be created, and even if the due dates were open dates, I would still encourage everyone to submit on time so that there was enough time for me to comment and return the papers in time for the next submission.

- I did create an extra incentive of two extra credit points for essays submitted on time.