Tips for Improving Communication in the Online Environment

BUILD COMMUNITY
- Hold face-to-face meetings periodically throughout the semester if feasible
  o Allows cadets to interact and get to know each other
  o Builds trust between instructor and cadets in order to increase engagement online
- Incorporate small groups
  o Increases active participation and interaction
  o Allows instructors to get to know each cadet more personally
- Hold synchronous meetings to complement asynchronous work
  o Increases instructor presence
  o Allows for students to get to know the instructor and each other
  o Adds variety and points of live connection, increasing engagement

DISCUSSION BOARDS
- Provide explicit instructions, explanations, and expectations (and repeat them often)
  o Increase meaningful cadet collaboration with clear guidelines
  o Build a sense of community through deliberate discussion board use
- Consider text-based discussion boards over video communication
  o Engagement may be greater in text-based discussions rather than video-based ones

FEEDBACK
- Consider sending audio or video feedback on student products
  o Personalizes the feedback for the recipient
  o Conveys more nuance than written feedback (think tone of voice, body language)
  o Creates a stronger instructor presence, especially for asynchronous classes
  o Can be completed faster than typing or handwriting feedback
  o Try: Flipgrid, Notability, VoiceMemos

INCREASE PARTICIPATION WITH CLASSROOM RESPONSE SYSTEMS
- Classroom response systems, or “clickers,” are polling devices used strategically during classes
  o Increases cadet participation when used in conjunction with small group discussions
  o Builds understanding of instructor expectations
  o Provides immediate feedback to both cadets and instructors
- TurningPoint, a software licensed by USMA, turns phones into a “clicker”
  o Can be embedded into Blackboard
- More ideas to increase student engagement from “Poll Everywhere”