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Vesna Kilibarda* (vkilibar@iun.edu), 3400 Broadway, Department of Mathematics, Indiana University Northwest, Gary, IN 46408. *Group Projects and Ice-breakers Build Classroom Community in a Finite Math Course.*

We are a commuter campus with diverse student body. Majority of our students work more than 20 hours per week, many have families, and almost a fifth are non-traditional students. For our student population online learning provides many advantages, such as flexible learning environment that caters to a variety of learning styles, savings in transportation cost and time, ability to customize the course to their needs, and plenty of one-on-one contact with instructor. Our students face challenges in an online learning environment, from adapting to CMS to time-management and motivation. We have found that group projects where students study real-world problems that matter to them and ice-breaker discussions at critical points in a semester help students feel a part of a classroom community and help boost their self-motivation. We assign group projects where students solve real-world problems using an Excel macro for solving systems of equations or a simplex method Java applet for solving systems of linear inequalities. After a challenging assignment a “Two-truths, One Fib” ice-breaker discussion about their class experience helps students understand that their peers are in a similar situation and helps an instructor modify the class in a way that can bust students’ confidence (Received September 26, 2017)