

# Virtual Campus Faculty Handbook

## Table of Contents

<b>I. Mission Statement .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. General Information.....</b>	<b>4</b>
• SACS Criteria .....	4
• Goals For The Virtual Campus.....	4
• What is Distance Learning.....	4
• Distance Learning at BCC .....	4-6
○ Telecourses	
○ Teleweb Courses	
○ Televised Interactive Education	
○ Hybrid Courses	
○ BCC Virtual Campus	
○ Online Degree Programs and Courses	
• The BCC Online Student.....	6
• Impact of Online Courses at BCC .....	7
• Virtual Campus Staff .....	8
<b>III. Guidelines for Teaching / Developing Virtual Campus Courses .....</b>	<b>9</b>
• Virtual Campus Course Development Approval Procedures .....	9
• Syllabus.....	9
• Evaluation of Learning Outcomes .....	10
○ Assignments	
○ Examinations	
• Strengthening Faculty/Student Communication.....	11
• Specific and Unique Responsibilities of the Online Course Instructors ....	11-12
• Course and Program Evaluation.....	12
• Textbook Selection.....	13
• Orientation.....	13
• Virtual Campus Class Size and Compensation.....	13
○ Telecourses	
○ Online and Teleweb Courses	
○ TIE Courses	
• Virtual Campus Faculty Schedules .....	14
• Virtual Campus Logistics .....	16-17
○ Course Scheduling	
○ Course Materials	
○ Student Email Addresses	
○ Student Passwords	
○ Source of Student Materials	
○ Discrepancy Rolls/Attendance Reporting	
• Copyright and Fair Use.....	17

<b>IV. Teaching with Blackboard .....</b>	<b>18</b>
• <b>Required Skills.....</b>	<b>18</b>
• <b>Faculty Training.....</b>	<b>18</b>
• <b>The Multimedia Development Center .....</b>	<b>18</b>
• <b>Blackboard Course Development.....</b>	<b>19</b>
○ <b>Ten easy ways to creating your Online Course .....</b>	<b>19</b>
○ <b>Ways to get students engage in more Online Courses.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>V. Appendices .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>A. Virtual Campus Goals .....</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>B. Is Distance Learning for Me .....</b>	<b>B-1</b>
<b>C. Online Syllabus/Book Submission .....</b>	<b>C-1</b>
<b>D. Sample Online Course Syllabi .....</b>	<b>D-1</b>
<b>E. Attendance Reporting Procedures .....</b>	<b>E-1</b>
<b>F. Banner Rosters.....</b>	<b>F-1</b>
<b>G. Proctor Request Form.....</b>	<b>G-1</b>
<b>H. Blackboard Testing Procedures .....</b>	<b>H-1</b>
<b>I. Online Textbook Ordering Page .....</b>	<b>I-1</b>
<b>J. The Associate Vice President’s Letter to Online Students .....</b>	<b>J-1</b>
<b>K. Coordinator’s Email to Online Students .....</b>	<b>K-1</b>
<b>L. Username/Password Email.....</b>	<b>L-1</b>
<b>M. Librarian Letter to Online Students .....</b>	<b>M-1</b>
<b>N. Blackboard Access and Classroom Requirements .....</b>	<b>N-1</b>
<b>O. Sample “Obtaining Permission to Use Copyrighted Works” Letter .....</b>	<b>O-1</b>
<b>P. Telecourse Student Orientation Meeting Suggested Agenda .....</b>	<b>P-1</b>
<b>Q. Teletips for Video Production .....</b>	<b>Q-1</b>
<b>R. Sample Postcard to Online Students .....</b>	<b>R-1</b>
<b>S. Virtual Campus Evaluation Process .....</b>	<b>S-1</b>
1. <b>Student Appraisal of Online Instruction</b>	
2. <b>Student Appraisal of Online Student Services</b>	
3. <b>Distance Learning Exit Survey</b>	
<b>T. SRS 2000 Student Retention &amp; Success Model .....</b>	<b>T-1</b>
<b>U. Multimedia Development Center Software List .....</b>	<b>U-1</b>
<b>V. Faculty Support Page.....</b>	<b>V-1</b>

# I. MISSION STATEMENT

**Our Vision:** Brevard Community College is committed to  
Being our Community's Center for

- Quality Teaching and
- Lifelong Learning

## **Our Mission:**

To engage our diverse population in quality, accessible, learning opportunities, which successfully meet individual and community needs. Brevard Community College fulfills its mission by offering the following:

1. Undergraduate Studies and Associate Degrees to pursue a Baccalaureate Degree.
2. Technical and vocational training for Associate Degrees and Certificates for entering the workforce, improving professional skills, and developing new competencies.
3. Instructional support services such as advisement and career guidance.
4. Activities supporting cultural enrichment, economic development, sports, wellness, and quality of life.
5. Workshops and classes for personal growth, developmental instruction, and lifelong learning.

## **Our Philosophy:**

The College embraces the following key values and beliefs:

1. RESPECT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL (COURTESY/CIVILITY/EQUITY):  
*Central to our philosophy is respect for the individual, manifested through courtesy, equity, and civility in every endeavor*
2. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE:  
*Recognizing that we exist in a dynamic environment, we foster innovation to promote continuous improvement in student, employee, and organizational development.*
3. PASSION FOR LEARNING:  
*As an educational catalyst, the College sparks the flame of human curiosity by creating an environment to ignite and sustain a passion for lifelong learning.*
4. LEADERSHIP, EMPOWERMENT, INTEGRITY:  
*We value ethical leadership that engenders trust and confidence, and empowers people to make sound decisions.*
5. TEAMWORK, SENSE OF BELONGING:  
*We encourage a sense of belonging by employees and students through promoting an atmosphere of teamwork that embraces the college's mission and goals.*
6. SERVICE:  
*We provide quality service to students, colleagues, and the community with the intention that all those served achieve higher levels of success and satisfaction.*
7. ACCOUNTABILITY:  
*Through systematic review and evaluation, we are publicly accountable to achieve our mission.*
8. SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT:  
*We value achievement and reward those who strive to do their best.*

## II. General Information:

### ( SACS ) SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES & SCHOOLS CRITERIA

Brevard Community College is accredited by SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). The mission of the Southern Association of Colleges & Schools is the improvement of Education in the South through accreditation.

"The commission recognizes the legitimacy of distance learning, such as that conveyed through off-campus classroom programs, external degree programs, branch campuses, correspondence courses and various programs using electronically based instruction offered geographically distant from the main campus."

The BCC Distance Learning Program was reviewed by SACS in fall of 2000 and the program and policies were found to be in compliance with SACS criteria.

### GOALS FOR THE VIRTUAL CAMPUS

**Generally, the Virtual Campus has established the following goals:**

- Establishment and maintenance of a VIRTUAL CAMPUS ONLINE with the same quality instruction and service found on any of our campuses. On-campus, or online, all BCC educational opportunities share the same goals, objectives, skills and competencies.
- Full service access to learning resources, program advisement and financial aid information.
- Personal attention and confidential discussion with dedicated faculty.
- Program acceleration
- Collaborative and cooperative learning with computer/online access and skill enhancement.
- Continual growth in enrollment and course offerings
- Continuous improvement in student retention and success

### WHAT IS DISTANCE LEARNING?

Distance Education is instructional delivery that does not require students to be at the same location as instructors. Historically, Distance Education meant correspondence study. Today, broadcast television, teleconferencing, computer and web-based mediums are far more common modes of course delivery. The term Distance Learning focuses on the student and his or her ability to learn in the extended environment; while the term Distance Education focuses on the instructor's and the institution's ability to develop, teach and administer effectively in this same environment. Distributed Education is educational delivery that uses a mix of delivery modes and learning styles for optimal instruction and learning.

### DISTANCE LEARNING AT BCC

Brevard Community College offers 5 types of Distance Learning courses:

1. Telecourses
2. Teleweb Courses
3. TIE Course (no longer available after Fall 2002)
4. Hybrid Courses
5. Online Courses

#### **Telecourses**

Brevard Community College offers over 30 telecourses per semester to bring education to the home or the workplace.

- Telecourses are college-level courses for credit that are televised for the student's convenience.
- Telecourses combine televised lessons, accompanying print material, assignments, optional on-campus review opportunities and minimal required on-campus sessions for orientation, discussions, and examinations.

- Telecourses allow adult students with family/work obligations, scheduling conflicts, disabilities, and/or other obstacles to pursue their educational goals.
- Telecourses are equivalent to on-campus courses in the quality of instruction, content, transferable college credit awarded upon successful completion, fees, and instructor qualifications.

Brevard Community College's Virtual Campus has a valuable resource for Distance Learning in its fully operational television station. As the educational television station of Brevard County, WBCC-TV serves a viewing area of more than 1,000,000 viewers. Now a PBS affiliate, WBCC will complete its conversion to digital format by Fall 2003, and will have a state of the art production and editing studio and world class conference facility.

Television courses are designated as "40D" sections in the college schedule. Orientations are mandatory. The Virtual Campus, in conjunction with WBCC, schedules these courses. Virtual Campus course development procedures apply.

### **Teleweb Courses**

A Teleweb course is a telecourse broadcast by WBCC-TV, which also contains a companion website for instructor student communication and interaction.

**Minimum Standards for Teleweb courses:** To be considered a teleweb course, the telecourse shall include a companion website utilizing the BCC sponsored course management system. This website shall consist of the following components: Instructor contact information (email, phone, fax if applicable, and office hours), syllabus, assignments and due dates, test information and online discussion boards with instructor participation.

Teleweb classes are designated as "40D" sections in the college schedule. Orientations are optional, provided all other criteria are met. The Virtual Campus, in conjunction with WBCC, schedules these courses. Virtual Campus course development procedures apply.

### **Televised Interactive Education (TIE)**

BCC's TIE system will no longer be available as a distance learning alternative after Fall 2002.

### **Online Courses**

Online Courses at BCC are served by a fully operational Virtual Campus—a networked computer-simulated campus environment in which a student may access all or many aspects of college education—from financial aid to student services. In this intuitive virtual learning environment, an enrolled student may experience conventional aspects of campus life, including activities and support services, as well as a having access to a variety of academic courses and degree programs.

The following services are available:

- The Admissions Center, with a full array of online educational services, paralleling those offered on campus: applications, orientation, registration, academic advising, catalogs, schedules, financial aid, transfer information, career exploration, student handbook, and Online Success and Mentoring Center. The online Admissions Center is staffed by a dedicated online Advisor, and Dean of Educational Services.
- The Instructional Center, with online "classrooms" for delivery of instruction and asynchronous and optional synchronous meetings among students and their instructors. The BCC faculty will create, teach, and evaluate these courses, as they do the courses on campus. BCC's Virtual Campus has adopted Blackboard course management and portal system for this purpose.
- The Learning Resource Center, with areas for course-specific readings, more general documents, and access to research on the Internet. Members of the BCC Library staff assists students are on-hand to assist students
- Links to the BCC bookstore and media center.

#### Online Courses Are Designed For:

- Students whose work and/or family schedule does not permit normal on-campus attendance.
- Students who want to accelerate program completion
- Students who are disciplined, motivated and comfortable in text based, and computer-aided online learning environments.
- Students who are physically or logistically unable to travel to campus.

BlackBoard course management system bundles many powerful communication and learning tools into a single portal, allowing seamless access to BCC's rich breadth of web resources. Blackboard is supported 24/7. Average unscheduled downtime is less than 10 hours per year. Scheduled maintenance and upgrade time is usually less than two days per year. All upgrades and maintenance are performed at non-peak hours. BCC Blackboard is available anywhere the World Wide Web is accessible.

While excellent resources – textbooks, study guides, instructional software, video media, etc. – are always a part of the learning process, the online classroom provides communication which is similar in many ways to the personal contact that instructors and students have on campus. This encourages a different kind of teaching and learning experience. An online classroom is a dynamic learning community through which a class strives to meet a common set of learning objectives. The Virtual Campus is a college-wide project. The President of the Virtual Campus works with other campus Presidents to balance faculty loads. Full-time faculty from all campuses participate in the Virtual Campus teaching and learning experience. In addition, several qualified adjunct instructors provide quality online instruction to Virtual Campus students.

#### Online Degree Programs and Courses

BCC offers the complete A.A. degree online, A.S. degrees in Legal Assisting, Business Administration, Computer Information Systems (MIS) option. The A.S. in Criminal Justice and Computer Programming are currently in development. The Virtual Campus also Certificate programs in Office Technology, and a wide variety of other credit and non-credit classes. New sections begin five times a year to offer increased access to programs and accelerated completion. Online terms have start dates in January, March, May, August and October. All terms are 16 weeks in length, excepting Summer term, which is 12 (Summer C).

#### THE BCC ONLINE STUDENT

The Virtual Campus expands educational opportunities to serve non-traditional college populations. Below are tables showing the characteristics of BCC's online students. Figures represent enrollments for Fall 1999 and Spring/Summer 2000.

<b>Gender</b>			
<b>Female</b>		<b>Male</b>	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
783	66.4%	396	33.6%
<b>Average Age = 31</b>			

<b>Degree Seeking</b>			
<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
854	72.4%	325	27.6%

<b>Florida Resident</b>			
<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1135	96.3%	44	3.7%

## IMPACT OF ONLINE COURSES AT BCC

Brevard Community College continues to be a leader in Distance Education both in program and course offerings and total number of students served. BCC offers over 120 different online courses, 5 degree and 5 certificate programs. Enrollment in the web-based courses continues to grow over 80% per year.

Academic Year	Enrollment	Sections Offered
1995-96	127	60
1996-97	330	142
1997-98	626	148
1998-99	1453	170
1999-00	2002	211
2000-01	4100	340

BCC is using web-based technology to make higher education more accessible to both traditional and non-traditional students. Individuals who are working full or part time, retired, disabled, homebound due to child care needs, or who simply choose to utilize this exciting new method of learning, are enrolling in record numbers. Many of these students would not have otherwise been able to attend traditional classes, either because of work or family obligations.

Using the web to enhance traditional instruction or to provide complete courses has become a national trend and BCC is on the cusp of that trend, using electronic collaboration, discussion boards, secure testing facilities and multimedia resources including, compressed video and PowerPoint, Shockwave, QuickTime, Lectora, and Real Audio presentations. Over 150 instructors from many different disciplines harness these forms of technology to provide stimulating and interactive courses to our students.

In 1997 BCC was named by **Forbes Magazine** as one of the Top 20 Cyber schools in the United States. BCC was the only two-year college to make the list. In 2001 the Virtual Campus received....

Overall student satisfaction surveys are overwhelmingly positive: Some actual student comments include:

***"This was my first online course. I have since enrolled in two other courses. I find it very beneficial to be able to be at home in the evening with my son and still get an education. I am a single parent and this is very important to me!"***

Humanities Student

***"...the online program is exceptional. Having the ability to complete my entire degree online has been a blessing. I could not have done it without BCC. Thank You."***

Economics Student

***" Returning to school after 14 years, this was a real challenge for me. Online is a wonderful way to learn with a family and job....I am very grateful to be able to attend school online."***

Speech Student

***"In many ways, I felt the online experience was more personal than a traditional classroom because of the ease with which you could have individual communication with the instructor"***

Economics Student

## VIRTUAL CAMPUS STAFF

The delivery of online course instruction to the Brevard community is a cooperative effort among many individuals and departments at Brevard Community College.

## President of the Virtual Campus

The President of the Virtual Campus directs all distance learning academic functions at Brevard Community College. The Campus President directs the Virtual Campus Staff and coordinates the operation of the Virtual Campus within the college, community and State. This includes program and course development, internal coordination of resources, recommendation of online course faculty, communication, budgets, training and development, and other instructional and educational support.

#### **Dean of Educational Services**

The Dean provides leadership and administration for online student services.

#### **Online Program Coordinator**

The Coordinator performs operational, procedural, logistical and communicative support to Online faculty.

#### **Multimedia Manager**

The Multimedia Manager helps faculty infuse educational technology into their classrooms.

#### **Systems Support Manager**

The Systems Support Managers performs operational, procedural, logistical and communicative support to telecourse, teleweb and TIE faculty.

#### **Online Student Advisor**

The Advisor provides access to services and academic advising to students enrolled in Virtual Campus courses.

#### **Online Student Retention Specialist**

The Online Student Retention Specialist works directly with faculty and students to aid in the retention and success of online students. Online tutoring and mentoring are available, as well as information about succeeding online.

#### **Virtual Campus Discipline Coordinators**

The 5 Virtual Campus Discipline Coordinators are full-time BCC faculty who:

- Provide discipline leadership for adjunct faculty
- Reviews all new courses in the discipline
- Coordinate course resources
- Support Virtual Campus scheduling and recruitment

#### **Virtual Campus Instructors**

Online course instructors have the same basic obligations as all instructors. Specific responsibilities are to assure academic validity of the course, to provide orientation, instruction, support, testing & evaluation, and other communication and feedback throughout the semester.

#### **Virtual Campus Taskforce**

This college-wide committee, consisting of faculty, staff and administrators, meets each term to review and discuss issues important to the continuous improvement of the Virtual Campus. New policies are reviewed; ad hoc committees are established, and measures for improvement of Distance Learning activities are developed and implemented. This taskforce serves to increase the integrity of the Virtual Campus programs and to ensure the input of faculty and staff in the decision-making process.

### **III. Guidelines for Teaching/Developing Virtual Campus Courses**

In addition to the guidelines set forth by the SREC (Southern Regional Electronic Campus), the BCC Virtual Campus has established *Faculty Guidelines for Teaching Distance Learning Courses*. These guidelines set forth both policy and procedures as they relate to instruction of distance learning courses. These guidelines provide the following:

#### **VIRTUAL CAMPUS COURSE DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCEDURES:**

1. Faculty identifies potential course(s) to be developed for online, telecourse/teleweb or TIE delivery.
2. Faculty and submits "Proposal for Online Course Development/Enhancement" to
  1. President, Virtual Campus
  2. Faculty member's Department Chair
  3. Curriculum Coordinator
3. Faculty member meets with Campus President. Project scope, time-frame and stipend are reviewed and agreed upon.
4. Faculty member undergoes Blackboard training (this can be waived for faculty presently teaching distance learning courses)
5. Faculty member, working with the Multimedia Manager, develops the course per stated college objectives, to meet stated college competencies
6. The course is submitted to the Online Program Coordinator and Curriculum Coordinator to confirm course meets Distance Learning course criteria as outlined in the "Faculty Guidelines for Teaching Distance Learning" and BCC curriculum standards.
7. Faculty member is given responsibility of updating each time he or she offers it.
8. Online Course development is considered part of a faculty's teaching load and thus course development would be a "work for hire" and all materials are owned by the college unless such ownership is superseded by virtue of a prior or subsequent agreement

## SYLLABUS

All distance learning courses shall have a course syllabus, which complies, with the "Required Syllabus Content" as set forth in the BCC Faculty Handbook. Sample syllabi for distance learning courses can be found in the Appendices. Online course instructors are required to complete the web-based syllabi by the opening of registration. The web-based form is located on the Virtual Campus Faculty Support site at <http://web2010.brevard.cc.fl.us/vcampus/faculty>.

All syllabi must be posted prior to the beginning of registration for each term.

### Web-based Syllabi Submission

Instructors are required to complete all of the Online Syllabus except "Special Requirements." If there are no field studies, on campus meetings, required online meetings or special software requirements in order to fulfill the course objectives, this field may be left blank. All other fields are required. Adjunct Faculty members will list the Discipline Coordinator as the Department Chair.

- **Term and Year** – If same syllabus is used in a following term, term and year must be updated.
- **Course Number and Title** – e.g., ENC 1101, Communications I
- **Course section** – search online schedule for section
- **Pre-requisite course number** – Included only if applicable
- **Instructor's name**
- **Building, office number and location**
- **College telephone number** – college number and extension
- **Email Address**
- **Department Chair**—list Virtual Campus Discipline Coordinator
- **Textbooks and required materials** – Title, Author/Publisher/Edition/ISBN/Price
  - **Note:** Many texts have online support and software supplements available at an extra cost. Some texts have fully developed course downloads available for installation into Blackboard. These "course packs" have different ISBN numbers than stand-alone texts. Be sure to reference the correct ISBN on your syllabus.
- **Course Description** – See course plan
- **Course Objectives** – See course plan
- **Course Competencies** – See course plan. If course includes specific CLAST skills, note that fact and asterisk each of those competencies on syllabus.
- **Outline of coursework** – Outline daily or weekly reading, writing, project, test assignments; or generally outline a list of major topics covered and/or writing, project, tests or assignments that will be used as basis for student's final grade.
- **Policy on late work or make-up work**

- **Grading Procedure** – Explain in exact terms procedures used in calculating student's final average. Having this information in print is vital if grade is questioned or appealed.
- **Grading Scale** – Although the instructor may establish his/her grading scale, the college has specific grading policies. See catalog.
- **Withdrawal Policy** – State the college withdrawal date for the term and that student must carry responsibility for his/her withdrawal. Include the college policy governing students not withdrawn by that date. See catalog.
- **Gordon Rule** – A statement specifying that the course is a Gordon Rule course and what that means.
- **CLAST Skills** – A list of CLAST skills taught or reinforced in the course.

## EVALUATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

**Assignments:** Regardless of the types of assignments used by the instructor, a key factor for student success is turnaround time and feedback. The more specific the feedback and/or written comments the instructor can provide to students, the better. The Virtual Campus encourages that instructors respond to students within 48 business hours of a student's question or inquiry. Instructors may use a variety of assessment measures including written projects, group projects, discussion questions, case studies, and online quizzes. When scheduling assignment due dates, instructors are encouraged to give students an idea about when they can expect feedback.

**Examinations:** The Virtual Campus courses follow general college testing procedures. Instructors are required to administer a **minimum of one proctored exam**, per course. Virtual Campus faculty may require physical attendance for testing purpose if such is required to meet course goals and objectives as determined by the instructors and stated on the syllabus.

Virtual Campus students who reside in Brevard County, are required to utilize the services of the BCC Learning Labs located on each campus.

Testing hours vary from campus to campus, but day, evening and weekend hours are available. Students must make their own appointments with the campus Learning Labs for testing. Instructors will direct students to make appointments to test during the designated time frame.

Students must bring an official picture ID to the test - a Florida Driver's license or Florida ID, passport, or military ID **AND** a second signature ID such as a credit card, social security card, or voter's registration card. **NO ONE** will be tested without proper ID!!

Students residing outside of Brevard County must provide their instructors with a secure testing sites or acceptable proctors for tests.

All faculty members utilizing online testing must follow the procedures outlined under "Blackboard Testing Procedures." Faculty members using hard copy exams must follow the established college procedures outlined in "Collegewide Lab Testing Procedure."

Individual faculty members set specific testing requirements and provide instructions for taking tests, which are posted in the online classroom.

## MINIMUM BLACKBOARD STANDARDS

In order to ensure consistency and quality within BCC's course management platform, the following minimum standards for Blackboard classrooms have been set:

### Online/Teleweb

Welcome letter or announcement

Orientation exercise

Instructor and Services Evaluations posted in the Course Information section of the classroom

Syllabus posted in the Course Information section of the classroom

Lecture notes, study guides, learning modules posted in Course Documents section of the classroom

Weekly use of, and participation in discussion boards

- Note: All areas of the classroom not in use should be disabled

### **Hybrid and Course Companion (supports on campus course)**

Syllabus in Course Information section of the classroom

Faculty Contact information in the Instructor Information section of the classroom

- Note: All areas of the classroom not in use should be disabled

## **STRENGTHENING FACULTY/STUDENT COMMUNICATION**

Online faculty are encouraged to be creative in motivating students through initial orientations, announcements, discussion board postings, synchronous virtual chat sessions (optional) facilitating collaboration by using groups, and email. Communication is the key to retention and success in the online classroom. Instructors are encouraged to respond to students within 48 business hours of all postings. The Online Student Advisor and Online Retention Specialist are available to assist in Faculty-Student communication.

Full-time faculty members are able to access their Outlook accounts remotely. Adjunct faculty are given web-based Imail accounts. Access instructions for both systems are available in the Appendices.

## **SPECIFIC AND UNIQUE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ONLINE COURSE INSTRUCTORS**

Part of using technology effectively is understanding what students need in the learning environment when technology is used. Below are suggestions for structuring effective online learning environments.

- Use the online classroom discussion board so that students may collect important ideas, express themselves, and feel some security that they are going in the right direction.
- Provide fast and productive access to help when it is needed, including **timely feedback** on assignments, discussion boards, projects and communications from students.
- Provide a learning environment that promotes both independent and interdependent activities with cognitive, as well as psychosocial support.
- Ensure that the learning tools are intuitive and essential for the immediate task.

### **Responsibilities of the Online Instructor**

Due to the unique environment in which courses are delivered, certain duties of an online instructor are different from those of the telecourse or classroom instructor. Often they can be even more demanding and much more critical to the success of the online student. Online course faculty are responsible for:

- Attendance and completion of BlackBoard course management training and become competency and proficiency in the use of the software.
- Developing course content that meets or exceeds the written course objectives and requirements.
- Providing a welcome letter, syllabus, a course outline and or lesson notes, discussion forum, evaluation tools (tests, projects), and links to the learning resource center and evaluation of instruction, within the online classroom. It is important that the distinction is made that online

courses are **NOT** self or independent study, but a structured learning environment, where students are accountable to the same standard as in the campus classroom.

- Post the web based syllabus for student access by the first day of registration for each term.
- Send an introductory email to all students on the first day of the term, acknowledging their enrollment.
- Providing current and accurate web based information on assignments, grading, course materials and instructor contact information.
- Responding to student messages in a timely manner, usually within 48 hours of receipt and referring students to the Online Intervention Center
- Providing textbook and resource material information to the bookstore and videotape information to the Learning Resource Center and the Online Programs Coordinator, by the established deadlines.
- Obtaining permission to use any copyrighted materials in their course, including the use of videotaped material. See section on copyright and fair use.
- Identify any students who are at risk of failing or otherwise not completing the course and use the services of the Online Student Retention Specialist- Tammy Ronsisvalle at tjrons@worldnet.att.net
- Provide a link to the Student Appraisal of Instruction and other evaluations in the online classroom and direct students to complete during the 12<sup>th</sup> week of the course. Full time faculty may waive this requirement as set forth in the BCC Performance Enhancement Program.
- Distance Learning instructors are encouraged to participate in as many S&PD workshops on online instruction as their schedules permit.

A major responsibility of the online instructor is to promote retention and success of the online learner because this population is more vulnerable to failing grades and withdrawals. The SRS2000 Model is a distinctive combination of components that should significantly impact the retention, completion and success of students enrolled in online courses. (The SRS2000 Model, outlining activities and strategies can be found in the Appendices.)

In addition to the SRS2000 Model, the Virtual Campus has developed an Success and Mentoring Center. This initiative was funded in part by FIPSE (Funds for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education) and is intended for use by students and faculty to improve online retention.

## **COURSE AND PROGRAM EVALUATION**

All full-time faculty at the College are evaluated in accordance with the BCC Performance Enhancement Program, which is designed to assist faculty in professional development and in the achievement of stated college goals. The program consists of the following elements: Self-Appraisal, Student Appraisal of Instruction, Class Observation, and Performance Enhancement Conference. To assure the continued standards of the distance learning courses, students are asked to complete the Student Appraisal of Instruction and the Student Appraisal of Online Student Services.

### **Student Appraisal of Instruction**

- The Student Appraisal of Online Instruction is located in every online classroom. This link is posted in the Course Information section of the classroom. When students have progressed through the 12th week of the term or finished 3/4 of the course, they should be directed to complete the student appraisal of online instruction. (See Appendices)

### **Student Appraisal of Online Student Services**

- This survey covers a range of services offered is available in the Course Information section of every online classroom. Instructors should encourage each online student to complete the survey during their last 4 weeks of class. (See Appendices). This tool is designed to provide feedback on the following areas:
  1. Academic Advising
  2. Financial Aid
  3. Learning Resources (Library)
  4. Office for Students with Disabilities
  5. Office of Distance Learning

### **Distance Learning Exit Survey**

This survey is sent to students who apply to graduate from BCC. It is administered by the Collegewide director of admissions. (See Appendices)

Faculty receive results of the appraisal forms after grades are submitted and all campus Deans are provided with copies of the Student Services evaluations. The summary data obtained from these evaluation instruments are analyzed and used by the Distance Learning committee, faculty, administration; and the college cabinet to identify strengths, areas for improvement, future trends and student needs. After identification, the information is channeled to appropriate college faculty and administration for use in department or division planning of in-service, student services, program planning, course or curriculum modifications, or policy revision.

### **TEXTBOOK SELECTION**

Distance Learning textbook selection shall follow the existing BCC guidelines as outlined in the Faculty Handbook. All textbook and resource material information for online courses shall be posted in the online syllabus and updated on the web-based syllabus form by the first day of student registration. The web-based form is located on the Virtual Campus Faculty Support web site at <http://web2010.brevard.cc.fl.us/vcampus/faculty>. The instructor is responsible for all changes, updates or amendments to textbook or resource material information.

### **ORIENTATION**

Student orientation is mandatory for first time in college students. Students must attend a specific campus based orientation, or they may access the BCC web-based orientation accessible via the BCC college website. In addition to this College-wide orientation, distance-learning students must complete an orientation for their course. Before students begin online classes, they are given access to BCC's success and mentoring center at <http://brevardcc.blackboard.com>. Students can access the classroom, either by entering their unique user Ids and passwords, or by using this generic login:

Username: BCCSTUDENT  
Password: BCCSTUDENT

Many Telecourses and Teleweb courses have on campus orientations. These orientations are held on Cocoa campus the Saturday before classes begin. The Virtual Campus holds a Blackboard orientation the same day. This orientation is completely voluntary and affords students the opportunity to become more familiar with Blackboard and Virtual Campus policies and procedures.

### **VIRTUAL CAMPUS CLASS SIZE AND COMPENSATION**

The College has in place procedures and practices, which address the areas of faculty compensation for distance learning instruction and faculty ownership rights for production of electronic media used in distance learning courses.

Salary arrangements for instructional personnel are established by the collective bargaining agreement between the College and the UFF-BCC. Supplemental contracts for distance learning instruction are initiated at the department level and sent to the Virtual Campus President for approval

and funding. All Adjunct Faculty Instructional Assignments for Online, Teleweb, Telecourse and TIE classes are generated by the Virtual Campus. Full load teaching assignments are paid on a biweekly basis over the span of the assignment. All independent study assignments are paid at the end of the term.

**Telecourse Class Size:**

- Communications I and II (6,000 word writing requirement)
  - a. Single section maximum of 39 students
  - b. Students 40 through 77 count as an independent study
  - c. Second section initiated at 78
  
- Area IV (3,000 word writing requirement)
  - d. Single section maximum of 53 students
  - e. Students 54 through 91 count as an independent study
  - f. Second section initiated at 92
  
- All other courses
  - g. Single section maximum of 60 students
  - h. Students 61 through 98 count as an independent study
  - i. Second section initiated at 99

**Telecourse Compensation**

T.V. Courses sections are paid at the regular course rate per credit hour based upon degree level of instructor. The independent study rate is \$15 per student per semester hour, paid at the end of the term based on all enrollments, including withdrawals, excluding drops.

**Online and Teleweb Course Class Size:**

- Online and Teleweb course sections will be considered as part of the faculty member's regular load.
  
- A section will have a minimum of 15 enrolled (unless otherwise approved for a lesser number by the Campus President).
  
- A section will have a maximum of 25 enrolled.
  - j. Students 26 through 29 will count as an independent study
  - k. When the section reaches 30 students, the section will be split into two sections.

**Online and Teleweb Course Compensation**

Online sections will be considered part of the faculty member's regular load. The Independent study rate will be 1/15 of the appropriate class rate times the number of students. Sample pay calculation for Masters level instructor with 6 students enrolled in a three credit online section:

$$\$1425 \div 15 = \$95 \times 6 \text{ students} = \$570$$

**TIE Course Class Size:**

Department Chair and Virtual Campus Associate Vice-President will determine class size.

**VIRTUAL CAMPUS FACULTY SCHEDULES**

Instructors will account for 35 on-campus hours per week and will post a working hour schedule in accordance with the appropriate procedure of the Operational Procedure manual. All instructors will show a minimum of twenty-five (25) in-class hours and office hours combined. In the event an instructor has classes on two campuses on the same day, an appropriate amount of travel time may be shown in the schedule. Counselors and Librarians will account for forty (40) hours per week as approved by their immediate supervisor. The schedules for librarians and counselors will include the rest break specified in Article 9, Section 6. Instructors who teach online or teleweb courses will be permitted to account for on-campus, advisement and in-class hours at a location other than the College according to the following schedule:

**16-Week Course**

<b>Course Credit Hours</b>	<b>On-campus Hours</b>	<b>Advisement Hours</b>
1	1	1
2	2	1
3	2	2
4	3	2
5	4	2

For summer term courses or all other courses, which meet less than a regular 16-week term, the instructor shall work with his/her Department Chair and Virtual Campus Associate Vice-President to establish an agreeable work schedule to include hours of instruction, advisement and on-campus hours. If no agreement can be reached regarding the instructor's work schedule, the following charts shall be used to compute the required number of hours the instructor must provide to fulfill contractual obligations.

**12-Week Course**

<b>Course Credit Hours</b>	<b>On-campus Hours</b>	<b>Advisement Hours</b>
1	1 hr. 20 min.	1hr. 20 min.
2	2 hrs. 40 min.	1hr. 20 min.
3	2 hrs. 40 min.	2 hrs. 40 min.
4	4hrs.	2 hrs. 40 min.
5	5hrs. 20 min.	2 hrs. 40 min.

**10-Week Course**

<b>Course Credit Hours</b>	<b>On-campus Hours</b>	<b>Advisement Hours</b>
1	1 hr. 40 min.	1 hr. 40 min.
2	3hrs. 10 min.	1 hr. 40 min.
3	3hrs. 10 min.	3hrs. 10 min.
4	4 hrs. 50 min.	3hrs. 10 min.
5	6 hrs. 20 min.	3hrs. 10 min.

**8-Week Course**

<b>Course Credit Hours</b>	<b>On-campus Hours</b>	<b>Advisement Hours</b>
1	2	2
2	4	2
3	4	4
4	6	4
5	8	4

**6-Week Course**

<b>Course Credit Hours</b>	<b>On-campus Hours</b>	<b>Advisement Hours</b>
1	2 hrs. 40 min.	2 hrs. 40 min.
2	5hrs. 20 min.	2 hrs. 40 min.
3	5hrs. 20 min.	5hrs. 20 min.
4	8 hrs.	5hrs. 20 min.
5	10 hrs. 40 min.	5hrs. 20 min.

In the event that an instructional load is completely comprised of online and teleweb courses, the faculty may account for all in class, advisement and on campus hours at a location other than the college. However, all online and teleweb instructors will be required to attend on campus department or committee meeting obligations and will be required to meet with the students on campus or in another appropriate setting, upon any reasonable request by such student.

## **VIRTUAL CAMPUS LOGISTICS**

To ensure that information about services and resources reaches distance-learning students, they are provided information in a variety of ways. Upon enrollment in an online course, students are sent an introductory hard copy letter from the Virtual Campus President. This letter outlines information and procedures pertinent to the distance-learning environment. (See Appendices). The letter includes the following:

- Information on Using BCC required email
- Information on obtaining texts and other materials
- Accessing the online LRC
- General online course information
- Directions to explore the online library services and to apply online for a library card, which will enable them to use the online library services and to obtain videotapes for certain online courses.
- Invitation to explore the Success and Mentoring Center
- The User ID and Password protocol used to access Blackboard

This information is also repeated in an email sent from the Coordinator of Online Programs to all enrolled students. This email includes information regarding procedures for online ordering of textbooks, a learning-style assessment tool, called "Is Distance Learning For Me?," (See Appendices) and an online orientation/demo course. In all correspondence, students are directed to complete the orientation course and to read and print the Online Student Handbook. Both the demo course and the handbook include information on accessing the online learning resources. Once students have successfully applied online for their library card, they are sent an additional email outlining the services available to them as a distance learner. (See Appendices).

### **Course Scheduling**

- There are five online terms per year, with start dates in January, March, May, August and October. The Virtual Campus administration encourages faculty to offer online courses at least twice a year, preferably, in the Fall and Spring. Additional courses may be offered in the October and March terms

### **Course Materials**

- Instructors may use any combination of videotapes, textbooks, study guides and computer software. All textbook and resource material information for online courses shall be posted in the online syllabus and updated on the web-based textbook form by the stated due dates. The web-based form is located on the Virtual Campus Faculty Support web site at [http://web2010.brevard.cc.fl.us/campuses/virtual/virtual\\_courses.cfm](http://web2010.brevard.cc.fl.us/campuses/virtual/virtual_courses.cfm). Textbook/Study Guide/Software information should include Title, Author, Publisher, Edition and ISBN. Supply title, producer and ISBN (if applicable) for videotapes. This information will be posted to the website for student access. The campus bookstore provides online text orders for online courses. This service is provided for geographically remote students, but is available to all online students. <http://brevardcc-cocoa.bkstore.com/>

### **Student Email Addresses**

- BCC email accounts are assigned to every BCC student upon registration. Students in Virtual Campus courses are required to use the BCC email account for all communication with the online and teleweb course instructor. All correspondence concerning online courses will be sent to the student via this email address, including their user ID and password to access the online classrooms. For user Sean Stone with SS# 987654123

- Email address = lastname + last 3 digits of ssn@imail.brevard.cc.fl.us  
Example: [stone123@imail.brevard.cc.fl.us](mailto:stone123@imail.brevard.cc.fl.us)
- Both the username and password to login to the imail system will be last name+last 3 digits of ssn. Example: stone123\*
- \*change upon first logon

#### Adjunct Faculty Imail Addresses:

- BCC Imail addresses are assigned as outlined below:
  - Email address = lastname + first initial@imail.brevard.cc.fl.us  
Example: [stones@imail.brevard.cc.fl.us](mailto:stones@imail.brevard.cc.fl.us)
  - User ID: stones
  - Password: newpassword\*  
\*change upon first logon

To access the BCC imail system go to: <http://imail.brevard.cc.fl.us>

#### Student Passwords

Guest access is not allowed by default in Blackboard. Under normal circumstances password information is sent to students, via email, from the coordinator by the start date of the online term.

In an effort to provide students with a more cohesive online experience, the Virtual Campus uses the same login protocol for students as the Imail system does.

Username: stone123  
Password: stone123

#### Source of Student Materials

- Instructional materials consist of textbooks and/or workbooks, videotapes, supplemental CD ROMS, customized publisher sites and Blackboard “course packs” or “cartridges.” Students can obtain textbooks through the local campus bookstores or via online ordering at <http://www.bkstore.com/brevardcc-cocoa/>. The local campus bookstore provides online ordering of textbooks for BCC’s online courses. Local students can obtain textbooks from any one of BCC’s four campus bookstores. Distribution of videotapes is handled through BCC’s Library Media Department and can be shipped to out of county students. Local students can obtain a set of videotapes from any of BCC’s four campus libraries, or they have the option of viewing or copying them in the library. See Appendix E.

#### Discrepancy Rolls/Attendance Reporting

- Due to TITLE IV federal funding regulations, it is mandatory that all faculty report students’ last date of attendance in their courses. To allow instructors the convenience of inputting this information as efficiently as possible, Banner web will be opened during posted scheduled times, and the information is input directly into the students’ records. During these time periods, instructors must verify their class lists and enter the last date of participation for students who have never participated or are no longer participating in the online class. **This is the same as verifying a discrepancy roll: students who are enrolled but are not on the class roster must be referred to the Virtual Campus; students who have never participated or stopped participating must have the last date of participation entered.** (See Appendix)

#### COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE

The federal copyright statute governs the reproduction of works of authorship. In general, works governed by copyright law include such traditional works of authorship as books, photographs, music, drama, video and sculpture, and also software, multimedia, and databases. Copyrighted works are protected regardless of the medium in which they are created or reproduced; thus, copyright extends to digital works and works transformed into a digital format. Copyrighted works are not limited to those that bear a copyright notice. As a result of changes in copyright law, works published since March 1, 1989, need not bear a copyright notice to be protected under the statute. Consequently, it should be assumed that whatever material an instructor wishes to copy is protected under copyright law.

These conditions only hint at the complex and vague nature of "fair use" and your ability as an educator to use materials in your classroom. Additionally, the conditions of "fair use" are in a constant state of change. To assist you in determining a "fair use" of copyrighted materials, the library has prepared a resource for your perusal. Point your browser to <http://www.brevard.cc.fl.us/lrc/legal.htm> for links to current information regarding developments in copyright law. A sample "obtaining permissions letter" can be found in the Appendices.

## IV. Teaching With BlackBoard

### REQUIRED SKILLS

Before offering to teach a course on the Internet, a faculty member must meet the requirements in each of the following items:

- The faculty member needs to be able to use Windows 2000 (or later version)
- To open, save and delete files
- To create, delete and manage file folders
- To navigate the computer's storage system which could include a floppy drive, a hard drive, a zip drive, a CD-ROM and the College's LANs.
- The faculty member needs to know how to use a word processor to create: a course syllabus, class assignments and tests, documents in RTF format.
- Internet email, to include composing, sending and reading documents with or without attachments.
- The faculty member should be able to use an Internet browser to do the following:
  - navigate to any URL
  - create and manage bookmarks
  - save to a local drive or to print a web page (or part thereof) and a web graphic
- The faculty member should have identified several Internet web sites, which are related to the subject matter of the course.
- The faculty member should know the location of several Internet search engines and be able to use these search engines to do research on any subject.
- The faculty member should be familiar with how their proposed course is being taught on the Internet at other colleges and universities in Florida and elsewhere.

### FACULTY TRAINING

The College uses a myriad of methods for orienting and training faculty for teaching in the distance-learning program. Full-time new faculty hires are first introduced to "Computer Support and Web-Based Services for Faculty/Students" by the Associate Vice President of the Virtual Campus as a component of the College wide New Faculty "Season Premiere" Seminar in August. The [BCC Faculty Handbook](#) includes a separate chapter for Distance Learning, which orients all full-time faculty and staff to teaching methodology and college procedures especially designed to support distance learning instruction and services. Faculty who are asked to teach in a distance-learning mode for the first time must undergo mandatory training and information from the Virtual Campus staff. Through this process, faculty are individually guided to audio/visual resources, other faculty, or training venues appropriate for that individual. Examples of these resources include two video series,

"Beyond Chalk: Teaching with Technology" and "Reach Out and Teach", which were produced by WBCC-TV through a statewide distance learning demonstration grant.

Full BlackBoard training is offered via the Virtual Campus staff and is limited introductory training is available online and via CD-Rom. The Virtual Campus offers a "Best Practices" showplace in the ONL 1000 course. This course allows instructors to learn some helpful technology and pedagogy tools to improve the online learning environments they create for students.

## **THE MULTIMEDIA DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

This Virtual Campus training center is equipped with workstations with high performance computers and peripherals such as a flatbed scanner, color printers, CD-RW units, video capture card and more. Faculty and staff can come to increase, or develop new, software skills to deliver more dynamic content for subject matter or for use in making interesting multimedia presentations.

In the Technology Training Center, Faculty and Staff can work with our Multi Media manager to learn to deliver, supplement, or support their courses and presentations with state of the art technology using the following tools

1. Courseware and authoring environments and tools
2. Graphic design tools
3. Animation and 3D graphics
4. Digital photography, video and audio
5. Web page design and HTML components
6. Scanning technology
7. MS Office 2000 applications

The Virtual Campus Multi Media director works closely with faculty to incorporate the use of educational technology and multi-media into the curriculum to augment the delivery of instruction. The Faculty/Staff Technology Training Center is a state of the art training facility, providing a place for Faculty and Staff to learn, practice, create and present multimedia productions. The use of a fifty CD burner to reproduce these materials allows other faculty and staff to have access to share expertise and work collaboratively. The Technology Center is also equipped with a color scanner and printer and numerous state of the art software applications. The Multi Media Director oversees the operation of this training center and is available on call to assist and instruct faculty on multimedia software and other technology-driven, course enhancement tools available through the training center. See Appendices for a list of software available in the Multimedia Development Center.

A list of Internet sites for Web Page Authoring, Design and Creation can be found in the appendices.

## **BLACKBOARD COURSE DEVELOPMENT**

BCC uses BlackBoard Course Development software to support the online courses. Blackboard is intuitive and guides you through five simple steps for creating a virtual class - with no programming languages or HTML to learn. If you can surf the Internet, you can create a CourseSite™ on Blackboard. It's simple and it only takes a few minutes. Based on flexible, open technology, Blackboard incorporates numerous features to enrich the online learning experience.

- Asynchronous Communication (threaded discussion)
- Synchronous Communication (real-time chat and whiteboard)
- Assessment Tools and Grade book
- Course Tools
- Content Area
- Course Settings
- User Management
- Collaborative Work Groups
- Electric Blackboard® for taking notes and filing them for future use.
- Database Reporting and CourseSite™ Statistics
- Online File Exchange (between instructor and student)

- Online Tutorial
- User Tracking

A copy of the “Blackboard Instructor Manual” can be obtained through the Virtual classroom or BlackBoard website.

Online Training on the basics of Blackboard can be found on the Virtual Campus Faculty Support website.

### **Ten Easy Ways to Creating Your Online Course**

Taking your course online may seem like a daunting task, but it can be simple. Just follow these 10 easy steps, and you'll be on your way to creating a successful online component for your course.

#### **1. Prepare Yourself**

- ❖ Educate yourself by reading articles about web-based training, instructional design, technology education, and online learning.
- ❖ Practice using the software. Take a training course, do a tutorial, or explore the program.
- ❖ Locate and introduce yourself to the Blackboard System Administrator on your campus.
- ❖ Ask the System Administrator to create (or help you create) a user account, password, and a blank course Web site for you.
- ❖ Understand hardware and software specifications. Make sure your computer is set up with the correct requirements (such as browser). Again, refer to your System Administrator if you need assistance.

#### **2. Prepare Your Materials**

- ❖ Gather your course materials and content in a central location. Include items such as handouts, slide shows, syllabus, overheads, lecture notes, projects, assessments, and discussion topics.
- ❖ Determine what formats your materials exist in. Take note of items already in electronic formats such as word processing documents, spreadsheets, and slides.
- ❖ Accommodate different types of learners. Make sure visual learners have graphics and text they can see to foster learning. Provide narration and text for verbal learners.
- ❖ Identify measurable course objectives. These should incorporate materials delivered both in class and online. Determine what core competencies and knowledge students will need to meet these objectives.

#### **3. Make an Outline**

- ❖ Make an outline that matches each course component with associated date, lecture materials, labs, assignments and corresponding items. This comprehensive outline can be very helpful in Step 5 – Building a Course Skeleton.

#### **4. Determine How To Deliver Materials**

- ❖ Determine which materials should be delivered in the face-to-face component of your course (if your course has one) and which items can be delivered online. Select items that are relevant to course objectives and student learning experiences.
- ❖ Prepare the materials for electronic delivery. This may include scanning graphics, creating files in a word processor, developing web pages in a web authoring tool, or creating slides in presentation software. If necessary, consult your System Administrator for assistance and advice.
- ❖ Avoid delivering materials that will distract the student from the course objectives. Do not add irrelevant information to “fill-up” your website.

#### **5. Build a Course Skeleton**

- ❖ Create the organizational (or skeleton) structure of your course. This involves creating a series of clearly labeled folders that will hold course materials.
- ❖ Make a folder for every item in your outline (from Step 3) or mimic the structure of your syllabus.
- ❖ Enter the Course Information area and create folders for the Syllabus, Grading Policies, and other basic items relating to course management.
- ❖ Enter the Course Documents area and create folders that correspond with the main topics or sections of your course. Create sub-folders for sub-topics as necessary. For example:  
Week 1: Introduction to English Grammar, (folder)

Week 2: Working with Nouns (folder)  
Week 3: Mastering Verb Tenses (folder)  
Regular Verbs, (sub-folder of Week 3)  
Irregular Verbs (sub-folder of Week 3)

- ❖ Enter the Assignments area, and create folders that correspond with your assignments.

#### **6. Add Staff Information**

- ❖ Enter the Staff Information content area and create an entry for yourself. If you have a picture of yourself, include that too!
- ❖ Create additional entries for teaching assistants, graduate assistants, guest speakers or other course staff members.

#### **7. Fill in the Content**

- ❖ Enter each folder and add the content.
- ❖ Include a short description for each item. Indicate what the item is and how it is relevant to the lesson. This description helps students understand how to associate (frame/attend to) this item in relation to rest of the course materials.

#### **8. Incorporate the Technology into Other Course Components**

- ❖ Enter the Discussion Board, create a Forum, and post an introductory assignment. For example, you might ask each student to write one to three paragraphs explaining who they are and why they took your course. Require students to read entries from other students. You might also encourage them to respond to each other. This is the first step in creating an “online community” for your course.
- ❖ Plan on adding at least one new topic to the Discussion Board Forum each week. Make sure this topic requires students to formulate an answer and back it up with facts to demonstrate their understanding. Monitor and respond to student threads and encourage students to do the same.
- ❖ Locate at least three external websites that relate to information you are teaching. Place these in the External Links area and recommend students explore these sites on “virtual fieldtrips.” Optionally, structure an assignment that incorporates researching and reporting information from these fieldtrips.

Also, consider placing links to the download pages of any plug-ins, players, readers, or viewers that are necessary to access the various kinds of files or multimedia your are using in your course.

#### **9. Create an Introductory Announcement**

- ❖ Post an introductory message in the announcements area. Welcome the students to your course, direct them to the Course Information area to obtain the syllabus, and indicate the location of the first class assignment or reading.

#### **10. Complete the Process**

- ❖ Preview course materials by checking each link, proofreading descriptions, and viewing the course from a student perspective.
- ❖ Instruct students on how to get a Blackboard account and log in. Consult your System Administrator for university-specific instructions.

### **Ways to Get Students More Engaged in Online Courses**

Dr. William Klemm from Texas A&M University recommends following these eight guidelines to create a strong collaborative learning environment in your course discussion board. These methods increase both the quality and quantity of student participation.

#### ***Eight Ways to Get Students More Engaged in Online Conferences***

By Dr. W.R. Klemm, Professor, Texas A&M University

##### **1. Require participation.**

Don't let it be optional. Set aside a portion of the grade allocation for participation in the online discussions. Tell the students that they must post x-number of items each week or for each topic. Critics will say that this approach does nothing to ensure quality of input. But it at least gets the students engaged, and hopefully, once they get caught up in the activity, they will strive to improve the relevance

and quality of their work, because now they are on display. No longer can they hide. For many students, it is more embarrassing to make public postings that have no value. As another incentive for quality work, the teacher should grade on quality of the postings. That is highly subjective, but no more so than grading term papers or essays.

## **2. Form learning teams.**

The advantages of so-called cooperative or collaborative learning are abundantly documented. Collaborative learning can occur just as well via computer conferencing. Moreover, asynchronous conferencing overcomes the schedule coordination problems that plague typical face-to-face learning teams. The advantage for promoting online interaction is that learning teams should bond and thus make each student in the group want to do his or her share. Helping students learn how to acquire team spirit is important in and of itself, but it also provides students with powerful incentive to become more engaged in online conference activity.

## **3. Make the activity interesting.**

If it is a discussion topic, make it one that students have a reason to get engaged in. Appeal to their life experiences, vested interests, and ambitions. It might even be a good idea to let the students create some of the topics, especially if you provide an overall academic framework to guide them where you want them to go. If it is a group-created paper or project, let the students pick the subject within the bounds of the academic objectives. Surely, you want more than just "discussion" of student opinions; a matter discussed in more detail on the topic of academic deliverables (Item 6).

## **4. Don't settle for just opinions.**

Everybody has opinions. They are like knee jerk reflexes, occurring with little thought once they have been formed. Thus, it is not surprising that many classroom discussion groups online are dominated by opinion messages, rather than rigorous analysis and creative thought. Teachers should insist that opinions alone are not sufficient. They must be supported with data and rational discourse and even re-examined in light of what others in the online group are thinking.

## **5. Structure the activity.**

Give students guideposts to help them think of things to say that are academically meaningful. Choice of topics has a great deal of influence here. Topics should be organized around an academic theme that serves course objectives. Topics should not be so open-ended that students digress. You can go further by creating activities that are best performed in a structured way. For example, debates can be structured by requiring students to post a position, to which others respond with pro or con supporting arguments, followed by critique of the arguments. Brainstorming can be structured by having students first generate a list of alternatives; re-think the list by creating new ordering, structure, or relationships, systematically evaluating each item to produce a "short list" of viable alternatives; and then reaching consensus decision on the best choices, followed by prioritization.

## **6. Require a hand-in assignment (deliverable).**

To extend structuring to its logical conclusion, you should require students to do something besides just express ideas and opinions. They should produce a deliverable from the conference. This kind of activity capitalizes on all the advantages of constructivist theory, which holds that students learn best when they have to integrate, synthesize and apply information by creating a deliverable piece of work. Such a deliverable can include idea generation and analysis, decisions, plans and designs, proposals, case studies, problem solution, research projects, term papers or reports, portfolios or role-playing.

## **7. Know what you are looking for and involve yourself to help make it happen.**

Irrespective of the specific learning activity, the teacher should know what quality work is and should intervene as the work is being developed to steer students in the right direction. When the teacher participates in a conference, providing extensive critique, feedback, and encouragement, students cannot help but become more involved.

## **8. Peer grading.**

Tell students at the beginning of the conference that at the end of the activity they will be asked to rate each other on the value of each person's contribution. This can be a powerful incentive for students to do quality work in the conference. However, most of the students that I encounter do not like to grade each other. This is especially a problem if they have bonded as a result of operating in a learning team. In that case, they may want to give everybody an A, even when some students made distinctly greater contributions to the conference. Problems also arise by having them rank each other, because they might think that rank 1 gets an A, rank 2 gets a B, and the lower ranked students will get a failing grade. One possible solution is to have students grade the contributions of another group, which also gives them added learning experiences. Another possibility is to structure the ratings so that they don't translate directly into A, B, C, etc. The teacher might say, for example, that everyone will get an A, B, or C for the peer helping portion of the final grade, depending on the peer helping ratings. The ratings might be in the form of "superior, good, fair, poor," or some equivalent. Another possibility is to have each student name the one student in the group who helped them the most. Students who are named more than once might get bonus points added to the final grade. A similar approach could be used with a ranking scheme. Students with the best rank get the most bonus points on the final grade. Material excerpted from *Eight Ways to Get Students More Engaged in Online Conferences* in the August 1998 Edition of T.H.E. Journal with permission from the author. The online version of T.H.E. Journal and can be found at <http://www.thejournal.com>. The author originally presented this paper at the Teaching in the Community Colleges online conference (April 7-9, 1998)