Online Learning

Taking an online course is a great learning experience but it does require some careful planning and commitment in order to be successful. Review these skills and tips to help you get started!

Self-Motivation

- Organize yourself and your study space.
- Structure your time in order to meet deadlines and finish your course.
- Plan ahead and stick to the plan, it can be easy to put off doing work.

Tips:
- ✓ Don't get caught up on social media or online games.
- ✓ Structure work times and take study breaks to reward yourself for completing your course work.

Technical Skills

- In addition to having access to a computer, you need to be comfortable with internet browsing, searching, email, sending and reading attachments.

Tips:
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with Blackboard by taking the online tutorial provided by your professor.

Reading Skills:

- Reading is a large part of any class. With an online class you will need to read course material as well as discussion posts from your professor and classmates.
- Reading and comprehending the course material will be essential to your success.

Tips:
- ✓ Avoid distractions. Find a quiet place and time to do your reading.
- ✓ When you come across material you don't understand, re-read it by breaking it into smaller sections and make notes in your own words. Take short breaks when concentrating becomes difficult.

Written Communication

- In most cases writing is the primary method of communication in online classes. You should be comfortable writing your thoughts, sharing ideas and asking questions in an online forum.

Tips:
- ✓ Read the discussion question carefully and ask your Professor for help if you need clarification.
- ✓ Brainstorm some ideas offline before posting it to the forum – this can be done by drafting a response to the question in a program such as Microsoft Word.
- ✓ Review your writing so that your message is clear and that there are no spelling/grammar mistakes.
- ✓ When you are ready, cut and paste your content from Word into the forum on Blackboard.

Study Regularly:

- Similar to a face-to-face course where you meet your professor on campus, an online course also requires you to set aside some time to study outside the scheduled lecture.
- An online course will typically require you to login a few times a week to participate in weekly discussion forums or complete specific assignments. It's important to stay active in the course!
- You can plan to spend the same amount of time working on your assignments and studying as you would with a traditional face-to-face class.

Tips:
- ✓ Create a study schedule where you dedicate a few timeslots in your weekly calendar where you can complete the coursework. For example, you could dedicate two or three sessions a week where you will jump online and participate in the weekly discussions or complete the readings.
- ✓ Avoid waiting until the last minute to complete online tests, submit assignments, or participate in discussions.
- ✓ Completing activities earlier in the week will also help you plan ahead and will give you enough time to ask questions if you encounter any problems.

Social Interaction:

- Interaction with professors and classmates in an online course is an integral part of the learning experience.
- Although online learning might be a new journey for some students, it's important to remember that you are not alone so make sure to participate in the course. Connecting with your professor and classmates will help you build an online learning community.

Tips:
- ✓ Introduce yourself to the class in the first discussion forum.
- ✓ Consider uploading an "Avatar" (i.e., a picture that represents you) to your Blackboard profile
- ✓ Participate regularly in discussions.
- ✓ Make sure to review the online etiquette ("netiquette") guidelines in the course to learn about appropriate online interaction.
- ✓ Be respectful of your professor and classmates.

Ask Questions:

- Don't hesitate to ask questions. Chances are your classmates have the same questions.

Tips:
- ✓ Review your professor's availability and keep a copy of their contact information
- ✓ Don't hesitate to send a question to your professor but make sure you do so well before a deadline
- ✓ In general, keep in touch with your professors – share your concerns with them so that they can help guide you through the material and assignments.
- ✓ If you fall behind, let your professor know immediately and ask for assistance in planning how you will catch up.