Hi DE Instructors:

There are three pieces of information I need to convey to you, each explained in more depth below:

1. Course Welcome Letters

2. System shut-down the first week in January

3. Moodle training for spring

1) Course Welcome Letters: Having Course Welcome Letters available for all online courses is a best practice in DE because it allows students to know the requirements of your course before they sign up for it—what kinds of technology they will be expected to use, whether there are any face-to-face commitments they will have to schedule, etc. I have pasted an example provided by Ali at the end of this email.

This Course Welcome Letter is geared to students who are deciding about taking your course, rather than to students who have already registered. So, if you send out a welcome to registered students, you are still free to do so; but I am requesting a Course Welcome Letter for the DE website for prospective students to use in their course selection decision-making process.

Please send Nancy Kutcher your Course Welcome Letter in Word format by November 1st. Please provide as much information as possible about your course beforehand so students can decide whether they have access to the necessary technical resources and whether their skills in time management and use of technology are where they need to be to succeed in your class. Contact: nancy.kutcher@marin.edu, (415) 485-9645.

Please include at least the following information:

• your contact information
• the deadline by which students must log on to secure their spot in your course
• notification of any mandatory course meetings on-campus or online
• how often students must access your course in order to maintain good standing
  • waitlisting and adding procedures for courses in high demand
• any participation requirements for your course
• required texts and materials

You can, of course, include more information if you like, but students will need at least this information. As usual, the course descriptions will be populated from the college catalog.
All the Course Welcome Letters will be posted to the DE website—a site that is being reconfigured to better navigate students through the process of finding out about DE courses, registering for DE courses, and then taking their DE courses in Moodle, finding COM's online student support services along the way. While you cannot see what the new design will look like yet, know that it is in the works and will be launched once Nancy Kutcher receives all of your Course Welcome Letters. We are committed to improving students' access to DE courses, as well as their success in them, so your Course Welcome Letters are very much appreciated!

2) **System shut-down:** IT plans to shut the system down for a week roughly scheduled for the first week of January. As the exact dates become known, I will send them to you, but we wanted you to know about the shutdown to inform your planning for your spring courses.

3) **Training:** We are talking with @One about holding an in-depth, day-long training on Moodle 2.0 on campus, probably in early December. Again, the date will be forthcoming.

Thanks for all of your work to make our DE courses a success. You should have your Moodle shells for Spring 12 courses by mid-November. Ali’s Welcome Letter is pasted below, if you would like a sample. Other samples, as I mentioned in my previous request, are available at http://www.cuesta.org/disted/

Susan

**ENGLISH 151 Reading and Composition (1B)**

**CRN 10401 & CRN 10409**

Thank you for your interest in Online English 151! Before our adventure in online learning begins on January 23, 2012, I want to apprise you of a few details about your instructor and this course. The detailed information below is intended to be honest and helpful, but not to scare you. So here is what you need to know, and thanks in advance for the time you will take to read what follows.

**Access Requirements:** No mandatory campus visits are required to take this course. The course, however, is not a self-paced course but an online community of learners working through a 17-week semester. It unfolds week-by-week with the whole class participating in weekly exercises and discussions together. If you are seeking an independent studies course, know in advance that this is not one. You do have to log on **at least 3 days a week** to work in the course, but you can pick whichever days and times suit you. A new week of course content with assignments is released each Monday for you to work on during the week.

Students should always access the class web site in Moodle via MyCOM. For information about getting a MyCOM account, read the FAQ's on the MyCOM Portal login page. #6 on the Portal login page explains how to get to Moodle.

**First Day of Class Instructions:** All enrolled students are required to login to the class Moodle website between **6 pm Monday, January 23 and 6 pm Tuesday, January 24, 2012** to hold their spot in the class. If a registered student does not login to the class site during this 24-hour period, his or her spot may be given to a student on the
waitlist. (The waitlist is long and there is a shortage of class spots to meet the demand; so know that I will honor the waitlist if you do not confirm your spot and begin the course as required.)

**Waitlist & Add Codes:** If you are on the waitlist or attempting to add the course, email the instructor, Alisa Klinger, as soon as possible to indicate your desire to take the course and to receive course start up information. Please include your name, the section number of the class you wish to add, and your COM Student ID (if you have one) in your email. I do honor the official waitlist, adding students in the order they appear on the waitlist.

**Course Materials:**


**Recommended:** Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, 7E, Seventh Edition, (Bedford/St. Martin's) ISBN 9780312601430 (Please use this one with the new MLA 2009-2010 updates. Don’t spend your money on any other editions, as they are out-of-date and you will not be able to participate in buy-backs.)

**Book Purchases:** Students may purchase their books online by visiting COM's online bookstore, or students may buy the books at the COM campus. Please purchase the editions listed, since content and pagination in old editions of texts do not match with course assignments. This is not a course where you can get by without reading the assigned texts because the quizzes and assignments are based on specific text passages.

**What To Do When You First Access The Course Online:** Be advised that Moodle works best with Firefox. Not all features function with Safari for Mac users. If you run into any technical problems, check your browser using the helpful information at the following link: [http://ilearn.csumb.edu/BrowserTestFiles/index.php](http://ilearn.csumb.edu/BrowserTestFiles/index.php)

Take some time to familiarize yourself with these 2 helpful Moodle FAQs for students and bookmark them for future reference:

[http://www.marin.edu/DE/faq.html](http://www.marin.edu/DE/faq.html)

[http://docs.moodle.org/20/en/Student_FAQ](http://docs.moodle.org/20/en/Student_FAQ)

Finally, there is an important note that you should read and heed at the top right of your Moodle home screen: "**Closing this browser does not end your session. In order to end a session you must click on Logout (top right side of browser window). If you do not log out, your session will remain active. The next person to use this computer will have full access to your account.**" Make yourself a sticky note to remind yourself to log out!

I hope this email answers your preliminary questions. If you have others, please email me. I love my job and I love critical thinking. Know that I look forward to working with you in Online English 151, hoping to make you feel positive about your work and excited about critical thinking too.

I look forward to our adventure in online learning!

Cheers, Ali

Alisa Klinger, Ph.D.

English Department

Alisa.Klinger@marin.edu
From: Susan Andrien  
Sent: Wednesday, October 05, 2011 3:19 PM  
To: Brian Wilson; Erik Dunmire; Mike Ransom; Sandi Weldon; Sandy Boyd; Beth Sheofsky; Alisa Klinger; Kathleen Smyth; Cheryl Rogow; Irina Roderick; Maula Allen; 'Ira.Lansing@marin.edu'; James Gonzalez; 'linda.noblebrown@marin.edu'; John Marmysz; Yolanda Van Ecke; Radica Portello; 'Henry Fearnley'  
Cc: Nancy Kutcher; Alisa Klinger; Shook Chung  
Subject:  

Dear DE Instructor,

You will be receiving your Spring 2012 CRN(s) for hybrid and online classes soon. As soon as you receive this information, please send Nancy Kutcher your Course Welcome Letter in PDF format. Please provide as much information as possible about your course beforehand so students can decide whether they have access to the necessary technical resources and whether their skills in time management and use of technology are where they need to be to succeed in your class. Contact: nancy.kutcher@marin.edu, (415) 485-9645.

Please include at least the following information:

• your contact information  
• the deadline by which students must log on to secure their spot in your course  
• notification of any mandatory course meetings on-campus or online  
• how often students must access your course in order to maintain good standing  
• wait listing and adding procedures for courses in high demand  
• any participation requirements for your course  
• required texts and materials

You can, of course, include more information if you like, but students will need at least this information. As usual, the course descriptions will be populated from the college catalog.

Nancy will be sending you reminders once the CRNs are ready, but I wanted to give you a heads-up to think about what you want to tell students about what you expect in your course. Here is a link that Ali provided to the Course Welcome letters at Costa: http://www.cuesta.org/disted/.

Thanks for all of your work to make our DE courses a success.  
Susan  
Hi Susan,

Read Sara’s email back to me below (she didn’t cc you on it), since she didn’t have all information about the whole project when she sent her suggestion about PDFs. (I’ve since
explained the project to her.) While you wrote to her in your email of last night that her suggestions make sense to you, I urge you to let Shook determine the format she needs to create the web design she has proposed. The Welcome Letters are just one part of Shook's project, since she is also streamlining registration and schedule for DE. Erik Dunmire is fine with cooperating with whatever Shook needs.

I'm not sure if you have responded to the emails Yolanda Van Ecke and Ira Lansing have sent out on this topic (I was forwarded them or they were cc'd to me), but instructors need to know that the Course Welcome Letter does not take the place of a syllabus, instructor web page, or anything an instructor might send their registered students in advance of start of classes--it is in addition to and targeting students who have not yet registered. In other words, it is to help students make informed choices about registering for DE courses. (Hopefully, this will cut down on no shows and students who end up dropping or failing because they didn't understand what the DE format and requirements were for the particularly course.) Additionally, the Welcome Letter can provide information about how to get an add code and how to access the course once a student is registered, since these are students' top two questions at times when instructors are often unavailable over holiday breaks before classes begin.

Feel free to let instructors know that I am happy to work with them on their Welcome Letters, if they need help. They can just email me for a one-to-one appointment--or go through moodlehelp@marin.edu, if you prefer that. If there is a lot of need, then I will probably try to set up a training session, though time is short before these letters need to be posted. If you ask Erik, I'm sure he would be happy to share his letter as a model for others as well, so you could give instructors his link or attach the sample of my letter I sent you last week.

Cheers, Ali

Alisa Klinger, Ph.D.
Instructor, English Department
Online Resource Faculty Person
Chair, Academic Senate Distance Education Committee College of Marin
alisa.klinger@marin.edu

From: Alisa Klinger
Sent: Saturday, October 08, 2011 3:25 PM
To: Susan Andrien
Cc: Sara McKinnon; Alice L Dieli; Steve Dodson; Burton D. Schane; Marshall Northcott; Erik Dunmire; Shook Chung
Subject: FW: DE Web Site - Course Welcome Letter Format

Hi Susan.

See below for the information Shook sent to you about pdf vs. Word doc. on Sept. 20. She prefers a Word doc.

You might want to check with Shook about linking to a webpage, as Eric Dunmire requests, though he can also put a link to his webpage in a Word doc. Shook is doing the site, but she is very reasonable and flexible, as you know.

Cheers, Ali
PS. Here's what I put out in the last issue of DE@COM on the topic of Course Welcome Letters:
Hybrid and Online Course Welcome Letters Needed As soon as you receive your Spring 2012 CRN(s) for hybrid and online classes, it is time to send Nancy Kutcher, Media Center Specialist, your Course Welcome Letter. It is most helpful to our DE students if you provide as much information as possible about your course beforehand, so students can determine if they are suitable candidates for online learning. Some students have the perception that DE courses will be easier, but it is our job to advise them about what successful DE students already know: online students need to be self-motivated with solid time management skills, they need to be able to communicate through writing, and they need access to reliable technology.

Contact: nancy.kutcher@marin.edu, 415.485.9645

Best Practices- Course Welcome Letter

Information We are striving for greater consistency in the information DE instructors provide to students at the Distance Education website before Spring 2012 Moodle shells are released for hybrid and fully online courses. It is a best practice to at least include the following pieces of information:

• your contact information
• when students must log on by to secure their spot in your course
• notification of any mandatory course meetings on-campus or online
• course access requirements to maintain good standing in your course
• wait listing and adding procedures for courses in high demand
• any participation requirements for your course
• required texts and materials

Providing such information encourages students to register for DE courses once they have the time and technology to successfully pursue them, as well as cuts down on no-shows. In other words, we can bolster our DE students’ success rates by providing them with clear course and contact instructions from the get go.

Alisa Klinger, Ph.D.
Instructor, English Department
Online Resource Faculty Person
Chair, Academic Senate Distance Education Committee College of Marin
alisa.klinger@marin.edu

From: Shook Chung
Sent: Tuesday, September 20, 2011 2:42 PM
To: Susan Andrien; Cari Torres; Nancy Kutcher; Alisa Klinger
Cc: Cathy Summa-Wolfe
Subject: DE Web Site - Course Welcome Letters, etc

Hi Susan,

Thank you for including our department in you planning process. This is what I anticipate to happen in preparation to launch the DE Courses Listing and Welcome Letters page on the public website:

A list of DE courses that are offered for Spring 2012 (Cari, do I get this from you or Burton/IT?)

I will mock up a page with links to Banner pages

I will set up a web template for the Course Welcome Letter. Nancy can use this template to create/build multiple Welcome Letter web pages. Yes, Nancy will have full access to edit this section. In fact, Nancy has had access to the DE web site since we last met.
I would like to suggest that the Course Welcome Letter will be provided by the instructor in a Word document or simple text format, instead of PDF. It would be easier for Nancy (or anyone) to copy and paste the letter into HTML pages from a Word document instead of PDF.

I am not against using PDF, but would like to bring to your attention that these PDF files need to be ADA compliant. If we go with uploading the Welcome Letters in PDF format, it is another portion of work load to make sure they are accessible. Therefore, I recommend that we stick with HTML text pages, instead of PDF.

Ideally, it would be best if we offer both - Course Welcome Letter in HTML pages, and downloadable/printer friendly PDF.

Since this new workflow (publishing DE courses listing/links to Banner pages onto DE public web site, Courses Welcome Letters, etc) will be a repetitive process for each semester, our department would like to suggest that we get a production schedule in place, so that we all can adhere to the timeline and anticipate if there are any last minute requests or changes.

Please let me know if your department will do the production schedule, or if you prefer that we provide one.

Thank you,
Shook

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Shook Chung  |  Senior Creative Designer Communications and Community Relations College of Marin  |  415.485.9524

On 9/19/11 3:50 PM, "Susan Andrien" <Susan.Andrien@marin.edu> wrote:

> Dear DE Instructor,
> 
> Hi all,
> > I am planning to send this letter to DE instructors as soon as they
> > are identified. After they receive the first letter, Nancy will be
> > reminding them on a weekly basis at first and, as we approach the
> > deadline, will remind the stragglers more frequently. I wanted you
> > all to be aware of this process so you can incorporate it into your
> > plans. For example, Shook, will Nancy have access to the staging
> > platform? Is there something else your department will need in order
> > to make this happen in a timely manner? Thanks to Ali for your help with this process.
> >
> > Thanks,
> > Susan
> >
> > Dear DE Instructor,
>>
> > You will be receiving your Spring 2012 CRN(s) for hybrid and online
> > classes in early to mid-October. As soon as you receive this
> > information, please send Nancy Kutcher your Course Welcome Letter in
> > PDF format. Please provide as much information as possible about your
> course beforehand so students can decide whether they have access to
> the necessary technical resources and whether their skills in time
> management and use of technology are where they need to be to succeed in your class.
> Contact: nancy.kutcher@marin.edu, (415) 485-9645.
> 
> > Please include at least the following information:
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> > € your contact information
> > € the deadline by which students must log on to secure their spot in
> > your course € notification of any mandatory course meetings on-campus
> > or online € how often students must access your course in order to
> > maintain good standing € wait listing and adding procedures for
> > courses in high demand € any participation requirements for your
> > course € required texts and materials
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> > You can, of course, include more information if you like, but students
> > will need at least these pieces of information in order to make an
> > informed choice about taking your course. As usual, the course
> > descriptions will be populated from the college catalog.
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> > Nancy will be sending you reminders once the CRNs are ready, but I
> > wanted to give you a heads-up to think about what you want to tell
> > students about what you expect in your course.
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> > Thanks for all of your work to make our DE courses a success.
> > Susan