Click Clack from COM DE Student

Laura Landry is in her second year as a student at COM. After working for over 18 years as a bus driver, she decided she needed a career change. She became interested in health care while attending a career college in 2010 and graduated with an AS Degree in Health Information Technology. She is now at COM seeking a degree in Psychology with the goal of transferring to a 4-year university to earn her Bachelor's of Science in Behavioral Health. Laura is also currently working and volunteering at women's recovery organizations in Marin County, where she is inspired by the transformation and success of the women she helps.

In her own words:
“I really enjoy the ease and comfort of Distance Education because I can access the College of Marin 24 hours a day at my own convenience. The instructors are very knowledgeable and personable, and they are eager to give their online students a successful college experience. Moodle has been very easy for me to use, giving me access to teachers, classmates, and tutors in the Online Writing Center with just a few clicks. The interaction with my teachers and classmates during our online discussions really broadens my learning experience. In the Moodle forums, I can easily read others’ perspectives and consider their points of view. While we all come from a variety of experiences, educational backgrounds, and lifestyles, it is clear to me that we share two common goals: to educate ourselves and to fulfill our purposes in the world. The same rules apply to DE courses as more traditional college courses though, so you have to study hard, communicate with your teachers, network with your classmates, and effectively manage your time. If you are like me, you will find online learning to be a rich and fulfilling experience and a great way to pursue your educational goals.”
Click Clack from COM DE Student

Hongtham Nguyen has completed the Medical Assisting Program at College of Marin, and now she is a full-time student in the Registered Nursing Program. She uses Moodle for both her online and face-to-face classes, so she can access instructional materials, participate in class forums, take quizzes and tests, and communicate with her instructors and peers. She plans to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing next because her ultimate dream is to work as a nurse-practitioner in a university medical setting.

In her own words:
I enjoy taking online classes because they are convenient, the classes fit my work schedule, and teachers are helpful. All the instructions for my online classes are accessible remotely, so I just have to have an internet connection to do my course work. I can go back and read things more than once to be sure I understand the materials, and I can take time to compose my thoughts and present them clearly and correctly. I benefit, in particular, from the support of the Writing Lab and the Online Writing Center so that I can improve my skills. College of Marin is a great school for me to attend online and in person because the staff and faculty members are very resourceful. The classes I need to take are also available at a fraction of the cost of comparable university courses. For those students who, like me, are working and commuting, online learning in Moodle is a valuable, supportive, and fulfilling option for college success!
Click Clack from COM DE Student

Paul Byrne is in his 3rd year of community college and is in the process of transferring to a 4-year university to pursue his interests in Nuclear or Civil Engineering.

In his own words,
“When I registered for my first online class, I was mostly dreading the fact that there weren't going to be any lectures because I really benefit from them. As it turned out, the online class did provide lectures; they were just posted as videos or text at the class website. My fears about distance education were eradicated! Taking online classes has worked out for me because they allow me to fit schoolwork into my busy schedule without requiring an actual class time for me to meet on campus each week. Also, because I am taking 26 units, combining a mix of face-to-face and online classes enables me to get all my assignments done on time. One thing I like about Moodle is that it is free open source software with reliable management features, such as a calendar, to tell me when I have to complete assignments and tests. What I really appreciate about taking courses online at COM though is the whole idea of the Online Write Center—the OWC—because it really helps me with my writing. Using the OWC means that I don't have to make time to come to campus or wait for my instructors' office hours; all I have to do is post my work in the appropriate forum and then check for feedback from an Instructional Specialist. I post school assignments to the OWC, but also job application materials, so I can put my best words forward whether I am at school or work. For me, online learning has definitely proven to be a good decision!”
Click Clack from COM DE Student

Joeny Guerrero didn't always have nursing as her career goal, but looking back, she realized that this was the path she was destined to take. Her journey was full of struggles and at times she doubted in her abilities, but her successes affirmed that she is now right where she belongs.

In her own words:
“After graduating high school I had no idea which direction to take my life. I floated for a few years in jobs that were unfulfilling while at the same time attending college. In hope of finding myself, I traveled by myself to my native Mexico. I sold my car, quit my job, and put school on hold. During my time there, which turned into a 15 month journey, my eyes were opened to many things. I saw poverty, hunger, and sickness like I had only read of in books. I realized how fortunate I was and I was filled with a passion to give back and help the vulnerable. These experiences inspired me to direct my life into nursing, and upon returning home, I put that plan into motion. It’s been a long journey but the sacrifices have been worth it. I am currently in my second semester of nursing school at College of Marin and enjoying every second of it. Upon graduating, I hope nursing will give me the opportunity to travel the world so that I can make a difference in people's lives.”

She found Moodle to be a great resource during her time in the Registered Nursing Program at College of Marin. “As someone who is not the most computer savvy, I was initially intimidated by being required to use an online portal to access important class related information. I have come to realize though that Moodle is not as frightening as I had previously imagined. It’s been a very intuitive system that allows me to easily access my grades, communicate with classmates and instructors through a variety of mediums such as blogs and message boards, and find the resources I need for lecture and clinical. This was most helpful during my pediatric rotation when all my classmates and I were assigned to different clinical sites but still needed to communicate. We used Moodle to share experiences and learn from each other. Another great benefit to Moodle is that it’s environmentally friendly by allowing students to turn assignments in online. All in all, I think it's been a wonderful system and has significantly improved my productivity and learning experience as a student.”
Alice Warsinske, a veteran DE student at COM, who headed to UCLA in Fall 2010 to undertake a degree in Communication Studies, offers these words of advice to others pursuing their studies online: I logged on at least once a day, kept a To-Do list each week with due dates, and addressed the instructor with all concerns or questions. I tried my best to participate as well, through discussion posts and peer exchanges. These are the types of habits that I found essential to doing well in DE, which may require more attentiveness and discipline than would be expected in a face-to-face class. Nonetheless, I felt I was given more thorough feedback, caring attention, and a strong sense of camaraderie that I do not always experience in the classroom. I encourage all future DE students to use the instructor, the online community, and the College of Marin Library as available and effective resources. I also encourage DE students to stay organized, never hesitate to ask for help or clarification, and keep your goals known and attainable for motivation.”
Click Clack from COM DE Student

Sabrina Dolan was one of the first students to try out COM’s new Moodle learning management system, by taking one of the Moodle Pilot courses during summer 2011. She was already familiar with Distance Education and with Blackboard, but she confesses that “learning a new course management system felt daunting at first--like having another hill to climb.” Soon after she started exploring Moodle, however, Sabrina says, “it was simple and user friendly. Before class started, I took a good chunk of time just exploring and getting acquainted with the website. I learned how to navigate Moodle by clicking though everything, page by page. After getting into a rhythm with Moodle, we became good friends. I would check in almost every day, and even do so multiple times to read forums, go over assignments, and check the calendar again and again. I made sure I knew my course requirements and kept myself caught up on all the readings. Because my computer broke down at one point, I also learned how important it is to save regularly. To me, checking and saving are two of the most important parts of being successful in my online classes. Distance education can sometimes be frustrating, complicated, and even time consuming; but my online courses have also been some of the most rewarding and fun (yes, I said fun) classes I have completed yet!”

Sabrina Dolan is a Biology major at College of Marin and is working towards a career with wildlife. She is a volunteer feeder for the Hungry Owl Project and works as a Dog Handler at Camp K-9 of Marin. Distance Education gives her the ability to work at a pace that suits her, enabling her to best manage her time and customize her education.
Click Clack from COM DE Student

John Kaley was a DE student at COM during summer 2011, when he completed his English requirement by using Moodle. Here’s what John has to share about the brave new world of online learning:

“Today, more than ever, information is all around us: you tap into it via smart phones, iPads, and laptops. It’s easy to do, and it’s supposed to be. There is probably even an app to learn how to use other apps. Up until now, you probably have been the consumer of information, browsing most of it and storing some of it. As an online student, however, it is you who will have to provide the information and you who will have to provide it with the same quality and speed that you expect when you are the one receiving it.

If you are thinking about taking or already taking an online class, I have some advice for you. It is important that you read all of the instructions and ask questions when you don’t understand something. An online class is demanding of your time, so make a plan for how and when to study. Since you don’t have all the time in the world to respond to assignments, think about what you are going to say before your fingers are on the keyboard. Be sure to be clear so that others can understand you. Also, try to get to know your classmates because you might need help and they can be a great resource. They can also make you feel that you are a part of the class and not so isolated. Take advantage of the online and in-person resources for the class. Many people at COM are here to help you be successful, so don’t be afraid to ask for help. If you follow these simple suggestions, you will succeed. Good luck!”

Presently, John Kaley is a mechanical engineering major at San Francisco State University.
Click Clack from COM DE Student

Courtney Buffington enrolled at COM in response to a challenge from her daughter to finally get the degree that had always eluded her for one reason or another. She admits to great trepidation at first, but is so happy to be doing what she’s always wanted to do: major in Art Education and get her credential to teach integrated arts at the high school level. She combines studying with freelance contract design and project management work, serving most recently as the Online & Digital Media Coordinator/Webmaster for the Mill Valley Film Festival.

In her own words:

“The Moodle interface is very well organized and super easy to navigate regardless of how tech savvy you are. If you can check and send email, you can use Moodle! If you do happen to get stuck, the answer to any question you may have is a simple click away. I’ve found the online classroom to be a supportive community, and there is always someone available to help when needed. Some students even form study groups that meet in the ‘real world’ and help one another with assignments. Rest assured that online assignments and discussion posts do not get sent into some impersonal void. I have received very thoughtful and constructive feedback from both classmates and instructors. The Online Writing Center also offers invaluable insights and assistance.

The main challenge I’ve found in taking Distance Education classes is truly no different from traditional face-to-face classes: I must be disciplined in scheduling my time properly to avoid last-minute meltdown! Know when your week’s assignments are posted, review what must be done, and schedule accordingly. I make an analogue checklist of tasks that must be accomplished and mark my calendar with due dates for assignments. Keeping my calendar in sight when I’m at my desk helps me stay on track.

All Distance Education students have an equal and valid voice in contributing to class forum discussions. Relevant class resources are right at your fingertips at all times. The online classroom is open and active all day, every day! Embrace the opportunity, customize the experience to fit your lifestyle, and remember that there are online instructors, librarians, and tutors at COM to support you.”