Characteristics of a Welcome Letter

In order to establish rapport with the students and to incorporate general best practices for distance education, all distance education faculty should construct a welcome letter and email all enrolled students via PeopleSoft (https://mycollege.laccd.edu) or via Canvas Inbox **two working days prior to the first class meeting** and post it in Canvas on the day of the first class meeting. It is recommended to post the Welcome Letter as part of an Orientation Module.

Note: You can only send students a Canvas Inbox message if the course has been published.

A Welcome Letter:

- Helps students unfamiliar with the distance education environment understand course expectations
- Tells students how and where to login
- Lets students know where to go for help and support
- Establishes rapport and promotes regular effective contact with the students early on
- Should be upbeat and supportive in tone

A Welcome Letter should have the following information:

COURSE INFORMATION

- Course name, section number
- Course dates
- Instructor name/information
- Contact information; the best way to contact you; how long students should expect to wait for a reply

COURSE TYPE

- Fully online or hybrid – for hybrid, place and date of first meeting.

LOGIN INFORMATION

- Login information/link:
    o Canvas URL
    o Login instructions
- Getting started/orientation links/course Check-In Assignment
- Attendance and drop policies if applicable
- Where to find the syllabus; recommended: attach the syllabus to the email with the Welcome Letter

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Required textbook(s)
- Course Check-In Assignment
- Distance education student resource(s) website
- Information about accessibility & link to DSPS website

Example of a Welcome Letter
Recommended to be sent out two working days before the start of the term

Hello Students!

Welcome to our online English 101 class, section 12345! My name is Jane Doe, and I will be your instructor for this course. I'm really looking forward to working with you all this semester. This letter contains information to help you get started in our class.

1. **This is an online class, and all online classes at LASC use Canvas as the Learning Management System.**

   I highly recommend using the most recent version of Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome as your browser to make sure everything works correctly (you can click on those links to download)!

   Please note: Our class will be accessible in Canvas starting on the first day of the term. You won't be able to access our course in Canvas before that.

HOW TO LOG INTO CANVAS:

Students and faculty will now log into Canvas through the Student Information System (SIS). This is the system where you go to look at your class schedule, add classes, etc. There are two ways to do this:

1. Go to https://ilearn.laccd.edu and log in. This will take you directly to Canvas
2. Go to https://mycollege.laccd.edu and log in. Then, click on "Canvas" on the right side of the screen.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR LOGIN FAILS:

If it is your first time logging into the SIS system, please see this guide for logging in: https://www.laccd.edu/Students/Documents/Student%20FAQ/how-to-login-portal.pdf

If you are having trouble logging into the SIS system to reach Canvas, you can try to reset your password at: https://accounts.laccd.edu/reset/

If you still can't log in, please contact Admissions to begin the password reset process. The contact information for Admissions can be found at: http://www.lasc.edu/students/admissions/contact_us.html

RESOURCES FOR USING CANVAS

   Learn to Use Canvas Video Link: https://community.canvaslms.com/videos/1124

   Set Up Your Canvas Profile:

   • Video Link: https://guides.instructure.com/m/4210/l/105258-user-settings-profile-picture-video

   Add a preferred email address if you have one:

   • Tutorial Link: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2894

<u>Set your notification preferences:</u>

- Tutorial Link: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1286
- Video Link: https://community.canvaslms.com/videos/1072

2. **We will have an in-person orientation meeting for our class on Saturday of the first week of classes at 10:00 am in SSEC 123.**

   This orientation will give you an overview of our course and will be an opportunity to get your questions answered.

3. **I will be holding online "office hours" in real time every Wednesday from 6:00-7:00 pm.**

   During this time, you can ask questions and I will go over course materials. You can join our online meetings by clicking on "CCCConfer" in the links on the left hand side of our course in Canvas. You will see a new meeting that you can join every Wednesday starting at 6:00 pm.

4. **Make sure that you read the syllabus carefully and take the "Syllabus Quiz" by Friday of the first week. I am also attaching our class syllabus to this email so you can see our course policies and required textbooks.**

   It is very important that you take this quiz so that I know that you are participating and an active member of our class.

   In terms of required textbooks, make sure that you purchase *Freakonomics* within the first few days of the term. It's a good idea to begin the process of buying it now, especially if you are purchasing it online!

5. **Online courses are required to meet ADA accessibility guidelines. This means that all aspects of the online learning experience are accessible.**

   Please let me know if you have adaptive software and hardware to assist you with taking this course or if you have any specific needs I should be aware of. You can find more information about Disabled Students Program & Services at http://www.lasc.edu/dsps/ or call the office at (323) 241-5480.

6. **There is a Canvas Help link at the bottom of the links on the left hand of your screen once you log in. Their support number is 1-844-303-5591. You can call that number 24/7 if you have any issues related to Canvas.**

   There are more resources for online students available at:
   http://www.lasc.edu/students/onlineservices/index.html

7. **If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at doejane@faculty.laccd.edu or (323) 241-0000.**

   The best way to contact me is my email address, doejane@faculty.laccd.edu

   I will answer emails, Canvas messages, and voicemails within 24 hours, Monday-Friday.

Again, I'm really excited to work with you all! I know that online classes can be a little intimidating, but I am here as a resource to help guide you through our course.

Here's to a great semester!
Ms. Doe