STUDENT GUIDEBOOK

November 2008

About OCICU

As a member of the Online Consortium of Independent Colleges and Universities (OCICU), your Home/Member institution makes available to its students online courses offered by other Consortium members. The member institution providing the course is referred to as the Provider. All consortium members are regionally accredited, independent, not-for-profit, and liberal arts like your Home/Member institution. OCICU is managed by New Ventures of Regis University in Denver, Colorado.

We hope that you have a pleasant learning experience in your OCICU course and that you will find this guidebook a useful tool in your education endeavors.

Is an Online Course right for me?

Online courses can be great alternatives for busy students, eliminating the need to physically attend class each week while still providing an environment for interaction with the instructor and other students. If this is your first experience with an online course, you may be wondering if this is the appropriate learning environment for you. Your response to the following questions may assist in self-selecting the best option to meet your learning objectives. If needed, your academic advisor can provide additional guidance and information.

My knowledge and comfort level in the use of a computer and the internet is:
- A. Expert. I use both a computer and the internet on a regular basis.
- B. Comfortable. I can perform basic tasks on both a computer and the internet.
- C. Nervous. I typically do not use the computer.

The availability of a computer with internet access for my use is:
- A. Readily accessible. I own a computer equipped with internet access.
- B. Accessible on a limited basis. I have access through my local school, library, or a friend.
- C. Not accessible. I would need to pursue options to access a computer and the internet.

When given directions, I typically:
- A. Ask questions immediately if I don't understand the directions.
- B. Try to figure out the directions on my own and ask questions if needed.
- C. Need someone to explain the directions to me.

I would describe myself as:
- A. Someone who completes assignments and tasks on time or ahead of time.
- B. Someone who is usually on time but can get distracted if other tasks emerge.
- C. Someone who is typically late or needs to be reminded of due dates.

NOTE: If you responded "C" to any of the questions, an online course may not be the best learning environment for you due to the following:

- Since courses are delivered strictly online, it is necessary to have a basic understanding and level of comfort in the use of the computer and the internet.

- Generally, you will be required to access your online course several times throughout the week; therefore, it is important that you have access to a computer with internet on a regular basis.

- In an online course, where facial expressions can not be seen, it is difficult for your instructor to determine if you are confused, have a question or don't understand something. It is necessary that you feel comfortable to "speak up" and let someone know that you need help.

- Since there are no regular meeting dates in an online course, it can be very easy to fall behind. It is very important to have self discipline and to stay motivated.

If you need more information, please ask your advisor.

Getting Started

Once you have registered through your home school, your request will be sent to the provider school for processing. When your registration has been processed, the provider school will send an email containing information on accessing your course. If you do not receive this email two weeks prior the start of the term, please notify your home school. The e-mail address used for OCICU correspondence is the one provided to OCICU by your home institution.

While waiting for your email, please visit www.ocicu.org to begin preparing for your course. Once on the site:

1. Click Student Course Access.
2. Select your home school from the pull down menu.
3. Click on your course from the links listed on the left hand side of the screen (if your course is not available, notify your home school).

From this site, you can review the academic calendar, demonstration course and system requirements. You can also order your textbooks and access your course.

The **Academic Calendar** link provides the start and end dates for your online course. NOTE: these dates may differ from your home school's academic calendar.

The **Ordering Books** link provides instructions on how to find and order your required materials. These materials are available through the provider school and not through your home school. *If you typically use Financial Aid to purchase books, contact your home school's bookstore to determine if arrangements can be made.*

The **Demonstration Course** link provides instructions on accessing the provider school's practice course. The demo course gives students the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the online environment before the term begins. NOTE: Each provider school has their own demo course.

The **System Requirements** link provides the minimum hardware and software requirements needed to successfully complete your online course.

The **Access this Course** link provides directions on how to access your online course. Each provider school will notify you when access to your course is available.

OCICU Student Checklist

It is strongly recommended that you use this checklist to ensure that you are prepared for your online course before the term begins.

_____ **I have ordered the required books and materials for my course from the provider school.**
- Materials should be received prior to the term start.
- **Your home school will not have the required materials for an online consortium course.**
- Links and directions to find and order your course materials are available at www.ocicu.org

_____ **I have completed the orientation and/or reviewed the demo course.**
- If you are required to complete an orientation course, the provider school will email you directions on how to access and complete the course.
- If an orientation is not required, you are encouraged to review the demo course. Links and directions are available at www.ocicu.org

_____ **I know the start and end dates of my course.**
- Term start and end dates for each provider may differ from your home school's academic calendar.
- Check the academic calendar link at www.ocicu.org to verify when your course begins.

_____ **I have made arrangements for computer and internet access.**
- Most online courses require work to be completed throughout the week.

_____ **I plan on spending 15-20 hours a week on my course.**
- Online courses are intense and move very quickly as they cover the same amount of material as a semester long course.

During the first week of each term:

_____ **Access your course as soon as possible** – Notify the provider school if you are unable to access your course as soon as possible. Some providers require each student to reply to their welcome message e-mail and confirm that they have successfully logged into the learning management system.

_____ **Find your instructor contact information and save it somewhere on your computer**. By saving this information outside of your course, you are able to contact your instructor if you should encounter difficulties accessing your course during the term.

_____ **Post a message to the discussion forum by the required date.** Each provider school will specify a date in which you must participate by or you will be dropped from the course for non-participation. Participation requirements may be different depending on the provider. For example, certain providers consider accessing the course as participation. Other providers require posting a message by a certain date.

Online Course Best Practices

✓ Plan ahead.

- Online courses are fast moving and very demanding. You should plan to devote 15-20 hours per week to each course.
- Although you are not required to access your course on specific days, you should plan on accessing several times during the week. Most instructors expect assignments and discussion postings to be completed throughout the week. Waiting until the weekend may affect your grade.
- If at any time during the term you know that you will be unable to access your course, you must contact your instructor as soon as possible.

✓ Order your required books and materials ahead of time.

- You should receive your required materials prior to the start of your course. This will allow you to begin working once you have online access. Waiting to order may cause you to fall behind. Not all instructors allow students to submit late assignments, which can affect your grade

✓ Make sure you have access to a computer with Internet.

- Spend a few minutes to verify that your computer meets the minimum system requirements established by the provider so that you can fully access the online environment.

✓ Ask for help.

- Because your instructor and fellow students can not see your expression when you are confused or have a question, it is imperative that you "speak up" and ask.
- If you are experiencing technical difficulties, please contact the Help Desk. It is always a good idea to notify your instructor as well, especially if the issue will affect your participation in the course.

Common Questions

Do I need to log on to my online course at a specific time or day?

No. The advantage of taking online courses is that students have the ability to access their courses when and where they choose. It is important to remember that most instructors require participation throughout the week, so don't leave your course for the weekend only. Each Provider requires that students login and post an introduction to the forum by a specified date (the Provider will notify you of this date). STUDENTS WHO DO NOT POST BY THE REQUIRED DATE WILL BE DROPPED FOR NON PARTICIPATION.

Are there course assignments that I can begin working on before the term starts?

Some Providers will send students syllabi or grant them access to their online course before the term begins. If the Provider does not offer early access to the course or assignments, students will need to wait until the term start to begin their course work.

Who do I contact if I need help?

The OCICU Help Line at 1-877-740-5959 or ocicu@regis.edu.

What do I do if I encounter problems in ordering the course material?

When you are ordering the required materials it is important to remember to follow the directions posted on the OCICU site. You will need to order materials through the Provider, not your Home/Member school. Plan ahead as ground shipping can take up to 7 to 10 business days. If you would like to use Financial Aid to purchase books, you should check with your Home/Member school's bookstore and ask if they can order the materials for you.

Who do I contact if I need to drop or withdraw from the course?

All registration changes must be made at your Home/Member school, where the drop and withdrawal policy are determined. Because there is a possibility of incurring penalties, it is important to contact the Home/Member school prior to dropping a course.