

Paradise Valley Community College
Student Success Distance Learning Guide

2008

Developed by:

**Gary Smith
Sue Van Boven**

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I. Introduction

Welcome to Paradise Valley Community College's distance learning program. The information contained here is intended to provide you with a brief introduction to the skills necessary for becoming a successful distance learner. The following information will help you decide if distance learning is for you. Also included is information for beginning a distance learning course and how to use Blackboard, a course management tool.

Distance learning offers unique challenges and opportunities. The ideas presented here are not going to turn you into a model student overnight, but hopefully they will help you develop enduring strategies for success. We hope that you will explore the resources and suggestions offered here and will find your learning experience rewarding.

Each semester, PVCC offers over 150 courses through the Choices Distance Learning Program. Keep in mind all distance learning courses are as rigorous as traditional classes. Most of these course are not self paced and have specific due dates for course work.

Following are the categories of distance learning courses at PVCC, along with short descriptions:

Flex Express

Flex Express is a combination of in-class meetings and independent study. Classes meet a designated number of times, and a significant amount of course work and learning is accomplished outside of class. Instructors will provide learning activity packets (or online web-based) which include additional assignment to be completed outside of class by the specified due date. Students are required to attend all class sessions and complete the course according to the dates listed in the schedule (not self paced).

Guided Independent Learning (GIL)

Students must enroll in and start the course by the enrollment deadline (enrollment is limited). Instructor provides course materials (print based and/or computer-based) to guide the learning pace (with established due dates for assignments and exams) not self paced. Generally, assignments are turned in through the Center for Distance Learning. All course work must be completed by the official end date.

Hybrid

Students must enroll in and start a course by the enrollment deadline. A hybrid course combines face-to-face instruction and web- or computer-based learning in an educational environment that is non-specific as to time and place. Common features of hybrid courses include the delivery of the syllabus, lectures, readings and assignments on web pages; discussions and presentations through online message boards, e-mail and chat software; interactive tutorials and labs; and on-line assessments (or any combination of the above). In a hybrid class, a significant part of the course interaction takes place online and students can expect to spend at least as much time as they would in an on-campus section of the course.

Online

Students must enroll in and start a course by the enrollment deadline (enrollment is limited). These courses are conducted **entirely** online. Students must have high speed internet connection or use the PVCC computer commons (\$15 semester fee). Some online courses are set up as self paced, some are 8 weeks in length, and others are structured, with specific due dates for assignments and exams (not self paced) and run the entire semester. All course work must be completed by the official end date.

Open Entry Online (OE online)

OE Online offers an extended enrollment period. Students may begin a course at any time before the enrollment deadline. Students can complete the course entirely off campus, in the PVCC Computer Commons computer lab (\$15 semester fee), or a combination of both. Students work through the course at their own pace (self paced), and exit during the semester when course requirements have been met. All coursework must be completed by the official end date.

A. Is Distance Learning For You

To determine if distance learning is for you, take the distance learning surveys on the next page or online at:

<http://www.paradisevalley.edu> The PVCC webpage will appear. It is the perfect starting point for students new to the college and/or distance learning.

Select distance learning in the “campus guide” section, located on the left side of the webpage.

Will you be successful if you enroll in a Distance Learning Course at PVCC?

Answer by selecting YES or NO to all questions & find out...

Do you own a computer you can access EASILY a minimum of three to four times a week? YES NO

Does your computer have access to the Internet (a modem and an internet service provider)? YES NO

Do you know how to use email? YES NO

Do you prefer to earn college credit on a flexible schedule as opposed to coming to class at the same time every week for the duration of the course? YES NO

Are you willing to invest a significant portion of your own time - at least six hours per week – to a Distance Learning Course? YES NO

Do you prefer to learn at your own pace and convenience? YES NO

Are you self-disciplined enough to pace your own learning? YES NO

Do you have reasonably strong reading skills - can you read and understand college-level textbooks

I am a self-starter and get things done on time. YES NO

I am familiar with the basic functions of computers-including opening, saving, copying, and attaching files? YES NO

Can you accurately follow written directions?

YES NO

Do you have good problem-solving skills?

YES NO

Are you a self starter?

YES NO

Self-Test Result

Yes****If you answered “YES” to all or most of the questions, **YOU WILL PROBABLY ENJOY a Distance Learning Course .**

Let’s take the next survey to find out which type of class is best for you.

No****If you answered “NO” to all or most of the questions, you might be more successful in a **traditional structured class** that meets at certain times on a regular basis.

Let’s take the next survey to be certain.

My need to take this course now is:

- a..High – I need it immediately for a specific goal.
- b..Moderate -- I could take it on campus later or substitute another course.
- c..Low -- it could be postponed.

2. Feeling that I am part of a class is:

- a..Not particularly necessary to me.
- b..Somewhat important to me.
- c..Very important to me.

3. I would classify myself as someone who:

- a..Often gets things done ahead of time.
- b..Needs reminding to get things done on time.
- c..Puts things off until the last minute or doesn't complete them.

4. Classroom discussion is:

- a..Rarely helpful to me.
- b..Sometimes helpful to me.
- c..Almost always helpful to me.

5. When an instructor hands out directions for an assignment, I prefer:

- a..Figuring out the instructions myself.
- b..Trying to follow the directions on my own, then asking for help as needed.
- c..Having the instructions explained to me.

6. I need faculty comments on my assignments:

- a..Within a few weeks, so I can review what I did.
- b..Within a few days, or I forget what I did.
- c..Right away, or I get very frustrated.

7. Considering my professional and personal schedule, the amount of time I have to work on a Distance Learning course is:

- a..More than enough for an on campus course.

- b..The same as for a class on campus.
- c..Less than for a class on campus.

8. Coming to campus on a regular schedule is:

- a..Extremely difficult for me -- I have commitments during times when classes are offered.
- b..A little difficult, but I can rearrange my priorities to allow for regular attendance on campus.
- c..Easy for me.

9. As a reader, I would classify myself as:

- a..Good -- I usually understand the text without help.
- b..Average -- I sometimes need help to understand the text.
- c..Slower than average.

10. When I need help understanding the subject::

- a..I am comfortable approaching an instructor to ask for clarification.
- b..I am uncomfortable approaching an instructor, but do it anyway.
- c..I never approach an instructor to admit I don't understand something

EVALUATION RESULTS

*** If you answered “A” to all or most of the questions, YOU WILL PROBABLY ENJOY a Distance Learning Course . We recommend you take OE/OE online, GIL, or an Online course.

Advantages include the ability to ***set your own schedule and learn at your own pace (within the deadlines of the course)***. Keep in mind that this is a class in which ***you work in-***

dependently, with an instructor. You will learn from doing interactive activities on the internet, reading chapters in the text, and sharing your ideas online with your classmates. Assignments are submitted via email or through the Center for Distance Learning. Quizzes will be taken online.

*** If you answered “B” to all or most of the questions, YOU WILL PROBABLY ENJOY a Distance Learning Course . We recommend you take a Flex Express, Hybrid, or Online course.

Advantages include the ability to learn at your own pace (within the deadlines of the course). Class meetings are limited and you will *hear explanations, see demonstrations, and work with an instructor and classmates.* Keep in mind that the instructor will determine when assignments are due, when tests will be given, and will generally determine the pace at which material will be covered.

*** If you answered mostly “C”s, you probably will do best in a traditional classroom course or Hybrid, at least for the moment.

Advantages include hearing explanations, seeing demonstrations, and working with an instructor and classmates regularly. Keep in mind that the instructor will determine when assignments are due, when tests will be given, and will generally determine the pace at which material will be covered.

If you are not yet ready for a distance course but would like to take one in the future, here are some suggested courses/workshops to prepare yourself:

Computers,
study skills,
time management,
test taking

And here are the reasons why:

1. Distance learning students sometimes neglect their courses because of personal or professional circumstances. Having a compelling reason for taking the course helps motivate the student to stick with the course.

2. Some students prefer the independence of distance learning; others find the independence uncomfortable and miss being part of the classroom experience.
3. Distance learning courses give students greater freedom of scheduling, but they can require more self-discipline than on-campus classes.
4. Some people learn best by interacting with other students and instructors. Others learn better by listening, reading and reviewing on their own. Some distance learning courses provide less opportunity for group interaction than most on-campus courses.
5. Distance learning requires you to work from written directions.
6. It may take as long as two to three weeks to get comments back from your instructor in distance learning classes.
7. Distance learning requires at least as much time as on-campus courses. Students surveyed say that distance learning courses are as hard or harder than on-campus courses.
8. Most people who are successful with distance learning find it difficult to come to campus on a regular basis because of their work/family/personal schedules.
9. Print materials are the primary source of directions and information in distance learning courses.
10. Students who do well in distance learning courses are usually comfortable contacting the instructor as soon as they need help with the course.

B. Know Your Learning Style

Not all classes are presented in the same way. Instructors, both in a traditional classroom and distance, use different techniques and methods for explaining concepts. Some may choose to present the course material in a visual format, others use a lecture format, and others enhance lecture formats with hands-on applications. Knowing your learning style can be beneficial whether you are taking a course in a classroom or distance.

There are different styles of learning. Some of us are visual learners; we learn and remember by seeing things (seeing it). Some learn best by listening to a lecture (hearing it). Others are hands-on learners; they need to manipulate objects to demonstrate learning (doing it). Answer a few questions below to learn more about your own learning style.

Important - Remember that no test or assessment knows you better than you know yourself.

1. You prefer learning with a teacher who likes to use:
 - A. the whiteboard, power point slides, charts, graphs
 - B. class discussions, lectures
 - C. group work on projects, labs

2. You have a problem with your foot. You would prefer the doctor :
 - A. Showed you the x-ray
 - B. Told you about the problem
 - C. Used a model of a foot to explain the problem

The following information is about learning styles in general and is not specific to styles related to distance learning. Now you can develop strategies that will help make your learning experience a success. There are many different theories and styles of learning, that have been categorized into three general styles - The Visual Learner (the seer), The Aural Learner (the hearer), and The Tactile Learner (the doer).

Three Types of Learning

If you answered “A” you are

a. *The Visual Learner (the "Seer")*

If you have identified that you are a visual learner, meaning that you learn best by "seeing" the course information presented in various ways, here are strategies to consider:

- Course information will usually be presented in a text format, so you will see and read the course information on the computer and textbook. Read the text, examine diagrams or pictures, and then relate what you see to what you read

- Textbook materials enhance written lectures by providing diagrams, maps, illustrations, etc.

- Research other Internet sites which could provide additional information about the topic

- Read the course description from the PVCC course catalog or PVCC website prior to taking the course
- Contact the instructor for further information

If you answered “B” you are

b. The Aural Learner (the "Hearer")

If you learn best by listening to lectures and discussing in class, then some distance courses may present a challenge for you. You may need to adapt your learning style to the visual text-based format used in most distance courses. Knowing what the course involves ahead of time, before the class begins, might be your best avenue for determining if taking a distance class is for you. Here are some strategies that may help:

- Read the course description from the PVCC Course Catalog or the PVCC website
- Contact the instructor for information about teaching style and course content
- Talk with other students who have taken distance courses, particularly the one you are interested in taking
- Identify courses that have a video component. Check out the website for further information.

If you answered “C” you are

c. The Tactile Learner (the "Doer")

If you process information using a tactile, hands-on approach here are some suggestions that may help in your course:

- Engage in discussions with other students in your class
- Identify courses that have a lab or other experiential

component

- Find others who are taking the course and form study groups
- Contact the instructor for information prior to taking the course

II. Time

No matter how convenient or flexible distance education may be, taking a distance course requires time. You might be saved some commuting time, but you might also spend more time with technology concerns. Whether the time you spend on course-related work is more or less than you might experience in a traditional, classroom-based course, it is still time you need to reserve and manage carefully. When evaluating your distance learning course options, consider how much time you have to dedicate to coursework every week during the semester, and estimate the time commitment the course will require. There will be specific due dates throughout the semester for assignments.

A. Managing Time

Distance learners often benefit from carefully structuring what time they have available. Identify what time of day or night you do your best work, and when you are able to access the Internet and your course materials. Set aside a certain time each day, or a few days during each week, to work on your course, and stick to this schedule. Be aware at the start of the course whether you are required to participate in activities at any specific times, and plan accordingly. If you are in a different time zone remember to plan accordingly for your course submissions.

III. Balancing Responsibilities and Setting Goals

Vital to a successful learning experience is the ability to balance your responsibilities. Knowing how to set priorities is the key to getting the greatest benefit from your distance education experience. Determine early in the semester exactly what work is required and do your best to plan ahead. Do not hesitate to ask for advice or help from your instructor.

A. Managing Stress

Strategies for managing course-related stress include:

- **Know your deadlines.** These include course deadlines as well as deadlines and important events occurring elsewhere in your life while you are enrolled in the course.
- **Plan ahead.** If you know that your time will be consumed by a non-course related activity during a particular week, do your course-related activities ahead of time. Don't try to do an entire week's worth of assignments in one sitting.
- **Know your available resources, especially technological resources, and have them at hand when you are working in your course.**
- **Keep in touch with your instructor.** If you do fall behind, let your instructor know immediately, and ask him/her for assistance in planning how you will catch up.

B. Student Accountability

The further you progress in higher and continuing education, the more responsibility you will need to take for your own learning. Ensure consistent access to a computer and have an alternative plan in case you have computer problems. Remember there is a computer lab at the college.

C. Self-Directed Learning

As you explore the many avenues of learning available and begin to define your individual path, you will still need to work with your instructors to make sure you are meeting the requirements of the individual courses. To become successful you must transition into the role of a self-directed learner. *A self-directed learner knows how to work independently, how to motivate self, how to organize activities and how to manage time.*

D. Understand Expectations

In order to meet course requirements and instructor expectations, you will need a clear understanding of these requirements and expectations. Take time to carefully look over the course syllabus (and print it out). The syllabus which

acts as a contract between you and the instructor, will list student expectations, a course description, a list of objectives, content summary, and student work required to complete the course.

E. Seek Clarification

If you have questions regarding content, contact the instructor immediately. In the distance learning environment instructors have fewer cues to alert them to your confusion. They cannot see your puzzled expression or hear you ask, “What?” If something is unclear to you, it may very well be unclear to the rest of the students in the class. Your questions may help others in the learning process as well. So ask, early and as often as necessary.

F. Become an “Active Learner”

To be successful in this environment, actively seek ways you can best understand the course material.

- Read, listen to, and participate in the course
- Become involved in discussing and defining course topics
- Critically evaluate the information you receive

G. Develop Self-Discipline

Self-Discipline may be the most important characteristic of a successful distance learner. With it, you have a tool that leads you to become an efficient time manager, and without it you may encounter difficulties. Here are some tips to help:

Set a realistic schedule

Scheduling is all about priorities. If there is insufficient time in your personal schedule to do the work of the course, you will be frustrated. You will not have

to keep a class attendance schedule, but you will have to meet the course work deadlines. Set up a schedule of when you will access the class materials and study, then stick to it. Your instructor will not extend the end of course date to accommodate your personal schedule.

Set interim goals and deadlines

Look over the course requirements and make a plan to accomplish parts of them in reasonable time periods. These accomplishments become your source of encouragement and constructive feedback.

Organize your study schedule

If you are taking a three-credit course, you will be spending six to ten hours a week on the course. Minimize distractions while working on your course materials.

Stay in touch with your instructor

If your instructor provides an email address, email your instructor regularly. You may have difficulty asking your instructor a question about your work. Your instructor can help, just ask. Discuss areas that are difficult and unclear. Ask for help. Your instructor will generally answer your email within 72 hours, Monday through Friday except holidays. Check your emails often.

Take time to evaluate your own progress

Review the course objectives and standards often to see if you are progressing and are on track to successfully complete the course. Review your grades periodically.

Plan your time for tests wisely

Be sure you have mastered the material that will be the basis for a particular test before you take the test. Allow yourself enough time to complete the test.

Connect with your classmates

Often a classmate's idea or encouragement can get you over a hurdle. Check into the discussion group for your course regularly. Invite students to correspond with you through email. Set up study groups.

Reward yourself

A good personal system of rewards can be great a motivator to pursuing a task. The expectation of a reward can increase your effectiveness and concentration. So, what's your reward going to be?

IV. Study Habits and Skills

A. Motivation & Goal Planning

Setting useful goals:

- Describe what you want to accomplish with as much detail as possible, in terms that can clearly be evaluated.
- If it's a larger, longer term goal, break it into shorter pieces and specify target completion dates.
- Make your goals ones that you are actually capable of obtaining, but that are challenging enough to take energy and discipline.



Motivation is the key to success in school. Although it's possible to list some hints here to improve motivation, pure motivation has to come from within; you just have to keep plugging away. You are responsible for your study habits, searching out resources and assistance, and managing your time. You have to want to do well enough to put forth the effort.

- Start early. The sooner you start, the sooner you'll be free to do other activities, the less you'll worry, and the more time you'll have to recover from mistakes and wrong directions.
- If you have a long, hard task, make it as comfortable for you as possible. Do it in short bits (but stay with it), do it wearing comfortable clothes, among friends, in familiar surroundings... whatever it takes to keep your spirits up while you work at it.
- If necessary, pause every now and then to remind yourself why you have chosen to take on certain work, what you expect to get out of it, where it will lead you. Once you're convinced that the work in your program is linked to your goals, you'll be much more apt to work willingly.

- Completed tasks keep interest and motivation at a higher level. Try to complete a task or accomplish a sub-goal, before you quit for the day.
- Give yourself credit for anything you do.
- **REWARD YOURSELF.** Reward yourself for studying, learning a difficult concept, or completing a project. Go to a movie, spend time with your friends, or do the things you put off in order to study. This reinforces your behavior. You are more likely to study again and concentrate if you know there is a reward at the end of completing a task. Keep rewarding yourself when you've done your best. We all need this to encourage us.
- You're in charge. Remind yourself that you need to study, work on an assignment, etc., even if you don't feel like it. If you wait till you feel inspired, you'll be waiting forever.
- **Make a public commitment.** Tell someone you see on a regular basis what your goals and when your deadline are. Then ask them to check on you to see what you have gotten done.
- **Think small.** If you've got a hundred letters to write, send a postcard a day. Going for too much too soon is a big reason why many people fail at self-management. It doesn't have to be "all or nothing."
- Study groups help to increase motivation because you have to prepare for them.
- Get enough sleep so that you can work at top efficiency the next day!
- Get inspired by talking to your professor and finding out more about their experiences in the field.
- **Clarify your personal goals.** Articulate them, write them down, post them on your door, mirror or notebook so you'll see them frequently.
- **Make something you normally do and enjoy contingent upon doing the avoided task:** "I'll work on my term paper in the library for an hour before going out."

When you run into snags:

- Don't worry about or dwell on things that go wrong. Concentrate on your successes. Remember that little successes build up just as quickly as little failures.
- Expect to and forgive yourself for backsliding and making mistakes.
- Learn from your mistakes, but don't dwell on them.
- Know your problem areas: socializing? reading? napping? day dreaming? Recognize when you are doing it and call yourself on it.

seling.

- Write out a plan for yourself. Jot down personal and academic goals and priorities, and re-read them when you're in a slump.
- You don't have to be a perfectionist. Make approaching your goals the basis of your self-respect rather than reaching them.
- Don't allow feelings of inadequacy to get you down. Think about all the things that you have going for you...your awful task will look a lot less awful within the context of a generally good-quality life.
- Expect a certain amount of tension. Use that tension as energy to get yourself going.
- Give yourself time to succeed. And if first you don't succeed...

B. Memory & Concentration

Improving Concentration

Reduce external distractions:

- Find a good place to study such as the library or an empty classroom. If it seems too quiet, get used to it by starting with short periods of time there. If you are a commuter student, stay on campus after class or arrive early during the week. On weekends find a library near your home to work.
- Minimize visual distractions by studying in a place where you will not see classmates walking by.
- If you prefer studying to music, chose something without vocals.
- Don't put temptation in your path. Don't turn on the TV until your day's homework is finished. If you're home, unplug your telephone while you study and hang a "Do Not Dis-

Concentration and Your Body

The pressure of deadlines and expectations may make you ignore your body's needs. If you don't take care of your body, fatigue can cause anxiety and limit your performance.

Throughout the semester maintain good habits of diet, exercise, sleep and rest.

Take 10 minutes to relax before meals; eat well-balanced food slowly; make mealtime an opportunity to calm down.

During long study sessions, drink lots of fluids, increase caloric intake, and eat frequent small meals. Use coffee, tea and soft drinks only in moderation.

Schedule 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night and plan a regular bedtime.

Don't oversleep, don't under sleep. If

turb" sign on your door.

Discourage internal distractions:

- Keep your calendar or "to do" list nearby as you study and record there any reminders to yourself or worries that may distract you while studying. By writing these things down, you can clear your mind for studying.
- Use a concentration score sheet. Each time you find your mind wandering, make a check mark on the sheet. Within just a few study sessions you should find that you have far fewer check marks and far greater concentration.
- When you find yourself consistently daydreaming or working without comprehension, stop and take a break. For 5 to 10 minutes, talk to someone, take a walk, daydream, relax. Then begin studying again.

Maintain interest: simple passive reading is not going to be enough. Think of some ways you might create interest in a class in which you are confused or bored:

- Find a study partner or form a study group.
- Get to know the professor better.
- Ask questions in class.
- Do some extra practice or research, such as exploring the internet.
- Teach an assignment to someone else.

you must cut down on sleep, try going to bed at your regular bedtime and getting up early. Get your sleep at night, and avoid daytime naps. Concentration dips both before and after a nap.

If you are feeling anxious, relax yourself periodically. If you can't sleep, exercise during the day and plan to spend 30 minutes relaxing before you go to bed.

Choose an exercise you enjoy...jogging, swimming, yoga, etc...and build up gradually until it's a regular part of your week.

To fight fatigue, use your body to help you concentrate. Choose or create a study environment with a straight but comfortable chair (but not too relaxing), a desk with all the equipment you need, daylight or indirect light which is bright enough but doesn't glare on your book or strain your eyes.

Study according to your biorhythms: schedule your most difficult subjects when you are at peak mental efficiency and plan to do easier tasks when you are mentally at low efficiency.

Find your "prime time." For you, this might vary. But for most students, one hour of daytime study is equivalent to one and a half hours at night because their concentration level during the day is much greater.

Take regular study breaks, even if you don't feel like it. Plan breaks to include light exercise to help you

- Make the assignment into a speech or song.
- Develop a strong motivation; think of a reason why you want to learn this.
- Find a tutor or find an additional book on the subject if the course and/or reading material is too difficult.

stay awake and revitalize.

Improving Memory

Forgetting is a natural process, with the greatest losses occurring within the first 24 hours of learning. It is essential to review readings and lecture notes within one or two days of initial exposure, with brief additional reviews interspersed in later weeks. Here are some basic ways in which we memorize:

- **Meaningful Organization:** We usually remember only five to seven items at a time. If you can organize 25 items into five groups of five, you'll find them much easier to manage.
- **Recitation:** Most of us have forgotten just how powerful this tool can be. Recitation works. When you recite something in your own words, you pay more attention. You get immediate feedback. You know if you are able to explain something in your own words out loud that you understand it. And when you hear something, you have used an entirely different part of the brain.
So recite as you read, as you review your class notes, and as you study. For material which you need to remember in some detail, reciting should take up 60%-80% of your study time relative to reading. Make use of flashcards as a recitation tool of anything you need to learn. And find a partner to ask each other questions and answer out loud.
- **Mental Visualization:** Most of us remember what we see more easily than what we read or hear. If possible, determine a way to visualize each new concept. Convert it to a chart or graph; draw it; make a mental video; find out what the people you are learning about look like, or even make a description up.
- **Association:** By making a link to something you already know, you should be able to remember new information more efficiently. Ask

yourself: Is this like something I already know? Does it sound like something else? Can I use it for something similar? Is it related to existing information I know?

- **Acronyms:** take the first letter of each item to be memorized and spell a word or phrase. For example, in order to remember the names of the Great Lakes, remember HOMES: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior. An example of a phrase is "Kings play chess on Friday generally speaking." This refers to biological classification of organisms. The most basic division is "kingdom," so the "k" in "Kings" refers to it. The next is "phylum," which "play" refers to, then "chess" is "class," "on" is "order," "Friday" is "family," "generally" is "genus," and "speaking" is "species."
- **Rhymes**, such as "i before e except after c," can enhance retention as well.

Memory is "context dependent" and "state dependent." Studying in a physical situation and emotional mood similar to the one in which you will be tested increases your chances to recall information. Make your studying situation as similar as possible to the testing situation. When possible, go review your materials in the classroom. Being too relaxed during your study time does not match the level of activation you reach during your tests (the reverse is also true-- if you get too psyched-up during your tests, you will not be able to recall your material because your test mood will not match your studying mood).

Try to memorize material for each class on a different day, so that the information for one class doesn't interfere with another. It also helps to review the night before or a few hours before the test, so there will be less chance of other information interfering with the acquisition of the test material.

Review soon, and in frequent small doses. While longer study sessions are effective for writing or for creative projects, most study is best done in short sessions with breaks (for example, study for 50 minutes and take a break for 10). As you walk to your next class, recall the main points of the lecture you just attended. Reviewing lecture notes for just five minutes after class can be a great help in recalling information later. Then review your lecture notes again that day or the next.

V. Communication Skills

A. Writing Clearly

Being a productive member of a distance learning community requires you to communicate clearly and concisely when you write.

A few simple guidelines can help you produce clear, effective written contributions to your course. As always, review guidelines for assignments:

- Keep your sentences short
- Keep your paragraphs short
- Watch for careless errors; check your spelling and grammar
- READ your posting before you submit it
- Correct any awkward or unclear areas before you post the final version in quotation marks and identify the author, so you do not accidentally plagiarize someone

B. Discussions

In many courses, you will be required to join in class discussions and respond to classmates' comments. These discussions may become complex, intense, and even provocative. Here are some tips to help you with discussions:

- Know what the instructor expects of your discussion response
- Think before you write
- Reread your response prior to sending

Before you send off a hastily written, emotionally based reaction to another's contribution, develop your ideas into a less emotional and more reasonable response. Then wait a few minutes and reread what you have written before you

submit your response. Learning how to turn a reaction into a response will make your course contributions more meaningful – and may earn you a higher mark for participation, if participation counts toward your grade. Pausing and rereading gives you the opportunity to review your writing for organization, clarity, and correctness.

VI. Community

A. Building a “Classroom” Environment

Distance learning does not mean that you are learning alone. You will have a class consisting of instructor(s), fellow students, and perhaps others with whom you will interact. Your instructor will build a class environment through discussion questions, group projects, and other activities. You help build this classroom environment through your participation. Seeing and speaking to others is not a necessary component in getting to know someone. Through your messages and discussions, you have the opportunity to develop personal and professional relationships. The classmates you get to know may come from very diverse situations and can offer a wealth of knowledge and experience.

Your fellow classmates and instructors provide resources, information and support. Look for areas where you may post reviews for books you have read on pertinent topics, links to online resources, and observations for specific topics. Within your ‘classroom’, you and your fellow classmates can build a collective knowledge base which may become invaluable even after your coursework is completed.

VII. Library Services

Library services are available to all registered PVCC students at:

<http://paradisevalley.edu/>. Select the “Library” option under Campus Guide. A wealth of information awaits you!

VIII. PVCC Catalog

The complete PVCC College Catalog can be accessed and ordered from the college web page:

<http://paradisevalley.edu/> Under “Quick Links” use the arrow key to scroll to “catalogue” or you may contact the college and have brochures/catalog mailed to you.

IX. Technology Considerations

As a distance student, your computer becomes an extremely important interface to your course(s), instructor(s), and your fellow students. In order to effectively use this interface, it will need to meet certain minimal requirements. If your computer cannot perform the functions you need to complete a class, you will have to make the effort to upgrade your equipment. It is not required that you own computer equipment; however, it is strongly recommended that you have a computer that will be available to you on a dedicated basis that will meet your personal study habits. Additionally, have a back up plan should your primary equipment fail or become unavailable. You may sign up to use the computers in the Computer Commons on campus. There is a semester charge of \$15.

The computer system you plan to use should meet the following requirements:

- **Minimum:** equivalent of a Pentium II processor with Windows 98 or higher operating system, or a Macintosh G3 processor with System 8 or higher operating system. The computer should have at least 64 MB RAM and a 56K baud modem. High speed connection is highly recommended.
- **Connection to the Internet/WWW.** Internet access may be provided by a dial up or cable modem Internet service, or obtained through a network connection (i.e. college or business LAN).

- Graphical web browser software.
- Windows users: Internet Explorer 5.5 and higher, or Netscape 6.2 and higher.
- Macintosh users: Internet Explorer 5.1 and higher, Netscape 6.2 and higher.
- You cannot use a beta or preview version of web browser software.
- The web browser must allow session cookies.
- The browser's encryption or cipher strength should be 128-bit.
- Valid, working email address that accepts mail from PVCC.
- Word processing software to create exchange and share written assignment documents.

Depending on course requirements and/or your preference, you may need:

- A printer that will allow you to print out documents, such as the syllabus, course schedule, or assignments.
- Course specific software/hardware: Check with your professor or campus to determine whether course assignments may require you to use additional software and hardware. (i.e., MS Word, Office2007, scanner for graphic arts course, spreadsheet software for a business course).
- Your Internet Service Provider (ISP) is responsible for helping you configure your computer system so you can connect to the Internet/WWW. Your ISP will assist you with problems concerning connectivity to the Internet/WWW and the PVCC web site. If you have difficulty connecting or maintaining a connection to the PVCC web site, contact your ISP immediately to determine the source of the problem. If you are disconnected from the Internet or the PVCC web site without warning, contact your ISP immediately.

X. Your Next Steps

A. Specifically how to start your course:

Flex Express

Prior to the start of the course, you may receive a letter from your instructor with information about the course. In any case, be sure to note and **attend** the first class meeting.

GIL

On the first day of the semester, pick up your learning packet(s) and syllabus in the Center for Distance Learning room E125. Be sure to read and sign the agreement sheet and leave it at the Center for Distance Learning. Your Learning packet will explain how to proceed with your course, when assignments are due, and where to turn them in.

Hybrid

Attend the first class meeting. Be on time. Your instructor will explain the course setup.

Online

One week before classes begin, you should receive a letter from your instructor with information on starting the course. If you don't receive this letter by the start of the semester, be sure to contact your instructor. Students can also access their course through a link on the PVCC Online Web Site. Online students should take the online briefing. Go to the PVCC web page <http://www.paradisevalley.edu>, select the online course button, which will take you to the PVCC Online Web Site.

OE Online

You must email your instructor at the start of your class. Your instructor will then email you with the information to begin your course. Your online briefing is located at <http://ml.gwc.maricopa.edu/indexpv.html>

In General:

- Register with Paradise Valley Community College (Admissions & Records) for your distance course. Be sure you have an email address. You can register on line or call 602-787-7000 or visit the office.
- Get an email account:

Via HOTMAIL

Type: <http://www.hotmail.com> in the URL box

Click on: the “Sign Up” button

Click the red arrow under the “Free” email option

Create: A Unique Windows Live ID, you choose

Type: Unique password, you choose

Type: Re-enter unique password

Type: A different email address, if you have one. This information is not required

Type: Secret question, choose one that won't change

Type: Answer to the secret question you choose

Type: All the required and appropriate “Profile Information” (i.e. first name, last name, etc.)

Type: The characters you see in the picture in the “Type characters” box

Read: “Windows Live Service Agreement and Privacy Statement”

Click on: the I accept button

At this point, if there are any errors in your application they will come up at this time and you will be directed as to what it is you need to fix. Also, if the login name you have selected has already been used, try another login name of your creation

A “Congratulations” page appears. You must click the “Activate My Account” button in order to activate your account

Read: “Microsoft Service Agreement”

Click on: the I accept button

Select: Any FREE Newsletters & Offers

Click on: Continue. at the bottom of the page

Your e-mail Inbox will appear

When done...

Click on: the “Sign Out” link, located in the top of the web page to log off your Hotmail account.

Via YAHOO

Type: <http://www.Yahoomail.com> in the URL box

Click on: the “Sign Up” link

Type: all the required and appropriate “Profile Information” (i.e. first name, last name, etc.)

Type: Unique Yahoo!ID (username), you choose

Type: Unique password, you choose

Type: Re-enter unique password

Type: Secret question, choose one that won't change

Type: Answer to the secret question you choose

Verify your registration by typing the series of characters that appear on the screen in the box titled “Enter the code shown:”

Read the Terms of Service and click the I Agree button to submit the form

At this point, if there are any errors in your application they will come up at this time and you will be directed as to what it is you need to fix. Also, if the login name you have selected has already been used, try an-

other login name of your creation

The “Yahoo! Mail” page will appear on the screen with Your New Yahoo! Mail Address

Click on: the “Continue without installing Yahoo! Toolbar” button.

The Yahoo! Mail Beta screen appears. Click the “No Thanks, remind me later” link

The Yahoo Mail! Home page appears. Click the “Go to My Mail” button

Click on: appropriate folder (i.e. Inbox folder to retrieve current messages)

When done...

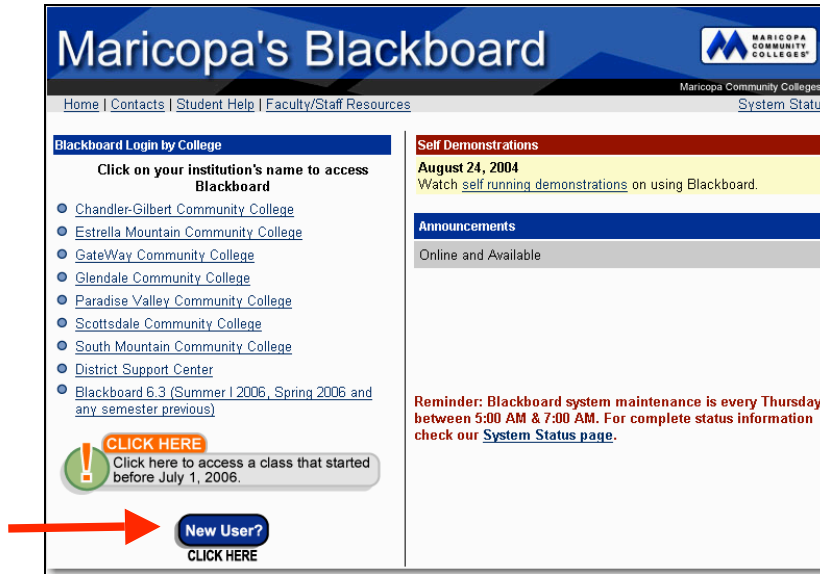
Click on: the “Sign Out” link, located in the upper-right corner to log off your Yahoo account.

- Find your Blackboard user name (Maricopa Enterprise ID) and password.

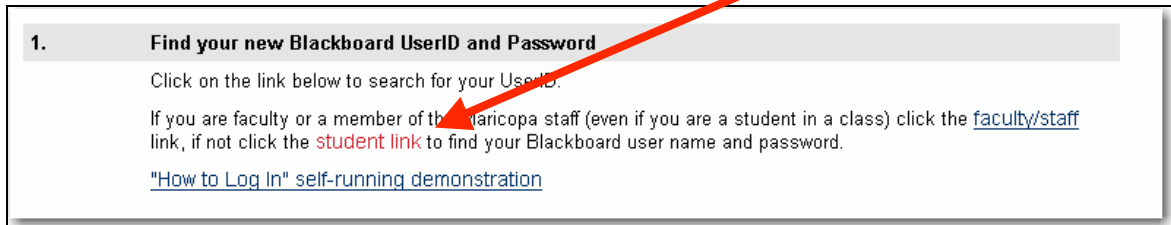
B. Find Your Maricopa Enterprise ID and Set Your Password

1. Go to Maricopa’s Blackboard at <http://www.maricopa.edu/blackboard>.

2. Click the blue **New User?** button below the college links.



3. On the **UserID Lookup** screen, click on the words, **student link**.



4. If you see the following screen, you are at the right place!
Click the **“First Visit? Discover your MEID and Set Your Password”** link.



5. At the **Maricopa Enterprise ID Lookup** screen, follow the prompts to:
 - Enter your **First Name, Last Name, and Zip Code.**
 - Enter your **Social Security Number OR Birth Date.**
 - Click **Next.**
6. At the **Set Password and Challenge Questions** screen, you will see your MEID in a blue box. This is your Maricopa Enterprise ID you will need to login to Blackboard.

Follow the prompts on the screen to:

- **Set your password.** Note the rules.
 - **Set your Challenge Questions.** Be sure to select questions and answers you will remember. You will need them if you need to reset or change your password in the future.
 - Click **Submit.**
7. At the Summary of updates screen, you can click the link to login to Blackboard.



Make note of your MEID and password as you will need them every time you login to Blackboard.

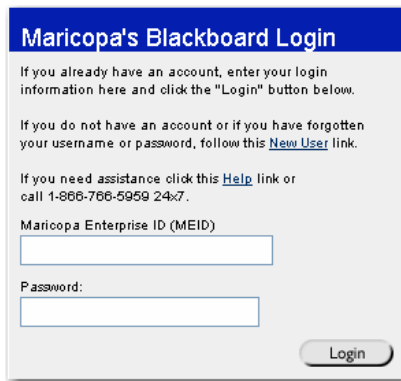
- **Prepare yourself for distance learning by completing the distance briefing.**
<http://www.paradisevalley.edu>
- **Purchase text books and other required material**
- **Attend and participate in your course on a regular basis (starting with the first day of the semester)**
- **Refer to the PVCC Distance Learning Web Pages for answers to your on-going questions.**
<http://www.paradisevalley.edu>

XI. How To Use Blackboard

Login to Blackboard

1. Open your browser and enter this URL in the address line of your browser:
<http://www.maricopa.edu/blackboard>
2. Select your college.

3. Enter your **Maricopa Enterprise ID and Password**; then click **Login**.



Maricopa's Blackboard Login

If you already have an account, enter your login information here and click the "Login" button below.

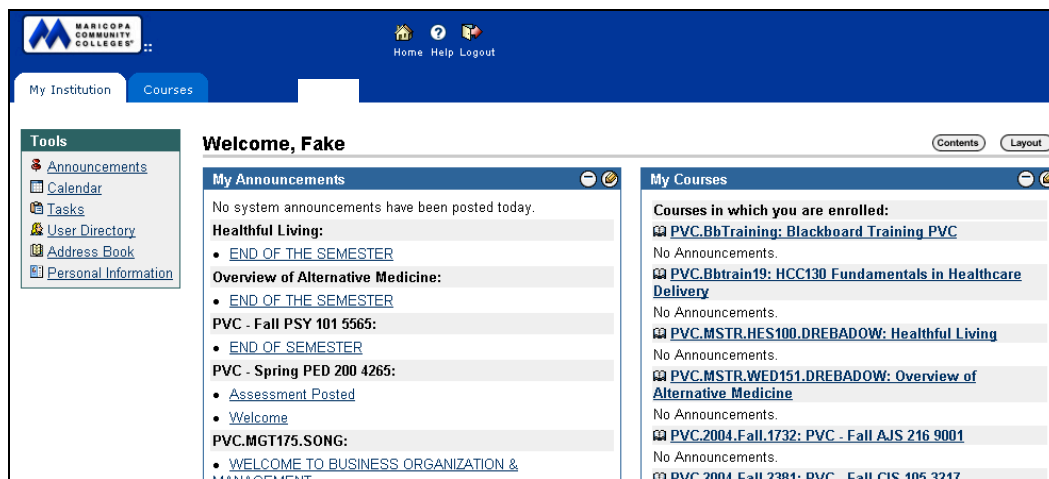
If you do not have an account or if you have forgotten your username or password, follow this [New User](#) link.

If you need assistance click this [Help](#) link or call 1-866-766-5959 24x7.

Maricopa Enterprise ID (MEID):

Password:

4. Blackboard's **My Institution** screen will display. This is your Blackboard "Home Page." The courses you are taking which are using Blackboard will be listed on the right side of the screen under My Courses. From here you can click the link for the course you wish to enter.



The screenshot shows the Blackboard My Institution page for Maricopa Community College. The page is titled "Welcome, Fake" and features a navigation bar with "My Institution" and "Courses" tabs. On the left, there is a "Tools" menu with links for Announcements, Calendar, Tasks, User Directory, Address Book, and Personal Information. The main content area is divided into three sections: "My Announcements" (no announcements posted), "Overview of Alternative Medicine" (listing several courses), and "My Courses" (listing enrolled courses such as "PVC.BbTraining: Blackboard Training PVC", "PVC.Bbtrain19: HCC130 Fundamentals in Healthcare Delivery", "PVC.MSTR.HES100.DREBADOW: Healthful Living", "PVC.MSTR.WED151.DREBADOW: Overview of Alternative Medicine", "PVC.2004.Fall.1732: PVC - Fall AJS 216 9001", and "PVC.2004.Fall.2381: PVC - Fall CIS 105 3217").

Enter Your Email Address in Blackboard

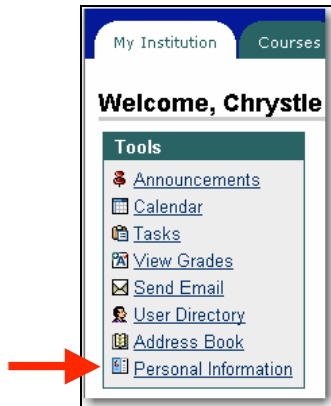
In order for you to use Email in Blackboard for communication with your instructor, **it is very important for you to have a valid email address and you must enter your email address in the Blackboard system.**

If you do not have an email address, you may sign up with a free service. Here are a few sites where you can get a free email account:

- <http://www.yahoo.com>
- <http://www.msn.com>
- <http://gmail.google.com>

1. Login to Blackboard. The first screen you will see is the **My Institution** screen.

2. Click on the **Personal Information** link in the Tools palette.



3. Click **Edit Personal Information**.



4. Enter your **Email Address**.
5. Scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click **Submit**.
6. Click **OK** twice to return to the My Institution screen.

Maintain Your Maricopa Enterprise Account

Whenever you wish to update your Maricopa Enterprise Account information or if you wish to change your password, you will use the Student Personal Administration Tool (SPAT).

1. Open your browser and go to: <http://spat.maricopa.edu>
2. Enter your MEID and Password and Login if you want to edit your account information or change your password.

OR

Click the appropriate link if you have forgotten your MEID or Password.



XII. Where to Get Help

A. Help Desk, contact information

The information center, located in the Kranitz Student Center Hallway can be accessed in person, by phone 602-787-7412 or 602-787-6711 or via the web site:

The Center for Distance Learning is the contact place for distance courses. You may call 602-787-6754 or 602-787-6750 or go to the web page:

<http://paradisevalley.edu/>, then under Quick Links, scroll to “information”

B. Center for Distance Learning

The Center for Distance Learning is the contact place for distance courses. You may call 602-787-6754 or 602-787-6750 or go to the web page:

<http://paradisevalley.edu/>, then select the “Distance Learning” option under Campus Guide.

C. PVCC Student Homepage

You can access information at:

The Center for Distance Learning is the contact place for distance courses. You may call 602-787-6754 or 602-787-6750 or go to the web page:

<http://paradisevalley.edu/>, then select the “students” option on the top menu.

Check your email

Examine your academic record

Read the latest PVCC news
Search Library Resources
Explore the Job Connection
Visit without having to find a spot to park

D. Other Resources

- Learning Support Center- E-180, (602)787-7180
- Library- E102, (602) 787-7200
- Computer Commons- E137, (602) 787-6760

(All located in Learning Resources *Building E*)

XIII. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is Distance Learning/choices@pvc?

A. At PVCC, distance learning means that the course has a distance learning component as compared to a class that meets regularly in a classroom with the instructor. Choices@pvc is a distance learning program that offers five different learning options.

Q. Does PVCC offer any computer or business courses online?

A. Yes.... You can access the [Online Web page](#).

Q. Do distance learning class credits transfer to the AZ Public Universities?

A. Distance Learning classes at PVCC are treated the same in transfer as the same class taught in a traditional mode. Contact PVCC Advisement to check on the transferability of specific course or courses.

Q. Do I need to take an orientation/briefing for each class?

A. No matter which orientation/briefing you take, you need to take it only once. However, for an online class, you must email your instructor with the answers to the ques-

tions at the end of the online briefing.

Q. How do I learn more about the choices@pvc Distance Learning Program?

A. Go to www.paradisevalley.edu web page, select “distance learning” under campus guide.

Q. How do I get information I need about other programs, classes, etc.?

A. Go to www.paradisevalley.edu web page, select “advisement” under quick link or call

602-787-7060 when you have questions concerning:

1. degrees and certificates offered at PVC
2. degree requirements offered at PVC
3. transfer credits accepted by or from PVC

B. Go to www.paradisevalley.edu web page, select “admission” under campus guide or call

602-787-7000 when you have questions concerning:

1. courses that transfer to PVC
2. admission requirements
3. enrolling for classes via internet

C. Go to www.paradisevalley.edu web page, select “courses” under campus guide when you want to know what classes are offered this semester.

Q. Are you in the correct section?

A. Some distance learning courses may be taken in either a graded (A,B,C,...) section or in a P/Z (credit/no credit) section.

For example:

Subject Code	Grade	P/Z
BPC101AA	3110	8110

In a P/Z section students will receive either a grade of "P" or "Z"

"P" means Pass -- Credit equal to a grade of "C" or better.

"Z" means No Credit earned

"P" and "Z" grades will appear on your transcript but are not calculated in your grade point average at PVCC.

Q. What is your Start Date?

A. The first day of the semester, or The Monday **AFTER** you register once the semester has begun.

Online students confirm your **Start Date** with your instructor(s).
(Many online classes begin the first day of the semester.)

Why is your Start Date so important?

The **Start Date** tells you when to begin your class.
The **Start Date** will be the basis for any refunds should you withdraw from the class.

* If you DO NOT begin your class by the **Start Date** , you may be withdrawn by the instructor.



Q. How do I withdraw should the need arise?

A. Process an “Enrollment/Schedule Adjustment Form” in the Admissions & Records office.

Phone: Admissions & Records office (602) 787-7020

Email: Contact your Instructor to let him/she know.



Q. Can I get a refund?

A. Refer to the refund policy as stated in the current PVCC class schedule. Refunds are based upon:

- The official Start Date AND
- The date the withdrawal is received in the Admissions & Records office.



Q. Where can I get a Student ID?

A. Many campus resources require a student ID card. The Center for Distance Learning does and the Computer Commons does. You can obtain a PVCC student ID card from our College Safety office. (*Kranitz Student Center*)

Visit the [College Safety](#) Website for more information. 602-787-7900.

Q. Where is the testing center?

A. If you are a GIL or Flex Express student, you may have to take your exams in the [Assessment/Testing Center](#) located in KSC 226. OE Online and Online students do all their testing online.

Testing for IT students is left up to the discretion of the instructor.

XIV. Conclusion

This document will help you get started as a distance learner. Don't hesitate to ask when you have a question. Your first resource should be the instructor or department providing your course. For further help you may also consult the Choices department. Good luck!

Which problem?	Who to contact?
Course materials or assignments	Your instructor
Blackboard access or navigation	PVCC help desk, 1-888-994-4433 or http://www.maricopa.edu/blackboard
Internet access	Your internet service provider (ISP)
Computer problems	Your computer manufacturer or software publisher

Enjoy your learning experience!

Some content provided by:
Indiana University
Monroe Community College
SUNY Community College