



Welcome to Distance Learning at Seminole State College!

The Distance Learning Department would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and provide you with some preliminary information about distance learning procedures, requirements, and support resources. If you are taking an online course for the first time, the following information should be helpful in getting you started this term. Even if you have taken DL courses in the past, please take a few minutes to read through this information carefully, as the information or procedures for DL courses may have changed since you last enrolled.

If you would like view a listing of the DL courses offered this term, visit the Seminole State of Florida Distance Learning Home Page at <http://www.seminolestate.edu/dl/> and select the link for our "Course Listings" to view our current course offerings. Our term schedules also contain instructor contact information and links to course web sites where available.

Recommendations for Success in Distance Learning

Distance learning courses are not for everyone. They require a unique commitment from the student. Good time management skills, motivation, and self-discipline are essential for success in a DL environment. Distance learning courses are not easier or harder than on-campus courses, but they do require a special kind of dedication.

We strongly advise that you take stock of yourself and examine your learning preferences before taking a DL course to see if this mode of learning is right for you. Take our **Successful Skills Survey**, available for download on the our web site, to help determine if distance learning courses fit your learning style. Also, please visit the "Self Assessment" link on the DL Web Site at <http://www.seminolestate.edu/dl/students/self-assess.htm> for an online version of our survey, as well as links to more questionnaires and surveys that can help you judge your readiness for learning at a distance.

Online Courses

Online Course Components:

An online course is web-based instruction, delivered over the Internet. The online courses at Seminole State College of Florida are delivered using the Sakai online course development platform. If you are taking a Sakai course, please review the **Using Sakai @ Seminole State College of Florida** handout available on the DL web site.

Online course components provide for interaction between you and your instructor, and between you and your fellow students. Your online course may include most or all of the following components:

- World Wide Web updates and information on the class
- Email communication with instructor and other students
- Real-time chatting with the instructor and fellow students
- Texts and/or workbooks to read and study
- Discussion Board forums which allow for on-going, asynchronous discussions

Online Course Requirements:

- You must be familiar with using email and navigating the Internet.
- You must have access to a computer with Internet connection. (If you do not have a computer and Internet access at home, you may use the open computer labs on campus to complete your work.)

- You must have a compatible web browser for use with Sakai, such as Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox. (See the **Using Sakai @ Seminole State College of Florida** handout for more information on browser requirements.)
- You must have any additional software or hardware required by the instructor for your specific course.

Online/Campus Courses

Online/Campus are courses which combine online course delivery with several required on-campus class meetings. Online/Campus courses meet on campus less often than traditional on-campus courses for face-to-face instruction, discussion, and testing. Approximately 80% of the course is conducted in an online environment, with the remaining 20% conducted on campus. Online components require access to a computer, Internet connection, Sakai-compatible web browser, and any additional software or hardware required by the instructor for your specific course. (If you do not have a computer and Internet access at home, you may use the open computer labs on campus to complete your coursework.) Contact your instructor for more information on scheduled times, dates, and locations of campus class meetings. Also, see the section on "Online Courses" in this letter for additional information about online course components you can expect to find in your course.

Managing Your Time Successfully in a DL Course

Reportedly, the most significant factor causing students to succeed - or not - in Distance Learning classes has been their ability to manage time. The more successful Distance Learning students report regularly spending 2 to 3 hours each week for each hour of credit for a class. A 4-hour credit class, for example, required a minimum of 8 to 12 hours of work EACH WEEK of the semester to complete all requirements.

Without class lectures to spur that quick burst of activity to complete the project or to bone up for a test, some Distance Learning students procrastinate through weeks of the semester – only to find themselves hopelessly far behind.

Procrastination is the most common pitfall in DL classes. It is essential that you adhere to the deadlines set by your instructor for assignments and tests. The following information was developed by former students who successfully completed Distance Learning courses:

- We strongly recommend you work out your typical weekly schedule - on paper - so you will have a general guide for fitting your time to study into your other activities. A typical plan is as follows:
 - Set up a grid with 1/2 hour times down the side, from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep at night, and with all 7 days of the week across the top.
 - Fill in your non-flexible times (work hours, scheduled classes, etc) with specific information.
 - Fill in your flexible times related to those non-flexible ones (travel time to work or school, lunch, break, etc).
 - Fill in your other activities - clubs, choir, meetings, etc - which happen less than once a week.
 - List special must-do's for family etc. (dance lessons, carpool, soccer practice, etc.) that occur regularly. Some find that taking a book along can help the time spent waiting and help accomplish study time needs at the same time.
 - List DEDICATED TO STUDY TIME. This will be time that you will reserve for study - and nothing less than a major emergency will be allowed to disturb it. One student suggested that this be set in 1/2 hour segments - 1 segment per credit hour - and before or after this segment a 1/2 hour or hour TRY TO STUDY TIME.
 - List TRY TO STUDY TIME. This will be time that you are planning nothing but study, but recognize that it may be interrupted. If interrupted, remember to grab some catch-up time.
- Use a semester calendar to lay out deadlines. If your instructor didn't provide specific deadlines, set your own and meet them.
- Arrive a bit earlier to work and use that 20 minutes for study.

- Have your lunch hour away from the "gang" with the textbook and syllabus.
- Review the syllabus, study guide, or notes while waiting for the kids at the dentist, school, etc.
- Find a corner at school to work on a project between (before/after) other classes.
- Get up a half hour before the kids and use that time for the "heavy" or new stuff.
- Set your mind to work solidly for 1/2 hour - and keeping to that 1/2 hour limit as close as a reasonable stopping point happens. Using a timer with a bell or tone alarm set to the time to stop can be very useful and productive. (You don't have to guess or keep looking at the clock but can concentrate on the work.)
- If you are stuck on a problem or assignment, lay it aside and go back with a fresh look later. However, if that does not work after a second or third try, do not puzzle for days on a problem. Get help from your instructor, a classmate, or some other source reasonably early in the game.

Where To Go for Help

General Questions and Comments:

The Distance Learning Office is here to help with any questions that you might have, and we welcome your feedback on our distance learning courses and support resources. Please visit the Distance Learning Web Site at <http://www.seminolestate.edu/dl/> for more information on our current course offerings, frequently asked questions, helpful web links, and more.

Online Student Support Services:

- The Seminole Library provides extensive online library research and support resources for DL students. The Virtual Library resources may be found at: <http://www.seminolestate.edu/library>
- MySeminoleState allows students to register for classes, check the available or "open" sections for a course, browse their transcripts, update/correct personal information such as address, name or telephone number, check financial aid information, and even pay for classes online. MySeminoleState is available at <http://my.seminolestate.edu> or by clicking on the "MySeminoleState" logo on the Seminole State College of Florida homepage (<http://www.seminolestate.edu>).
- Links to the following department web sites can all be found on the Seminole State College of Florida Prospective Students page at: <http://www.seminolestate.edu/futurestudents/>
 - **Admissions:** Information & Requirements, Catalog Request, Fees
 - **Assessment and Testing Information:** GED, AHS, ABE, ESOL, CLAST, Make-up Testing, ADN
 - **Counseling/Student Advising:** Academic Advising, Orientation, Counseling Info
 - **Financial Aid/Scholarships:** Stafford Loans, Work-Study, FAQ's, Online Forms
 - **Registration and Student Records:** Academic Calendars, Transcripts, Online Catalogs

Technical Support:

The DL Office also provides technical support for Sakai. If you need help accessing your course, setting up your web browser, or if you have questions about the hardware and software requirements for online courses, stop by our office or contact us by phone or email. If you have trouble logging in to Sakai, please fill out our online Sakai Problem Form located at: <https://www.seminolestate.edu/dl/students/problem-form.php>

Please note that the DL office does not provide technical support for other types of software programs that may be required by your instructor for a specific course. If you have difficulty with a course-specific software program (for example, Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, etc.) you should try contacting your instructor for assistance. If your instructor cannot help you resolve the problem, you may need to consult your software documentation or contact the software vendor technical support for help. We also do not support issues related to LiveMail, MySeminoleState, and Network Logins. For help with those systems, please call the student helpline at 407-708-2000 or email helpdesk@seminolestate.edu

Contacting Us:

The DL Office is located in room V-103 at the Sanford/Lake Mary Campus. We are here Monday through Thursday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM and Friday from 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM. You can also reach our office by phone: (407) 708-2424, or email: dl@seminolestate.edu. We look forward to assisting you, and we wish you success in all your academic endeavors.

Help Us Help You!

Please take a few moments to fill out our DL Welcome Survey located online at <http://www2.seminolestate.edu/dl/surveys/dlwelcomesurvey.asp> so that we can gather information about our DL welcome information as well as your experiences in finding online courses on the web, logging into Sakai, and/or checking out your videotapes for term loan.

Good Luck and Have a Great Semester!