Success Center
Directed Learning Activity (DLA)

Comprehending Your Syllabus

F002.1

Directed Learning Activity – Comprehending Your Syllabus

Description: ***One of the most important resources for a student enrolled in a class is the syllabus. The class syllabus contains information you will need throughout the semester, from important due dates to how your grade is calculated. It is imperative to become familiar with the syllabus of each class you are taking this semester. A successful student always has his or her syllabus on hand and refers to it throughout the course.***

Materials: ***In order to complete this Directed Learning Activity (DLA), you will need a copy of the syllabus from one of your classes this semester. You will also need access to a computer with an internet connection.***

Step One: Why You Need to Comprehend Your Syllabus – Video Interviews with Students For this first step, you will need to find an open computer in the Success Center with an internet connection. After opening a web browser, visit the site for iFALCON, which is Cerritos College's award-winning Habits of Mind campaign (***www.cerritos.edu/ifalcon***). Click on the link labeled ***Study Skills Program*** in the lower right corner of the iFALCON homepage. After reaching the Study Skills section of the iFALCON site, click on the links labeled, first, ***Syllabus*** and, then, ***See It.*** Watch the videos titled "Syllabus Basics I: Know the Course Guidelines" and "Syllabus Basics II: Use Your Course Schedule," then answer the questions below.

What are at least two new ideas – one from the first video and one from the second video – that you learned from these interviews with Cerritos College students? Why do you think these concepts are important?

Step Two: Analyzing a Sample Syllabus

Instructors' respective syllabi will likely look as different as the teachers themselves. Therefore, it is imperative to master the skill of reading syllabi and identifying the most important information.

To develop this skill, identify the information needed to answer these questions in the excerpt from a sample syllabus below.

1. What is the instructor's late-paper policy? _____

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2. What does the syllabus say about academic honesty? _____

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3. How often should a student consult the syllabus? _____

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4. How does the syllabus recommend students to deal with issues or problems that come up during the semester? _____

_____

Excerpt From a Sample Syllabus

Due dates are noted on the syllabus. You should check your syllabus daily for due dates and to **focus** on the work to be done that day. For example, check the syllabus on Monday morning to **organize** your time for reading the material and studying to **comprehend** for the entire week.

There are no make-up exams, and no late work will be accepted. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, any work due that day will not be accepted. You should plan for unforeseen challenges in meeting your due dates. Don't rely on the printer in the computer lab. Be sure to type and print your paper before the due date. **Organize** your schedule to make sure your work is completed on time.

Take down the contact information for three classmates on the first day of class. Creating relationships in class is a great way to **advance** on your path to success. Plan to **link up** with these students both in the event that you miss class and need to find out what is expected for the next class as well as to work on **comprehending** the course material on a regular basis.

Take personal responsibility for your actions both inside and outside of class. Because this is a nine-week class, the coursework will be accelerated. This means that we will be covering a large amount of material every day. Your willingness to [redacted] in class is directly related to your success in class. Likewise, if you find yourself overwhelmed with responsibility due to family, work, and/or school commitments, use [redacted] to solve your problems rather than succumbing to pressure. For example, [redacted] with me during my office hours if you have any issues to discuss. If you're worried about completing an assignment on time, seek out help by [redacted] with tutors or counselors.

You are required to do your own work. Cerritos College's policy on academic honesty states: "*Academic dishonesty* is defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means….
The faculty member may take options to the extent that the faculty member considers the cheating or plagiarism to manifest the student's lack of scholarship or to reflect on the student's lack of academic performance in the course." See the course catalog for examples of academic dishonesty and faculty actions in response to it.

What was your strategy for reading the excerpt from a sample syllabus and identifying the necessary information in it?

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Step Three: Comprehending Your Syllabus

Now, apply the strategy you developed for reading the excerpt in Step Two to the syllabus for one of your classes this semester. Identify the information needed to answer the questions below. Doing so will help you to understand your professor's expectations and to know what's coming up later this semester.

1. What is your professor's name and contact information? _____

_____

_____

2. What are the required materials for your course? Textbooks? Art or lab supplies? _____

3. What are the dates of your tests/quizzes (if applicable)? _____

4. What are the due dates for your papers/projects (if applicable)? _____

5. How will your grade in the class be calculated? How can you find out what your grade is? _____

6. What is one question you have about this class that does not seem to be answered by the syllabus? How could you find out the answer to that question? _____

Step Four: Reflecting on What You Have Learned

Before reviewing your work with a tutor or an instructor in the Success Center, reflect on your learning. What did you learn as you advanced through this activity? What skills or strategies have you developed that will help you to better comprehend your syllabi?

PRINT STUDENT NAME **STUDENT #**

Tutor Feedback:

_____ In Step One, the student identified at least two new ideas – one from the first video and one from the second video – that he or she learned from the interviews with Cerritos College students and explained why he or she thought those concepts were important.

_____ In Step Two, the student not only answered all four of the questions about the excerpt from a sample syllabus, but also articulated a strategy for reading the syllabus and identifying the necessary information in it.

_____ In Step Three, the student found the answers to as many of the six questions as possible in the syllabus from one of the classes he or she is taking this semester.

_____ In Step Four, the student responded thoughtfully and thoroughly to the reflection prompt.

Additional Comments:_____

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PRINT INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR NAME **DATE**

INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR SIGNATURE