Center for Teaching and Learning
Office of Distance Learning
Best Practice Manual

Section Title: **Starting a New Term**	Last Updated: **5/18/2005**
Procedures for Distance Learning Instructors Starting a New Term:	

Summary: This procedure is designed for the instructor as a step-by-step checklist of things to do for the successful opening of a new semester with a new group of students, among them many who take their first Distance Learning class. The timing and sequence of the steps represents a compromise between two conflicting interests. On the one hand, the instructor wants to get the course ready (class roster etc.) as close to the actual beginning date of the class as possible, on the other hand, many students wish to familiarize themselves with the intricacies of the course website and course materials weeks before the beginning of the class.

Procedure:

1. During the registration period the course syllabus must be posted in the list of Distance Learning courses at http://courses.frederick.edu. Students are directed to this site to access general resources, the course syllabus, and a form to be sent to the instructor prior to the beginning of the class. The form asks for relevant student information and requires the student to sign an academic honesty pledge. The instructor email address is embedded in the form.

2. Two weeks prior to the beginning of the Distance Learning class, **adjunct faculty** should make sure that they have access to their account in **PeopleSoft**. The College assigns such account automatically for the duration and the purpose of the contract. The user ID in CAPS is "W#######" (where "#######" is the 7 digit empl. ID number). For first-time users, the password (all CAPS) consists of the first 2 letters of the first name, followed by the first 2 letters of the last name, followed by the last four digits of your 7 digit empl. ID number (NOT SS#). The user then sets his/her own password for future use.

3. At the latest two weeks prior to the beginning of the class, the preliminary class rosters will be loaded into Blackboard (see detailed instructions in the Section "Class Rosters"). Class rosters will be updated until the first day of classes. The instructor contacts students for missing email addresses.

4. Approval for adding students to Distance Learning courses above the assigned cap must be obtained from the Director of Distance Learning

5. At the latest, one week prior to the beginning of the class, the instructor makes the Blackboard course website available to the students.

6. During the week prior to the beginning of classes an orientation session for Distance learning Students is offered (attendance of the instructor is encouraged).

7. Before the beginning of the class, the instructor sends out a "Welcome" email message which among other things must contain the following items:
(a) **Login Information:** The user ID is "W#######" (where "#######" is the 7 digit student ID number shown on the student's ID card) and the last four digits of that student ID number as the initial password.
(b) **Personal Information:** Students must be notified that the assigned password is "initial", i.e. the student is responsible for choosing a unique password for this course. Remind students to update Personal Information, particularly the email address, in their Blackboard profile.
(c) **Forgot password:** Students must be urged NOT to call the instructor or the Office of Distance Learning BEFORE going back to the Blackboard Log-in screen (where users enter user ID and password). On that screen, the log-in area shows in small print an active button called "Forgot your password?" Click that button to go to a new screen where the student enters **First Name, Last Name and User Name or E-mail Address**. In order to change the password, the student must have an active e-mail address in his/her Blackboard account. Upon submitting the request, the student will receive an e-mail message with instructions to make the password change. The current password will remain active until the student responds to the e-mail.
(d) **Type of Course:** Many students wrongly assume that every Distance Learning course is self-paced, and therefore it is quite possible to start late and still do well. If the course is not self paced, making that point explicit saves a lot of time and many emails. Explain briefly how the course is organized.
(e) **Reminder:** if the student has not done so already, to sign the form with the academic honesty pledge at http://courses.frederick.com and send it to the instructor.

8. During the first week of class (late registration period) the instructor should check the class roster (see detailed instructions in the Section "Class Rosters") repeatedly for late registrations. The late registered student is entered manually into Blackboard via the Control Panel (try "Enroll User" first, there is a good chance that the student may be in the system already. If so, cross-check the email address and enroll. Otherwise "Create User" with the user ID "W#######" (where "#######" is the 7 digit student ID number shown in the class roster) and the last 4 digits of that same student ID number as the initial password. Send the "Welcome Email" to that student.

9. At the end of the second week of the class, "no shows" (students who failed to respond to the instructor's phone or email communication and have not participated in the assigned class activities) should receive an email modeled after the following sample text:
"Dear…(full name of the student) This class… (name the class, like"SO101net") has progressed to the end of its second week. I have not heard from you and I assume that you either have withdrawn or intend to withdraw from this class. Following standard procedure, I am forwarding this note to our Financial Aid office. I look forward to seeing you online or in the classroom next semester. "
Forward the email with any other comments you wish to include to the Financial Aid office at FCC or, in the case of MOL students, to the Financial Aid office of the student's home college.