Standards and Guidelines for Teaching Online
August 2003

Following are the basic expectations for faculty practice in on-line teaching. These are minimum expectations for faculty teaching in Regis SPS Undergraduate Online Program. These standards were developed in a cooperative effort with SPS Undergraduate Program and SPS Distance Learning.

1. **It is important for Faculty teaching on-line to clearly state their course expectations by posting the information on the Forum prior to the opening date of the course.** The first thing that happens in an on-line class is for the instructor to introduce him/her self both as a content expert in the subject matter (build credibility) and as a person (build community.) Access to online courses is granted to faculty in advance of the students. It is important that your information is posted first, to set the tone for the class. It is recommended that in addition to your personal introduction, you provide a list of expectations/policies for the course (e.g. Participation Policy, Plagiarism Policy, etc). It is recommended that this document be chunked into sections that are clearly identified by the headers and posted within the "Facilitator Notes" section of the Forum. By doing this, your policies will be clearly defined, and can be referred to easily throughout the course. **The introductory posting should include:**

   a. Detailed contact information for the faculty member. This should include email address, phone numbers, online office hours, etc. This is necessary so that the student has multiple communication modes in which to contact you if issues arise.

   b. Expected turn around time for e-mail responses (Best practices require a 24 hour response to emails with an upper limit of 48 hours, unless other arrangements have been made for special circumstances). See item 2 for specifics.

   c. Expected participation of you, the faculty, in the forum discussion (e.g. "I will check into the Forum regularly, read all postings, and respond frequently. I may not respond immediately to each posting as I hope to foster a learning community in which you collaborate and assist one another."). See item 4 for specifics.

   d. Due dates and required formatting for assignments. This is especially important if you are going to vary from what is pre-loaded in the Week-by-Week or Assignments page (e.g. "By Sunday I will post the items due for the week and make any modifications of due dates, etc.")

   e. Expectations in terms of participation in forum discussions for the student. What merits full participation vs. partial? How will you grade participation? How will you handle a student that "disappears" and "re-appears" weeks later? What is respectful communication on the Forum,

what will and will not be tolerated. Is there a topic thread or area where students can take the discussion "off line" away from the content of the course and just "talk"? Review the resources attached for some ideas.

f.   Expectations on how to handle time away. When faculty or students travel and will not have access to the virtual classroom, it is imperative that they notify the facilitator, or the facilitator notify the class of this plan. Faculty s**hould not be away from a class for more than 3 days during a session.** Students should also prearrange with faculty for any planned away time during an on-line course session. Under no circumstances should faculty be absent during the first week of class. Students should not be allowed to do so either except under extreme circumstances and with prior agreement and conditions set by faculty. Facilitators should notify their Faculty Chair if there is any unexpected away time.

g.   Expectations for academic performance: how grades are determined, expectations as to forum participation, and such policy items as guidelines for success in the class, your policy about late assignments, or late postings, plagiarism policy or any other policy statements that affect academic performance. Review resources attached to this document.

h.   FERPA statement and request for students to post their permission to receive scores and grades via email as a reply to the expectations document.

2. **Faculty in online courses are expected to respond to e-mail messages from students within 48 hours (Within 24 hour is recommended, 48 hours is the upper limit).**   Students should be directed when to use email vs. posting on the forum. Most situations where email is used require private response, and will include questions of clarification, or will inform faculty of issues, which must occur in a timely manner.

3. **Discussion forums are very much a part of on-line learning, and should always be utilized in on-line classes.** E-mail should be used for private communication with a student regarding specific issues, and for sending and returning graded work. Forums should be used to build rapport and interaction among students in a class, and as a place to facilitate active learning.

4. **Faculty should be interacting with students in the forum (asynchronous discussion) areas of their web courses as needed to facilitate class discussion.** When discussions are lively and self-directed, faculty need to participate frequently (**Best practices require every other day, with an upper limit of every third day**) so that students know you are there and actively engaged. Participation by faculty is warranted more often when the discussion lags, when it goes off track, when incorrect information is posted, or when questions arise. Faculty are expected to interact in the forum, re-direct discussion, summarize, recognize contributions, provide additional materials, content clarification, etc. Pre-loading messages into the

Forum for the entire term is not encouraged, as the direction of the course may change based on the learning that occurs within each week.

5. **E-mail is the primary conduit for submitting and returning student assignments**. Be sure that the student has responded to either an email or a Forum posting providing you with permission to send graded material to their email account.

1. **When there are uncomfortable confrontations in a forum, or heated disagreements, or students are struggling with logistics with perhaps a work group or such, it is important to address the situation directly and diffuse it.** By creating clear expectations for student communication in the Forum, this situation may be avoided. If an issue arises, please feel free to contact facsup@regis.edu to brainstorm strategies for dealing with difficult situations. You may also wish to contact your Department Chair or Online Lead Faculty to discuss these situations. Academic issues should be brought to the attention of the Department Chair or Associate Director. Facilitators are encouraged to use other means of communication to resolve student issues beyond the Forum and email. Calling a student to discuss concerns may be the best solution.

2. **Chats cannot be required or part of a grade. The session must be optional. When chat sessions are planned, it is important to determine what works time-wise across multiple time zones and plan them to accommodate *all* students.** While chat sessions are good learning spaces, they do detract from the flexibility for which students often come to distance learning.

3. **Inform students of expected turn-around time for assignments. Assignments should be returned prior to the next assignment due.** Students need to receive feedback in a timely manner. This feedback is necessary for them to build on their understanding of the content. When students do not receive timely feedback, they do not have the benefit of responses from faculty made on past assignments to facilitate learning before they submit another assignment.

4. **Provide specific feedback** about the quality of the student work and rationale for the grade on all assignments (quizzes, tests, papers, forum work, participation). Students need specific, clear feedback about the work they submit. Providing only a grade without clarification about the rationale for the grade is not appropriate.

Resources:

Additional information is available at
http://support.regis.edu/spsonline/teaching_tip/sep02_expect_tip.htm

Below are some samples of various postings that you may use as a model.

Sample Plagiarism Policy:

The Regis University Bulletin (2002) defines plagiarism as: "presenting as one's own, the ideas words, or products of another" (45). A paper that uses the content of an original author but merely re-words or reorganizes that paper is a plagiarism of the work. Minor modifications, sentences, original ideas or opinions, and paraphrases that do not reference the work from which it was taken are plagiarism. Material taken from a source, though adequately referenced, may not be guilty of plagiarism but may be guilty of failing to demonstrate original thought, critical thinking, analysis, or synthesis with regard to the assignment's intentions.

In my courses, if an assignment is submitted and plagiarism is identified, the student will earn a zero on that assignment. If another instance of this occurs, the student will earn an "F" in the course.

Sample Participation Policies:

I. An excerpt from *Janet Angevine Colvin, Affiliate Faculty, SPS Undergraduate Programs*

Online Discussions
An "A" posting includes the following:
1. Post initially by Wednesday.
2. Initial entry is approximately 150-200 words. This entry is edited carefully. Don't ramble and expect that "more is better." Do not list the questions with your answers, but incorporate the answer with the question.
3. Initial entry contains thoughtful, substantive ideas concerning assignment or content related to the assignment. Entry may expand the content if the question has been covered thoroughly by previous students.
4. Second entries- Replies to classmates' remarks should be posted from Thursday through Sunday. Reply to at least one other (preferably two or more) classmates with detailed remarks. Find strengths in the class members' ideas and then elaborate by agreeing, disagreeing, adding to, modifying, extending or questioning. Answer questions posed. The reply is much more than "Good, I liked your comment." Replies can also add assistance, such as aiding students who are completing an assignment or clarifying the definition of a technical term.
5. "A" entries include an outside resource (where appropriate) or a relevant, real life application.

6. Student does not "post and run" on Wednesdays only. An "A" student reads the flow of discussion and responds or summarizes as the discussion evolves.
7. Spelling and grammar checked. Formatting problems and minor errors are acceptable.

Note: Technical expertise is not necessary for a quality entry. An "A" entry is a combination of well-written observations, research and communication skills.

II. An excerpt from *Gerry Hodne, Associate Director, SPS Undergraduate Programs*

<u>Participation Policy:</u>
In an online class, discussion forums are the mode of communication and our only venue to exchange ideas, thoughts, knowledge and opinions. You will have one or more discussion assignments each week, as outlined in your week by week, and my overview and assignment postings. Some assignments may be in addition to those you will find in the week by week, so you are responsible to read and understand the assignments as I outline them.

Part of your participation grade is responding to classmates' postings in addition to responding to discussion questions. My policy toward participation is listed below:

1. If you post to the *minimum requirement* outlined in the assignments for the week, you will receive *minimum* participation points.
2. As a general rule, each of your postings should be *at least one well-developed paragraph.* (No less than 6 sentences in length). When **appropriate** you should **incorporate** the textbook reading into your postings.
3. When responding to your classmates, your posting should be well developed. "Good posting" is not a contribution to the class discussion.
4. You are responsible for reading and responding to questions posed to you. If you are not reading and responding to replies, questions, or comments from your original posts, you are not contributing to the success of our discussions, and this will affect your participation grade.
5. If you "**<u>disappear</u>**" from the online forum you **receive zero points for the week**, and if you "**<u>disappear</u>**" for **two weeks** of the eight-week course you will **receive an "F"** in the course.