

Dear Student,

Welcome to RPCC's distance learning courses! If you are receiving this letter, you have registered for an online class. Once the semester begins, if you go to RPCC's home page (<http://www.rpcc.edu>) and click on the "Blackboard" link, it will take you to the RPCC Blackboard Help Page, which has a link to the Blackboard website, which we will use for this entire course.

To log in, you have a unique username: it is "rp + the first initial of your first name + your entire last name + last **four** digits of your social security number." So, Jane Doe could be "rpjdoe1234". Your password should be "rpcc" plus the last **four** digits of your social security number with no spaces (example: "rpcc1234"), and when you first log in, you should change that to make it more secure. If you have any problems with your password, email our Blackboard Administrators at [blackboard@rpcc.edu](mailto:blackboard@rpcc.edu). **Please note, though, that the course will not let you login until the first day of classes.**

Once you log in, change your email address to one that you will check frequently. To do that, click on "Personal Information" under the Tools menu on the Blackboard welcome page, then click on "Edit Personal Information."

Feel free to browse around your course site (especially under the "Assignments" and "Course Documents" buttons). The good thing about these courses is that they are ALL online. Even so, you may be required by your online professor to come to campus several times for exams. Although not driving to class every week will give you much flexibility, online classes are just like a regular face-to-face class since online courses have specific due dates such that you have to "attend" class online several days a week. If you feel like everything is going fast, and things are due quickly, that's because you don't actually attend class in-person, and it's your responsibility to motivate yourself to complete the assignments on time. That's why it's so important to KEEP UP with the assignments—don't let yourself fall behind.

About once a week, your professor may post an "announcement" on Blackboard, which will provide specific times/dates when everything will be due for that particular week. If something happens and you need an extension of a day or a few hours, email your professor to ask—the worst that could happen would be your professor would say "no." Also, every time your professor posts an announcement, the first thing you should do is read the materials your professor suggests, whether that is a "Weekly Lecture" or your textbook's readings. The announcement section of Blackboard, just like your syllabus, is intended to remind you of due dates for posting to the discussion board, submitting an assignment, or taking a quiz. Overall, your syllabus, announcements, and weekly lectures should all repeat the same due dates—those are the three most important things for you to read/keep up with.

Upon receiving this letter, you should receive one other document, done in Microsoft Word. Almost every document your professor will post on Blackboard is in Microsoft Word, and that is the program you will be expected to type all your assignments in, so if you don't have this program, you will need to get it ASAP. In addition, most online professors require everything to be submitted online. The first document you are receiving with this letter is entitled "Student Orientation to Online Courses" and will give you an overview of what professors expect from their students in the online setting. At the start of class, you will then have access to a second document, the course syllabus, which will give you an overview of what you'll be doing each week. Please read both of these documents carefully.

Online courses are wonderful since you can access them 24-7, but they do require you to discipline yourself, since there's no professor in front of a classroom shaking his/her finger at you for not doing the homework. This course also requires you to log on to the course every day (or every other day) in order to keep up with the semester's schedule. That means you can't just decide to not do any work for a week of school & then come back! Expect that the first two weeks of the course will be rough, because you'll be learning how to do everything in Blackboard, but after that, we start repeating the same procedures for the rest of the course, so it gets easier. Also, please remember that your professor is ALWAYS here to answer any question you may have (most professors reply within 24 - 48 hours); even if you consider the question stupid—ask it anyway. If you don't ask, you're only hurting yourself.

Again, RPCC welcomes you to this online course and hopes your experience with distance learning is a positive one.