

June 13, 2008

Hello Online Student!

I can't believe this Monday we will be starting our summer course. Today I finally peeked at my email inbox and see that I have 57 emails. One of them (or several) might be from you. This past week I have been commuting from Salinas, where I live, to Ben Lomond to be a part of the DBA Experiential Learning Institute. It has been more intense and exhausting than anticipated. When I get home, I have no energy to do anything. Tomorrow is the last day of the Institute so I will be responding to emails in the evening and updating my website, [www.cabrillo.edu/~grodriguez](http://www.cabrillo.edu/~grodriguez). By Sunday morning the needed information will be in my Cabrillo webpage.

Like me, many of you are not getting much of a break before starting the summer semester. I hope you are ready for an online course! Students often underestimate the amount of individual time and dedication it takes to successfully complete an online math class. Students who have taken an online math course often say that it takes *more* time and dedication to successfully complete this course online than the "traditional" classroom course. Taking a math course over a 6-week time period requires *even more* time and dedication.

I have taught several online math classes and usually less than half the students complete—but not necessarily pass—the course. I tell you this not to scare you away from taking the course online but rather so you know what you are getting yourself into. I **strongly** encourage you to visit my Cabrillo website and read the info in the webpage titled "Is an online class for you?". It lists the qualities of successful online students and other useful information.

As you will read in the "Is an online class for you?" webpage, staying on task and not procrastinating are crucial for you success in the course. You must make this class a priority and "attend" class on a regular basis. How do you "attend" an online class? You "attend" it by logging on to the course website on a **regular** basis (several times a week), learning the required math content, and doing the assigned homework. If you are ready for the challenge, keep reading this letter so you know how to get prepared for this course! If you aren't quite sure then make sure to read the webpage I mentioned above.

You will have to cover a **lot** of math material from day 1 of the semester, while at the same time learning how to navigate through the course website. It is *extremely important* that you know how the course is set up. How will you go about learning math online? What are your responsibilities as a student in this online course? The orientation will give you all the information you need (assignments, exams, deadlines, grading policies, website, textbook, and how to get started with the course). You can get all this info in by viewing the online orientation. The online orientation will be available by Sunday morning. View the online information carefully!

What materials do you need for this course? Since the bookstore lists several items I made a short presentation on this topic and posted it in my Cabrillo website (link mentioned above) as "What do I need to buy for this course?". Here are the basics. The **mandatory** "material" for this class is an access code for Coursecompass/MyMathLab which is an online companion to *Elementary Algebra for College Students Early Graphing 3<sup>rd</sup>* edition, by Allen Angel. (Coursecompass is the course management system; MyMathLab deals with the online math assignments.) The access code is **required** since it is the only way for you to do the online assignments. If you purchase your access code at the Cabrillo bookstore, you will get a small thin packet and inside of it you will find the access code. You can also purchase the access code online directly from Coursecompass for less money (\$57).

Besides access to the online assignments, the Coursecompass site gives you access to the textbook and student solutions manual (in digital form). Some students prefer to have a hard copy of the book (easier to read; portable). View my website for more information about the course materials.

You cannot use someone else's access code, nor can you "transfer" yours to anyone else. If you drop the class during the allowed timeframe, you may return your materials to the bookstore **unopened** to receive a refund. (For summer session you must drop the course the **first** day of the semester.) If your packet is opened I don't think you can get a refund through the bookstore but you should try calling Coursecompass' Customer Service to see if they are willing to give you a refund for the access code. (If you buy the access code at the Cabrillo Bookstore, my advice to you is **to not open the packet with the access code unless you are 100% sure that you want to take this online class!** You should be able to determine this after viewing the orientation.) If you buy the access code online and decide to drop, call Coursecompass' Customer Service to see if they are willing to give you a refund. I know several students who did get one. I don't know how far into the semester they give refunds. Please pay attention to the website's return policy.

The access code should be valid for 12 months from its initial use. This means that if you do not pass the course or you drop the course (and don't get a refund), you will **not** have to buy a new access code if you retake the course within this 12-month time period AND the same textbook is used.

Before the start of the semester you must:

- Have access to a **PC computer** that is ready to use for the entire semester. Figure out all of your computer issues before semester begins! It is crucial that you don't have to sort out technology problems once the semester begins—there is just too much other stuff to do! The online product and companion website have been tested in and support Windows 2000, XP and Vista along with Internet Explorer 6.0/7.0. *What if you have a Mac that can run Windows programs?* Tech Support told me that it should work but they can't help troubleshoot. (Exciting news: Starting in Fall many of the math textbooks we use will have online sites that are compatible with Windows, Macs and other browsers besides Internet Explorer.)
- Have a current **valid email account** that you plan to **check at least twice weekly**. This should be your own email account—not one that is shared with someone else. If you don't have one now, please create one as soon as possible. There are many sites that offer free web-based email accounts: yahoo.com, hotmail.com, gmail.com, etc.
- Visit my website **www.cabrillo.edu/~grodriguez**. Follow the link for Math 154 Online to view some information for this course, such as the syllabus and schedule. (Again, this will be completed by Sunday morning.)
- If you are not purchasing the access code online, buy the **MyMathLab** packet at bookstore. You need to have access to the course website by the *first* day of the semester or you will fall behind!

Did you just browse through the info in this letter or did you carefully read it? If you just browsed, please re-read it carefully! I would also caution you to make sure you carefully look over the info I will have in my website.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me via email at garodrig@cabrillo.edu.

Hoping for a great semester!

Gabby Rodriguez