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Purpose

SOWELA Technical Community College is committed to quality distance education as a method of improving education opportunities for students.

This Student Handbook for Distance Education outlines resource information that will enable a student to benefit from the opportunities afforded by distance education.

About SOWELA Technical Community College

SOWELA Technical Community College’s proven commitment to affordable, quality education is a foundation of our mission. As part of the Louisiana Community College System, we are dedicated and responsive to our community, providing an open door to the world of educational opportunities.

To that end, SOWELA provides traditional, distance, and lifelong learning experiences and awards associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates that empower learners in transfer, career, and technical education to excel as globally competitive citizens.

The SOWELA Library and Learning Resources Center provides an extensive list of online searchable databases and other resources, including Interlibrary Loan Services, to meet the research and information needs of its Distance Education students and faculty.

About Distance Education Courses

Distance Education offers students the opportunity to take college courses without having to come to campus or to significantly cut down on the trips they have to make. If work or family schedules conflict with on-campus classes, they don’t have to give up important responsibilities to pursue an education.

The difference between a Distance Education course and a campus-based course is how each is delivered. DE courses are delivered electronically via internet. Instructors utilize various methods of communication to conduct the course, such as Web 2.0 technologies, social networking, threaded discussions, email, web conferencing, audio, and video.

Any student can take a DE course. Just as some people are more successful at regular courses, others are more successful at DE courses. In general, a successful distance education student is someone who wants or needs a flexible school schedule and knows how to study independently. Not sure if DE is for you? Take the following self-assessment:

Are you ready to take an online class?

Our main concern is that you successfully complete your online course. It is important to be familiar with the necessary skills and tools you need to succeed in an online course. Important things to consider include the following requirements:
• **Technology Requirements**
  o Do you have consistent/easy access to a reliable computer with a broadband internet connection (high-speed, such as cable, DSL or fiber?) and with necessary programs and software, including some type of word processing program, for the course(s) you want to take?
  o Do you have computing skills that will enable you to function efficiently in an online course (downloading and saving files, creating folders, changing settings on your computer, typing and word processing, sending email with attachments, etc.)?
  o Do you have word processing skills such as creating, editing, and saving documents?
  o Do you have Internet skills that will enable you to navigate and access specific URLs, use online library resources, and login to secure web pages?
  o Have you accessed your SOWELA student email account? Are you willing to access it several times a week and use it for ALL school-related correspondence?

• **Communication Requirements**
  o Will you be able to access and navigate your online course(s) as often as required (at least three times a week for a total of 12-15 hrs. per week) in order to have timely interaction with the instructor(s) and/or other students in your course(s)?
  o Are you able to communicate with others effectively using online technologies, such as email programs, chat rooms, blogs, and discussion boards?
  o Can you express yourself clearly and concisely in written messages and assignments?
  o Do you have good reading comprehension skills so that you can effectively read and understand directions, reading assignments, and information in your textbook or in material provided by your instructor(s)?
  o Will you ask questions when you don't understand assignments or instructions from your instructor(s)?

• **Participation Requirements**
  o Will you meet the online course requirements listed in your course's syllabus (frequent assignments, frequent communication, group assignments, and a significant amount of reading)?
  o Do you understand that frequent participation will be required in each of your online courses and you will need to dedicate at least 12-15 hours per online course per week in order to be successful?
  o Do you have access to an alternative computer that meets all requirements in case something happens to your computer, so that your participation will not be affected?

• **Organizational Requirements**
  o Are you self-motivated with good organizational and time-management skills (not needing to be reminded of due dates, etc.)?
  o Can you ignore distractions (social networking, instant messaging, TV, family, etc.) while working on your online course work in order to complete assignments effectively and on time?
If you answered \textit{NO} to any of these questions, it’s probably not in your best interests to take an online course this semester. Without these basics, you may not experience success in an online course.

If you answered \textit{YES} to all of these questions, you have the time and skills to take an online course.

\textbf{A Successful Online Learner}

- Is responsible for maintaining his/her own equipment and Internet connection.
- Is expected to use professional communication at all times. (See Netiquette.)
- Is responsible for meeting all deadlines – plan ahead. Procrastination is the enemy.
- Is expected to have a high-speed Internet connection, although many SOWELA online courses will be able to run on a dial-up connection (just expect it to be very slow).
- Is proficient in the use of computers and productivity software such as email and word processing.
- Participates in the class with the instructor and classmates.
- Takes notes!
- Reads, listens to, and/or watches the course materials as often as required by the course.
- Develops self-discipline.
- Can problem solve; for example:
  - What if you have a family emergency?
  - What if the electricity goes off?
  - What if your computer crashes?
  - What if you lose your USB flash drive (or other external storage device)?

\textbf{Types of Distance Education Courses}

- \textbf{Online} – Online courses, also known as, web classes, are taught fully online through a designated website. No face-to-face interaction between students and teachers is required. These course are either taught through Canvas®--the college’s learning management system or through a textbook-based site, such as one of Pearson’s MyLab sites.

- \textbf{Hybrid} – Hybrid courses employ a combination of face-to-face and online work. The classes may meet face-to-face with reduced frequency during the semester, but the remainder of the work is completed online via the designated coursesite.

- \textbf{Web-Enhanced} – Web-enhanced courses are face-to-face classes that have supplemental resources placed on an accompanying coursesite.
• **Compressed Video** – Compressed video courses make use of SIP or H.323 technologies to connect two or more remote locations to a main site. Students must be located at specific locations that have the hardware and software available to participate in the class(es). SOWELA offers a number of these courses between its Lake Charles and Morgan Smith sites. More expansion is planned for the future.

**Student Services/Resources/Help**

**WEBSITE:** [http://www.sowela.edu](http://www.sowela.edu)

**PHONE:** 1-337-421-6565  
(Toll-free): 1-337-256-0483  
**TTY NUMBER:** 1-337-2524

**Office of Student Success**
Monday-Friday: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM  
Phone: 1-337-421-6969  
(Toll-free) 1-800-256-0483  
Contact: christine.collins@sowela.edu  
randall.guidry@sowela.edu (Testing)  
[https://www.sowela.edu/student-services](https://www.sowela.edu/student-services)

**Office of Student Support Services (Disability Services included)**
Monday-Friday: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM  
Phone: 1-337-421-6969  
(Toll-free) 1-800-256-0483  
Contact: christine.collins@sowela.edu  
[https://www.sowela.edu/disability-services](https://www.sowela.edu/disability-services)

**Office of Career Planning and Placement**
Monday-Friday: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM  
Phone: 1-337-421-6951  
(Toll-free) 1-800-256-0483  
Contact: joseph.lavergne@sowela.edu  
[https://www.sowela.edu/career-planning-placement](https://www.sowela.edu/career-planning-placement)

**Student Counseling Services**
Monday-Friday: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM  
Phone: 1-337-421-6971  
(Toll-free) 1-800-256-0483  
Contact: counseling@sowela.edu  
[https://www.sowela.edu/personal-life-counseling](https://www.sowela.edu/personal-life-counseling)
Office of Academic and Student Affairs
Monday-Friday: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM
Phone: 1-337-421-6970
(Toll-free) 1-800-256-0483
Contact: paula.hellums@sowela.edu

Financial Aid
Monday through Friday 7:45 AM to 4:15 PM
Phone: 1-337-421-6545
(Toll-free) 1-800-256-0483
Contact: onestop@sowela.edu
Federal School Code: 005467
https://www.sowela.edu/financial-aid

SOWELA Online Bookstore
Phone (toll-free): 1-877-859-2652 @sowelabookstore
http://sowelabookstore.com/home.aspx

Library and Learning Resource Center
Monday-Tuesday: 7:45 am to 8 pm
Wednesday-Thursday: 7:45 am to 5 pm
Friday: 7:45 to 4:15 pm
Phone: 1-337-421-6530
(Toll-free) 1-800-256-0483
Contact: Mary Frances Sherwood
sowelalibrary@sowela.edu
https://www.sowela.edu/resources/Library

SOWELA Help Desk
The SOWELA Help Desk provides assistance with the distance learning course management system (Canvas®), student accounts (email, LoLA), and other computer-related issues. To get assistance, students may call the help desk or submit a help desk ticket (preferred method).
Monday-Friday: 8 am to 4:15 pm
Phone: 1-337-421-6520
(Toll-free): 1-800-256-0483
help@sowela.edu
NOTE: In any help desk request, include your full name, your student ID#, your full birthdate, and a brief description of the problem or the help you are seeking.

Manager of Instructional Technology
Monday-Friday: 7:30 am to 4:00 pm
Phone: 1-337-421-6931
(Toll-free): 1-800-256-0483
Contact: Roy Bertucci
help@sowela.edu
https://www.sowela.edu/student-life/sowela-online/
Course Expectations

- In order to be successful in any course, you will need to know the course requirements and expectations. This is where your syllabus comes in; your syllabus is a contract between you and the instructor, outlining what will be taught, how the instructor will know that you understand the content, and how you will be assessed in the course.
- Read the syllabus carefully; ask questions if you do not understand any of the course requirements.
- Do not expect the instructor to answer questions where the syllabus can be used to find the answer!
- However, if an instructor does not hear from you, he/she may well conclude that you are grasping the material and do not need assistance.
- You are also expected to observe proper online etiquette.

Netiquette

From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netiquette

Network Etiquette (netiquette) is "cyber speak" for etiquette on-line and in e-mail: manners, civility, and shared rules. The rules of netiquette apply to everyone who uses the Internet or any kind of network to communicate to any other person in the world. Here are some very simple rules to follow that will help you to converse more smoothly with your fellow computer users.

- Treat other people in cyberspace the way you would like to be treated. Remember that without facial expressions some comments may be taken the wrong way.
- Review discussion threads before you enter the discussion. Be careful to write only relevant comments.
- Maintain threads by using the “Reply” button rather than starting a new topic.
- Limit the abbreviations that you use, such as "u" for "you," "k" for "OK", and "ne1" for "anyone". This will ensure that everyone understands your message.
- Assume that the other person will not immediately know what you are talking about; give a little background information to help the reader understand your topic or position.
- Respect other people's privacy.
- Writing something in all CAPS is equivalent to yelling. Try to avoid this.
- An emoticon is a text representation of an emotion. For example, :) is equivalent to a smile. Do not overuse emoticons, but they can be useful to avoid having a statement be misinterpreted.
- Do not make insulting or inflammatory comments to other members of discussions. Be respectful of other’s ideas.
- Do not leave the subject field of an e-mail blank. Your e-mail provider may send it to BULK, or JUNK instead of the inbox of the receiver, or your anti-virus software may think that it is a virus of some kind. A subject also allows the receiver to tell what the email is about at a glance.
- NEVER give out personal information of any kind via email, chat, or instant message. Phishing refers to the tactic used by criminals in which they will send a legitimate sounding email to your
- Address and ask for information to verify an account. A reputable company, such as a bank, will not ask for usernames, account numbers or passwords through e-mail.
Technology Considerations
As an online student, your computer becomes your primary interface to your courses, your instructor, and your fellow students. In order to effectively use this interface, it will need to meet certain minimal requirements. If your computer cannot perform the functions you need to complete a class, you will have to make the effort to appropriately upgrade your computer equipment. Your instructor might also provide you with further information, such as preferred file types and specialized software.

Computer Skills Needed
You don’t need to be a computer geek or guru to succeed, but you do need to have some basic technology skills, such as word processing and using a Web browser. If you don’t presently possess these skills, you will need to pick up on them fairly quickly. If you don’t think you can learn these technology skills easily, you may need to develop new skills, take a class or do some reading before enrolling.

You will need skills in:
- Basic word processing
- How to send and receive emails
- Uploading and downloading files
- How to send and receive attachments, and navigating and conducting research on the Web
- Spend some time at your computer and on the Internet every day, getting comfortable with your equipment and surroundings. Practice your computing skills until you feel confident that you can complete class assignments.

Self-Directed Learning
As you explore the many avenues of learning available and begin to define your individual path, you will still need to work with your instructors to make sure you are meeting the requirements of the individual courses. Proving you understand the subject matter and can apply what is taught is still important.

Online learning requires students to be self-directed, that is, to take initiative in the learning process. Online students should be able to analyze their learning needs, identify available resources, and select and implement strategies to meet these needs.

Developing Self-Discipline
This need may seem fairly obvious, but without self-discipline, you cannot be a successful online learner. In residential classes, you have an instructor and peers with whom you interact on a regular basis. You also typically meet at a certain time and place each week. This interaction and schedule help to keep you on task in your coursework. In an online learning environment, especially if you do not meet at specific times, it’s much easier to put off assignments, discussion, and responsibilities. In this context, self-discipline means motivating yourself to pay regular and consistent attention to the work that needs to be done, and doing it without delay or
procrastination. Even more than in a residential course, falling behind in an online class can jeopardize your likelihood of completing the course and earning the credit.

**Balancing Responsibilities and Setting Priorities**
Vital to a successful online learning experience is the ability to balance your responsibilities, both within and beyond your course. Knowing how to set priorities is key to getting the greatest benefit from your online education experience. Find out before or as the course begins exactly what work is required of you, and do your best to plan ahead. Inevitably you will have more tasks to accomplish than you have time in which to complete them. At times like these, do your best to determine which course activities are most vital, and concentrate on those. Do not hesitate to ask for advice or help from your instructor.

**Managing Stress**
Just because a course is delivered in an online format does not necessarily increase or reduce the stress you may experience taking it. Consider your own sources of education-related stress when choosing to take courses online. If you feel high stress from giving in-class presentations, then an online course would probably save you from that kind of stress. On the other hand, if using computers and related technology makes you experience excessive stress, you might reconsider taking a course online, since most online courses rely exclusively on computer technology.

**Strategies for managing course-related stress include:**
- Know your deadlines. These include course deadlines as well as important events occurring elsewhere in your life while you are enrolled in the course.
- Plan ahead. If you know that your time will be consumed by a non-course-related activity during a particular week, do your course-related activities ahead of time.
- Ask for help resources, especially technological resources, and have them at hand when you are working on your coursework.
- Keep in touch with your instructor. If you do fall behind, let your instructor know immediately, and ask him/her for assistance in planning how you will catch up.

**Understanding Expectations**
In order to meet and exceed course requirements and instructor expectations, you’ll need a clear understanding of exactly what those requirements and expectations are. The course syllabus acts as a contract between you as the learner and the instructor. It outlines what will be taught, what you will need to do to show your understanding of the content, and how you will be assessed. Read through the syllabus early and carefully. Do your best to develop a sense of the “big picture” of the course - what will be due, and when. Then concentrate on the individual pieces, such as assignments and assessments.

**Proactively Seeking Clarification**
If something about the course or the material is not clear, don’t wait for your instructor to make it clear. Especially in an online environment, instructors have fewer cues to alert them to your confusion. They cannot see your puzzled expression or hear you ask, “What?” When you are unclear about an aspect of the course, ask your instructor. Use very specific questions, seeking
exactly what something means, what you will be expected to produce, etc. If an instructor does not hear from students, he/she may well conclude that students are grasping the material and do not need further assistance. If something is unclear to you, it may very well be unclear to the rest of the students in the class. Your questions may help others in the learning process as well. So ask, early and as often as necessary.

**Becoming an “Active Learner”**

In a traditional classroom, you may have sat through lectures or presentations, taken some notes and waited to understand what the instructor thinks about the subject. This passive reception of information does not work well in an online environment. The subject matter will likely be presented to you in many different media, including text, still images and visuals, audio, video, and live or off-line conversations that use text or audio. You will need to become more actively involved with these materials, pulling them together in a way that makes sense to you.

To be successful in this environment, actively seek ways you can best understand the course material. Read, listen to, and watch the course materials more than once. Take notes as you do so. Interact with your instructor and classmates. Become involved in discussing and defining course topics. By creating your own definitions and models to represent the topic, or working with others to create shared definitions and models, you take ownership in the final product which can help you in understanding and internalizing the subject.

Do not simply accept and memorize. Question everything, particularly if it doesn’t make sense or seem to fit with what you already know. Critically evaluate the information you receive. Everyone stands to benefit from your active learning, including the instructor and your peers as well as you.

**Responding vs. Reacting**

Often you will be required to join in a class discussion and respond to other postings. These discussions may become complex, intense, and even provocative. Before you send off a hastily written, emotionally based reaction to another’s contribution, turn to a word-processing program and develop your ideas into a less emotional and more reasonable response. Then wait a few minutes and reread what you have written before you make your posting public.

Learning how to turn a reaction into a response will make your course contributions more meaningful – and likely earn you a higher mark for participation—if participation counts toward your grade. Pausing and rereading also gives you the opportunity to review your writing for organization, clarity, and correctness.

Communication in online courses is of two different types: synchronous or asynchronous.

- **Synchronous communication** takes place in “real-time,” or at the same time. To be online at the same time as peers and interact with them is to communicate synchronously. Chat, instant messaging, and Web conferencing are examples of synchronous communication tools. Chat sessions and instant messaging can have a lively, immediate feel, and may feel casual or conversational in tone.
• **Asynchronous communication**, on the other hand, takes place over time, not requiring group members to be online simultaneously. Email, discussion forums, blogs, and wikis are examples of asynchronous communication often used in online courses. With asynchronous communication tools, you browse, read, and respond at your own pace to what others have already sent or posted. Your online course may use one or many of these tools. If possible, practice with the tool before the assignment takes place. Ask your instructor for help if you are unsure how a tool works before you need to use it.

**Online Community**

Online learning does not mean you are learning alone. You will belong to a class consisting of instructors and fellow students with whom you will interact. Your instructor will attempt to build a class environment through discussion questions, chats, group projects, and other activities.

You can help build this classroom environment through your participation. Seeing and speaking to others is not a necessary component in getting to know someone. Through your chats and messages, both real-time (synchronous) and delayed (asynchronous), you have the opportunity to develop personal and professional relationships. The classmates you get to know online may come from very diverse situations and can offer a wealth of knowledge and experience.

**Copyright**

Copyright refers to the rights of an individual or organization that has published a piece of work and is regarded as the owner of that intellectual property. If others use that work in a way which infringes upon the rights of the owner, they may be in violation of copyright law. There are several exceptions to this law, allowing use of portions of copyrighted materials for educational purposes, for ‘fair use’, for library use, etc. For students doing academic work, referencing or quoting from existing works is usually permissible under fair use guidelines.

However, it is your responsibility to make sure you are not violating copyright law as you make use of others’ intellectual property.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**

As a student in an online course, you are subject to academic conduct and misconduct rules adopted by your institution. Rules and regulations differ by institution, as do procedures for investigating and disciplining students who commit academic misconduct. You are responsible for learning the rules of your institution.

**Appendices:**

• **Policies**
  - 7.003.1 – Mandatory Online Tutorial Policy – Appendix A.1
  - 7006.1 – Distance Education Policy – Appendix A.2
  - 7008.2 – Strong Password Policy – Appendix A.3
  - 7.011.1 – Student Email Policy – Appendix A.4

• **IT Help Guide for Students** – Appendix B
APPENDICES
TITLE: Mandatory Online Tutorial Policy for Web Students

EFFECTIVE DATE: May 12, 2009
LAST REVISION: Initial
Policy No. 7.003.1

Policy Statement

Students who wish to take an online or hybrid class at Sowela must first complete a mandatory online tutorial. The tutorial will include the following components:

- Technology requirements for taking online classes
- How to access the course management system
- How to navigate the coursesite
- How to access course documents and assignments
- How to submit assignments
- How to use the coursesite email system
- How to use the discussion board
- How to check grades
- How to communicate with instructors
- How to be successful in an online class
- How to get help with problems

During registration, students who register for one or more online or hybrid classes will be given an information sheet that gives the students information on how to log in to the course management system and instructs them to complete the mandatory online tutorial, found in their course lists, prior to the start of classes.

Students must score a grade of 80 or better on the tutorial exam before they are allowed to begin work in their webclasses.

As a final exercise in the tutorial, students are instructed to send emails to their teachers informing them that they have completed the tutorial. Once the teachers ascertain that the tutorial has been successfully completed, they will allow the students to begin work in their classes.

Source of Policy: Information Resources & Technology Department - e-learning
LCTCS Policy Reference: N/A
Responsible: Administrator, Chief Information Resources & Technology Officer
LCTCS Guideline Reference: N/A
Related Policy: N/A
Approved by: [Signature] Chancellor
Date: 5/19/09
All current academic policies that apply to on-campus courses will apply to those taught via distance learning, unless otherwise specified below.

Definitions

**Distance Learning**
Distance Learning is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance learning course may use the Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or DVDs and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

**Online Course**
All instruction occurs in an online environment, synchronously or asynchronously, or both. No face-to-face (F2F) instructional meetings are required for the course. Instructor provides all materials, course activities, assignments, and discussions in an online environment. Students may be required to take one or two face-to-face exams, either at the college or in a proctored environment.

**Hybrid Course**
Instruction occurs in both a face-to-face (F2F) and in an online environment. There must be required F2F class meetings. For student accessibility, all or most materials, course activities, assignments, and discussions must be available in an online environment.

**Responsibilities and Requirements**

1. The College is responsible for the technology used in delivering all courses, and is responsible for providing academic, technological, and support services and training to faculty and students participating in distance learning.

2. Distance learning students must have the access to all services and materials available to students in face-to-face courses.
3. Recommendations to offer courses in a distance learning format will be made by individual academic departments or the workforce development department and will reflect student needs and available resources.

4. If a program is designed to be offered in an online format, the enrolled students must be allowed to satisfy all requirements of the degree program.

5. The academic departments offering distance learning opportunities are responsible for ensuring that the distance courses meet the same rigor and high standards of quality as face-to-face courses. The academic departments will assess and evaluate the content, structure, and rigor of the distance courses on the same schedule as they evaluate face-to-face classes.

6. The student services office and the academic and electronic learning departments are responsible for verifying that students who register for distance courses or programs are the same students who participate in, complete the courses or programs, and receive credit for their work. Methods of authentication include, but are not limited to, the following: secure logins and passwords, face-to-face or proctored exams. In the Fall 2012 semester, the institution has plans to implement the use of biometric signature authentication software.

7. Faculty who use only objective assessments in their distance education courses are encouraged to offer one or more of these exams in a face-to-face setting on campus.

8. Like students in face-to-face courses, students in distance courses will evaluate their courses and instructors at the end of each semester.

9. Faculty who teach distance learning courses are responsible for acquiring the skills necessary to teach their classes effectively and communicate with technical support personnel. The department chairs will ensure that all faculty hired to teach distance education courses for their departments meet the requirements as set forth in the “Faculty Requirements for Teaching Online and Hybrid Courses” policy.

10. Faculty who teach distance courses are required to be available to interact individually with their students, either in-person, over the phone, or by email or electronic chat. Contact information and/or electronic “office hours” must be included in their syllabi.

11. The College recognizes that technological advancements occur often. In order to keep up-to-date with changes and best practices, distance faculty members are required to attend at least one professional development event, relating to distance education, per year. These events may include, but are not limited to, professional development opportunities offered by the college. Faculty participation will be monitored and recorded by the electronic learning coordinator, who will then provide a report of attendance/participation to department chairs at the end of each semester.

Source of Policy: Information Resources & Technology Department - e-learning
LCTCS Policy Reference: N/A
LCTCS Guideline Reference: N/A

Responsibility: Administrator, Chief Information Resources & Technology Officer
Related Policy: N/A

Approved by: [Signature]
Date: 9.15.11
Policy Statement: SOWELA Technical Community College is committed to a secure information technology environment in support of its mission. In today’s environment the need for a strong password policy is greater than ever. Many information technology systems at SOWELA require the use of passwords including but not limited to e-mail, academic and administrative applications, computing labs, and VPN.

Purpose: This Strong Password Standard describes the minimum requirements for acceptable password composition and maintenance by all technology users (students, staff, faculty and vendors) at SOWELA Technical Community College. Its purpose is to reduce overall risk to the institution by helping users reasonably avoid security and privacy risks that may result from weak password choices.

STRONG PASSWORDS need to have:

1. Minimum length: 8 characters.
2. Must use characters from three of the following four categories
   1. Upper (A-Z)
   2. Lower case (a-z)
   3. Numeric: 0-9
   4. Special Character: %, @, =, +, *
3. Should not contain any part of your full name or your username.
4. Should not use any term that could easily be guessed by someone who is familiar with you, e.g. personal identification numbers, including those on a license plate, your telephone number, and birthdate, any part of your Social Security number, the name of a spouse or a street address.
5. Your password must be changed every 180 days, or at the beginning of every semester.

For further information or help, please contact the Information Technology Staff or email help Desk at help@sowel.edu or 421-6520.

Source of Policy: Information Resources & Technology Department
Responsible: Administrator, Chief Information Resources & Technology Officer
Related Policy: N/A
Approved by: [Signature]
Date: 12-5-12
TITLE: Student e-mail Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 6, 2014
LAST REVISION DATE: Policy No. 7.011.1

Introduction
There is an expanding reliance on electronic communication among students, faculty, staff, and administrators at SOWELA Technical Community College. This is motivated by the convenience, speed, cost-effectiveness, and environmental advantages of using electronic communications rather than printed communication. Because of this increasing reliance and acceptance of electronic communication, e-mail is considered as a part of an official means for communication with SOWELA students.

Implementation of this policy ensures that students have access to this critical form of communication. This policy will ensure that all students can access, and be accessed by e-mail and other electronic means of communications, as the need arises. This is especially relevant as it relates to disseminating critical college-related information.

Policy
This student e-mail policy provides guidelines regarding the following aspects of e-mail as an official means of communication:

- The College’s use of e-mail;
- Assignment of student e-mail addresses;
- Student use of and responsibilities associated with assigned e-mail addresses
- Expectations of e-mail communication
- Educational uses of e-mail
- Forwarding e-mail
- Appropriate use of student e-mail
- Lifetime e-mail

The College’s Use of e-mail – Electronic mail is an official means of communication at SOWELA Technical Community College. The College may send communications to students by e-mail and has the right to expect that those communications will be received and read in a timely fashion. Information sent via e-mail has the same importance and needs to be responded to in the same manner as information communicated in other ways. Students have the responsibility of accessing and reading their e-mail messages in a timely fashion.
Assignment of Student e-mail Addresses - All students currently enrolled at SOWELA Technical Community College are required to have College assigned e-mail addresses. The Information Resources and Technology Division (IRT) will assign all current students official College e-mail addresses. It is to these e-mail addresses that the College will send e-mail communications.

Expectations about student use of e-mail - Students are expected to check their official e-mail address on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with communications from the College. Checking e-mail on a daily basis is recommended. Students are also expected to check the Spam folder periodically to determine if any misclassified messages are located there. Important messages may sometimes be located in the Spam folder, if the e-mail system misclassified the message, the misclassified messages in the Spam folder must be identified and marked as "Not spam" to reduce the chances of further misclassification.

Educational uses of e-mail - Faculty will determine how electronic forms of communication (e.g., e-mail, course announcements, chats and message boards) will be used in their classes, and will specify their requirements in their course syllabi. This official student electronic communications policy will ensure that all students are able to comply with electronic-based course requirements specified by faculty. Faculty can therefore make the assumption that students' official e-mail is being accessed and they can use e-mail, chats and message boards for their classes accordingly.

Forwarding e-mail - Students may elect to redirect (auto-forward) messages sent to their SOWELA official student e-mail address. Students who redirect e-mail from their official address to another address (such as Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, or any e-mail server other than the official students.sowela.edu) do so at their own risk. Having e-mail lost or delay in receipt as a result of redirection does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with communication sent to his or her official e-mail address. The College is not responsible for the handling of e-mail by outside vendors or unofficial servers.

Appropriate use of student e-mail - In general, e-mail is not appropriate for transmitting sensitive or confidential information unless its use for such purposes is matched by an appropriate level of security.

a. All use of e-mail, including use for sensitive or confidential information, will be consistent with the College Acceptable Use Policy, Policy# 7001.

b. Confidentiality regarding student records is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). All use of e-mail, including use for sensitive or confidential information, will be consistent with FERPA.

c. E-mail shall not be the sole method for notification of any legal action.

Source of Policy: IRT
LCTCS Related Policy: N/A

Approved by: __________________________

Date: 2-28-14
TO ACTIVATE YOUR STUDENT EMAIL ACCOUNT:

- Click on the “QUICK LINKS” button in the middle of the SOWELA website homepage (www.sowela.edu) and choose “STUDENT EMAIL” from the dropdown menu.

- Type your LoLA username in the “Username” box, and add “@students.sowela.edu.”

- **EXAMPLE:** A student named Eric Martin, whose LoLA username is “ericmartin2,” would type “ericmartin2@students.sowela.edu” into the username box.

(Do NOT input the quotation marks. They are only used in the examples to highlight the words or symbols used in the directions.)

- For the “Password” box, type in a TEMPORARY password that follows this format:
  
  o Initials of first and last names (lowercase), then add your 6-digit birthdate (mm/dd/yy), then a capital letter “P,” followed by the “@” symbol and the letters “ss” (lowercase).
  
  o **EXAMPLE:** A student named Eric Martin, whose birthday is Nov. 5, 1990, would type in a temporary password of this: em110590P@ss

- During the log in procedure, you will be asked to create a new, personal password that contains at least eight alphanumeric characters/symbols.

**IF YOU HAVE A PREVIOUSLY EXISTING gmail, Google+, Google docs, Google Play, YouTube, or other Google account PLEASE READ these special instructions:**

- When you click on the “STUDENT EMAIL” link, you will be taken to a login page that says “Google” at the top. Google is the provider of the SOWELA student email system, but we use the domain “students.sowela.edu”.

- If you have a Google account of any kind, you will need to click the “Add account” link on the login page to add your SOWELA email account to your list of other Google accounts.
  
  o Click “Add account”; then on the next page, type your LoLA username at the “Username” box, and add “@students.sowela.edu”.
  
  o Then type your temporary password in the next box, and click “Sign In.”
  
  o **Do NOT click the “Create an account” link on that page.** Your student email account is ALREADY created; you just have to log in to it.
TO ACCESS YOUR NEW CANVAS ACCOUNT:

- Click on the “QUICK LINKS” tab in the middle of the SOWELA website homepage (www.sowela.edu) and choose “Canvas Login” from the dropdown menu.

- Type your LoLA username in the “Username” box.

- Type your current LoLA password in the “Password” box. (Canvas® uses the same usernames and passwords as for LoLA.)

- If you forget your password, you must change it on the LoLA login page by going to https://my.lctcs.edu/cp/home/displaylogin and then clicking on the brown “CHANGE YOUR PASSWORD” button. Then follow the steps as directed.

TO RECEIVE FURTHER ASSISTANCE:

- Send an email to the IT help desk at help@sowela.edu and include the following information:
  
  - A description of the type of help you need
  - Your full name AND your LoLA username
  - Your full birthdate
  - Your student ID number

NOTES:

- The IT Department CANNOT help with ANY issues related to RDCs, MyMathLab, MyWritingLab, MyReadingLab, or any other “MyLab” sites. You must ask your teachers for help with those issues.

- Canvas, our learning management system, will not be accessible to students until the FIRST DAY OF CLASSES. After that time, BEFORE reporting a problem to the help desk, if you do not see one or more of your courses listed on your Canvas site, ASK YOUR TEACHERS if they will be using Canvas. The TEACHERS must make their sites accessible to their students before the coursesite links will show up on the students’ pages.

- Click on the SmartNotice™ name in the very bottom right of the SOWELA website homepage (in the dark blue area) to CHECK your information for accuracy and ADD any additional contact information, including a cell phone number if you wish to receive alerts by text message. This is the program that SOWELA will use to contact you in the event of a campus emergency or a weather-related emergency.

SOWELA Technical Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, origin, gender, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies:

**Title IX Officer:** Dr. Fitzpatrick Anyanwu  
3820 Sen J Bennett Johnston Ave.  
Lake Charles, LA 70615  
(337) 421-6505, (800) 256-0483

**ADA Officer:** Ms. Christine Collins  
3820 Sen J Bennett Johnston Ave.  
Lake Charles, LA 70615  
(337) 421-6969, (800) 256-0483