

August 6, 2008

To: Students Registered for CIS 1130 Online for Fall, 2008 (DL 01)

From: Sally Sullivan, Professor, Computer Information Systems

Welcome to CIS 113 online! There couldn't be a better time to be learning programming skills within the context of C++. The skills you learn in this course will serve you well, no matter what aspect of Information Technology you pursue. I'd like to share a story about a student I had in a face to face 113 course a while ago. He asked questions during every class (he never missed one) and often helped fellow students. It seemed he was doing every exercise at the end of the chapters for practice (more than had been assigned) and then asking questions to clarify anything he didn't understand. Needless to say, this student earned a grade of A.

A few semesters later, when the CIS Department was searching for a student close to graduating to be named CIS student of the year, I naturally thought of this student. During my research, I was quite surprised to learn that he was a biology, not a CIS, major! I called him and he said he just wanted to learn something about programming. He simply applied skills he had used in other courses such as the sciences and mathematics to succeed in this one. These included keeping up with the class, staying engaged with the material by doing lots of practice, and explaining concepts to others. I highly recommend taking a page from this student's book, so to speak. I will be structuring the course to encourage you to stay engaged and get lots of practice.

This class requires about 12 hours of work per week. That's about 4-5 hours for introducing yourself to the material (the same amount of time you would spend attending a face to face class and lab) and about 8 hours per week of additional work on review, testing, and programming exercises (the identical amount you would spend in a face to face class). As one of my former students put it, "the class takes the same AMOUNT of time, but it allows you the flexibility as to WHEN to spend the time and that is all."

Please schedule a conference with me during the first week of class if there is any question about whether you have the time available or if you have any questions about the course at all which are not answered by the syllabus and course outline. The refund period is the first week of class. If you are already a programmer, your time might be slightly less, but just slightly.

I will make an extra effort to be available at any time convenient to you during the first 10 days of class (August 18-September 3) and I would very much like to meet with each of you individually (or arrange to come with another student or two!). This is not a requirement, but is highly recommended. Email me to set up your appointment. My schedule will not be firm until classes begin on August 25. You can check it at my web page ([academic.pgcc.edu/~ssullivan](http://academic.pgcc.edu/~ssullivan)).

I may have the syllabus posted on my website a week or so before classes begin (before that there will be one from a previous semester to give you a general idea of the class flow), for those who like to get a head start. If you can't come in but want to discuss things, please email me with a good telephone number and a range of times that would be good ones to talk by phone.

I must give a grade of "Q" to students who disappear (do not participate in the online course) during the first three weeks of class. This grade does not affect your GPA, but it does affect your academic load. In this, it works the same as a grade of W. The "Q" grade designates administrative withdrawal, meaning that the student has in effect withdrawn from the course without filing the appropriate paperwork.

You do **not** need to attend an on campus orientation. You **must have your textbook** when classes begin and sign into the Blackboard course when it becomes available the evening of Thursday, August 21 to get started. The first module of the course will be available beginning Monday, August 25, the first day of classes. Feel free to email me at [SSullivan@pgcc.edu](mailto:SSullivan@pgcc.edu) to introduce yourself or ask questions. This course is similar to a math course, since one topic builds on the last. That is why it is essential to keep up. I plan to schedule three 2 ½ hour sessions in a lab during the semester, to fulfill part of my office hour requirements. Please also check my regular weekly office hours when they are posted. Best of luck in this course!