Dear Colleague:

Attached is a pdf file which evaluates your online course(s).

Rubric scores for all course elements must be at least a 3, except the ‘Start Here’ Module which must have a value of 4.

As I mentioned in my previous May 22 letter to faculty teaching an online course, our regional accrediting agency, ACCJC, has made a major shift in policy by emphasizing the need for high quality standards in all online courses. Accrediting and auditing teams who visit campuses will now be closely examining online courses. We will have such a visit this fall.

For those faculty who wish to see additional information about the online accreditation process, I am including another attachment of the ACCJC definitions of Distance Education and Correspondence Education, the recommendation regarding Distance Education from the Visiting Team, and some of the criteria used to evaluate DE Programs, found in the ACCJC Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education (June 2011).

A large number of our current online courses do NOT meet the minimum standards the accreditors and auditors demand. Jim Clarke, Mike Smedshammer, and their team of faculty mentors will be available for the next six weeks to assist faculty who wish to upgrade their courses so that they are eligible to be taught this fall. Jim, Mike, and the mentors can provide guidance, but 99% of the work will have to be done by the faculty members themselves.

The MJC online course rubric that you received on May 22 is based on Quality Matters standards that colleges across the country are using to review online courses and train faculty (https://www.qmprogram.org/). We also used criteria recommended by @One, iNACOL, and Blackboard Exemplary Course.

Based on Jim Clarke’s careful review of all the MJC’s courses scheduled for offering this fall, I am mailing to individual faculty members a list of the specific modifications that must be made to bring their courses up to minimum standards.
As I also mentioned in my May 22 letter to all faculty, **August 1** is the deadline for courses to be upgraded. No one will be required to upgrade their course this summer. However, those courses not completely upgraded by August 1 will be withdrawn from the fall 2012 schedule. Faculty whose courses are withdrawn can discuss alternative teaching assignments with their Deans. Some faculty may choose to simply offer an on-campus version of their online course. Others may choose to modify their online course during the fall for a spring 2013 offering.

MJC will sponsor **two workshops** for faculty to assist them in upgrading their courses before the August 1 deadline. The workshops will be held at the East Campus Library Research Lab on **Monday June 25 from 1-3pm and on Thursday June 28 from 10am – noon.**

I also want to announce that Mike Smedshammer will be our interim Instructional Design Coordinator and will replace Jim Clarke who is retiring. We are all grateful to Jim for the online leadership he has shown over the past decade.

I will support Jim, Mike, and Jenni Abbott, our interim Director of Online Learning, and the entire online teaching faculty to ensure that we have the maximum number of high quality online courses available for our students this fall.

Let’s get ready for the accreditors by showing them that MJC has a series of terrific online courses.

Jim

James Fay
Interim Vice President of Instruction
Modesto Junior College
ACCJC Definitions and Standards Related to Distance Education

Included below are the ACCJC definitions of Distance Education and Correspondence Education. The distinction between the two is critical. Some courses being listed and reported as DE courses do not meet DE criteria, but are in fact simply Correspondence Courses, which MJC does not offer.

Definition of Distance Education
“Distance education is defined, for the purpose of accreditation review as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. Distance education often incorporates technologies such as 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 video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, in conjunction with any of the other technologies.

Definition of Correspondence Education
(1) “A course provided by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced;

(2) A course which is part correspondence and part residential training, the Secretary considers the course to be a correspondence course; and,


MJC received the following recommendation (#7) as part of the October 2011 MJC Evaluation Report:
“In order to meet the standard, the team recommends the college develop and implement a distance education plan as identified in the Substantive Change Report, 2010”. (Standards II.A.1, II.A.1.b, II.A.2.d.)

The MJC Distance Education Advisory Committee developed a comprehensive DE Plan in early 2012. The Plan was approved by Academic Senate (March 29, 2012) and by College Council (April 16, 2012). An important element of the Plan is minimum standards for online teaching.
http://www.mjc.edu/current/studentservices/waystolearn/deplanfinal.pdf

The MJC Minimum Standards Rubric is based on Quality Matters standards that colleges across the country are using to review online courses and train faculty (https://www.qmprogram.org/). The rubric focuses on five areas:

1) “Start Here” orientation module
2) Organization of course content, including an introduction
3) Assessments connected to varied learning activities
4) *Extensive and meaningful* faculty-to-student and student-to-student interactions
5) Content enhanced by visually and intellectually engaging material

The MJC rubric addresses the new ACCJC requirements listed in the June 2011 *Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education*, the resource ACCJC provides to Visiting Teams in order to evaluate DE programs. Questions are listed in the Guide to align with ACCJC Standards, including:

- How does the institution ensure that its DE/CE programs and services are of high quality, comparable with the institution’s face-to-face offerings, and appropriate to an institution of higher education?

- By what means are DE/CE programs assessed for currency, teaching and learning strategies, and student learning outcomes, and are the assessment methods different from those methods applied for assessment of face-to-face programs? What is the rationale?

- What means does the institution use to assess students’ educational preparation for DE/CE programs? How is this information incorporated into program planning?

- How are activities offered in DE/CE mode evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting student needs?

- If the institution uses course materials developed outside the institution for its programs offered in DE/CE format how are these materials assessed, and how does the institution ensure that the academic standard is comparable with its other programs?

- What processes exist to approve and administer DE/CE courses and programs? Are the processes effective?

- Do courses in DE/CE mode include multiple ways of assessing student learning?

- What efforts has the college made to match the teaching methodologies with particular needs of students and with learning styles? How effective are the instructional methodologies that the college uses in producing learning in De/CE mode?
Those of us teaching online in the fall are working to revise our courses in order to meet the minimum standards for online courses, as required by ACCJC accreditors. The requirement for a “Start Here” orientation module is new for many instructors. Below, I am attaching screenshots of these elements in the Start Here module I have created for my English 101 course as an example of one way to satisfy the requirement.

I recommend Jing for screenshots explaining how to navigate your course (you can also use it to make screen-capture video). Jing is free and easy to use: [http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html](http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html)

Mike Smedshammer

1. The “Student Academic Contract for Online Courses” (provided by the Instruction Office):

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Student Contract for Academic Courses

Attached Files: MJC DL Student Contract.pdf (56.80 KB)

Attached is the Student Academic Contract for Online Courses. All online students at MJC must agree to the terms in this contract in order to participate in online courses.

By completing this orientation module, you agree to the terms set forth in the contract.
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2. an overview of the LMS (Blackboard), the course structure and navigation:

- Each module begins with an overview. Click on the title to move into the module.

Finally, click on the title of the module in the upper left-hand corner to go into the module itself and start the activities.

Go through the activities one page at a time, in order.

So, you're taking an English class.

People have different emotions regarding English composition. Some have had great teachers and love English. Others have had different experiences.

I want you to click on this link and add one word to the list. (We will use this collaborative assignment later.) For now, please just add your word.

"English Makes Me Feel..." activity.
3. a complete course syllabus:
4. course expectations (included inside syllabus):
5. grading policies:

6. help desk information
7. Instructor contact information:
8. Other required course information such as assistance for students with disabilities:
9. Policies about returning phone calls and email:

Office Hours / Contact / Disability Information

- Tuesday/Thursday mornings from 9:00-11:00 a.m. in my office, Founders Hall 260Q.
- Monday nights from 8:00-9:00 p.m. online via Illuminate. See the link for this below.
- Email: smedshammerm@yosemite.edu (this is always the best way to reach me). Always include your full name and course, and remember to never use texting shorthand when emailing an instructor (or boss or anyone in an official position).
- I do my best to return email within 24 hours. If you do not hear back from me, please send another email, as sometimes emails do not get delivered properly. If that does not work, please leave a voice mail. I will get back to you!
- Voice mail: (209) 575-6490 (voice mails get forwarded to me.)
- If you have a disability, be sure to contact MJC Disability Services right away. They will provide you with documentation to share with me. I will then know specifically how to accommodate your needs. Here is the MJC Disability Services website: http://www.mjc.edu/current/resources/support/depss/ They are great!

10. Class participation policy (student must actually participate regularly in the class, such as in a discussion board. Just logging in is not sufficient.)

Class Participation Policy

Federal and state regulations require online students to participate regularly. Logging in by itself is not sufficient. Students must submit assignments and participate in assigned activities, such as discussion boards.

- Students who have not logged in for more than one week will be contacted via email to their student accounts. Students who do not respond to this email within 48 hours may be dropped.
- Students who do not submit course assignments over two consecutive weeks may be dropped.

Remember, if you are ill or have a family emergency that prevents you from participating for more than a week, contact your instructor.