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Academic Success Guide  
2020-2021  
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Version 1

# Academic Success Guide

## PREPARING FOR REMOTE LEARNING

Coronavirus has been disruptive, no doubt. However, don't let it diminish the quality and value of a private university education at the University of La Verne. This guide came about from brainstorming discussion between Dr. Carlos Cervantes, Associate Dean, and CBPM Academic Advisor Michelle Kechichian, expanded to the brilliant minds of professional academic advisors at the main campus for critical and constructive feedback. We hope this guide will help you to prepare in advance of your semester classes to be successful and maximize the educational benefit of the [La Verne Experience](#). This guide complements the ASC's "Support on Campus" guide that has other resources for you, including the coronavirus website's resources for students. Check them out!

ASC Success [Guide](#).

Coronavirus Student [Resources](#).

Stay informed, visit the official coronavirus [website](#).

## REMOTE INSTRUCTION

Remote learning doesn't diminish the quality of a university education. If it did online programs would not have grown exponentially worldwide. The only difference is that instruction is being conducted online via WebEx, Zoom, Blackboard, or other modalities of instruction. Our faculty have strived since mid-spring 2020 to sharpen their technical skills to meet the educational standards that we are known for in classes that traditionally are taught F2F (face to face) but have moved to an online platform on a temporary basis due to local safety and health protocols.

### YOUR ACADEMIC ADVISOR

Academic advising is important. We advisors are the student's primary link to the curricular and cocurricular programs at the University of La Verne (hereafter La Verne). We try to fill the call for an institutional mindset that intrusive and intentional support structures can help students to succeed in college. Crockett (1985) noted that academic advising was the one institutional program in a college that was required of all students, elevating its potential to enhance their retention (and academic success). Effective academic advising, backed by research and best practices, can elevate the idea that access, with support, is opportunity (Tinto, 2008).

Connect with your academic advisor. Stay in touch. If you don't know who your advisor is, login to your degree audit, MyDegree Tracker, via the student [portal](#). You might find that you have more than one advisor! You will notice that the name is hyperlinked with his/her/their email address.

### BEST PRACTICES

Communicate often with your instructors.  
Ask for help.  
Seek campus resources.  
Read your syllabi.  
Mark your calendar for key dates.

### KEY TIPS

- Download the full application for WebEx and Zoom on your PC and mobile phone, and any other device such as an iPad as backups.
- Practice joining WebEx or Zoom rooms with friends or classmates to work out the kinks and to feel comfortable with the software.
- Practice how to share your screen as you will likely need to make a presentation in some of your virtual class sessions.



## PRE-CLASS CHECKLIST

- Time permitting, 10-20 minutes before the start of your class, find a quiet place with the strongest possible WIFI or wired Ethernet connection to your router or hotspot device.
- Is your room messy? Tidy up a bit. Otherwise consider using a digital virtual background to mask your room or location.
- Are you dressed appropriately? Would you visit someone with PJs?
- Avoid darkened rooms. Avoid a bright window to your back. Being in front of a window is a better option for natural lighting.
- Have a pen/pencil and notepad next to you. These may help with notes.
- Have a bottle of water within reach to avoid leaving the course.
- Avoid opening unnecessary apps that could distract you away from the lecture.
- Opened apps or browsers can also diminish your internet speed, connection, and overall stability.
- Turn on your webcam. Make sure it works. Adjust it to avoid awkward angles. (Your instructor might ask that the webcam be continuously on for attendance purpose).
- Open your WebEx or Zoom application, if the instructor has not permitted you to join, be patient. Keep the window open until you are permitted to enter or the instructor joins the room.
- Mute yourself when you enter the WebEx or Zoom room. More in the next section about online etiquette and tips.

*“Mute yourself to avoid background noises that can disrupt the session, or to avoid embarrassing “hot mic” moments.”*

### REMOTE VS ONLINE. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

**Remote:** You’d be expected to login to your class at the scheduled class time. This “live” session expects you to be alert, focused, and ready to participate in the course. This experience also involves following on-screen and syllabus-directed instructions. Make sure you review and complete all your assignments by the posted deadlines to be successful in class. This experience merits consideration of the “WebEx or Zoom Etiquette & Tips” to the right of this box. This experience may be referred as “synchronous”.

**Online:** This teaching modality expects students to be highly motivated and disciplined because these classes are self-paced within a structured, deadline-based format. This modality may also require frequent Blackboard “attendance” to keep up with the assignments and discussion boards.

## WEBEX OR ZOOM ETIQUETTE & TIPS

- Read the course syllabus. Look for the instructor’s own behavioral and etiquette expectations.
- Mute yourself to avoid background noises that can disrupt the session, or to avoid embarrassing “hot mic” moments.
- Open the chat box, move it out of the way if it floats around the screen. [Tip: utilize the chat box to contribute to the conversation or to ask questions].
- Avoid using chat to attack, criticize, harass, or disparage the instructor, the course, or other classmates. Everything you write could be read by everyone in the course, including your instructor, the course might also be recorded. Written comments can be saved and used to open student judicial or conduct cases.
- Identify the icon gesture to “raise hand” digitally. Don’t assume you can unmute yourself to speak unless you have been given permission by the instructor verbally or in writing (in the syllabus).
- Speak only if prompted or appropriate.
- Speak naturally as if people were within earshot. You’d be surprised how sensitive PC or webcam speakers can be.
- Keep your focus on the camera and maintain eye contact on the screen—this shows you are attentive and engaged.
- Limit facial expressions that give away negative reactions.
- Limit body movement that can be distracting or obstruct clear view of your face
- If you have the urge to sneeze or cough, turn off the camera, make sure you are on mute. Don’t worry, it’s natural.
- Don’t presume you can record the class session if the lecture is conducted live. Check with your instructor about his/her/their policy on recording. [You might find out that your instructor might already plan to record the lecture to accommodate students].



## IN-CLASS TECHNICAL SUPPORT

If you have technical trouble, don't freak out. The following tips can help:

- If your connectivity begins to falter during class. Turn off your camera to see if it helps with bandwidth.
- Close other applications that might be running in the background that are degrading your connectivity. Yes, if you're side viewing YouTube, close the browser.
- If audio fails on your PC,
  - 1) Call in to the session using your mobile phone
  - 2) Join the class using WebEx or Zoom on your mobile phone. Here is where downloading the WebEx and Zoom apps prior to the start of the semester will come in handy!
- Ideally, the best virtual class experience will be using a PC or laptop. Calling in or using the app on your mobile phone should be a backup solution.
- Notify the instructor right away via the chat box if you are having technical problems. Try to avoid unmuting yourself to share your technical problems.
- Your focus should be on the instructor and the people on the other end of your video conference. Avoid disruptive background noises.
- Move to a location that gives you a stronger wireless signal.
- If you can connect your PC directly to the router with an Ethernet cable, do so. The connection over Ethernet versus Wi-Fi is "night and day."

## THE VALUE OF THE LA VERNE DEGREE

The value of the university degree that you earn from La Verne will not be diminished or less respected by the pandemic. How you choose to adopt and manage the pandemic and your obligations to yourself, your family, and your community to show grit and make the best of the situation will determine how successful you are in taking classes online or remotely until we can resume regular operations on campus.

Community can and has been built online for as long as online universities, programs, and instruction have existed. The future of online and remote learning and telecommuting for careers is here, there is no turning back. How you react and adjust now will help you to transfer these life and survival skills to a future profession.

Use these moments to sharpen your technical and online skills and etiquette. Showcase what you've learned in your resume and build talking points for interviews. Hiring for jobs has not stopped due to Covid-19; in fact, they continue but online via Zoom or WebEx. If you can show prospective employers how you adjusted to university instruction online and still graduated, imagine what your employer might think about your fit to his or her organization?

Don't let a crisis go to waste.

### TEXTBOOKS

To view the list of textbooks for your classes, visit the University Bookstore [website](#) or your course schedule in MyLaVerne. If you visit the website, simply type your student ID number and select the term.

**CASE STUDY: JANE WANTS TO CONTACT AN INSTRUCTOR FOR A CLOSED CLASS TO SEEK PERMISSION TO ENROLL BUT THE INSTRUCTOR IS NOT LISTED IN THE UNIVERSITY DIRECTORY. WHAT NOW?**

Jane might “freak out” if she finds out that Dr. Moore, the new adjunct instructor, is not listed in the [university directory](#). She complains to her best friend, Ally, who happened to know how to retrieve the instructor’s email when she watched the Advising Office’s YouTube channel tutorial on the [subject](#).

Ally shows Jane how to retrieve the instructor’s email in MyLaVerne. Ally looked up ANTH 250 (CRN 1234); she clicked on the CRN (Course Registration Number) to view the course details. Ally showed Jane where the name of the instructor is located; next to the name was the email radio button.



**CASE STUDY: MATT CAN’T REMEMBER HOW TO RETRIEVE HIS COURSE SCHEDULE. WHAT NOW?**

Matt calls his advisor Michelle because he can’t find his class schedule. Michelle invites Matt to her WebEx room and asks him to share his screen with her. Michelle walks him through the process to retrieve the schedule: “Login to the LaVerne Portal... scroll down the menu on the left screen until you see ‘student schedule.’ Be sure you are looking at the correct term or semester. There are two schedule views, ‘Student Detail Schedule’ and ‘Student Schedule by Day and Time’. Matt printed the schedule and thanked Michelle for the tip.

## WHAT IS BLACKBOARD?

Many of your professors will use the Blackboard program to post their course syllabus, assignments, lectures, other course materials, feedback, and grades. Blackboard can be accessed on your PC or laptop by logging on to your La Verne Portal.

***Recommendation: Download the Blackboard App to your mobile phone.***

If you are using your PC or laptop to join a virtual class meeting on Zoom or WebEx and your professor refers to information on Blackboard during the class, students can open their Blackboard App on their mobile phone to follow along.

Although some professors may post grades in Blackboard, the final grades will be posted on student’s academic transcript and our degree audit report, [MyDegreeTracker](#).

Professors will notify students during the beginning of the class if Blackboard will be used for their course.

## DOWNLOADS: WEBEX, ZOOM, BLACKBOARD

Download **WebEx Meetings** to your PC or laptop: <https://www.webex.com/downloads.html>

Download **Zoom Cloud Meetings** to your PC or laptop: <https://zoom.us/download>

Download to Mobile Phone from your App store:

**WebEx Meetings, Zoom Cloud Meetings, & Blackboard**



The logos in your App store will look like this:



Cisco Webex Meetings  
Video Conferencing  
★★★★☆ 242K



ZOOM Cloud Meetings  
Meet Happy  
★★★★★ 1.06M



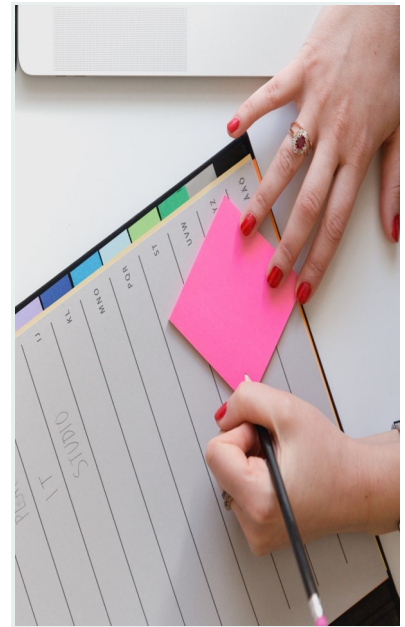
Blackboard  
Education  
★★★★★ 285K



## IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINE

Keep up with important university and course dates and deadlines. Most of us have smartphones that have calendars. Fill the calendar, sync it with your PC, even. Here are some key offices with different calendars:

- [University Registrar](#)
- [Student Accounts](#)
- [Financial aid](#)
- [Housing](#)



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*“Keep up with key university and course dates and deadlines”*

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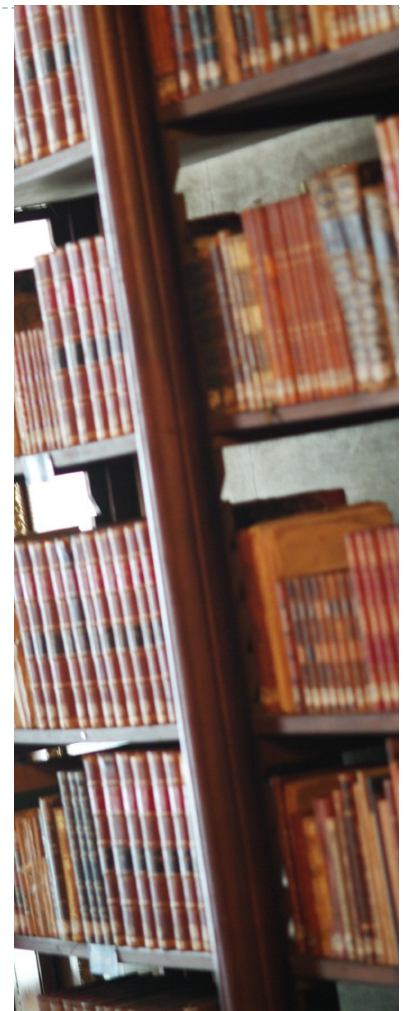
## UNIVERSITY CATALOG

Why should students review the academic catalog? The catalog reflects current policies, procedures, and fees. While academic advisors will assist students in every way possible, the responsibility for following all policies and meeting all requirements of the catalog rest with the student.

Students are expected to satisfy all degree requirements of the academic catalog in effect at the time they are admitted to, and begin coursework in, a degree program. Look at the end of the catalog for an index of topics such as majors, minors, grade policies, etc.

If you don't have a printed copy of the catalog, download it free of charge from our [website](#).

*[TIP: Every student is tied to one catalog. Typically, the one catalog is usually for the year of first enrollment. For example, if your first semester of enrollment is either fall 2019 or spring 2020, “your catalog” is “2019-2020”. The only reason you would have a different catalog year is if you actively appealed to change the catalog of record].*

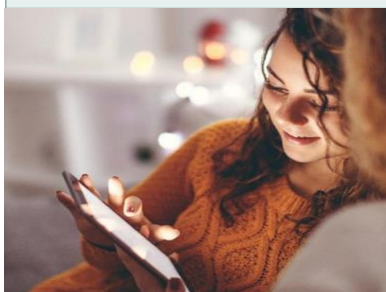


**CASE STUDY: IT'S AMANDA'S FIRST WEEK OF CLASSES. ONE OF HER CLASSES DIDN'T GO AS WELL AS SHE HAD HOPED. SHE DOESN'T LIKE THE TOPIC BUT FEELS STUCK AND DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.**

Amanda's stuck with a class she doesn't like after the first meeting of the semester. Coincidentally, her academic advisor emailed her to check-in with her. Amanda replied to her academic advisor and explained her situation to seek assistance.

Amanda and her advisor met to review the class schedule and to find another class that might be a better fit.

Her advisor also reminded her to check the Registrar's academic [calendar](#) to find the last day to make class schedule changes. Also, Amanda was urged to maintain full-time status in the semester, with at least 12 semester hours, but to aim for "[16 to finish](#)" in 4 years.



## PROTECT YOUR VOICE AND HEARING

Working or studying from home continuously has been a change and challenge for all of us during Covid-19. The majority of us did not choose the telecommute or remote learning. However, it has forced us to adapt to new methods of communication since March 2020.

We had to learn or relearn technology, figure out ways to access social and private networks, and connecting with coworkers, friends, family, classmates, and instructor online via WebEx, Zoom, or related modules. However, when was the last time that we took a step back to take a break from our tasks? When did we take break from speaking and hearing?

The Doctors of Keck School of Medicine provided a few tips to protect our voices and hearing:

- “Reduce background noise.
- Use a headset to improve audio.
- Adjust the light in the room.
- Minimize distractions”.

They add tips to protect your voice, avoid “cell yell”:

- “Take short breaks where you stop talking.
- Be mindful of how “loud” you are when you speak into a microphone (background noise makes you speak louder.
- Use a single ear bud.
- Warm up your voice by gently humming, lip trills.”

(Source: Email newsletter, August 19, 2020).

