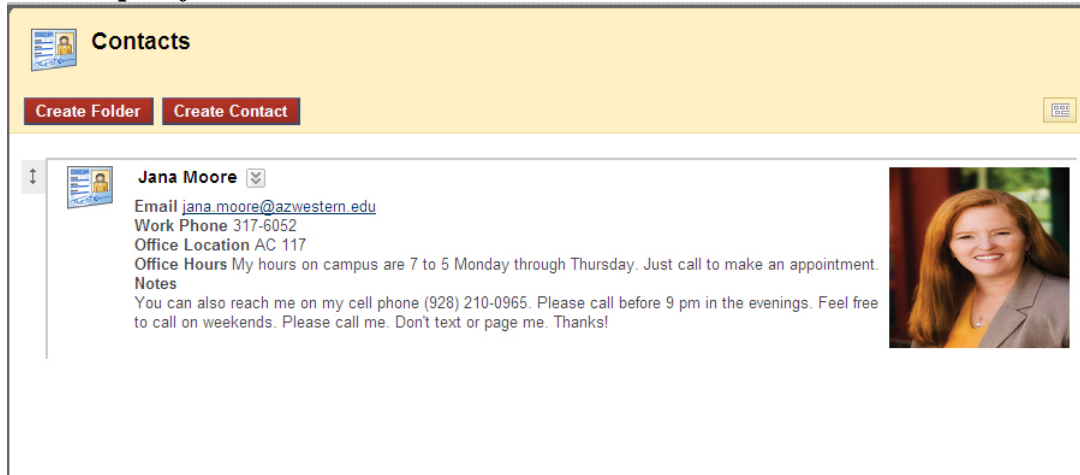


## Blackboard Recommendations

- 1. The first week** of class is your opportunity to orient students to using Blackboard. You may want to add an clearly labeled orientation area for online learning in your class. An orientation folder is available for copying. Please contact [Carol Rinehart](#) for information about copying the folder to your course. In some respects, this is the most critical time to get the students involved in online learning
- 2. In addition to orienting** students on using Blackboard, we recommend that you orient your students on ‘how’ to use your course. The best way to achieve this goal is reached by:
  - Creating a ‘lesson’ that the students must complete the first week that instructs them on several things... such as: how to navigate around your course, where to find certain important items, what your objectives are for the course, how to communicate with you, what they can expect as far as workload and time commitments, etc. This type of orientation will help the students be acquainted to the course and it will go a long way toward reducing the number of problems you may encounter during the semester.
  - We recommend that you create a quiz about the course orientation lesson and the course syllabus to make sure that the students have read the orientation lesson and the course syllabus. These documents can be placed in” Course Information” content area
- 3. Have a navigation menu** that is obvious for students and easy to navigate  
Course menu buttons may include:
  - **Announcements**
  - **Course Information**
  - **Instructor Information**
  - **Content/Lessons**
  - **Assignments/Quizzes**
  - **Discussion Board**
  - **Library**
  - **External Links**
  - **Grades/Tools/Email**
  - **Help**
- 4. Add a link to AWC Library resources:** Blackboard gives you many options for linking to additional research resources from your course site. These resources can be Journal articles or Databases. The method you choose depends on the demand for external research, your comfort level with HTML and Blackboard, and how you want your students to use your course site. You can add an external link to the library page or add a library lesson. If you want to add a Library lesson to your course, please contact [Tina Sibley](#) (928)317-6491 for more information.  
**Resources for Blackboard and Off Campus Classes link:**  
<http://libguides.azwestern.edu/offcampus>
- 5. Put a picture** of yourself or you may want to post something else under ‘Instructor Contact’ section, and put personal information about yourself in there too. Getting the students involved in the course is crucial to its success, and letting your students get to know you better helps to get them involved. Especially in an online course. Getting ‘in-touch’ with your students is even more important in that environment. Set ‘virtual office

hours' for your course that is set aside a certain time each week that your students know that you will be sitting in front of your computer if they need you. If you do not have office hours set, you can put a note in the contact area for the student to call or email you for an appointment

***An example of Instructor Contact area:***



6. **Be consistent:** We recommend that you apply consistent terminology when creating the structure of your course and when referring to that structure. If you call a certain item a 'lesson' in one location of your course, do not call it a 'chapter' in another part of the course. Use consistent terminology so students do not get confused.
7. **Use a consistent course layout.** For example, if you have a folder structure for each "unit" of instruction, and inside the 'week 1' folder you have an 'additional resources' folder that has additional course materials, then for the 'week 2' folder you need to have an 'additional resources' folder even if there is nothing to put in it. Just put a note inside the folder that says something along the lines of "this folder intentionally left blank." **Tip:** You do not have to add course specific dates here and have a single, clearly labeled calendar to update each semester.
8. **Add a banner** to your course that includes the course title. If you want to copy the banner to another semester course shell, you may want to exclude the semester date from the banner so no future editing would be needed.

**An Example of a Course Banner:**



9. **Remove menu buttons** that you do not use. Leaving buttons in your menu that are not used may cause your students unnecessary confusion. You can accomplish by clicking the chevron near the name and select delete.
10. **Create a Course Calendar** that lists specific dates or 'milestones' in your course. This can easily be done by using a web page editor (such as FrontPage or Dreamweaver) to create an

HTML document with a simple table with rows and columns. You can then upload this Course Calendar document to Blackboard.

**Note:** Blackboard has a feature called the Course Calendar that you can use for this purpose, but it is our opinion that a simple HTML table is far more useful than the Course Calendar built into Blackboard. Using a simple HTML table enables your students to visually see upcoming events in the course easier because all the information is listed sequentially on the screen.

- 11. Use the survey feature in Blackboard Tests/Surveys and Pools Course Tools link.** By using a survey, you can gain feedback from your students on any topic that you want to ask them about. Survey questions are very anonymous, so your students can share their true feelings and you can be assured of getting honest feedback. Some examples of the types of uses for surveys are seeking feedback on the effectiveness of certain types of homework exercises, or seeking suggestions for course improvement.
- 12. Every time you create a new item of information inside Blackboard, you have the option of selecting date restriction.** This is helpful in that you can release assignments and course information as you go throughout the semester, instead of releasing all of it at the beginning of the semester. **Note:** Some students want to work ahead, plan around their schedule, and open access to course content allows more flexibility. It is up to you to decide how much flexibly you want to have in your course.
- 13. When you use audio or video clips** inside your course, provide a written transcript of exactly what is said in the audio/video clip. It is beneficial to those students who may be disabled in some fashion and use screen readers to obtain page content and also for students who have slow internet connection.
- 14. Using Multimedia is very useful for students;** you can record a lecture or tutorial and then upload it to AWC video server <http://video.azwestern.edu>  
You are able to easily embed video code in blackboard

Example for multimedia used in Blackboard:

<http://video.azwestern.edu/videos/31/the-query>

- 15. If you are going to require that students submit documents to you for homework** assignments, projects, and exams, we recommend that you establish a naming convention that all students must adhere to, also add file types accepted for example docx, .doc or .rtf etc. This will save you many hours of headaches of having to run down documents and assignments and misplaced files. Be firm with this naming-convention and let the students know early on how important and serious it is that they follow it.
- 16. You may receive questions from your students requesting technical assistance** on issues regarding Blackboard and even on technology issues not related to your course. To avoid spending time on answering questions, we suggest that you create a Discussion Board thread that is specifically devoted to posting questions that students have regarding technology/Blackboard issues. When students question you about these types of issues,

instruct them to first go to the appropriate discussion board thread and seek help from their fellow classmates. In most cases, their question is already answered in the discussion board threads. **Note:** For Technical support you can send an email to [helpdesk@azwestern.edu](mailto:helpdesk@azwestern.edu) or call 928.317.5892