



eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center

Student Handbook

eLearning Today, Leading Tomorrow

The eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center (eLearning Center) supports Laredo College's mission to offer online degree programs and courses to meet the needs of the diverse student population of Webb County and the surrounding communities.

All eLearning courses require students to have textbooks, internet access, and a webcam and to complete course requirements online, which may include final exams.

Laredo College is committed to providing equal opportunities to all members of the campus community and to maintaining an environment that is free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. In accordance with Laredo College Board policy, and applicable federal and state law, no individual will be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in Laredo College services, programs, and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, citizenship status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Laredo College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for its programs, services, and activities. Accommodation requests related to a disability should be made five business days prior to the date of service by contacting Disability Services Director, Adriana Craddock, at lcds@laredo.edu or (956) 721-5137.

Notifiable Conditions:

Laredo College is committed to maintaining the health and safety of the college community. It is important for all students, employees, and community members to take proactive measures to create a safe learning and working environment. LC is required to report any student and employee cases of notifiable conditions to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in a timely manner. Therefore, all students and employees should report a confirmed diagnosis of a notifiable condition to LC's Health and Safety Operations Center at safety@laredo.edu and (956) 721-5852. Notifiable conditions that LC is required to report can be found at: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/IDCU/investigation/Reporting-forms/Notifiable-Conditions-2023Color.pdf>

eLearning Center Contact Information

Fort McIntosh Campus
Lewis Energy Group Academic Center 307
Phone: (956) 721-5211 Fax: (956) 721-5873

South Campus
Judith Zaffirini Library B202
Phone: (956) 794-4211

www.laredo.edu/elearning

<https://ehelpdesk.laredo.edu/>

eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center Staff:

Alicia Reed	Director
Luz Contreras	Instructional Assistant
Gabriel Gonzalez	Technical Support Coordinator
Hannah Higgins	Technology & Multimedia Specialist
Anna Gonzalez	Lead Instructional Design Specialist
Beatriz Flores-Martinez	eLearning & Instructional Design Specialist
Guadalupe Castillo	eLearning & Instructional Design Specialist
Veronica Juarez	eLearning & Instructional Design Specialist
Guillermo Parra	Computer Lab Supervisor
Zulema Saldaña	Technician Part-Time
Alfredo Gonzalez III	Technician Part-Time

Alicia J. Reed

eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center Director
alicia.reed@laredo.edu
Lewis Energy Academic Center 307
(956) 721-5211

Dr. Elizabeth C. Rodriguez

Dean of Academic Innovation and Technology
elizabeth.rodriguez@laredo.edu
Lewis Energy Academic Center 209-A
(956) 721-5888

Dr. Marisela Rodriguez Tijerina

Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs
marisela.rodriguez@laredo.edu
Elpha Lee West Building 124
(956) 721-5820

Table of Contents

Modes of Instruction	4
Canvas (Learning Management System)	4
Technology Requirements for Canvas	5
Virtual Backpack Online Student Orientation	5
Scholastic Dishonesty	5
Student Code of Conduct and Discipline	5
Student Disciplinary Procedures	6
Advising for Online Students	6
Syllabus Information	6
Registration for Online Courses	6
Authenticating the Identity of Students Enrolled in Online Courses	6
Open Educational Resources (OER)	7
Bookstore	7
Online Testing	8
Student eHelpDesk	8
Online Tutoring	8
Library Resources	8
Counseling and Disability Services	9
Financial Aid	9
Withdrawal from Online Courses	9
Grades	10
Academic Appeals	10
Complaints and Grievance	10
Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)	10
Graduation	11

Modes of Instruction

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) rules define distance education as follows: “A course in which a majority (more than 50 percent) of the instruction occurs when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in a separate physical location. The definition of distance education courses does not include courses with 50 percent or less instruction when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in a separate physical location.” Two categories of distance education courses are defined:

100 Percent Online Course

A distance education course in which 100 percent of the instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. Requirements for on-campus or in-person activities do not exclude a course from this category.

Hybrid Course

A distance education course in which more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations.

Distance Education Degree or Certificate Program

A program in which a student may complete a majority (more than 50 percent) of the credit hours required for the program through distance education courses. The definition of a Distance Education Degree or Certificate Program does not include programs in which 50 percent or less of the required credit hours are offered through distance education. Two categories of distance education programs are defined:

100-Percent Online Program

A degree program in which students complete 100 percent of the credit hours required for the program through 100 percent Online Courses. Requirements for on-campus or in-person orientation, testing, academic support services, internships/fieldwork, or other non-instructional activities do not exclude a program from this category.

Hybrid Program

A degree program in which students complete 50 percent or more and less than 100 percent of the credit hours required for the program through Distance Education Courses.

Canvas (Learning Management System)

The eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center is the administrator of Canvas, the Learning Management System for Laredo College. Canvas is used to deliver content for online, and hybrid/blended courses and students can access it through the PASPort Student Portal.

Technology Requirements for Canvas

For the best performance when using Canvas, a high-speed internet connection, and an updated internet browser are essential (current or second-most recent major release of Chrome, Firefox, Edge). Make sure to review the additional [computer requirements](#) for Canvas. Students are also required to have a webcam to take online exams.

Virtual Backpack Online Student Orientation

The [Virtual Backpack Online Student Orientation](#) is a free, on-demand, self-paced orientation course that helps students understand online classes and provides the necessary information to begin the online learning experience successfully. The Virtual Backpack is open to all current and prospective students and covers how to access and navigate a course, customize an account, complete assignments and tests, and more.

Scholastic Dishonesty

The college expects all online students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is beyond reproach. Students will be expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their online experiences. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in academic work is subject to disciplinary action. The [Academic Dishonesty](#) link provides additional information on "scholastic dishonesty," including, but not limited to, cheating on academic work, plagiarism, and collusion.

“Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)” software is a rapidly emerging tool that students may be interested in using. If doing so, Laredo College students are expected to adhere to the same standards as the Scholastic Dishonesty statement on plagiarism. Presenting generative AI software content as your own is a violation of academic integrity. If you use generative AI in your work, you must indicate that you have done so. Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for a fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted in a course must be your own. If you are using outside resources to complete your work, it is important that you cite your work accordingly. **Please note that faculty still have the option to limit their use of generative AI. To ensure you stay within the academic integrity of your course, please talk to your instructor.** For additional information on generative AI, please visit the [Library AI informational website](#).

Student Code of Conduct and Discipline

Students enrolled in online courses at Laredo College are expected to abide by the [LC Code of Student Conduct](#) outlined in the LC Catalog. Any student who violates any provision of the Code of Conduct is subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion, notwithstanding any action taken by civil authorities on account of the violation. Consequently, online students are expected to be fully acquainted with all the college's published policies, rules, and regulations, and copies of the Code shall be available to each student for review at the Office of Student Discipline/Title IX Coordinator.

Student Disciplinary Procedures

Disciplinary action related to online courses is handled informally between the student and instructor or by the Office of Student Discipline/Title IX Coordinator if there is a mutual agreement to do so. This agreement will be documented in writing. If a discipline problem cannot be resolved on an informal basis, a formal disciplinary hearing may be requested. Special arrangements may be made for online learning students who do not reside in our in-service area. Consult the [Code of Student Conduct and Discipline](#) to learn more about the disciplinary process.

Advising for Online Students

Students can visit the [Advising Center](#) to receive academic advisement and transfer guidance. Academic Advisors assist students with understanding degree requirements, selecting and planning courses, creating a graduation and transfer plan, and learning about institutional and state policies that impact their academic progress and persistence. Students have three convenient options in which they can receive services: walk-in advising at the Fort McIntosh campus, appointments at the South campus, and phone advising, which is subject to availability (Advising Options). The eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center does not advise students. Additionally, students can refer to the [Registration Guide](#) for more information, regarding registration dates, payment deadlines, tuition and fees, academic calendar, and advising directory.

Syllabus Information

Online students who want to learn more about a course can do so by viewing the [Syllabus Information](#) website. The syllabus provides an outline of what will be covered in the course of study and the course's requirements, allowing students to preview the course content information before committing to an online course. Additionally, the [Faculty Vitae](#) provides an overview of the instructor's teaching experience, including their respective educational credentials.

Registration for Online Classes

Students can register for online, hybrid, and videoconference courses through PASPort (www.pasport.laredo.edu). All courses adhere to LC's admission policies and testing requirements and follow the [academic calendar](#). Students enrolled in online, hybrid, or videoconference courses will be charged a \$20 Distance Learning Fee per semester credit hour to cover the costs associated with managing and upgrading Canvas and other online services.

Students are encouraged to consult the LC Student Handbook to get additional information about advising, dropping a course, the attendance policy, student support services, and other important guidelines.

Authenticating the Identity of Students Enrolled in Online Education Courses

On the first day of class, students will access their course in Canvas by logging into the secure web portal [PASPort Personnel and Student Portal \(PASPort\)](#). The PASPort student portal requires that all students obtain a unique PASPort username and a password account that is generated through the LC Students Information

System during the admission process. Students are issued a temporary login password that utilizes the individual's birth date, which consists of six digits: month, day, and year. When students log in for the first time, they will be prompted to change their password to one that requires a minimum of **8 characters** and consists of a combination of alphanumeric and special characters to increase the difficulty of a login breach to their personal account. Students must choose a password that meets the imposed requirements, is difficult to decipher, is not a common word, a personal detail, or a reflection of the user's work activities.

The student's password expires every 180 days; however, they can change their password at any time within this 180-day period by clicking on the Forgot Password Link or from within the student PASPort portal by selecting the "My Account" option on the upper-left portion of the toolbar displaying on the main homepage. Students can also set up secret Questions and Answers in an attempt to recover their password if forgotten. The instructions on this webpage advise the students to come up with responses to questions that are difficult to decipher, all in an effort to prevent intrusion.

PASPort requires that students use the unique account username and password that is given to them by the Enrollment and Registration Services Center during the admissions process. Inside PASPort, students have access not only to Canvas but also to personal information, such as their home addresses, phone numbers, emergency contacts, tax forms, transcripts, and more. **It is important that students create strong passwords and do not share their login credentials. PASPort accounts are designated for the use of students who were approved ONLY. Students are encouraged to become familiar with the Security section of the college [Internet Usage Policy](#).**

- Each student, employee, or guest with a PASPort account shall be responsible for all use of the account.
- Accounts shall be for use by a single individual – the person for whom the account was approved.
- An employee or student shall not share or give their assigned login or password information to anyone.

Students are urged not to attempt to read or copy files belonging to others or attempt to decrypt or translate encrypted material unless the files have been made accessible by the owner or appropriate authorization has been obtained.

Open Educational Resources (OER)

Open Educational Resources (OER) are educational materials that are freely available and openly licensed, allowing users to access, reuse, adapt, and redistribute them. OER can include any type of educational resource, such as textbooks, courses, videos, software, etc. OER aims to make education more affordable, accessible, and inclusive. Laredo College (LC) is launching an OER initiative to make textbooks free for students and improve the quality and diversity of the curriculum. The LC President, Board, Provost, faculty, and staff support the initiative. The initiative aims to make higher education more affordable, accessible, and inclusive for all students.

Bookstore

The course syllabus provides required textbook information for online courses. Textbook(s) and other instructional resource materials can be purchased online at the [LC Bookstore Website](#). The bookstore search

tool allows students to find a textbook by title, author/publisher, and price. Students can buy their books online from other web sources and have them shipped directly to their home address. Contact the LC Bookstore at (956) 721-5250 for additional information.

Online Testing

Online courses require the use of Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor, a program that can be downloaded for free from the eLearning Center's [Respondus webpage](#). The LockDown Browser/Monitor program records students' online testing and requires a computer with a webcam and microphone. The webcam can be integrated into the computer or connected using a USB cable. Learn more through the Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor [introduction video](#). On-campus computer labs are available for online testing at the [eLearning Center](#) and the [Center for Learning, Academic, and Student Success \(CLASS\)](#). For assistance installing or using Respondus LockDown Browser/Monitor, contact the eLearning Center at (956) 721-5211 or submit a ticket at <http://ehelpdesk.laredo.edu/>.

Student eHelpdesk

The [eHelpdesk](#) is a knowledge base where online students can get help with technical issues related to Canvas by browsing the articles or submitting a ticket, and it is available 24/7. The eLearning Center also provides assistance via phone at (956) 721-5211 during [hours of operation](#).

Online Tutoring

Tutoring is available to all students as an online resource, giving access in real-time to tutors who can help with assignments and answer questions. Students can receive live tutoring help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through Online Tutoring, an online tutoring service provided by CLASS (Center for Learning, Academic, and Student Success). Students must first log in to PASPort and then to Canvas to find the Brainfuse Online Tutoring link.

Library Resources

The [LC Library](#) offers online students a broad range of learning and instructional resources such as [eBooks and Journals](#), [Databases and Periodicals](#), [Encyclopedias](#), and more, as well as the ability to request books or articles from another library. They also have access to the library collection at Texas A&M International University through a mutual borrowing agreement. TexShare services are also available to borrow materials from member libraries across Texas and to access periodical databases. The Library [How-To Videos](#) provide tutorials on how to access the library homepage from off-campus and find books and articles in the database listings.

The [Distance Education](#) link on the Library's webpage has a handy database of Research Guides by subject area, which makes it easy for students to find what they need. Furthermore, the Library has a Mobile App that allows students instant and easy virtual access to all of the library databases, as well as to browse the book catalog, periodicals, and more. Online students can obtain library assistance or specific information by sending an email to Reference_desk@laredo.edu or by calling (956) 721-5274 or (956) 794-4274.

Counseling and Disability Services

Counseling and Disability Services' mission is to give all students a better opportunity to have a smooth adjustment to a post-secondary educational environment. They are committed to ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in all facets of college life. Counseling and Disability Services also focuses on providing support through accommodations, assistive devices, advocacy, and counseling to help our students succeed in a college setting. For more information, please contact [Counseling and Disability Services](#) at (956) 721-5137.

Financial Aid

Each academic year, students are advised to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is available online at <https://studentaid.gov/>. The financial aid application for the upcoming academic year becomes available on October 1 of each year. An academic year begins with the fall semester and extends through the spring and summer. Apply early to get the best financial aid possibilities. Some funds are restricted, so the sooner you apply, the greater your chances of receiving first-come, first-served financial aid. We strongly advise all students to apply as early as possible to minimize tuition/fee payment delays. Financial aid applications take several weeks to process. Apply early and complete all necessary steps to obtain your financial aid offer as soon as possible. To complete the FAFSA, you'll need to provide information about your family's financial situation and your own financial resources, such as your income and assets. You will also need **LC's federal school code, 03582**, to ensure the FAFSA gets to LC. If you need assistance completing the FAFSA application and/or have questions regarding financial aid, please don't hesitate to contact our office:

Phone

(956) 721-5361

Monday – Thursday: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Friday: 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Email finaid@laredo.edu

In-Person Walk-Ins

Each [LC campus has a financial aid office](#). No appointment is necessary.

Monday – Thursday: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Friday: 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Withdrawal from Online Courses

Please contact the [Office of the Registrar](#) for details on withdrawing from courses. It is the student's responsibility to submit an [Add/Drop](#) form prior to the official last day to Drop with a "W." Students who receive Financial Aid Title IV funds and withdraw from LC may owe a refund to the Department of Education. Students who receive Financial Aid should contact the [LC Financial Aid Center](#) prior to withdrawing from any LC courses.

Grades

Students can view their online course progress reports by clicking on "View Grades" from the Canvas Dashboard to open their personal gradebook. This report provides the grade for a particular assignment/exam, the date the assignment/exam was taken, and any comments the instructor may have made. Additionally, students can use the "What If" tool in Canvas to add a grade to specific assignments or the final exam to obtain an average of their progress or to determine what grades they need to earn in order to pass the course. The final exam and overall final course grade can be accessed through the [PASPort](#) account under the "Students" Tab. A grade of "I" (Incomplete) will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances, such as verifiable serious illness or death in the immediate family.

Students can view their grades by accessing the Canvas Gradebook in their online/hybrid/videoconference course or through their PASPort account using their choice of device with internet access. Grades and other student information, such as registration holds, financial aid status, and unofficial transcripts, are available on PASPort. Final grades for all courses will be available within one to two days after the end of the semester through PASPort. Official transcripts can be obtained from the [Office of the Registrar](#).

Academic Appeals

Online students who think that a final course grade is incorrect have two weeks (10 working days) after the grade is issued to appeal their grade. Students who feel that a grade earned in a class activity is incorrect have one week (five working days) to appeal a grade that has been issued. Online students are encouraged to discuss grade issues immediately with their instructor. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved after consultation with the instructor, the online student will need to discuss the issue with the division chair as part of an informal process. A formal conference can be scheduled if the issue is not resolved; the section [Students Rights, Responsibilities, and Students Complaints](#) on the LC Catalog provides the process to file a written complaint.

Complaints and Grievances

The eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center does not supervise online instructors, nor does it address issues regarding instructional matters. Issues or complaints related to online or hybrid courses or an instructor must follow the appropriate chain of command: Instructor, Department Chair, Division Dean, Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs, and then the President of LC. Please consult the LC Catalog for detailed instructions on the [Student Complaint Policy](#). Students may contact the Office of Student Discipline/Title IX Coordinator at (956) 794-4988 for additional information.

Family Education Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)

Laredo College is committed to protecting the privacy of traditional and online students by adhering to a Board approved Student Records Policy. The College President or designee shall develop and maintain a comprehensive system of student records and reports dealing with all facets of the College District program operation and ensure through reasonable procedures that records are accessed by authorized persons only, as allowed by this policy. The data and records shall be stored in a safe and secure manner and shall be conveniently retrievable for utilization by authorized school officials. Laredo College shall make a student's records available to the student. The records custodian or designee shall use reasonable procedures to verify the requestor's identity

before disclosing student records containing personally identifiable information. Online students can review their records in person during regular business hours without charge upon written request to the records custodian. For in-person viewing, the records custodian or designee shall be available to explain the record and answer questions. The confidentiality of the student's records shall be maintained at all times. As part of this confidentiality, LC complies with the provisions of protecting the privacy of educational records, establishes the right of a student to inspect and review their educational record, and provides guidelines for the correction of inaccurate or misleading data. LC complies with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and informs students of their rights through the [LC College Catalog](#), the eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center Student Handbook, and the [FERPA General Guidance for Students](#). Students enrolled in online courses are required to communicate with instructors via email using the LC student PASPort Portal and the messaging system within the LMS, which ensures privacy associated with the unique login and password assigned to the student. In order to keep students' grades confidential, online faculty utilize the Canvas Gradebook without the need to email students' progress reports to external email services. Furthermore, eLearning Center staff informs students during student orientations to accept responsibility for the security of their personal username and password, likewise not to share login credentials with anyone, and to always end their personal PASPort sessions after each use.

Graduation

Once an online student is in the final semester of a degree or certificate program, a graduation application must be completed and filed with the Registrar's Office in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements. Consult the [Application for Graduation](#) site for additional information on the graduation deadlines and the application process.

Note:

The eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center Handbook is designed to provide a quick reference for policies and procedures that govern student conduct and other academic aspects as it pertains to online courses at Laredo College (LC). Also contained in this handbook is important information that LC is obligated by law to provide to its students each year.

Presented to the LC Board of Trustees on 5/30/2024.