

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE SCHOOL FOR NEW LEARNING

- A. FOUNDATIONS OUTCOMES**
- B. TIME MANAGEMENT**
- C. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Introductory Letter

Dear SNL Student,

Welcome to the *Foundations of Adult Learning (FAL)* course. We offer *Foundations* to help you understand the tasks you will undertake in becoming involved in learning and to prepare you to complete them successfully. Through this course, you will engage actively in your own learning. Our intention is to help you develop your sense of yourself as a learner, to identify experiences that have been important to your understanding, and to convert your experiential learning into competence.

The primary outcome of *Foundations* is a comprehensive plan for your own program of study. In the process of developing your Learning Plan, you will learn about a model for learning from experience. You will become more familiar with SNL's competence-based approach and how it fits with the traditions of education. You will be instructed in methods of effective program planning. You will be able to practice many of the learning tasks that you will perform throughout your SNL program.

Each person enters *Foundations* at a unique point in his or her history. Some people have been in college before; others have not. Some people have moved high on the career ladder; others are reentering the job market. Some people are well into middle adulthood; others are still under thirty years of age. Some people appear very assured in what they want; others seem more tentative. However diverse your classmates appear, all are coming to find out more about themselves as learners and to create Learning Plans that will work for them.

We urge you to come to *Foundations* with a sense of adventure that will allow you to look at your experiences as though you are on a new journey. We urge you to come with a sense of openness so that you can be imaginative in creating new learning possibilities. We ask that you come with a sense of trust that you will find the structure and support you need to learn how to be your own agent of learning. We are eager to join you in this exciting venture.

This book contains materials you will utilize throughout your program. The sections, forms, exercises, and readings will help you plan specific phases of your program, as well as introduce theories of learning, and ideas about the liberal arts. It is a resource for your use that provides important background information. Some students think of *Foundations* as the course that will tell them what credit they have and what they are required to do in order to graduate. You will achieve those outcomes. However, you will achieve them as a result of your understanding and realization of the concepts and values that shape this unique approach to higher education.

Your Faculty Mentor will provide a syllabus and set of assignments that will pace you through this set of ideas and processes. It is our hope that you will find this book to be a useful tool in the continuing development of your educational goals. Best wishes on your journey!

—*The School for New Learning Faculty and Staff*

SECTION A: FOUNDATIONS OUTCOMES

Foundations provides you the opportunity to plan your educational future based on your goals and SNL's requirements. You will plan your learning within the context of SNL's competence framework. In the process, you will learn to interpret the competencies in the areas that represent the larger aims of a liberal education.

Among other things, by the end of the quarter, you will have:

- demonstrated an understanding of your learning style
- produced a working draft of your Learning Plan
- demonstrated knowledge of your focus area (**or** investigation about possible focus areas) through research
- identified or have leads on a professional advisor
 - **or** have researched your career/focus area enough that you are ready to begin honing that research towards identifying a professional advisor
- identified and transferred appropriate coursework from accredited colleges as demonstration of competence
- written a proposal, draft outline, or draft essay of an independent learning pursuit
 - **or** written a revised autobiography **or** essay of your instructor's choice

Each of the competence statements you will demonstrate in *Foundations* has a subset of outcomes, listed below. Your *Foundations* instructor will design assignments and exercises to help you demonstrate these outcomes.

L-2: Can design learning strategies to attain goals for personal and educational development.

1. Can articulate personal and educational goals and assess the gap between where one is and where one wants to be
2. Can identify learning interests and competencies to be developed and construct a plan for achieving personal and educational growth
3. Can describe one's self as a learner using one or more models of adult and/or experiential learning

F-1: Can design a plan for development in one's Focus Area based on an analysis of elements that comprise the area.

1. Can demonstrate an understanding of current issues and trends within the Focus Area through research (reading, interviews, and other forms of inquiry)
2. Can create a unified, well-articulated plan for achieving one's own Focus Area goals, based on research (reading, interviews, and other forms of inquiry)

Students demonstrate the L-2 and F-1 competencies by showing that they understand the educational philosophy and procedures of the School for New Learning in the *Foundations of Adult Learning* course.

They apply this knowledge in developing an educational plan for attaining a Bachelor of Arts Degree relevant to their personal and educational goals.

The School for New Learning Philosophy

The School for New Learning's unique approach to education is explained in the documents listed below. Learning from experience, the value of the individual, and the collaborative nature of learning all have a place in these documents. The Mission Statement and Essential Commitments form the basis for the School's curriculum, for the training of faculty, and for the continued development of new programs and ways of thinking at SNL.

SNL's Mission Statement connects the School with the philosophy of DePaul University. It describes the values which those who engage in learning at SNL espouse and practice.

The Essential Commitments comprise those elements without which SNL could not operate effectively. These non-negotiable characteristics are closely aligned with DePaul's mission.

For more on this subject, read ["School for New Learning: Purpose and Philosophy" in Chapter 10.](#)

Mission Statement

The DePaul University School for New Learning (SNL) is a college designed particularly for adults, who bring rich experience to their desire to advance, enhance, or change their careers and personal lives. Every element of the college, from curricula to support services, acknowledges the constant interaction of school, work, community and family, and empowers the student to reflect, so that experience becomes a source of knowledge and learning becomes a way of life. Rooted in Vincentian traditions of human dignity and social responsibility, SNL provides highly personalized opportunities and emphasizes the integrity, individuality, and responsibility of each student to develop competence and put learning to ever-new use.

Essential Commitments

The School for New Learning defines eight commitments as essential to its mission.

A Commitment to Learning as a Way of Life:

For all of its learners SNL cares about the substance and process of learning – the knowledge, abilities and values they acquire, as well as the educational goals they attain. The School believes that adults learn deeply by reflecting, particularly on experience, drawing meaning and transferable knowledge from all they have done. When we are most successful, students refine their habits of learning, and experience the excitement of expanding their curiosity, of using formal inquiry, of developing as independent lifelong learners.

A Commitment to Competence:

Curriculum design and assessment practices at SNL focus on the outcomes of learning – the student's demonstrated knowledge and abilities, learned in a variety of ways. This focus on competence leads faculty to pursue excellence in curricular design, advising strategies, and teaching methods. It enables

students to integrate classroom learning with learning from life and work, and to apply continuously what they are learning in other contexts.

A Commitment to Partnership with Students:

In collaboration with learners, faculty and staff design, implement and assess individualized educational programs. This learning-centered partnership, based on mutual respect for each participant's expertise, prior learning, and decision-making power, deepens and broadens learning.

A Commitment to Diversity:

SNL faculty develop teaching, advising and assessment practices that value human differences in the broadest sense. SNL seeks, in particular, to present a welcoming environment for those who have historically been excluded from higher education, and to enable all to benefit from the richness that diversity brings to a learning community.

A Commitment to an Evolving, Developing Organization

SNL is a continuously evolving organization, open and responsive to the emerging educational needs of individuals and groups in a constantly changing world. SNL's response includes ongoing research in effective teaching, mentoring, and assessment, resulting in imaginative design of programs, structures, systems, courses and materials.

A Commitment to Community in Service of Learning:

SNL students, faculty, and staff work and learn in a community that fosters the mutual regard and support necessary for learning. Individuals creatively address challenges caused by multiple locations, asynchronicity, and varying areas and levels of knowledge. Members commit themselves to the Vincentian personal regard for the dignity of individuals, respectfully dealing with conflict, setting goals which benefit individuals as well as DePaul and its urban, and global communities, and celebrating achievements.

A Commitment to Social Justice:

SNL deliberately works to shape a more just, livable world; to ensure that those who have historically been ignored, excluded, marginalized, oppressed and economically disenfranchised benefit from the many learning opportunities available through SNL and beyond. In its curriculum, its classroom environments, its assessment practices, its advising strategies, and its formal advocacy, SNL creates an intellectual and social milieu where a plurality of worldviews, cultures and value systems are respected, understood, encouraged and appreciated.

Commitment to Adult Learning

The active, reflective practice of established and emerging principles of adult learning is central to the School for New Learning. Faculty and staff, who come from many formal disciplines, enable and encourage colleagues to develop, apply, and disseminate knowledge in the practice of adult education--continuously.

A Few Tools for Learning

1. Faculty Mentor

At SNL, students in the competence-based programs are assigned a Faculty Mentor (your *Foundations* instructor). She or he facilitates the course and assesses your work, and after the course is completed, works with you as a Mentor to help you move through the degree program. Individual conferences are

held during *Foundations* to help establish your relationship with your Mentor, and to provide an opportunity to discuss your overall goals and concerns.

2. Collaboration

At SNL, students are expected to work both alone and in collaboration with other learners while in the program, although they may limit their collaborative opportunities depending on individual learning goals and styles. During *Foundations*, you will engage in small groups to assist you with the learning process.

3. Learning Style Inventory

Another important tool in self-directed learning is the Learning Style Inventory (LSI), which you will take, score and discuss in *Foundations*. Self-reflection about your learning style will have bearing on your educational goals as you generally plan your learning opportunities around the competence framework, and specifically as you plan your Externship project (L-10 & L-11). At SNL, some courses will emphasize different aspects of the learning cycle; for example, one course may involve more research (abstract conceptualization) while another may be more "hands on" (concrete experience). *Foundations* will put you in touch with all aspects of the learning cycle. Attention to your learning preferences will help you understand your challenges, as well as areas of strength in learning.

4. This Book

The FAL Resource Book is a "living" document that continues to be revised and improved to meet the needs of the students that utilize it. The hope is that you will use it throughout not only your Foundations of Adult Learning class, but your entire program at SNL, as a reference and guide. If you have suggestions about the book, please feel free to give them to your instructor so that they can be considered for any future revisions.

5. Student Handbook

As an SNL student you can enjoy the services available to all DePaul students. You are also responsible for maintaining the standards and practices that reflect the university's commitment to excellence. See also <http://www.depaul.edu/university-catalog/academic-handbooks/Pages/default.aspx>

6. Library Resources

One of the most useful services available to you is the DePaul library. While at SNL you will have many opportunities to use the library that can be accessed online. Keep in mind that you'll need an active password and student identification number since some materials may be restricted to DePaul students only. For more information go to: <http://www.library.depaul.edu/> .

SECTION B: TIME MANAGEMENT

As you think about your learning styles, learning strengths and challenges, it is important to assess your time management skills. What are the activities, relationships, responsibilities that bear on your academic goals? Your ability to recognize the external forces that will influence your ability to both commit and manage the necessary time and resources needed to achieve your learning goals is a powerful step in assuring your academic success.

For many, pursuing educational goals is a journey. Some students are just beginning the journey while others may have started theirs years ago. As you embark on your academic journey at SNL, there are qualities and characteristics that can help you succeed. Students have identified writing and critical thinking skills, flexibility, a sense of humor, project completion skills, and time management skills as essential to their success at SNL.

Similarly, there may be past behaviors and/or attitudes that are no longer useful and may have a detrimental impact on your achievement. Gaining an appreciation for how you spend and manage your time can assist in identifying past behaviors and/or attitudes that you may no longer need, or that you can set aside temporarily while pursuing your educational goals.

EXERCISES:

To help you identify what challenges you may personally face while pursuing your studies at SNL, please do the Time Management Exercises in the Workbook Section.

Supplemental Resources in Time Management

Buzan, Tony. *The Mind Map Book: How to Use Radiant Thinking to Maximize Your Brain's Untapped Potential*. New York: Dutton, 1996.

Covey, Stephen. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990.

Covey, Merrill, et al. *First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Leave a Legacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Gelb, Michael. *How to Think Like Leonardo DaVinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day*. New York: Dell, 2000.

Gross, Ronald. *Peak Learning: How to Create Your Own Lifelong Education Program for Personal Enjoyment and Professional Success*. New York: Putnam, 1999.

Levoy, Gregg. *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*. New York: Three Rivers, 1998.

Thompson, Charles. *What a Great Idea: Key Steps Creative People Take*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1992.

Wycoff, Joyce. *Mindmapping: Your Personal Guide to Exploring Creativity and Problem-Solving*. New York: Berkley, 1991

SECTION C: FAQ - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Topic and Question	See Chapter
General	
Are DePaul classes transferable?	2, 6
What are competencies?	1, 5, 7
How do you meet the requirements of the grid?	2
What are Extemship and Advanced Electives?	3, 5
Where are SNL classes offered?	2
What are the summer program options?	2
Where can I find out about Guided Independent Studies (GIS)?	2, 7
What is a Faculty Designed Independent Study (FDIS)?	2, 7
Proficiency Exam	
How do you know you have enough competence to take a proficiency exam?	3
Focus Area	
Can you transfer classes into the Focus Area?	5, 6
Can ILPs be used in the Focus Area?	5
Is Research Seminar related to the Focus Area?	3, 5
What is the best strategy to develop the Focus Area?	5
What is the BAC?	Appendix
What is the BAECE?	Appendix
What is the BAGB?	Appendix
Transfer Coursework	
Which prior classes can transfer to SNL?	6
How do I transfer in classes that are not on the Pre-Approved list?	6
SNL Learning Plan and Grid	
Are we supposed to have a study plan at the end of this class?	1
What is the minimum number of competencies a student must achieve at SNL to acquire an SNL degree?	2
How can you be strategic about using prior classes and experiences?	2

Topic and Question	See Chapter
Learning from Experience	
How do you convert life experience/ experiential learning to competencies?	7
How do I get credit for work experience?	5, 7
What documentation is needed to prove experience?	7
How do I fit previously earned certificates into SNL?	2, 7
What do we do with non-credited schools and certificates?	2, 7
Where can I find guidelines for ILPs?	7
How should I write my ILPs?	7
Do ILPs receive grades that are includes in our GPAs?	2
My Faculty Mentor and My Committee	
What is the Faculty Mentor's role?	
What does my mentor expect students to learn and how will it be assessed?	8
How do you put together an Academic Committee?	8
How do we get help obtaining a PA?	8
What is the role of the PA?	8
SNL Online	
Where can we find more information on SNL Online?	2, SNL website
Writing	
Will this class enhance our writing skills?	1
How do I write an X competence statement?	4
How do I write an X competence statement for my Focus Area?	4, 5
How much writing is there for transfer classes?	6