



## Dr. Steven Mark Sachs

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Welcome to our Computer Applications Office Technology Online Class for the Spring, 2020 Semester at Los Angeles Valley College! This is your *Welcome Letter*.

Hi. I'm Dr. Steve Sachs ("Professor Steve"), and I will be your online instructor. I am happy you have chosen to enroll in this course, and I am looking forward to working with you this semester!

This *Welcome Letter* has tons of significant information about our class. For example, it has information on your required textbook and supplementary materials. Please ensure that you read all of the [Welcome Letter](#) very carefully. You'll be glad you did.

The fact that our class has two "section numbers" listed in the Schedule of Classes for LAVC is insignificant. They just like listing "Lecture" and "Lab" as different, but, for an online class such as ours, there's no functional difference. Just to keep things easy, let's just use the first section number (11690) for this Spring, 2020 semester for our internal purposes.

Dying to get the textbook bundle ASAP? Search this Unit for "More on Your Textbook and SAM" for information on how to get it.

## What's the Class About?

It's about Microsoft Excel (usually just called, "Excel").

### Let me tell you a little about The Big Picture:

- Microsoft **Windows** is a Graphical User Interface (a "GUI") that lets you do lots of work and have lots fun on a PC-type ("PC" means "Personal Computer") machine.
- Microsoft **Office** is one of the things that can be used with Microsoft Windows. Microsoft Office, usually just called, "Office," is a group of software (computer programs) that let you do specific things that I'll list below. The version of Microsoft Office we will be using in this class is **Office 365**. As an active student of Los Angeles Valley College, you can get Microsoft Office 365 free. I will explain how to do that shortly.
- Here are some of the parts of Office 365:
  - Excel 2016 (this is the one we will be studying in this class). Sometimes they'll call this Excel 365.
  - Word 2016
  - Access 2016

- PowerPoint 2016, and
- Lots more stuff.

Excel is a great program for figuring things out and for displaying information. One of Excel's main strengths is called "what-if analysis." For example, Excel could be tweaked to answer this kind of inquiry: What if our photography company's mark-up for all 8×10 and 5×7 pictures we sell were to change from 10% to 12.5%? What effect would that have on our overall monthly sales of both picture sizes if we simultaneously experience a decrease of 6.23% of all wallet-size photo sales? What does a chart of this information look like?

In CAOT 85, the version of Excel we will study is Excel 2016 (again, this is a part of Office 365). Importantly, if you become good at what we're learning in this class, you'll be in fine shape even if you work in a place with a newer or slightly-older version.

By the end of the semester, I intend to have empowered you to use Excel at a significantly higher level than 99% of people who use it on the job, and you should be able to list Excel 2016 confidently on your résumé and other skills lists.

Excel is also wonderful and powerful in displaying information in graphs (which Microsoft calls "charts"). For example, we could create a chart showing the changes in monthly college enrollment extremely easily within Excel. Done by hand before Excel was available, it could take hours to do a good job of this. But it would take a knowledgeable user (like you will become in our class) maybe 15 seconds to make this kind of chart, after the data were already figured out. Then you could go on to customize the chart as much as you wanted with very easy, visual tools. It's fun!

## Your Skills Coming into the Class

I want you to be aware that students taking online courses are expected to already have *considerable* general computer literacy (not necessarily with Excel, of course). This is true despite there being no formal prerequisite computer class or competency test to earn the privilege of taking this one.

Following is a list of some computer skills you should already have. If a lot of these mystify you, then you are probably not ready to take any online Microsoft Office class yet. In this case, my advice is for you to have a friend or a basic computer class teach you all of these things before the semester begins, or get the skills now and take this class another semester. There is also considerable help available in the textbook's first chapters. Those first chapters are not about Excel, but rather on Microsoft Windows software and such. Still, **you really should be proficient before, not after, the semester begins.** If you're quite unfamiliar and still want to take the class, get someone knowledgeable in Windows and the internet to teach you these things ASAP. Really.

Here's most of what you should already be able to do *before* the semester begins:

Start and exit Windows

EXTRA IMPORTANT: Copy, move, rename, organize, and delete files, and create and organize folders, using either the "Windows Explorer" (this is different from Internet Explorer) or the "My Computer" functions

Download and upload files

Send and receive e-mails

Use the Firefox or Chrome browser (similar to Internet Explorer, Edge, and Safari).

Search the internet

Use a mouse's buttons, including the roller button (if your mouse has one)

Use passwords

Start and close software

Maximize, minimize, restore, and resize windows

Move windows to different locations on your screen

Use the Ctrl and Alt keys effectively

Control sound (voice, music, etc.) coming out of your computer

Print

## What Should I Do Immediately?

If you haven't already gone through the "SuperModule" that appears before this Module in the "Modules" section of Canvas, do it now. It's all about using Canvas. You will need to be very proficient in using Canvas to have an easy time with this course. So I believe you should do go back and forth between the SuperModule and Module 1 until you have

completed both of them. Once you have, you'll be empowered to take on the class with ease. There are just these two Modules, but Module 1 has lots of separate Units inside of it.

How important is it to go through everything in the SuperModule and in Module 1? It's vital. Policies that can make you or break you are listed here. Also, you will not be able to progress until you have completed the SuperModule and Module 1. Although you will be able to read and work in the *textbook* chapters and in SAM (you'll read about SAM later), you won't be able to take any of the Minor and Major Exams without having completed the SuperModule and Module 1. Gotta do it.

What does it mean to "complete" these two Modules? For the SuperModule, it just means that you open it and read through it. For Module 1, which has several "Units," you need to pass the *very easy* Quizzes after each of Module 1's Units. So, even if you decide to get into the textbook and the online SAM training before you finish both the SuperModule and Module 1 (this is NOT a good idea), you'll still need to complete them very soon. Again: **YOU ARE NOT TO TAKE THE REAL EXAMS UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED BOTH MODULES.**

## **USING A PC or MAC with SAM and with Textbook Homework: Your Own Computer Equipment for This Class**

This course is completed most easily on a PC-type computer. Although you can use a Mac for the course and for SAM (to be described later), some functionality may be lost if you use a Mac. For example, there are certain "themes" in Excel that the textbook or the SAM training tell you to use, and MAC does not have all of these themes. So using a Mac could cost you a few points of credit.

When you take any actual exam (these are all taken within the SAM system, to be described later), **DO NOT USE A WIRELESS INTERNET CONNECTION.** Also, the on-screen simulations during exams and training display the PC version of MS Office (including Excel) and Windows.

The **internet browser** you should use for SAM work should be either Firefox or Chrome. Both of these are free and available for download on the internet. It is okay to have more than one browser on your computer, so if you have a favorite that is neither Firefox neither Chrome, you don't have to give it up. Just don't use it for coursework for our class.

## **Your Computer Screen Resolution**

Ensure that your screen resolution is at absolute minimum 1024 x 768 for optimal display. *You should use this resolution or higher any time you use any Microsoft Office application/software* unless you have a super-resolution screen that can do higher

numbers. I will provide you with a Resource that teaches you how to change the resolution for PC-type computers, in case you don't already know how to do it. This Resource is in the Files area of Canvas (see the vertical, white menu at the left of most Canvas pages).

## Use Your Own Resources

Sometimes students try to "share" textbooks, computers, and other resources. Bad, bad idea. For one thing, exams have time limits, and there is just enough time for one person to complete each exam. So having your own computer for exclusive use is necessary. For another thing, if you don't have your own, individual SAM code (with which you will be creating a unique SAM online account), *you will not be able to take any of the exams* and you won't have access to the online training. You get your SAM code in the textbook bundle, or it can be purchased directly from the publisher. See the upcoming "Your SAM Account" Unit for details.

Also, the textbook is a resource to which you will need to refer frequently, and trying to share it would really backfire. **Get your own textbook bundle or separate materials (described elsewhere in the course requirements), and work on your own, separate computer (preferably a PC), and ensure that you have high-speed internet access, even if you're living with someone else who's taking the same class at the same time.**

## A Little about the SAM Account

We use the SAM system for most online training and for all grading-relevant exams. You need to create a SAM account. You will read lots of detail about this in an upcoming Unit in this module. The Unit is called, [Module1Unit5: Your Textbook and your SAM Account](#).

There is more than one way to obtain SAM, so complete your reading of the SAM module before making your decision. Nevertheless, you can get an idea about it by looking at the following document, available online: [http://assets.cengage.com/pdf/gui\\_sam-stu-quick-](http://assets.cengage.com/pdf/gui_sam-stu-quick-guide.pdf)

[guide.pdf \(Links to an external site.\)](http://assets.cengage.com/pdf/gui_sam-stu-quick-guide.pdf). **Our Institution Key for**

**SAM is T2054479**, and you will need to know that Key to register for your SAM account.

Even if you already have an active SAM account, it must be with an 18-digit SAM code; other code versions won't work. After creating your account, **you will still need perform the additional step of enrolling in our specific class within SAM.** There are instructions on how to do all of this in the SAM Unit here in Canvas (and via the hyperlink above), but you won't be able to do that Unit until you have completed its preceding Units.

# General Note

This online course will be taught *100 percent* online. All quizzes, tests, and training assignments will be completed online. There are no required on-campus meetings and there will not be any on-campus meetings. While you will enjoy greater flexibility in scheduling your study time, *you will need to be solidly self-motivated and disciplined in setting your study schedule and completing course requirements.*

**Important:** Please note right away that the three Major Exams take place on **SUNDAY EVENINGS (typically sometime between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.)!** If this does not work with your life schedule, then this is not the class for you. **DO NOT TAKE THIS CLASS IF YOU CANNOT BE AVAILABLE ON SUNDAY EVENINGS TO TAKE MAJOR EXAMS.** Other exams (Minor rather than Major exams) will be available on multiple days and dates. The Sunday evenings are listed in the Calendar part of SAM. We'll describe that a little later in this Module.

If you cannot take exams during the date/time combinations appearing in the Canvas calendar, then you should not take this class since you cannot pass without taking the Major Exams. THE TIMING OF THE MAJOR EXAMS IS SET INVARIABLY. If you have an “emergency” at the time of one of these, you will simply need to skip that exam. There are no make-ups and no re-scheduling.

Whenever you go into Canvas (even now if you're online), you'll see a link on the left side of the screen with a calendar icon. You can always see what's coming up in the near future by checking on that link. Other parts of Canvas will also note due dates, deadlines, and such.

## More on Your Textbook and SAM

You must have some version of the textbook as well as your own SAM account for our class.

The textbook we will use is:

*Shelly Cashman Microsoft Office 365 & Excel 2016 Comprehensive.* Although I do not recommend that you buy this outright as a hardcopy book (see explanation below), its ISBN is 1-305-87072-7. **An online-access version of this book is included without cost in your subscription to either “Cengage Unlimited” or SAM, both of which are described below.**

Here is a website that can give you great information on both Cengage Unlimited and on SAM. You can copy and paste the URL into your browser or just click on it:

[https://www.cengage.com/coursepages/sachs\\_caot85](https://www.cengage.com/coursepages/sachs_caot85) (Links to an external site.)

**FINANCIAL AID STUDENTS:** Note that Financial Aid students should get their subscriptions at the LAVC bookstore rather than online since the online store cannot accept Financial Aid vouchers.

Cengage Unlimited is a subscription you can obtain that provides you with both SAM and access to our textbook online. It also has tons of other stuff included. If you choose to get the Cengage Unlimited subscription, **DO NOT PAY FOR A SEPARATE SAM ACCOUNT** (since it's included in Cengage Unlimited).

**IMPORTANT:** The Cengage Unlimited subscription offers you the ability to rent a hardcopy of our textbook for less than \$8 more for the entire semester. Whether or not you get the hardcopy rental, you will still have online access to the textbook. I **RECOMMEND STRONGLY THAT YOU ADD THE HARDCOPY RENTAL.** It will make your study *much* easier.

You also have the option of getting just a “standalone” SAM account. If you get this, it will also include an online-only version of our textbook. It will not offer 4-month rental of the hardcopy of the textbook. It will also not have other perquisites that the Cengage Unlimited subscription includes. Check out that URL above and you'll see about the differences.

## The Textbook Versions

This section refers **not** to online-vs-hardcopy, but instead to different lengths of the same-series textbook that are available.

There are a few different versions of our textbook, including Intermediate and Comprehensive. In our class, for reasons of simplicity, I have assigned the Comprehensive version even though we will not be using the last few chapters of that version textbook. No problem, though: The publisher has assured me that you will not be paying any more for the online (or Cengage-hardcopy-rented), longer, more “comprehensive” version of the book.

## Actually Getting the Stuff

1. A Cengage Unlimited subscription can be obtained via the LAVC bookstore; it can also be obtained directly online with Cengage using this link: [CENGAGE UNLIMITED LINK. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
2. As aforementioned, if you obtain SAM through a Cengage Unlimited subscription, in addition to your SAM code, you will also get online access to our textbook. Optionally, you will be able to add a one-semester “rental” of a hardcopy of our textbook for a very small extra charge (by choosing the “print option”).
3. If you obtain SAM from the bookstore without the Cengage Unlimited subscription, you will get a SAM code plus online access only to the textbook.

4. To get SAM standalone online (without Cengage Unlimited), you can go to the [SAM landing page \(Links to an external site.\)](#) at [sam.cengage.com](http://sam.cengage.com) (Links to an external site.) and click on PURCHASE SAM in the lower-left corner's blue box.
5. You need to know several things to get into SAM properly. They include:
  1. The semester, which is Spring, 2020.
  2. **Our INSTITUTION KEY, which is T2054479.**
  3. The college, which is Los Angeles Valley College.
  4. CAOT 085, Spring, 2020, Sect 11690, Dr. Sachs
  5. Note the SECTION NUMBER(s) in the course. Only the first one is the "real" section number.
6. There is more information about purchasing the textbook bundle (including book and SAM) from the publisher, Cengage, in a special PDF that I have included in the Files area of Canvas. The document has a few minor errors (like indicating two prices, one cent different), but it is pretty informative. You do NOT need to read it, but it could prove very helpful if you are deciding to buy the materials directly from the publisher. It is called (you can click on the following link to see it directly): [Cengage Publisher's Information on Purchasing the Required Textbook Bundle Directly from Cengage.pdf](#) .
7. **Students on financial aid: You should obtain your SAM and textbook materials directly through the LAVC bookstore. Cengage publishers cannot process financial payments or vouchers.**

NOTE that there is another Module devoted to the class' textbook and to SAM ([Mod1Unit5](#)). You'll get there soon. You may not be able to reach it until you have completed the Module 1, Units 1-4.

## To access the online version of our textbook once you are in SAM:

Once you have established your SAM account, get into SAM and click on the **Activity List** tab near the top of your screen. In the list of activities, select **Shelly Cashman Microsoft Office 365 & Excel 2016 ...** This will bring up the textbook's table of contents from which you can choose where to go next.

If there is so much stuff on the list that you need to scroll way down to find the book, you can deselect the parts you don't want to see on the list (for the moment) by un-checking stuff like Exams, Training, etc. in the blue bar below the tabs.

# Getting Excel 2016 (and Microsoft Office 365) FREE

As an active student at LAVC, you can get the software we will study in class, Excel 2016, free. You can keep it as long as you remain enrolled at LAVC. You should get it and install it on your computer immediately.

Log into your student e-mail account (the one at student.laccd.edu) and you can download Excel 2016 by going to the WAFFLE ICON near the top-left area of your screen. Click on OFFICE 365, which appears in blue, and then click on INSTALL OFFICE near the top-right area and follow instructions.

Don't have your student e-mail account yet or don't know how to get in? Go here: <https://www.lavc.edu/getconnected/email-onedrive.aspx> (Links to an external site.).

## Free Adobe Reader and Adobe Flash Player Software

For many of the files you'll need to read in this class, your computer will need to have free [Adobe Reader \(Links to an external site.\)](#) software installed. You can download this free, safe software here:

<http://get.adobe.com/reader> (Links to an external site.). You will also need [Adobe Flash Player \(Links to an external site.\)](#) from the same company. When you go to the website, read the screen carefully. Your browser may already have Flash Player. You should check this from within Firefox. You can get Adobe Flash Player here: <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer> (Links to an external site.).

I recommend taking care of these downloads right now. Then come back and continue reading this Welcome Letter.

## Getting Closer to Ready

The upcoming "First Steps" unit (Module 1 Unit 4) is quite important. It will help you get ready and will help explain the rest of the course.

### Virtual Valley Resources

There is a great Virtual Valley website for all online students (if you're taking a class online from LAVC, you are a part of "Virtual Valley"), and you should check it out thoroughly. Here's the URL: <http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.html> (Links to an external site.). An especially important part of that site can be reached by clicking on the STUDENT RESOURCES drop-down near the top of the page; then click on *Things You Need to Know*. Please take all the stuff there very seriously; it's there to make your life easier!

I would also like to recommend strongly that you take the Readiness Assessments on the Virtual Valley website

(<http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/studentGettingStarted.html> (Links to an external site.)). Look in the lower right corner for the *Technical Skills Quiz*, the *Student Skills Quiz*, and the *Online Learning Success: Self-Paced Tutorial*. At the end of these, you will either feel fully prepared for taking an online class, or you will know what to do to get yourself fully prepared. Either outcome is *so* worth it!

## CRITICAL ITEMS FOLLOW!

### This Volume of Material from Me Gets Smaller Soon, I Promise!

*Please don't be put off by the volume of written material there is to digest in the first phases of the semester.* My approach is to explain as much as possible so there are as few questions – and the lowest amount of confusion – possible. **I promise you: The volume of support and informational material *will decline* after the first couple of weeks of the semester.** Of course, at that time the volume of instructional material will increase. Also, you will see lots of Announcements in CANVAS, particularly during the first 2-3 weeks of the semester. Again: The large volume of communications will go way down soon! It's very important that you learn a lot about the class very early in the semester and, since ours is an online class, this is the way I need to give you the information.

### How to Communicate with Me (and with Other Students in Our Class)

To communicate directly with me (or other students), please use the "Inbox" you can see at the far left linkbar on any Canvas screen. Once you're there, click on the Compose icon near the top of your screen. Don't know what I'm talking about? Here is a Canvas article showing you how to compose a note to me or to any other student(s) in our class:

<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2670> (Links to an external site.).

When you choose an addressee, you'll see that my name, sans title, is listed along with those of your fellow students.

### Computer Lab

I want you to know that there is a good computer lab available on the LAVC campus on the 2nd floor of the library building that you may use. If you want to use the on-campus lab(s), you'll need to have your student ID card with you. Check with the Admissions office about how to get one. You are never required to come on campus for this class, though, and you don't need to have your student ID card with you just to set foot on the campus. BTW, students need to pay for parking on campus.

**Do not take any exams in the computer lab.**

## Required Communications: Extremely Important!

Early in the semester, you will see an Announcement in Canvas that will require you to send me a pre-written **Affirmation**. You can see the text of that required Affirmation in the Pages section of Canvas. (You can get to all parts of Canvas by using the linkbar area on the left side of your screen.) The Affirmation basically says that you will not use any resources, other than your brain and hands, when you take any of the exams. **IF YOU DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR AFFIRMATION WHEN REQUIRED, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE ANY EXAMS AND WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE WITH THE COURSE.** I need to exclude students who fail to send in the Affirmation when it is required. Please watch and respond to all of the Announcements very carefully, appropriately, and in a timely fashion.

This Affirmation should NOT be sent to me yet. Please wait until I ask for it in an Announcement here in Canvas.

From time to time, you will also see an Announcement requiring you to send me an “I am In” message. This is my way of taking roll, since, in an online course, there is no traditional “roll call.” **IF YOU DO NOT SEND ME THE “I AM IN” MESSAGES WHEN REQUIRED, YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE WITH THE COURSE,** because you would be telling me, in effect, that you are no longer attending the class. Please watch and respond to all of the Announcements very carefully and appropriately. **Again: Please DO NOT send these until I ask for them in Canvas Announcements.**

If you've been reading carefully here, you will have noticed that the required Affirmation and the required "I am In" **documents are different from each other.** Some students get this confused. When you see the Announcements of these, it should be clear that they are different.

## Are You Ready? Once you are, things flow easily!

Once you have gone through the SuperModule (about Canvas) and all of the Units in Module 1, you will be fully ready for the class. I am looking forward to an enjoyable semester with you and I wish you good luck in the course!

All the best,

Dr. Steven Mark Sachs

“Professor Steve”

*Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Computer Applications Office Technology, and Counseling*