Dear Astronomy 102 Students,

Welcome to the study of Astronomy! My name is Deborah Levine (I prefer to be addressed as “Deborah” or Dr. Levine if you prefer to use an honorific) and I’ll be your guide to the Solar System this semester.

This orientation letter will provide you with some basic information to help you get started. This section of Astronomy 102 is a fully online class which begins 8/24/15. All exams will be administered online, it will not be necessary to visit the TLC for exams.

What is this class?

In this class we will use a combination of readings, discussions and tutorial assignments to develop an understanding of the Solar System and Earth’s place in it.

Astronomy 102 Catalog Description:
“Surveys the dynamics of our solar system and other planetary systems, including Kepler's Laws, motion, planets and their satellites, dwarf planets, comets, meteors, and extra-solar planet systems.”

Student Learning Outcome for this course:
1. Compare our solar system to observed exoplanet systems.

Course Objectives:

1. Compare and contrast ancient and modern theories in Astronomy.
2. Explain seasons, moon phases, and eclipses as they relate to motions of the Sun-Earth-Moon system.
4. Classify and compare optical systems and detectors used in Astronomy.
5. Analyze the nature of light and the information it contains.
6. Examine the dynamics of our Sun.
7. Compare and contrast the characteristics of different planetary systems and their evolution.
8. Analyze the nature and significance of comets, meteors, and asteroids.
9. Inspect current observations of extra-solar planets in the quest to search for life.

When you successfully complete this course it is my goal that you will be able to:
• Describe what science is, discriminate between legitimate science and pseudo-science and discuss the difference between science and belief systems
• Explain the importance of astronomy, and science in general, for the general population.
• Understand news stories about solar system astronomy and be able to explain them to your friends and children.
• Understand what you are seeing when you look up at the night sky.

How do I find my class?

Our “classroom” is built in the college’s Blackboard system. If you are enrolled in the class, it will appear in your course list in Blackboard automatically. You can log in to Blackboard at: http://www.canyons.edu/Offices/DistanceLearning/Pages/Blackboard.aspx. You can also jump
to the Blackboard login area by clicking the small Bb icon at the top of the CoC home page. Your login credentials are as follows:

- **Username:** `<your 7-digit student id number>`
- **Password:** `Student` (if you have previously used Blackboard, use your current password).

The Blackboard site will be available to you no later than the evening before the first day of class (08/24/15) and **you must log in within 24 hours of the start of class**, or you will be dropped from the course as a no-show.

If you have any problems with Blackboard (and you are sure the course has begun and that you are enrolled in it!) please contact the College’s Blackboard Tech Support:

- **Email:** bbsupport@canyons.edu
- **Phone Number:** 661-362-3344

**How do I find my instructor?**

The best way to reach me is via email at deborah.levine@canyons.edu. I'll respond to email within 24 hours Monday to Friday (except holidays) during the duration of the course. There will also be other ways to contact me through Blackboard, and I will hold office hours using an internet “chat” tool twice weekly.

**What do I need to participate in this course?**

The short version: time, diligence and regular access to a computer on the internet. A complete list of materials is available in the course syllabus which will be posted on Blackboard.

There are two physical textbooks:

- Lecture-Tutorials for Introductory Astronomy, 3rd Edition by Prather et. al.

These are available from the campus bookstore website. You may also find it useful to have a scientific calculator or calculator application.

**You must have regular access to a computer.** All of the work for this class is obtained and submitted online, and you will need to log in to Blackboard at least every other day. You must check your CoC student email regularly. And you will need to be able to read and produce PDF-formatted documents.

There is no official set of system requirements for your computer. I work on a Mac using Firefox, but Blackboard should work on all common platforms. It's even available on phones and tablets, but you will likely find it very challenging to complete assignments using only a tablet or phone.

I look forward to working with you as the semester unfolds! For now, go outside tonight and look up… think about what you see… do you have any questions?