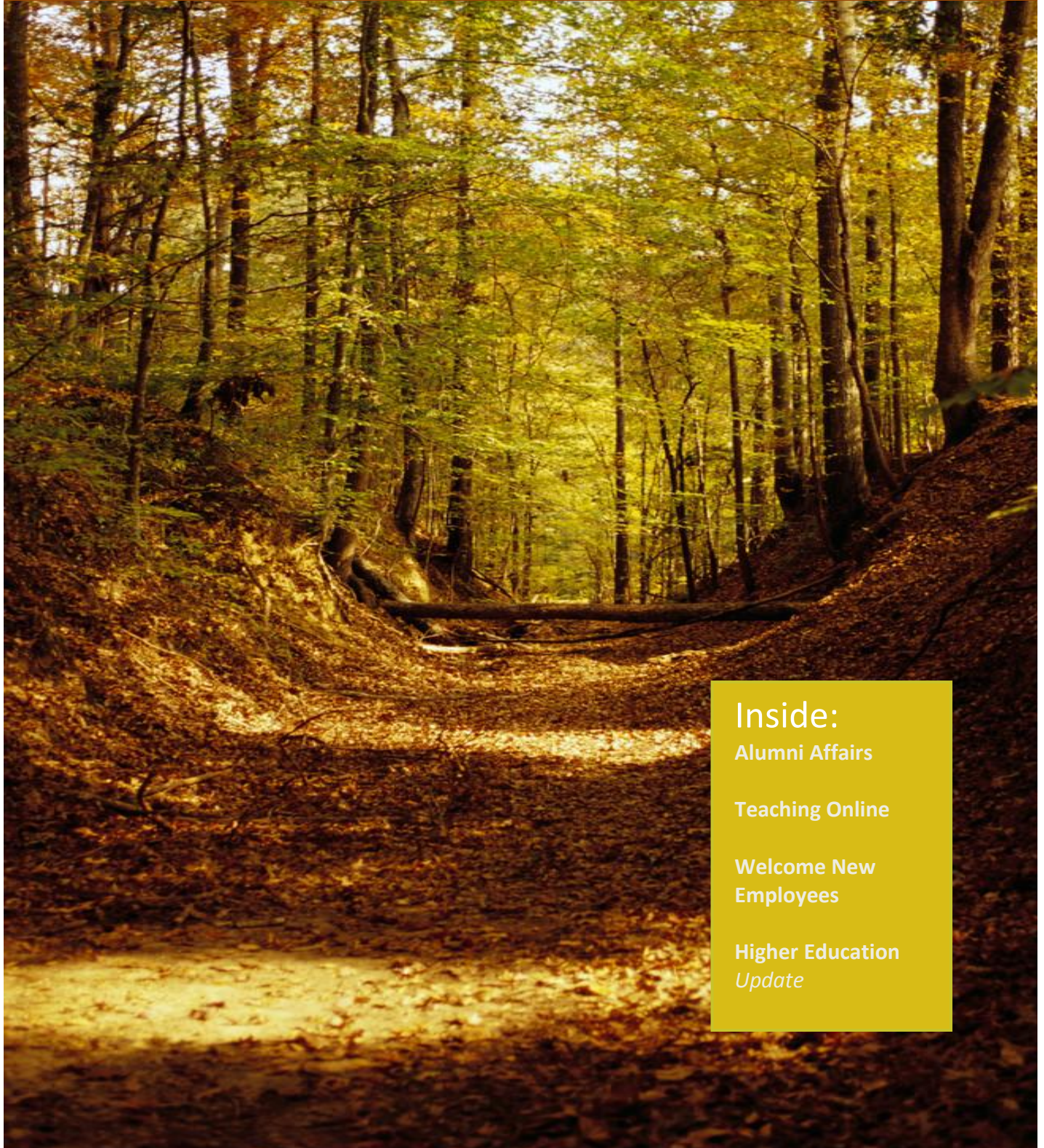


Housatonic

Community News

October 2010



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Teaching Online



Distance education continues to evolve with advances in technology and interest, and education professionals must continue to change with it. Sandra Enders, Adjunct Instructor of Behavioral and Social Sciences, has been teaching online for almost ten years. In the interview below shares some of her experience and techniques for making what was once an unconventional way to teach an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Professor Enders says she started “marketing” herself to online programs as an adjunct and weighing ones that best fit the lifestyle of a stay-at-home mother. There are some potential drawbacks to teaching online full time—no formal title, a diminished sense of community. Still, this full-time distance educator does find time to visit campus—she has been on campus this semester for Success Coaching—and she makes herself available seven days a week for telephone conferences.

How long have you been teaching online?

I started making hybrids nine years ago at Briarwood College (now Lincoln College of New England). They had no online infrastructure, no distance learning. I was really intrigued by the online process, so I started doing hybrids by going to Yahoo groups. I created groups for each of my courses and set up discussion boards. That was my first hybrid. I did that for two years there.

Back then there weren’t all the programs in online instructional technology like today. The only thing I could really find was Indiana University running a summer course in distance learning. It was just a single stand alone certificate in distance learning.

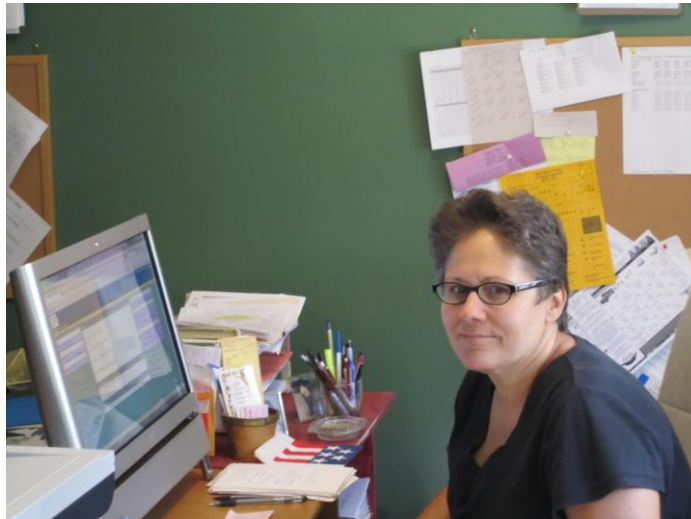
I [found] Central Texas College. What I like about it is that they cater to the military. I found it just fascinating. Ninety-nine percent of their students are military or spouses of military and they are stationed around the world. In 2003 I started with them.

In 2004 I picked up Housatonic. [Laughs] I started harassing the then Social and Behavioral Science Department because they hadn’t put anything online yet. I kept saying, “Please, I want to put this American Government course online. I know I can do it.” Finally, they said we’ll let you try in fall 2004.

The only other thing that was really kind of running was Professor Maz Burbank, who was starting her Psychology online for the first time, so I talked to her. There was no distance learning director then. Kathy Cercone (Prof. of Biology, Coordinator of PTA program) helped me put it online.

Did you design the curriculum?

The publishers have so much to choose from. Pearson Education is phenomenal. You just pick and choose what you want to add in. Of course back then it wasn’t as streamlined as it is today. It was hard to get the databases back then.



Sandra G. Enders, who has earned master degrees in Social Psychology and Political Science, as well as a Sixth Year Certificate in Educational Foundations, sits at her work station.

There was no Blackboard, no Vista?

There was something called *CourseCompass*, and I was using that a little bit also.

When you began, how did you go about creating materials for online instruction? Are there any writing skills that you think are particularly useful for an instructor to have in order to teach online? Is it a different kind of communication style?

I didn't really think so. I fell into it pretty easily, but I write a lot. With so many years of education, especially in my field, social and behavioral sciences, there is a lot of writing. So I just wrote the way I would do academic work—the way I would write an academic paper, a more formal academic tone, like you would write in a handout.

Maybe some discussions get a little bit more informal, but I always keep firm to Standard English. Some of my students start tweeting, and I put a stop to that. I say, "No tweeting!"

How do you guide students in terms of what resources are useful and appropriate for online learners.

This semester I added in something that I hadn't been offering because we moved to a new publisher at Housatonic. We got a whole new textbook, so I had to do a whole new course this semester. I had been thinking about changing some of the assignments. I did make one change, a ten percent assignment and I passed it by Laurel [Quinones, Director of Distance Learning] and she said, "Yeah, it sounds good." [Students] have to go to the online library, look up a

social problem that they are interested in, pick up a journal and review it in APA format. I thought it would be a nice little step in learning the difference between an academic journal and a magazine. I didn't get exposed to the journals until I was a graduate student, and no one really pushed me into them. [Otherwise students] are missing out on so much.

Before they go there they have to review a few links that I have set up on my own Web site. I have a section on my Web site on how to do research writing, what's plagiarism, and one really good link shows—many of our students don't know this—the difference between what is a popular magazine and what is an academic journal.

It's something I started wanting to expose them to. It's something I also started at my Central Texas class. I'm anxious to see how it goes over.

How do you gauge students' level of preparedness for a course? You don't have the one on one interface. What kind of cues do you receive from students that let you know, "Okay, this person might be struggling, or that might be more advanced."?

Well, you can tell by them submitting the work right away, the quality of the work they submit. Do they post a one-liner versus a good size paragraph that was asked for? Do they give an "I agree with you—" rather than saying "I understand and this, this and this (further explanation)." *Continued on page 6.*

Welcome,

New Community Members!

We asked new community members
to respond to brief survey to help us get to know them better.



Kyle Zander
Instructor, Biology/Anatomy & Physiology

Cats or dogs: Dogs, but I am stuck with a cat for now.
Broadway or Off Broadway: Broadway--my wife and I go to shows all the time!
Mexican Restaurant or Italian restaurant: Mexican restaurant, definitely--specifically On the Border in Orange, CT



Jennifer Nohai-Seaman
Instructor, Developmental Math

Lycoming College (BA in Math)
Binghamton University, MS in Education
(emphasis in secondary math education)

Prof. Nohai-Seaman has taught high school in Binghamton, NY and Wisconsin. She and her husband returned to the East Coast from the Midwest, where he earned a doctorate in music composition. He teaches Music Theory full-time at Suffolk County Community College. She worked as an adjunct while staying home with their daughter, Calista, for the last three years. She says, "I love to read, listen to music, and be a Girl Scout leader for my daughter's Daisy troop."



Farshad Ravanshad
Instructor, Computer Science

Cats or dogs: Cats
Yankees or Red Sox: Yankees
Eat, Pay, Love or The Expendables: Eat, Pay, Love
Jazz or Classical: Classical
Mac or PC: Mac
Metropolitan Museum of Art or MOMA: Metropolitan
Berkshires or Long Island: Berkshires
Broadway or Off Broadway: Broadway
Mini Cooper or Minivan: Mini Cooper
Mexican Restaurant or Italian Restaurant: Italian

Cats or dogs: Cats (I have 3)
Yankees or Red Sox: Yankees, I grew up in NY and live there now, but I do love Fenway Park
Jazz or classical: I like both classical and jazz; my husband is a composer, so we listen to everything
Mac or PC: PC
Berkshires or Long Island: (I live there and take the ferry to work every day)
Broadway or Off-Broadway: Broadway
Mini Cooper or Minivan: Mini Cooper
Mexican restaurant or Italian restaurant: Italian restaurant



Making Alumni Matter

Magaly Cajigas has been named Institutional Advancement Associate and now heads Housatonic's new Office of Alumni Relations. Cajigas, already a valued member of the Department of Institutional Advancement staff, is now expanding her responsibilities to reach out to alumni.

Cajigas has launched a major effort to reach alumni through tried and true methods like word of mouth, but also through creative paths such as social networking. She also sees the importance of educating currently enrolled students about their future responsibilities as alumni. As she establishes the office, the network of alumni is expected to grow and contribute to the professional and social resources of HCC.

Right now, Cajigas receives a few calls a month from alumni (graduates and students with 35 or more credits) seeking ways to reconnect with services or

lend their own professional skills. She directs them to career services and other resources.

In addition to being the primary contact for alumni, a major part of Cajigas' responsibilities is coordinating the much anticipated annual Alumni Reunion Dance and Alumni Hall of Fame Gala—now Alumni Weekend 2010. Hundreds of community members and alumni will gather on campus November 19th and 20th to reconnect, mingle with instructors and administrators, and raise money for the Foundation's Scholarship Program.

Last year's Alumni Gala featured actor and literacy proponent, Levar Burton, who Cajigas described as the perfect honoree, enthusiastically mixing with guests and recounting the role education has played in his life. This year's Hall of Fame Honoree is television journalist and author Joan Lunden.

SAVE THE DATE

Housatonic Community College Foundation
presents

ALUMNI WEEKEND 2010 November 19 & 20

Friday, November 19: Alumni Reunion Dance
Reunite with friends - reconnect with HCC faculty.
Great food, drinks, music and dancing in a lounge setting.
7:00 - 11:00 pm, Lafayette Hall Atrium.
Tickets: \$75 per person.

Saturday, November 20: Alumni Hall of Fame Gala
Honor HCC's distinguished alumni. Cocktails, dinner,
dancing, silent auction and presentation by Joan Lunden.
6:00 - 11:00 pm, Beacon Hall Event Center
Tickets: \$250 per person.

Attend both events! Special two-night tickets are available for \$300 per person.



GALA GUEST SPEAKER JOAN LUNDEN

Long-time host of
Good Morning America,
Award-Winning
Broadcast Journalist,
Best-selling Author
&
Community College Graduate

Performance is tied to writing.

It is. A lot of it is. Thirty percent is online quizzes; they're open book, unlimited time. Fifty percent is online discussion board posts, and then there is a twenty percent individually submitted final reflection paper.

I added in another assignment on international human rights. I link out to Humanrights.org. They have forty minutes of video at their Web site going through the history and the thirty rights that there are so I don't have to worry about copyright issues. A lot of social issues come up in those rights. This is my first semester offering that and so there is a discussion board on that—what they think of the rights, pick one to discuss, etc.

And then they have their weekly chapters. They can pull out any kind of theory or concept or issue that they read about in a chapter and they have to do a post on that, and they have to respond to another's post for the week.

In addition to the publisher's materials and Web sites, do you use Wikis or anything like that? Do you think they are useful?

-No, I haven't. I haven't found the need for it. There is enough going on in the course without the need for using that. But in the future it might become a consideration. I like to change every couple of years.

The package that you receive from the publisher is like a textbook, but does it take any of your autonomy from constructing your own course.

Well, the International Human Rights is completely mine; that has nothing to do with the publisher, and the journal articles have nothing to do with the publisher. The final reflection is twenty percent. I have them write a lengthy essay on the three major sociological theories and how they personally reflect on them. Thirty percent is the quizzes from the publisher. The other thirty percent they pull from the textbook. So you can say that sixty percent comes from the publisher; the other forty percent, I create.

How do you compare the two experiences—teaching online and on campus? Are you different teaching online than you would be in a classroom?

I did the classroom for a couple of years. I have to have a lot of notes. Sometimes I miss it, like when I come here [on campus to do Success Coaching] and I have the feel of [students] right there. Last year I did the human rights exercise as extra credit, and I did it on campus, so I met a bunch of my students. And my two classes and my husband's classes [he also teaches online] met there, and I felt that I do miss the interaction sometimes.

I think I wouldn't mind doing classroom if a fulltime position came up and I had to do both. But right now it is what I am doing, and it fits my schedule. I have a six-year old at home. That's big part of the reason I moved online.

When a course ends and you have never met with students in person, what is that like? They just disappear.

You kind of get used to it. In the beginning I send out a welcome, and I make it a point in the introduction thread in the beginning that each student gets greeted individually, and there is correspondence with each and every one. I make sure I do that every first week or two of the semester. I go over what their major is, what their career direction is and interact with them in the beginning so there is a little bit of bonding and you know where they are at, so if they approach me five weeks into the course or they call on the phone, I can say, "You're the nursing student." I make notes on my roster. They appreciate that. You can tell that they are happy that you remember who they are.

So you do talk with them on the phone.

Yes. I make myself available to them seven days a week by phone from nine to four. I'm lucky to get maybe one call a week, maybe twice a week.

Would you say that the hours you put in are comparable to a traditional course?

They are probably about the same. Grading, interaction online, administration—I'd say it's about equal.

It requires a great deal of organization.

Especially if you are making a living at it full-time.

What kind of workspace do you have?

I have whole office set up. It's an L-shape. I have a big bulletin board with all of the schedules, my classes set up. Around the office I have strip of wood with hooks. Every class gets a clipboard. The roster goes in the front and all the paperwork to each class, the contract, et cetera, and goes on each clipboard. So I can tell right away if I get a phone call, you know, "I'm in Housatonic's course, section number eighty-four sixty three." I can pull it down, and I can tell right away who they are. I am very organized like that. After the course ends I usually keep [the clipboard] hanging for six months, until the next semester ends just in case someone calls. And then I put certain things in a binder—contract, grade book, roster--certain things.

Are you moving that organization more online or in a digital format?

My daybook, I'm not. Every year I consider moving it online, but I can't find a program I like. But I have my schedule up on my Web site, and I have all of my syllabi posted on my Web site in case a student says I am thinking of taking one of your classes in January, can you send me something? I'll send them a link to the Web site. It's a pretty extensive Web site. I've had a Web site since I started teaching online for about eight or ten years.

But I stay well-organized with my scheduling. And the classes get staggered; that's how I am able to do [as many as I do] throughout the year. I never have more than two closing the same week. The crucial part is opening and closing a class. Opening, you've got to be the on the ball, greeting them and making sure they catch on to the system. After the third week they kind of know what to do. A few weeks before closing, you've got to start sending out the reminders. So it's really opening and closing that is really more time consuming than the "center" of the classes.

I grade two to three times a week and go in and send e-mails, usually a broadcast e-mail a week about what is going on, what was corrected that week.

Do you see yourself designing any courseware down the line?

I don't see myself as an instructional technologist. I like the technology enough to create my own classes, but to go into more deeply, probably not.

You and your husband work from home and you work with Laurel Quinones. In addition to that, what sense of community do you have?

I don't have much [laughs]. It's really through online interaction. It isn't bad here [Connecticut] because I can take a trip here and stop in and see Laurel and Jose [Labrador, Educational Technology Specialist], but with Central Texas I've never met one person there, and I've worked there since 2003. But it's funny—you get to know them through e-mail and there is almost a sense of intimacy through cyberspace. It's almost like being there after a while, especially with Central Texas. We do a lot of live training and you can put your web cam up there if you want to—a lot of us don't. But it really doesn't bother me that much.

And I do other things. I'm very active in my local parish; I'm active in my son's school, so I make up for it in other areas.

And what about the naysayers who stigmatize online education in any of its forms?

I think there are going to be certain people who want it, and people that don't. It's just going to be another avenue to get an education. I don't think you will ever completely bridge the gaps. Maybe in the future.

HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE

Community College Summit

Our nation's community colleges received a high place on the agenda of the federal government when Dr. Jill Biden hosted the Community College Summit at the White House on October 5, 2010.

With opening and closing sessions streamed live, the summit tackled six topics at the heart of creating stronger community colleges across the nation: Pathway to Baccalaureate; Increasing Community College Completion; Affordability: Financial Aid to Community College Students; Community Colleges in the 21st Century; The Importance of Community Colleges to Veterans and Military Families; Industry-Community College Partnerships.

In her opening address, Dr. Biden put into context the role that Housatonic has played in the region:

“As we meet here today, families all across our country are struggling. We see that struggle firsthand in community colleges. We see people who are determined to build a better life for themselves and their families, no matter how hard it is. Today, community colleges are the largest, fastest-growing, most affordable segment of America's higher education system. For generations, these schools have been an option for many students who didn't have other options: recent immigrants, working adults, or students who could not afford or were not quite ready for a four-year institution.”

For more information visit www.whitehouse.gov/communitycollege.

Soaring Numbers of Students at Connecticut Community Colleges Push Public System Enrollment to Record High

According to the Connecticut Department of Higher Education, more students than ever are seeing the value of a college education as preliminary enrollments at Connecticut's public state colleges and universities hit an all-time high with 127,171 students attending this fall. Nearly 80 percent of the gain over last fall is due to surging numbers of students attending the state's 12 community colleges.

Commissioner Michael P. Meotti said, “In a tough economy, public higher education is growing its enrollment as students recognize the benefits that a college education can bring to their career and personal success. This is particularly true at our community colleges where both younger and older students are opting to begin or re-start their college careers and use these colleges as their springboards to a four-year degree.”

Q&A: Bullying and Higher Ed

The tragic suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi has brought attention to the importance of tolerance on college campuses. Residential colleges may present more opportunities for students to demonstrate bullying and bullish behavior, but commuter schools are not without their share of incidences, making the stress Clementi experienced far from anecdotal.

Q. Should lessons on tolerance be incorporated more fully into college curricula? If you teach, how do incorporate related topics in your course? E-mail your answer to Smonroe@hcc.commnet.edu with “Q&A” in the subject line.

Diversity Committee Seeks Community Input

Housatonic's Diversity Awareness Committee will distribute a brief college-wide survey. Questions will ask respondents to comment on perceived and recognized ideas about differences such as those related to gender, sexual preference, ability, socio-economic status and race. The responses will help the committee develop more topical and relevant programming and services.

***Housatonic Community News* welcomes articles, photographs,
announcements and feedback.**

The deadline for the December 2010 issue is November 23, 2010.

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HOUSATONIC OPERATIONAL VALUES

INTEGRITY

Communicate openly, honestly and responsibly
Make agreements and keep them
Admit your mistakes

RESPECT

Treat others as you wish to be treated
Communicate directly, calmly and professionally
Listen attentively
Value different perspectives

COMMUNITY MEMBER FOCUS

Ask questions to ensure understanding
Make suggestions and recommendations
Keep community members informed
Acknowledge requests promptly
Anticipate community member "wants"
Treat others with respect and dignity
Make continuous improvement