College in the Schools Students and Parents:

Welcome to the University of Minnesota course **PsTL 1135: Essentials of Human Anatomy and Physiology**. PsTL 1135 is offered at your high school through a concurrent enrollment program called College in the Schools (CIS). Students who successfully complete PsTL 1135 will get a jump start on college, earning both U of M and high school credit.

Let me introduce myself: I am Murray Jensen, associate professor in the University of Minnesota Twin Cities’ Department of Postsecondary Teaching and Learning, where I regularly teach PsTL 1135. I am also the CIS Faculty Coordinator for PsTL 1135. I help select, prepare, and support all high school instructors teaching this anatomy and physiology course at participating high schools. I can testify that these CIS teachers are extremely dedicated, creative, and knowledgeable. This course is currently offered in 30 high schools in Minnesota.

In this letter I want to communicate clearly what students can expect in the course. The first--and maybe most important--point I want to emphasize is that PsTL 1135 is not an easy course. Students should expect a faster pace, assume greater personal responsibility, and perform at a higher level than in a typical high school course. In my 20 plus years of teaching experience, at both the high school and college levels, I’ve learned that the worst trait an incoming college student can have is false confidence. False confidence is what is fostered in easy courses, those where students do little work and still receive high marks. These students frequently struggle, or even drop out of college, when faced with academic challenges. I’ve also talked to many college professors who complain that students who take college credit courses in high schools frequently get a false impression that college is easy.

**Who should take the course?**

PsTL 1135 is an excellent introduction to human anatomy and physiology and to the rigors of college coursework. It provides students the opportunity to determine if they wish to pursue majors in the health or biological sciences. It is not a substitute for a more advanced anatomy and physiology course, and is not the first course in a two-course sequence that is frequently used in allied health care preparation programs.

**College credit**

Students who successfully complete PsTL 1135 will earn four (4) U of M semester credits and fulfill their “biological science with lab” graduation requirement. If students attend the University of Minnesota after graduating from high school, they don’t need to worry about transferring credits. All CIS students have an official University of Minnesota transcript.

If students apply to another college or university after graduation, they should be aware that the decision whether to grant credit recognition rests entirely with that institution. However, CIS has collected data from many students over the years that indicate the vast majority of students succeed in securing recognition for their U of M credits earned through CIS. **Students should keep the course syllabus (along with all exams, papers, reports, etc.) after the course has ended.** Having this documentation available can help students secure credit recognition.

**Quantity of work**

University policy states that students can expect 3 hours of work per week per credit. Students in PsTL 1135 should expect approximately 12 hours of work per week, including class time.
Grades
In the sections of this course taught on the U of M campus most students receive “Bs” or “Cs.” This may well be the case for high school students taking the course for college credit. Students will be graded using University of Minnesota standards.

College GPA
The grades students receive in PsTL 1135 through CIS will be recorded on official U of M transcripts and will be used in calculating their University GPAs. If students apply to another college or university, their University of Minnesota GPA will be calculated using a formula determined by that institution.

Course goals
The study of human anatomy and physiology has historically focused on memorizing long lists of bones and muscles or steps of physiological events such as the contraction of a muscle cell or propagation of a nerve signal. While this course will require students to learn many bones and muscles, it will go much farther than that—there is much more to anatomy and physiology than memorization. For example, students will work in cooperative learning groups, using the language of anatomy and physiology and a scientific approach to discuss case studies. The process of learning to work in groups is often difficult, but necessary. Health care and science are both professional fields that require teamwork, and, to that end, “learning to work in a group” is indeed on our list of course goals.

To make progress toward this goal, one of the most common group activities in the course will be cooperative quizzes. Each week in Essentials of Human Anatomy and Physiology there will be at least one cooperative quiz, completed in two parts. Students first take the quiz on an individual basis and turn in their answers; they then work in groups of two, three, or four students to again complete the quiz, this time working together to come to consensus on a set of answers that represent the group’s combined efforts. Final point totals for cooperative quizzes are calculated as an average of the individual and group components. Research has shown cooperative quizzes to be effective at promoting both the learning of anatomy and physiology, and learning to work in groups. All PsTL 1135 classes are required to use cooperative quizzes on a weekly basis. The intent of the cooperative quizzes is to help students prepare for exams. Exams will be challenging, will require considerable preparation, and will be graded on an individual basis.

Another feature of PsTL 1135 that makes it stand out from typical high school science classes is its emphasis on critical and creative thinking. Specifically, this course promotes inquiry and innovation whenever possible. Inquiry is a core aspect of any scientific endeavor and involves the process of identifying a problem and then generating and critiquing possible solutions. Inquiry is much more complex than merely learning the names of bones and muscles, and many high-performing students find the process taxing. Student in PsTL 1135 should often be faced with problems and issues that cannot be solved easily – and might become frustrated because answers are elusive. Encountering doubt and dealing with ambiguity are intended components of this, and most of all, college courses. Initially, students in the course might find this approach (i.e., teaching by inquiry) confusing, but good students will learn to embrace it.

Although CIS teachers do in fact teach the same course that is taught here on campus, they have considerable freedom to select specific topics in anatomy and physiology to teach; there is no one required schedule of topics. My general philosophy is that depth is better than breadth: it’s
much better, for example, for students to spend time going into the details of the cardiovascular system, than to spend minimal time on all the systems in the human body.

Have a good semester, and I hope you enjoy learning the basic concepts of human anatomy and physiology.

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