<h1 style="text-align:center">Discussion Forum Expectations:</h1>

Grading:

Each initial forum post (your response to the question) is worth 10 possible points. Initial Forum posts are typically due by a Wednesday, by 11:59 PM CDT, and receive a 20% point deduction per day for late submission.

Each of two required reply posts (your thoughtful response to others' initial forum posts) are worth 5 possible points. Reply posts can be done any time between after you've submitted your initial post, and the close of the forum for the Unit (typically Sunday by 11:59 PM CDT).

Each of these posts will be evaluated using this quality rubric:

Scoring Standard	Definition
Exceeds Expectations	Performance far exceeds all of the assignment or exam requirements
Fully Meets Expectations	Performance reflects satisfaction of all or nearly all of the assignment or exam requirements. There are often opportunities to improve in terms of fully satisfying assignment requirements or answers to exam questions by being more specific and thorough in terms of integrating course material or applying it to a case or situation.
Meets Most Expectations	Performance reflects adequate work for at least some of the assignment or exam requirements. Oftentimes, there are one or more parts of an assignment that are not fully addressed. There are often significant opportunities for improvement in terms of the specificity and depth of an answer and integration of course material.
Meets Some Expectations	Performance demonstrates significant deficiencies in satisfying one or more key assignment or exam requirements. There are often significant deficiencies in terms of the thoroughness, depth, and application of course material as specified in the assignment requirements or exam question.
Meets Few Expectations	Performance fails to address most, if not all, of the assignment or exam requirements.

How to get the most out of the forums:

Take these considerations into account as you seek to learn and engage with the course concepts and each other, as well as get a good grade!

1. **Quality, not quantity:** The point of these discussions is to engage in meaningful conversations with your colleagues. Show your engagement by being clear, concise, and making your participation more about quality than quantity. Posting more than the minimum requirement to compensate for weak posts will not get you additional points. Don't expect to post many low-quality posts and get credit; at least two quality discussion posts are required for full credit.

2. **Answer the question:** No one likes a vague or evasive response to a question. Clearly connect the course concepts to your own personal experience. Be sure you're *responding fully to the question* posed.

3. **Further the conversation:** Some conversations get bigger, and others wither away. These discussions are more about exploring the concepts and learning through interactions with others, and less about wrapping up a conversation with one definitive answer. Further the conversations by playing 'devil's advocate,' respectfully challenging others' assumptions (or defending them with your own experience or data), exploring alternative interpretations or ideas, citing research, etc.

4. **Writing style:** Have no fear, we are looking for the *content* of your argument, not spelling ability or grasp of the English language. That said, re-read your answer before submitting it to make sure it makes sense. It's an easy way to cut down on typos, grammatical errors, and oddly-phrased sentences that make it harder to grade.

5. **Tell us *why***: Take your answers to the next level by providing clear connections to the course concepts. Don't just tell us the 'what', tell us 'why' this is important, and specifically how it relates to the content discussed in the self-assessment, the book, the lecture, and your own experience.

   Don't rely on your reader to make those ties for you. Facts are only helpful when they are integrated into your response to the question. Consider how you can create clear ties between examples you provide and the course concepts. Additionally, *asking good questions* can show your grasp of the course concepts, provide specific examples of what you're talking about at a higher level, and spark meaningful discussion with your peers.

6. **Creativity is valuable**: We are not looking for cookie-cutter answers. Feel free to be creative and show us more of *YOU* in your response! Do you have an example from personal experience? Share it! Do you have your own interests or personality quirks that have come out as you've learned about positive (or negative) management techniques? Tell us about them! Don't worry about disagreeing with anyone. But you should back up your opinion with appropriate information and arguments. Be real; be YOU.

7. **When in doubt, check your 'netiquette':** While we will ask you to evaluate the merits of your colleague's contributions, we expect all discussions to be constructive and civil. Review your reply post before submitting it. How would you feel if you received that feedback? If you have any doubts about how your feedback will be received, try to soften the language. Consider using the 'sandwich technique' (say something nice + provide constructive criticism + say something nice).

8. **Meets vs. exceeds expectations:** Minimally fulfilling the question's requirements does not make for an excellent response. Nor will that type of response garner you a grade of 100%. *Excellent* responses achieve the highest grades possible, exceed expectations, and show how the information is directly connecting to you and your life. Average responses achieve solidly average grades and fully meet expectations. YOU earn these grades – excellent, average, fair, and poor. See the following examples of discussion posts rated "Exceeds Expectations" and "Fully Meets Expectations' to see the difference.

Here are a few examples of *excellent* responses shared in prior sessions of the course. Although I'm sharing examples from discussion posts, these general principles are appropriate for all assignments.

Note that excellence does not always equate to length!

An excellent (exceeds expectations) discussion post: (Notice that this post is action-oriented.)

I would first consider which skills are most critical and evaluate my scores on those dimensions. In my case, the skills in need of the most work are ability to synthesize, computer skills, and persuasiveness.

One action I would take is one that I am currently doing and will do as part of this course and that is to practice strategic planning with real companies. In this week's lectures, Southwest Airlines was used as an example of how to conduct a SWOT analysis. I think real life applications are the best way to learn and improve the clarity and succinctness of analyses in effective strategic planning. I'll be the first one to say that I'm not one to keep things brief and I find myself elaborating more than necessary on various written projects.

Similarly, a second action that I would take is to join computer-learning courses. This past semester I took advantage of a few courses that were offered by the DoIT tech store. Because a large part of forecasting (conducting trend analyses and contingency planning) is facilitated by spreadsheet and other software such as Microsoft Excel, I think it would be ideal to have advanced knowledge of how to use these systems to develop the most accurate forecast. Thus,

because my computer skills are not at the level I want them to be, learning from experts in that area is my best plan of action.

As part of a "soft skill," I think that learning and developing more persuasive speaking techniques would be a beneficial action in improving the persuasiveness dimension on my Self-Assessment. But I also think I'd be most effective in a clan or adhocracy culture in which I would feel more comfortable expressing an idea and persuading others to see the value in it.

A good (fully meets expectations) discussion post: (Notice that this post is in the abstract.)

The first action I would take in improving my strategic planning would be to identify any commonalities among the areas that were defined as weaknesses for me. This would allow me to determine exactly why these areas are a weakness for and how they could be improved. For example, if I were weak in the areas of persuasiveness and verbal skills, overall communication skills would be the broad area of focus to work on. With this knowledge, I could then begin to improve these skills by placing myself in situations that promote these skills.

The next action I could take to improve my strategic planning skills would be to place myself in low-risk situations that involve some or all of the 12 skills of the Core Skills for Strategic Planning. Putting myself in these situations would allow me to focus on the specific skills I need to improve. This could then be transferred manager position in the organization, where I could be an effective part of the strategic planning team.

Diversification of team members in the organization would be the last and possibly most effective way to improve my strategic planning. Surrounding myself with team members that have a diverse set of skills would allow me to improve my skills that I scored in the 1-2 range on by observing others that effectively exhibit these skills. Over time I would be able to bring these areas up to a level that is satisfactory in order to be an acceptable strategic planner.

An excellent discussion response: (Notice that this post isn't particularly long but it furthers the discussion in a meaningful way and adds additional information.)

I was most intrigued by your second technique. I have struggled in group settings in a similar way, but I have never thought of it as an issue with decisiveness. I gravitate towards the leadership position in group settings. The importance of group work is growing in school and the work place. I have worked hard at developing these skills, since I've always been concerned with overstepping from the leadership position. It's very interesting to see this flaw from your perspective of indecisiveness, and I'm curious to know whether this in turn affected your scores in other related skills such as team skills?

A good discussion response: (Notice that this post mentions applicable items but doesn't particularly further the conversation.)

I definitely agree with all of your three steps. I feel like a mentor is a huge opportunity for someone to grow their skills whether their mentor would be a parent, sibling, friend, coach or whoever. I think it is important that your mentor be honest with you too. I think they should not only tell you how to improve your weaknesses and strengths, but also what your strengths and weaknesses are, since you yourself may not even realize what they are.

I think taking on a leadership position is important too. It may help you realize what your strengths and weaknesses are. It may also give you more confidence and will improve your skills into becoming a effective strategic planner. Also, getting a position of leadership is not as hard as you think!
I think your last point may be the most important. After being placed in that leadership role it is important to have someone who will tell you what you are doing well and what you aren't doing so well in. They can also help you

overcome your weaknesses and give you tips on how to improve. So this person has to be honest and straightforward with you.