Substantive Change Application
Distance Delivery

Background Information on Distance Delivery

Higher Learning Commission (HLC) policies outline when institutions need to notify the Commission about distance-delivered instruction and when they need to seek approval. (See policy 3.2(a) and the information below.)

This document defines the characteristics of distance delivery, specifies when institutions must notify the Commission or seek approval for distance delivery, and provides the form for seeking approval.

Commission Definitions for Distance-Delivered Courses and Programs

The Higher Learning Commission uses the following definitions for the purpose of applying its policy on distance delivery to its accredited and candidate institutions:

- Distance-delivered courses are those in which all or the vast majority (typically 75% or more) of the instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication, correspondence, or equivalent mechanisms, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.

- Distance-delivered programs are those certificate or degree programs in which 50% or more of the required courses may be taken as distance-delivered courses.

Reporting and Seeking Approval for Distance-Delivered Offerings

The chart below identifies the Percentage Brackets for determining the scope of distance delivery by an institution. The Commission determines the appropriate Percentage Bracket for each institution. Such determination is based on information provided by the institution in its Annual Institutional Data Update to the Commission or when it seeks and receives approval of a proposed change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Bracket</th>
<th>Percentage of Distance-Delivered Offerings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(calculations are based on degree programs, not certificates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Up to 100% of total degree programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Up to 20% of total degree programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Initiation of distance-delivered offerings up to 5% of total degree programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No degree programs or more than four certificate programs (Commission policy does permit the institution to offer up to four certificate programs as well as a limited number of courses leading to degree programs through distance education or correspondence education without seeking prior approval.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher Learning Commission policy requires an institution to seek the Commission's prior approval if the institution plans to initiate or expand its distance-delivered offerings as described below. When initiation or expansion is anticipated, an institution must submit a substantive change request using the forms contained in this document.
Initiation occurs and a review is required when the institution:

- plans to initiate its first distance education degree program, even when it has been approved to offer distance education certificates or correspondence education degree programs or certificates;
- plans to initiate its first correspondence education degree program, even when it has been approved to offer correspondence education certificates or distance education degree programs or certificates;
- has initiated four distance education certificates and plans to initiate a fifth, unless the institution has already been reviewed and approved to offer one or more distance education degree programs; or
- has initiated four correspondence education certificates and plans to initiate a fifth, unless the institution has already been reviewed and approved to offer one or more correspondence education degree programs.

Expansion occurs and a review is required when the institution:

- plans to increase its current activity in distance education degree programs or its current activity in correspondence education degree programs to a higher Percentage Bracket.

In addition, the Commission may require a substantive change evaluation if the institution:

- has never had a focused review of distance or correspondence degree or certificate programs and is offering one or more programs or five or more certificates; or
- has a significant annual increase in enrollment.

In addition to reviewing distance-delivered courses and programs through its substantive change processes, the Commission evaluates delivery whenever it comprehensively reviews an institution. In these comprehensive reviews, the Commission examines the institution’s capacity to provide education to its students and the quality of its performance in doing so, whether via distance delivery or traditional face-to-face modes. Comprehensive reviews examine curriculum, staffing, support services, access to appropriate laboratory and library resources, and all other facets of quality higher education.

Questions

For general questions on approval of distance-delivered programs, send an e-mail to changerequests@hlcommission.org or call 800-621-7440 x137. For institution-specific questions, contact the Commission staff liaison assigned to the institution by calling 800-621-7440 and asking to be transferred to the liaison.

1 Wherever distance delivery is mentioned throughout this document it means distance or correspondence delivery. The following are the Federal definitions (2009) of distance and correspondence education:

Correspondence education means:

1. Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor.

2. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student.

3. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced.

4. Correspondence education is not distance education.

Distance Education means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:

1. The internet;

2. One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines,
fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;

(3) Audio conferencing; or

(4) Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction
with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3).

Substantive Change Application, Part 1: General Questions

Distance Delivery

Note: Wherever distance delivery is mentioned it means distance or correspondence delivery.

Institution: ___________________________ City, State: ___________________________

Name of person completing this application: ___________________________ Date Submitted: MM/DD/YYYY

Title: ___________________________ Phone: ___________ Email: ___________

The questions are designed to elicit brief, succinct, detailed information, rather than a narrative or references
to extensive supporting documents. Do not attach other documents unless they are specifically requested in
the questions.

The total submission should be no more than 10-12 pages on a single classification of change. The
submission should be no more than 20 pages total on an application addressing multiple change requests.

Submit the completed application as a single electronic document (in Adobe PDF format) emailed to
changerquests@hlccommission.org.

Requested Change(s). Concisely describe the change for which the institution seeks approval.

Please Note: if submitting a change request for a new program and distance offerings or a new program and location, the
institution should submit the New Program Application. Otherwise an institution submitting more than one change
request should complete multiple applications, one for each type of change.

Classification of Change Request. Check all boxes that apply to the change.

Note: not every institutional change requires prior review and approval. Review the “Overview of Commission Policies,
and Procedures for Institutional Changes Requiring Commission Notification or Approval” to make certain that current
HLC policy requires the institution to seek approval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in mission or student body:</th>
<th>New academic program(s) requiring HLC approval:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ change in mission</td>
<td>□ certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ change in student body</td>
<td>□ bachelor's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ master's/specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ associate's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ doctorate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Substantive Change Application: Distance Delivery

New additional locations:
☐ in home state
☐ in other state(s) or in other country(ies)

New branch campus:
☐ new or additional campus(es)

Distance Delivery:
☐ Initiation of distance education
☐ Expansion of distance education
☐ Initiation of correspondence education
☐ Expansion of correspondence education

Consortial or contractual arrangement:
☐ Consortial arrangement
☐ Contractual arrangement
☐ The institution has completed the Screening Form for Contractual Arrangements and has been advised that approval is required. (If not, see the Substantive Change Screening Form for Contractual Arrangements)

Other:
☐ Substantially changing the clock or credit hours required for a program

Institutional Context for Substantive Change Review. In 1-2 paragraphs, describe the key dynamics — institutional mission and internal or external forces — that stimulated and shaped the change.

Special conditions. Underline YES or NO attesting to whether any of the conditions identified below fit the institution. If YES, explain the situation in the box provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the institution, in its relations with other regional, specialized, or national accrediting agencies, currently under or recommended for a negative status or action (e.g., withdrawal, probation, sanction, warning, show-cause, etc.)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the institution now undergoing or facing substantial monitoring, special review, or financial restrictions from the U.S. Dept. of Education or other federal or state government agencies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the institution’s senior leadership or board membership experienced substantial resignations or removals in the past year?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the institution experiencing financial difficulty through such conditions as a currently declared state of exigency, a deficit of 10% or more, a default or failure to make payroll during the past year, or consecutive deficits in the two most recent years?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is the institution experiencing other pressures that might affect its ability to carry out the proposal (e.g., a collective bargaining dispute or a significant lawsuit)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Approvals.** Check the approvals that are required prior to implementing the proposed change and include documentation of the approvals to the request:

- [ ] Internal (faculty, board) approvals
- [ ] System approvals (for an institution that is part of a system)
- [ ] State approval(s) for requests other than for Distance Delivery
- [ ] For Distance Delivery only: process in place to ascertain and secure state approval(s) as required
- [ ] Foreign country(ies) approvals (for an overseas program or site)
- [ ] No approval required

**Specialized Accreditation**

Complete this section only if specialized accreditation is required for licensure or practice in program(s) covered by this change application.

- [ ] The institution has already obtained the appropriate specialized accreditation. Attach a copy of the letter from the agency granting accreditation.

- [ ] The institution has begun the process of seeking or plans to seek specialized accreditation. Specify the name of the agency and the timeline for completing the process. (If approval is a multi-stage process, the institution should contact the HLC staff liaison to discuss the timeline before submitting this change application form.)

- [ ] The institution does not plan to seek specialized accreditation. Provide a rationale for not seeking this accreditation.

**Changes Requiring Visits**

Complete this section only if the institution is already aware that the proposed change will need to be reviewed through a visit. (If the institution is unsure whether a visit is required, the Commission will advise the institution based on the information provided in the change application.)

- [ ] Request to schedule a Change Visit.
  
  If a Change Visit has already been planned in consultation with Commission staff, specify the date set for the visit: _______________

- [ ] Request to add a proposed change to an already scheduled visit. Specify type of visit and date scheduled: ________

Whether the change will be reviewed through a separate Change Visit or embedded in an already scheduled visit, the following schedule will apply:

1. The institution files Part 1 of this change form at least 4 months before the visit. If the visit has not already been scheduled, this filing will initiate the process of scheduling the visit.

2. The institution files Part 2 of this change form at least 2 months before the scheduled visit. If the change will be embedded in an already scheduled visit, the form should be filed as an attachment to
the report prepared for that visit.

Please note: The Commission plans to update the change forms annually, on or about September 1 of each year. However, if a Change Application form was accessed more than 90 days prior to filing, it is recommended that the institution visit http://www.ncahc.org/change to ensure that there have been no changes in the application form in the intervening time.
Substantive Change Application, Part 2: Topic-Specific Questions

Distance Delivery

Submitting a Substantive Change Request

Attach the "Substantive Change Application—General Questions" as page one of this application. That completed form and the answers to the questions below will constitute the request for approval of a substantive change. It will be provided to future HLC review processes.

Name of Institution:

Part 1. Characteristics of the Change Requested

1. Briefly describe the planned initiation or expansion of distance delivery the institution is requesting permission to operate.

2. Include a list of all proposed certificate and degree programs planned in the initiation or expansion of distance delivery. For each degree program or certificate:
   a. Indicate the Classification of Instructional Programs [CIP codes, program name, and additional description (optional)]. CIP codes are established by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics. More information is available at http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/
   b. Specify the program level.
   c. Specify if it is distance education or correspondence education.
   d. Specify all modalities of delivery.
      _ Audio conferencing
      _ Broadband lines
      _ cable
      _ closed circuit
      _ correspondence
      _ fiber optics
      _ internet
      _ microwave
      _ open broadcast
      _ satellite
      _ videocassettes, dvds, and cd-roms
      _ wireless communication devices
   e. Identify date the offerings will be launched (MM/DD/YYYY).

3. What organizational structures are in place to ensure effective oversight, implementation, and management of the institution’s distance-delivered offerings?

4. Does the institution have a separately identified organizational unit for providing or marketing the distance-delivered offerings? ( ) Yes ( ) No
   If yes, please explain how this separate unit coordinates with other academic and administrative units across the institution to ensure the consistency and quality of offerings.
5. If the institution is planning any involvement by external organizations (other than accredited higher education institutions) in key operations as identified below, provide the information requested for each planned involvement. (Note that such involvement by a parent company or by one of its subsidiaries external to the institution in any of these operations should be reported.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of involvement</th>
<th>Name(s) of external organization(s)</th>
<th>% of Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Recruitment and admission of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Course placement and advising of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Design and oversight of curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Direct instruction and oversight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Other Support for delivery of instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. If the institution is planning any involvement with other accredited higher education institutions in key operations identified above, provide the name(s) of the other institutions and the nature of the involvement.

7. Operational Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Data</th>
<th>Last year (actual tallies)</th>
<th>This year (estimate)</th>
<th>Next year (projected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Total number of academic programs (i.e., counting different majors at all levels). Do not include certificates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Total number of programs in Item A above available via distance delivery (i.e., 50% or more of courses available as distance-delivered courses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Percentage of programs available via distance delivery (100 x B/A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2. Institution’s History with Distance-Delivered Offerings

8. Briefly describe the institution’s experience with distance-delivered offerings.

9. If the Higher Learning Commission approves the institution’s initiation or expansion of distance delivery, what future growth does the institution anticipate (e.g., in the next six months, three years, 10-20 years)?

10. How does the institution plan to manage this growth?
Part 3. Institutional Planning for Distance-Delivered Offerings

11. What impact might the proposed initiation or expansion of distance-delivered offering(s) have on challenges identified as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit or reaffirmation panel and how has the institution addressed the challenge(s)?

12. How does the institution determine the need to expand or initiate a distance-delivered offering? If the institution offers a traditional program now, how does it decide whether to start offering this program via distance delivery?

13. How does the institution plan for changes and future expansion of the role distance delivery plays in the institution? Who is involved? How do new ideas and initiatives originate, and how are they examined and evaluated?

14. How does the institution ensure that financial planning and budgeting for distance-delivered offerings are realistic? What are the institution’s projected revenues and expenses?

15. How does the institution assure that promotion, marketing, and enrollment of its distance-delivered offerings stay in balance with its actual resources and technical capabilities?

16. What controls are in place to ensure that the information presented to students in advertising, brochures, and other communications will be accurate?

Part 4. Curriculum and Instructional Design

17. How does the institution assure good instructional design in its distance-delivered offerings? How are the institution’s faculty and quality control mechanisms involved in the instructional design process?

18. What processes and procedures will the institution use for technology maintenance, upgrades, back up, remote services, and for communicating changes in software, hardware or technical systems to students and faculty?

19. How does the institution assure that it provides convenient, reliable, and timely services to students or faculty needing technical assistance, and how does it communicate information about these services?

20. What is the institution’s experience, if any, in collaborating with other institutions or organizations to provide distance-delivered education?

21. If the institution is planning partnerships or agreements with external organizations or institutions as identified in Questions 5 and 6, how will the Institution ensure that students can use these services effectively?

Part 5. Institutional Staffing and Faculty Support

22. How does the institution staff distance-delivered programs? How does this differ from the institution’s processes for staffing traditional programs?

23. What is the institution’s process for selecting, training, and orienting faculty for distance delivery? What special professional development, support, or released time does the institution provide for faculty who teach distance-delivered offerings?

24. How does the institution assure copyright compliance and keep distance delivery faculty aware of
institutional policies on using others’ intellectual property?

Part 6. Student Support

25. How does the institution assure that distance delivery students have access to necessary student and support services (e.g., institutional information, application for admission, registration, tutoring or academic support, advising, financial aid, tuition payment, career counseling and placement, library resources, complaint processes)? How does the institution provide them information about using these services, and how does it monitor and evaluate their use of these services?

26. How does the institution measure and promote interactions among distance delivery students and faculty (e.g., email, online chats, discussion groups, phone or streaming audio, “office hours,” cyber buddies/mentors and tutors)?

27. How does the institution assure that the distance delivery students it enrolls and to whom it awards credit and credentials are the same ones who did the work and achieved the institution’s learning goals (student authentication)?

28. How does the institution protect student identity and personal information?

Part 7. Evaluation and Assessment

29. How does the institution assess, review, and evaluate quality in distance-delivered offerings?

30. How are the measures and techniques the institution uses for distance-delivered offerings equivalent to those used to assess and evaluate traditional face-to-face offerings? If there are differences, why are these differences appropriate?

31. How does the institution assess the learning of the students it educates in its distance-delivered offerings to ensure that they achieve the levels of performance that the institution expect and that its stakeholders require?

32. How does the institution encourage and ensure continuous improvement of its distance-delivered offerings?
Appendix B

Web-Based Courses and Programs

On April 13, 2000, the Coordinating Board adopted the Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning and Web-Based Courses developed by the CBHE staff and the Committee on Technology and Instruction (CTI). These principles apply for asynchronous programs delivered in an Internet, website environment, through satellite transmission or via distribution of audiovisual and/or print material.

Principles of Good Practice for Distance-Learning/Web-Based Courses

When providing courses and programs through distance-learning methods, institutions should establish standards and encourage academic integrity equivalent to those expected of courses offered in a traditional, campus-based environment. These Principles of Good Practice, adapted from the 1999 Guidelines for Distance Education by the North Central Association Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NCA), are suggested as a guide for Missouri institutions as they develop and implement courses for, and assess their involvement in, distance education and web-based course delivery.

The intent of these principles is to encourage reflection on quality and best practices, as faculty and institutions negotiate the rapidly changing and sometimes unfamiliar territory that such courses inherently have. Institutions are encouraged to operationalize these principles in locally directed ways that result in meaningful steps toward ensuring high quality.

1. Distance-learning courses and programs, including web-based courses, should maintain high academic integrity.
   - Institutions should ensure both the rigor of courses and the quality of instruction.
   - Institutions should ensure that the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of each course.
   - Institutions should ensure the currency of materials, programs, and courses.
   - Each institution's distance education policies regarding ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products should be clear and in writing.
   - Institutions should provide appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance education.
   - Institutions should provide appropriate technological and pedagogical training for faculty who teach distance education courses/web-based courses.
   - Faculty should engage in timely and adequate interaction with students and, when appropriate, should encourage interaction among students.
   - Institutions should ensure that distance-learning courses and web-based courses apply toward degrees and that there is sufficient explanation to the distance learner as to how those courses apply toward degrees.

1. Distance-learning and web-based courses and programs should be assessed and evaluated regularly.
   - Institutions should assess student capability to succeed in distance education programs and should apply this information to admission and recruiting policies and decisions.
   - Institutions should evaluate the educational effectiveness of their distance education programs and web-based courses (including assessments of student-learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction) to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.
   - Institutions should ensure that the performance of distance-learning faculty and faculty involved in providing web-based courses is evaluated in a fashion that is at least as rigorous as that used to evaluate the performance of their peers who do not teach distance-learning courses.
   - Institutions should ensure, to a reasonable extent, the integrity of student work.

1. Institutions involved in distance education and web-based instruction should ensure that students have access to adequate resources and services.
   - Institutions should have access to the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education.
   - Institutions should ensure that students have access to, and can effectively use, appropriate library resources (through traditional and electronic means), including MOBIUS, a consortium of Missouri's academic libraries.
   - Institutions should monitor whether students make appropriate use of learning resources.
- Institutions should provide laboratories, facilities, equipment, and software appropriate to the courses or programs and/or make clear to students the responsibilities they have to provide their own such equipment.
- Institutions should provide adequate access to a range of student services appropriate to support distance-learning courses and programs, including (but not limited to) admissions, enrollment, assessment, tutorials, special needs access, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, placement, and counseling.
- Institutions should provide an adequate means for resolving student complaints.
- Institutions should provide students with information that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available.
- Institutions should ensure that students enrolled in courses possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the program and should provide aid to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology.

**Review Process for Program Changes**

A change in an academic program needs to be submitted to the Coordinating Board for both informational and review purposes. After considering the requested changes, the Commissioner may determine that the program change should be submitted instead as a new program proposal. Program changes should be reported using the "Request Program Changes" form. Please complete Form PC. Program changes that should be submitted include the following:

**Program Title Change:** All revisions or changes in the name of a program or its nomenclature shall be reported to the CBHE. A title or nomenclature revision that includes substantive curriculum changes may be deemed tantamount to a new program and may be referred back to the institution for resubmission as a new program.

**Combination Programs:** This category includes only those programs that result from a mechanical combination of two previously existing programs. Substantive curricular changes shall ordinarily be limited to the elimination of duplicated requirements. The development of interdisciplinary programs and area-study programs that use the resources of several existing programs needs to be handled through the new program approval process.

**Single-Semester Certificates:** Given the limited scope of this type of program, a single-semester certificate may be added or deleted simply by using the "Request for Program Change" form. The establishment of a longer program, however, should be pursued through the "Review Process for New Programs."

**One-Year Certificate Programs:** A one-year certificate program developed from an approved program can be reported as a program change provided the program is directly related to an approved degree program and consists predominantly of courses included in the approved parent degree program. A one-year certificate not associated with an approved parent degree program should be submitted as a new program.

**Option Addition:** The addition of a specialized course of study as a component of an umbrella degree program may be submitted as an option-addition program change, subject to the limitation that the Commissioner shall make a determination regarding the potential for unnecessary or inappropriate duplication of existing programs. Only in those instances in which duplication is not a problem, may the proposed option be implemented. The following general guidelines are used to distinguish a permissible option addition from a proposed new degree program.

An option (or emphasis area) functions as a component of an umbrella degree program. As such, an option in a specialized topic shall consist of a core area of study in the major plus selected topical courses in the specialty. Although typically, the core area of study shall constitute a preponderance of the requirements in the major area of study, especially at the baccalaureate level or below, as measured by the number of required courses or credit hours, no specific percentage distribution requirement has been established.

A. A proposed option (or emphasis area) shall be a logical component or extension of the umbrella degree program. One measure of this compatibility—but certainly not the only one—would be the consonance of the proposed addition with the federal CIP taxonomy. For example, in physics, while
Best Practices
For
 Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs
(2001)

Introduction

These Best Practices have been developed by the eight regional accrediting commissions in response to the emergence of technologically mediated instruction offered at a distance as an important component of higher education. Expressing in detail what currently constitutes best practice in distance education they seek to address concerns that regional accreditation standards are not relevant to the new distributed learning environments, especially when those environments are experienced by off-campus students. The Best Practices, however, are not new evaluative criteria. Rather they explicate how the well-established essentials of institutional quality found in regional accreditation standards are applicable to the emergent forms of learning; much of the detail of their content would find application in any learning environment. Taken together those essentials reflect the values which the regional commissions foster among their affiliated colleges and universities:

- that education is best experienced within a community of learning where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing, and improving the instructional program;
- that learning is dynamic and interactive, regardless of the setting in which it occurs;
- that instructional programs leading to degrees having integrity are organized around substantive and coherent curricula which define expected learning outcomes;
- that institutions accept the obligation to address student needs related to, and to provide the resources necessary for, their academic success;
- that institutions are responsible for the education provided in their name;
- that institutions undertake the assessment and improvement of their quality, giving particular emphasis to student learning;
- that institutions voluntarily subject themselves to peer review.

These Best Practices are meant to assist institutions in planning distance education activities and to provide a self-assessment framework for those already involved. For the regional accrediting associations they constitute a common understanding of those elements which reflect quality distance education programming. As such they are intended to inform and facilitate the evaluation policies and processes of each region.

Developed to reflect current best practice in electronically offered programming, these Best Practices were initially drafted by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (www.wiche.edu/telecom/), an organization recognized for its substantial expertise in this field. Given the rapid pace of change in distance education, these Best Practices are necessarily a work in progress. They will be subject to periodic review by the regionals, individually and collectively, who welcome comments and suggestions for their improvement.
Overview to the Best Practices

These Best Practices are divided into five separate components, each of which addresses a particular area of institutional activity relevant to distance education. They are:

1. Institutional Context and Commitment
2. Curriculum and Instruction
3. Faculty Support
4. Student Support
5. Evaluation and Assessment

Each component begins with a general statement followed by individual numbered paragraphs addressing specific matters describing those elements essential to quality distance education programming. These in turn are followed by protocols in the form of questions designed to assist in determining the existence of those elements when reviewing either internally or externally distance education activities.
The Best Practices and Protocols

1. Institutional Context and Commitment

Electronically offered programs both support and extend the roles of educational institutions. Increasingly they are integral to academic organization, with growing implications for institutional infrastructure.

1a. In its content, purposes, organization, and enrollment history if applicable, the program is consistent with the institution's role and mission.

- What is the evidence that the program is consistent with the role and mission of the institution including its goals with regard to student access?
- Is the institution fulfilling its stated role as it offers the program to students at a distance, or is the role being changed?

1b. It is recognized that a healthy institution's purposes change over time. The institution is aware of accreditation requirements and complies with them. Each accrediting commission has established definitions of what activities constitute a substantive change that will trigger prior review and approval processes. The appropriate accreditation commission should be notified and consulted whether an electronically offered program represents a major change. The offering of distributed programs can affect the institution's educational goals, intended student population, curriculum, modes or venue of instruction, and can thus have an impact on both the institution and its accreditation status.

- Does the program represent a change to the institution's stated mission and objectives?
- Does the program take the college or university beyond its "institutional boundaries," e.g., students to be served, geographic service area, locus of instruction, curriculum to be offered, or comparable formally stated definitions of institutional purpose?
- Is the change truly significant?

1c. The institution's budgets and policy statements reflect its commitment to the students for whom its electronically offered programs are designed.

- How is the student assured that the program will be sustained long enough for the cohort to complete it?
- How are electronically offered programs included in the institution's overall budget structure?
- What are the institution's policies concerning the establishment, organization, funding, and management of electronically offered programs? Do they reflect ongoing commitment to such programs? (See also item 1e below.)
1d. The institution assures adequacy of technical and physical plant facilities including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support its electronically offered programs.

- Do technical and physical plant facilities accommodate the curricular commitments reviewed below, e.g., instructor and student interaction (2e), and appropriateness to the curriculum (2a)?
- Whether facilities are provided directly by the institution or through contractual arrangements, what are the provisions for reliability, privacy, safety and security?
- Does the institution's budget plan provide for appropriate updating of the technologies employed?
- Is the staffing structure appropriate (and fully qualified) to support the programs now operational and envisioned in the near term?

1e. The internal organizational structure which enables the development, coordination, support, and oversight of electronically offered programs will vary from institution to institution. Ordinarily, however, this will include the capability to:

- Facilitate the associated instructional and technical support relationships.
- Provide (or draw upon) the required information technologies and related support services.
- Develop and implement a marketing plan that takes into account the target student population, the technologies available, and the factors required to meet institutional goals.
- Provide training and support to participating instructors and students.
- Assure compliance with copyright law.
- Contract for products and outsourced services.
- Assess and assign priorities to potential future projects.
- Assure that electronically offered programs and courses meet institution-wide standards, both to provide consistent quality and to provide a coherent framework for students who may enroll in both electronically offered and traditional on-campus courses.
- Maintain appropriate academic oversight.
- Maintain consistency with the institution’s academic planning and oversight functions, to assure congruence with the institution’s mission and allocation of required resources.
- Assure the integrity of student work and faculty instruction.

Organizational structure varies greatly, but it is fundamental to the success of an institution’s programs. The points above can be evaluated by variations of the following procedure and inquiries:

- Is there a clear, well-understood process by which an electronically offered program evolves from conception to administrative authorization to implementation? How is the need for the program determined? How is it assigned a priority among the other potential programs? Has the development of the program incorporated appropriate internal consultation and integration with existing planning efforts?
• Track the history of a representative project from idea through implementation, noting the links among the participants including those responsible for curriculum, those responsible for deciding to offer the program electronically, those responsible for program/course design, those responsible for the technologies applied, those responsible for faculty and student support, those responsible for marketing, those responsible for legal issues, those responsible for budgeting, those responsible for administrative and student services, and those responsible for program evaluation. Does this review reveal a coherent set of relationships?
• In the institution’s organizational documentation, is there a clear and integral relationship between those responsible for electronically offered programs and the mainstream academic structure?
• How is the organizational structure reflected in the institution’s overall budget?
• How are the integrity, reliability, and security of outsourced services assured?
• Are training and technical support programs considered adequate by those for whom they are intended?
• What are the policies and procedures concerning compliance with copyright law?
• How does program evaluation relate to this organizational and decision-making structure?

1f. In its articulation and transfer policies the institution judges courses and programs on their learning outcomes, and the resources brought to bear for their achievement, not on modes of delivery.

• What are the institution’s policies concerning articulation and transfer? What are decisions regarding transfer of academic credit based upon?
• Is the institution internally consistent in its handling of articulation and transfer issues, or do different divisions have different policies and procedures?

1g. The institution strives to assure a consistent and coherent technical framework for students and faculty. When a change in technologies is necessary, it is introduced in a way that minimizes the impact on students and faculty.

• When a student or instructor proceeds from one course or program to another, is it necessary to learn another software program or set of technical procedures?
• When new software or systems are adopted, what programs/processes are used to acquaint instructors and students with them?

1h. The institution provides students with reasonable technical support for each educational technology hardware, software, and delivery system required in a program.

• Is a help desk function realistically available to students during hours when it is likely to be needed?
• Is help available for all hardware, software, and delivery systems specified by the institution as required for the program?
• Does the help desk involve person-to-person contact for the student? By what means, e.g., email, phone, fax?
• Is there a well-designed FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) service, online and/or by phone menu or on-demand fax?
1i. The selection of technologies is based on appropriateness for the students and the curriculum. It is recognized that availability, cost, and other issues are often involved, but program documentation should include specific consideration of the match between technology and program.

- How were the technologies chosen for this institution’s programs?
- Are the technologies judged to be appropriate (or inappropriate) to the program(s) in which they are used?
- Are the intended students likely to find their technology costs reasonable?
- What provisions have been made to assure a robust and secure technical infrastructure, providing maximum reliability for students and faculty?
- Given the rapid pace of change in modern information technology, what policies or procedures are in place to keep the infrastructure reasonably up-to-date?

1j. The institution seeks to understand the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates, e.g., requirements for service to those with disabilities, copyright law, state and national requirements for institutions offering educational programs, international restrictions such as export of sensitive information or technologies, etc.

- Does institutional documentation indicate an awareness of these requirements and that it has made an appropriate response to them?

2. Curriculum and Instruction

Methods change, but standards of quality endure. The important issues are not technical but curriculum-driven and pedagogical. Decisions about such matters are made by qualified professionals and focus on learning outcomes for an increasingly diverse student population.

2a. As with all curriculum development and review, the institution assures that each program of study results in collegiate level learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded by the institution, that the electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete, and that such programs leading to undergraduate degrees include general education requirements.
- What process resulted in the decision to offer the program?
- By what process was the program developed? Were academically qualified persons responsible for curricular decisions?
- How were "learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded" established? Does the program design involve the demonstration of such skills as analysis, comprehension, communication, and effective research?
- Is the program "coherent and complete?"
- Are related instructional materials appropriate and readily accessible to students?

**2b.** Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions concerning program curricula and program oversight. It is recognized that traditional faculty roles may be unbundled and/or supplemented as electronically offered programs are developed and presented, but the substance of the program, including its presentation, management, and assessment are the responsibility of people with appropriate academic qualifications.

- What were the academic qualifications of those responsible for curricular decisions, assessment, and program oversight?
- What are the academic qualifications of those presenting and managing the program?
- If the principal instructor is assisted by tutors or student mentors, what are their qualifications?
- Are these qualifications considered appropriate to the responsibilities of these persons?

**2c.** In designing an electronically offered degree or certificate program, the institution provides a coherent plan for the student to access all courses necessary to complete the program, or clearly notifies students of requirements not included in the electronic offering. Hybrid programs or courses, mixing electronic and on-campus elements, are designed to assure that all students have access to appropriate services. (See also 2d below, concerning program elements from consortia or contract services.)

- How are students notified of program requirements?
- If the institution relies on other providers to offer program-related courses, what is the process by which students learn of these courses?
- Is the total program realistically available to students for whom it is intended? For example, is the chosen technology likely to be accessible by the target student population? Can target students meet the parameters of program scheduling?
2d. Although important elements of a program may be supplied by consortial partners or outsourced to other organizations, including contractors who may not be accredited, the responsibility for performance remains with the institution awarding the degree or certificate. It is the institution in which the student is enrolled, not its suppliers or partners, that has a contract with the student. Therefore, the criteria for selecting consortial partners and contractors, and the means to monitor and evaluate their work, are important aspects of the program plan. In considering consortial agreements, attention is given to issues such as assuring that enhancing service to students is a primary consideration and that incentives do not compromise the integrity of the institution or of the educational program. Consideration is also given to the effect of administrative arrangements and cost-sharing on an institution’s decision-making regarding curriculum.

Current examples of consortial and contractual relationships include:

✦ Faculty qualifications and support.
✦ Course material:
  - Courses or course elements acquired or licensed from other institutions.
  - Courses or course elements provided by partner institutions in a consortium.
  - Curricular elements from recognized industry sources, e.g., Microsoft or Novell certification programs.
  - Commercially produced course materials ranging from textbooks to packaged courses or course elements.
✦ Course management and delivery:
  - WebCT, Blackboard, College, etc.
✦ Library-related services:
  - Remote access to library services, resources, and policies.
  - Provision of library resources and services, e.g., online reference services, document delivery, print resources, etc.
✦ Bookstore services.
✦ Services providing information to students concerning the institution and its programs and courses.
✦ Technical services:
  - Server capacity.
  - Technical support services, including help desk services for students and faculty.
✦ Administrative services:
  - Registration, student records, etc.
✦ Services related to orientation, advising, counseling, or tutoring.
✦ Online payment arrangements.
✦ Student privacy considerations.
Evaluation of contract services and consortial arrangements requires a review of pertinent formal agreements. Note, for example:

- Are performance expectations defined in contracts and agreements? Are conditions for contract termination defined?
- Are there adequate quality control and curriculum oversight provisions in agreements concerning courseware?
- Are there appropriate system reliability and emergency backup guarantees in agreements concerning technology services?
- What are the provisions for protection of confidentiality and privacy in services involving personal information?
- What are the assurances concerning qualifications and training of persons involved in contact with students? These services may range from help desk to tutoring or counseling.
- Consortial agreements introduce additional elements to be evaluated:
  - How are curriculum-related decisions made by the consortium, noting the requirement that "Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions regarding program curricula and
    - Is the institution fully engaged in the consortial process, recognizing the decision-making responsibilities of shared ownership?
    - What are the financial arrangements among the parties to the consortial agreement? What are the implications of these arrangements for institutional participation and management?
    - What entity awards the certificates and degrees resulting from the consortial program?
    - What articulation and transfer arrangements are applicable to courses offered via the consortium? Did these arrangements involve specific curricular decisions by the academic structures of the participating institutions? Were they prescribed in a state or system decision?
    - To what extent are the administrative and student services arrangements of the consortium focused on the practical requirements of the student?

2e. The importance of appropriate interaction (synchronous or asynchronous) between instructor and students and among students is reflected in the design of the program and its courses, and in the technical facilities and services provided.

- What provisions for instructor-student and student-student interaction are included in the program/course design and the course syllabus? How is appropriate interaction assured?
- Is instructor response to student assignments timely? Does it appear to be appropriately responsive?
- What technologies are used for program interaction (e.g., email, telephone office hours, phone conferences, voicemail, fax, chat rooms, Web-based discussions, computer conferences and threaded discussions, etc.)?
- How successful is the program's interactive component, as indicated by student and instructor surveys, comments, or other measures?
3. Faculty Support

As indicated above, faculty roles are becoming increasingly diverse and reorganized. For example, the same person may not perform both the tasks of course development and direct instruction to students. Regardless of who performs which of these tasks, important issues are involved.

3a. In the development of an electronically offered program, the institution and its participating faculty have considered issues of workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property resulting from the program, and the implications of program participation for the faculty member’s professional evaluation processes. This mutual understanding is based on policies and agreements adopted by the parties.

- Have decisions regarding these matters been made in accordance with institutional or system processes customarily used to address comparable issues?

3b. The institution provides an ongoing program of appropriate technical, design, and production support for participating faculty members.

- What support services are available to those responsible for preparing courses or programs to be offered electronically? What support services are available to those faculty members responsible for working directly with students?
- Do participating faculty members consider these services to be appropriate and adequate?
- Does the staff include qualified instructional designers? If so, do they have an appropriate role in program and course development?

3c. The institution provides to those responsible for program development the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the program's technologies, including potential changes in course design and management.

- What orientation and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for ongoing professional development?
- Is adequate attention paid to pedagogical changes made possible and desirable when information technologies are employed?
- Given the staff available to support electronically offered programs, are the potential changes in course design and management realistically feasible?
- Do those involved consider these orientation and training programs to be appropriate and adequate?
3d. The institution provides to those responsible for working directly with students the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the technologies for these purposes, including strategies for effective interaction.

- What orientation and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for ongoing professional development? Do those involved consider these orientation and training programs to be appropriate and adequate?

4. Student Support

Colleges and universities have learned that the twenty-first century student is different, both demographically and geographically, from students of previous generations. These differences affect everything from admissions policy to library services. Reaching these students, and serving them appropriately, are major challenges to today’s institutions.

4a. The institution has a commitment – administrative, financial, and technical – to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable all admitted students to complete a degree or certificate in a publicized timeframe.

- Do course and program schedules reflect an appropriate commitment to the program’s students?
- Do budget, faculty, and facilities assignments support that commitment?

4b. Prior to admitting a student to the program, the institution:

- Ascertain by a review of pertinent records and/or personal review that the student is qualified by prior education or equivalent experience to be admitted to that program, including in the case of international students, English language skills.
- Informs the prospective student concerning required access to technologies used in the program.
- Informs the prospective student concerning technical competence required of students in the program.
- Informs the prospective student concerning estimated or average program costs (including costs of information access) and associated payment and refund policies.
- Informs the prospective student concerning curriculum design and the time frame in which courses are offered, and assists the student in understanding the nature of the learning objectives.
4b. continued

- Informs the prospective student of library and other learning services available to support learning and the skills necessary to access them.
- Informs the prospective student concerning the full array of other support services available from the institution.
- Informs the prospective student about arrangements for interaction with the faculty and fellow students.
- Assists the prospective student in understanding independent learning expectations as well as the nature and potential challenges of learning in the program’s technology-based environment.
- Informs the prospective student about the estimated time for program completion.

To evaluate this important component of admission and retention, it is appropriate to pursue the following:

- How do potential students learn about the electronically offered program? Is the information provided sufficient, fair, and accurate?
- How are students informed about technology requirements and required technical competence?
- How are students informed about costs and administrative arrangements?
- What information and/or advice do students receive about the nature of learning and the personal discipline required in an anytime/anywhere environment?
- What criteria are used to determine the student’s eligibility for admission to the program?
- What steps are taken to retain students in the program?
- What is the history of student retention in this program?

4c. The institution recognizes that appropriate services must be available for students of electronically offered programs, using the working assumption that these students will not be physically present on campus. With variations for specific situations and programs, these services, which are possibly coordinated, may include:

- Accurate and timely information about the institution, its programs, courses, costs, and related policies and requirements.
- Pre-registration advising.
- Application for admission.
- Placement testing.
- Enrollment/registration in programs and courses.
- Financial aid, including information about policies and limitations, information about available scholarships, processing of applications, and administration of financial aid and scholarship awards.
4c. continued

- Secure payment arrangements.
- Academic advising.
- Timely intervention regarding student progress.
- Tutoring.
- Career counseling and placement.
- Academic progress information, such as degree completion audits.
- Library resources appropriate to the program, including, reference and research assistance; remote access to databases, online journals and full-text resources; document delivery services; library user and information literacy instruction, reserve materials; and institutional agreements with local libraries.
- Training in information literacy including research techniques.
- Bookstore services: ordering, secure payment, and prompt delivery of books, course packs, course-related supplies and materials, and institutional memorabilia.
- Ongoing technical support, preferably offered during evenings and weekends as well as normal institutional working hours.
- Referrals for student learning differences, physical challenges, and personal counseling.
- Access to grievance procedures.

Within the context of the program, the requirements of the program’s students, and the type of institution, review each of the services and procedures listed above from the standpoint of a student for whom access to the campus is not feasible.

- Are the institution’s policies and procedures appropriate and adequate from the standpoint of the distant student?
- If not all appropriate resources are routinely available at a distance, what arrangements has the institution made to provide them to distant students?
- Are these services perceived by distant students to be adequate and appropriate?
- Are these services perceived to be adequate and appropriate by those responsible for providing them? What modifications or improvements are planned?
4d. The institution recognizes that a sense of community is important to the success of many students, and that an ongoing, long-term relationship is beneficial to both student and institution. The design and administration of the program takes this factor into account as appropriate, through such actions as encouraging study groups, providing student directories (with the permission of those listed), including off-campus students in institutional publications and events, including these students in definitions of the academic community through such mechanisms as student government representation, invitations to campus events including graduation ceremonies, and similar strategies of inclusion.

- What strategies and practices are implemented by this institution to involve distant students as part of an academic community? By their statements and actions, do administrators and participating faculty members communicate a belief that a sense of academic community is important?
- How are the learning needs of students enrolled in electronically offered programs identified, addressed, and linked to educational objectives and learning outcomes, particularly within the context of the institution’s definition of itself as a learning community?
- Do representative students feel that they are part of a community, or that they are entirely on their own?

5. Evaluation and Assessment

Both the assessment of student achievement and evaluation of the overall program take on added importance as new techniques evolve. For example, in asynchronous programs the element of seat time is essentially removed from the equation. For these reasons, the institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry as to whether distance learning programs are achieving objectives. The results of such inquiry are used to guide curriculum design and delivery, pedagogy, and educational processes, and may affect future policy and budgets and perhaps have implications for the institution’s roles and mission.

5a. As a component of the institution’s overall assessment activities, documented assessment of student achievement is conducted in each course and at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcomes.

- How does the institution review the effectiveness of its distance education programs to assure alignment with institutional priorities and educational objectives?
- How does evaluated student performance compare to intended learning outcomes?
- How is student performance evaluated?
- How are assessment activities related to distance learning integrated into the institution’s broader program of assessment?
5b. When examinations are employed (paper, online, demonstrations of competency, etc.), they take place in circumstances that include firm student identification. The institution otherwise seeks to assure the integrity of student work.

- If proctoring is used, what are the procedures for selecting proctors, establishing student identity, assuring security of test instruments, administering the examinations, and assuring secure and prompt evaluation?
- If other methods are used to identify those who take the examination, how is identification firmly established? How are the conditions of the examination (security, time limits, etc.) controlled?
- Does the institution have in place effective policies and procedures to assure the integrity of student work?

5c. Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.

- What procedures assure the security of personal information?
- How is personal information protected while providing appropriate dissemination of the evaluation results?

5d. Overall program effectiveness is determined by such measures as:

- The extent to which student learning matches intended outcomes, including for degree programs both the goals of general education and the objectives of the major.
- The extent to which student intent is met.
- Student retention rates, including variations over time.
- Student satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys.
- Faculty satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys and by formal and informal peer review processes.
- The extent to which access is provided to students not previously served.
- Measures of the extent to which library and learning resources are used appropriately by the program’s students.
- Measures of student competence in fundamental skills such as communication, comprehension, and analysis.
- Cost effectiveness of the program to its students, as compared to campus-based alternatives.
Although not all of these measures will be applicable equally at every institution, appropriate evidence is generally available through:

- Evaluations of student performance (see 5a above).
- Review of student work and archive of student activities, if maintained, in the course of program reviews.
- Results from students’ routine end-of-course and -program evaluations.
- Student surveys of overall satisfaction with the experience of electronically offered programs; surveys reflecting student cost trade-offs experienced as they pursued the program.
- Faculty surveys, peer reviews of programs, and discussion groups.
- Documentation concerning access provided to students not previously served, through a combination of enrollment records and student surveys.
- Usage records concerning use of library and learning resources, and instructor assignments that require such usage.
- Assessment of students’ fundamental skills in communication, comprehension, and analysis. How have the institution’s usual measures of these skills been adapted to assess distant students?
- Documentation of the institution’s analyses that relate costs to goals of the program.

5e. The institution conducts a program of continual self-evaluation directed toward program improvement, targeting more effective uses of technology to improve pedagogy, advances in student achievement of intended outcomes, improved retention rates, effective use of resources, and demonstrated improvements in the institution’s service to its internal and external constituencies. The program and its results are reflected in the institution’s ongoing self-evaluation process and are used to inform the further plans of the institution and those responsible for its academic programs.

- How is the institution’s ongoing program of assessment and improvement developed and conducted?
- Does it cover the essential categories of improved learning outcomes, retention, use of resources, and service to core constituencies?
- Does the program appropriately involve academically qualified persons?
- What are the institution’s mechanisms for review and revision of existing programs and courses?
- How does program evaluation affect institutional planning?
- What constituencies are actively involved in the ongoing process of planning for improvement?
- Has the process had measurable results to date?

5f. Institutional evaluation of electronically offered programs takes place in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programs.

- What are the administrative and procedural links between the evaluation of electronically offered programs and the ongoing evaluation of all academic programs?
- How are the respective characteristics of campus-based and electronically offered programs taken into account?
July 14, 2011

TO: President Troy Paino,
Truman State University

FROM: Joyce Gardner, Accreditation Services

SUBJECT: Final Team Report

Enclosed is the institution’s copy of the final Team Report of a visit to Truman State University. The Commission encourages you to make additional copies of the Team Report to circulate to your constituencies. In addition, I have attached draft copies of the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) and the Organizational Profile (OP). These two documents, the SAS and the OP, will be posted on the Commission website after the accreditation decision of the Institutional Actions Council or the Review Committee. They are enclosed now for your information and for your review. You will receive an official action letter, an SAS and an OP following the Institutional Actions Council.

You are asked to acknowledge receipt of the Team Report and the SAS and OP worksheets; and to file on behalf of your institution, a formal written response to the evaluation team's report and recommendation. Your response becomes a part of the official record of the evaluation visit. Your response also serves as an integral part of the evaluation process, and it will be included in the materials sent to the next team that visits your institution. Please send your institutional response to the Commission two weeks after you receive this report, send copies to members of the visiting team, and set aside some additional copies for the Commission’s review process. (See Handbook of Accreditation, Third Edition, Chapter 2.2-2) Please address your institutional response to your staff liaison and email it to Sharon Ulmer, Process Administrator, Accreditation Services (sulmer@hlcommission.org).

In your response, you are also asked to let the Commission know which review option you prefer: the Readers Panel or the Review Committee. A description of these processes appears in the Handbook, Chapter 2.2-2. Please review these options and advise the Commission as soon as possible, whether you agree essentially with the team's report and recommendation and therefore choose the Readers Panel, or whether you wish to have the team's report and your materials examined by a Review Committee. The next Review Committee meeting is September 12, 2011, in Chicago.

If you have any questions concerning the evaluation team’s report, the SAS, the OP or the review options, please write or call Robert R. Appleson, your staff liaison.

Enclosures

cc: Gayle A. Kearns, Team Chairperson
REPORT OF A
COMMISSION-MANDATED FOCUSED VISIT

Assurance Section

TO
Truman State University
Kirksville, MO
April 18-19, 2011

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM
Gayle A. Kearns, Associate Dean, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK 73034
(Chairperson)

Marius Boboc, Director of Assessment, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH
44115
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I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

On April 18-19, a two-person team visited Truman State University, Kirksville, MO, to conduct a focused visit which was requested by the institution to review their request to offer the post-baccalaureate certificate programs in Managerial Foundations, Ada Programming, Computer Security and Sustainability and Environmental Studies in a fully online format. The post-baccalaureate certificate programs consist of four 3-hour courses in each discipline area.

Specific planning information for the change request and curricula for the certificate program was provided. The team members reviewed the following accreditation report from the comprehensive visit in January 2005.

This is a substantial change in scope or level of distance education for this institution—from Level 0 to Level 1. If this change request is approved, the institution will be required to apply for substantive change requests in the future to add new online programs.

B. Accreditation Status

Truman State University was founded in 1867 as North Missouri School and Commercial College. In 1919 the college was renamed Northeast Missouri State Teachers College until 1967 when “teachers” was removed from the title. In 1972 the Missouri legislature authorized the school to substitute “university” for “college”. In 1985 former Governor John Ashcroft signed legislation that designated the University as Missouri’s only statewide public liberal arts and sciences university, expanding its mission from a regional to a statewide institution. Finally, in 1995 coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the mission change to a statewide university, Governor Mel Carnahan signed legislation that changed the University’s name from Northeast Missouri State University to Truman State University.

Truman State University has continually ranked as the number one master’s level public institution in the Midwest in U.S. News & World Report.
During the last comprehensive visit in 2005, Truman was given a 10 year reaccreditation status.

C. Organizational Context

According to the Substantive Change Application for Distance Delivery submitted by Truman in March 2011, there are three main factors that define the organizational context for the request, as follows: a) “interest in public-private partnerships in workforce development;” b) “outreach to Truman alumni;” and c) “new revenue streams.” As a relevant example along these lines, Truman was approached by Boeing Corporation in 2009 with an invitation to join its Learning Together Partnership. Consequently, the certificate programs were developed as a way to meet the needs of Boeing Corporation, while offering the potential to expand to the needs of other corporate partners in the State of Missouri. The distance education delivery mode was chosen due to the characteristics of the target audience—full-time employees at Boeing Corporation who could not complete the certificate program in the traditional fashion (by taking face-to-face classes on the Truman campus). At the same time, Truman’s enrollment management strategy has identified the potential for an increase of graduate enrollment, which, coupled with less state financial support, could relate to greater interest in online courses.

D. Unique Aspects of Visit

None

E. Interactions with Organizational Constituencies

The site team met with the following organizational constituencies:

- President Troy Paino
- Interim Provost Richard Coughlin
- Nancy Asher, Director of Testing and Assessment
- Michael Blum, Professor of Organizational Behavior
- Michael Kelrick, Professor of Biology, Director of Interdisciplinary Studies
- Donna Liss, Chief Information Officer
- Kevin Minch, Director of the Truman Institute
- Andrew Mun, Professor of Financial Management
- John Nitzke, Professor of Computer Science
- Diane Richmond, Director of Learning Technologies
- Karen Smith, Chair of the Assessment Committee
- Susan Thomas, Instructional Designer

April 18-19, 2010
- Small group of Truman undergraduate students with online learning experience

F. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

The site team had access to the following print documents:

- Distance delivery application
- Planned certificate courses
- Prior program review documents (pre-dating current HLC forms)
- Program information for students
- Transfer and articulation information
- Graduate certificate policies
- Student services
- Student guides for online learning
- Assessment instruments
- Instructor resources and training
- Implementation calendar
- Organizational profile
- Evaluation Summary Sheet (ESS)
- Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS)
- Affirming the promise: A bridge to a third decade of excellence in the liberal arts FY 2008-2010 (University Strategic Plan)
- Report of a comprehensive evaluation visit to Truman State University, Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 2005

Additionally, the site team was able to visit the following Truman Web sites related to the focus of the visit:

- Academic Advising (http://csi.truman.edu/handbook/advising.asp)
- Academic Integrity (http://conduct.truman.edu/docs/AcademicIntegrity.pdf)
- Academic Structure (http://provost.truman.edu/divisions.asp)
- Academic Support Services (http://advising.truman.edu/CurrentStudents/AcademicSupportServices.asp)
- Accreditation (http://catalog.truman.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=7#Accr)
- Admissions (http://admissions.truman.edu/)
- Alumni Association (http://alumni.truman.edu/AlumniAssociation.asp)
- Alumni Relations Office (http://alumni.truman.edu/)
- Assessment and Testing Office (http://testing.truman.edu/)
- Assessment Information (http://assessment.truman.edu/)
- Blackboard (https://bb-learn.truman.edu/)
- Blackboard Support for Faculty (http://itct1.truman.edu/facultySupport/services/blackboard.asp)
II. AREA(S) OF FOCUS

A. Statement of Focus – To review request to offer the post-baccalaureate certificate programs in Managerial Foundations, Ada Programming, Computer Security and Sustainability and Environmental Studies in a fully online format

B. Statements of Evidence

A1. Truman State University’s mission statement includes language that furthers the development of distance education opportunities to not only local areas but also to the regional and multi-state areas for the university which includes the goal of access by expanding distance education offerings to students in the State of Illinois and possibly throughout the United States.

A2. The addition of these four (4) certificate programs has been strategically aligned with the mission of the university and the newly formed Truman Institute. Faculty have bought into converting face-to-face courses within degree programs to professional certificate programs to reach professionals who want and need this additional professional education.
A3. Through discussions and examination of documents there is evidence that institutional values permeate through traditionally delivered course and online courses. Online education fulfills the mission of the Truman Institute by extending the values-centered education to working adults anytime and anywhere and focuses on developing leaders who are socially responsible and ethically motivated.

A4. Based on an examination of the Truman library databases, the team verifies that the library’s resources and services support student learning and effective teaching. The library resources and services are sufficient and the library is equipped to provide online students with resources to complete the certificate programs.

A5. The change request for distance delivery of the four (4) certificate programs is consistent with the role and mission of the institution and the Truman strategic plan as well as in conversations with the President, administrators, distance delivery faculty, and support staff verified that the members understood and supported the need to offer distance programs to serve learners in Missouri.

A6. Library resources have been converted to serve students at a distance with the purchase of all subscriptions in an online format and access to an online book collection. Truman contracts with SunGard Higher Ed to provide the management of IT Services. Services include, but are not limited to a student portal powered by Luminis (and locally dubbed "TruView"), an online LMS - Blackboard, 24/7 continuity, back-up, and technical support.

A7. Student support services are present including advising, career services, a Student Success Center, and writing tutors. With the anticipated increase in the number of students of color, an associate director of admissions and multicultural student affairs is prepared to monitor their academic progress and provide additional counseling and support.

A8. Undergraduate students currently taking classes in the distance learning courses were surveyed by the team, and the responses were favorable in all areas—pedagogical, technological support and ease of navigation of each course.

A9. After reviewing the organizational chart for Truman, the team suggests that the institution identify a “new home” for Instructional Design Services to ensure that
the unit staff has design consistency in online course preparation for current as well as future classes delivered in a distance education format.

A10. The team suggests that the role of the Truman Institute be clarified. In this light, the campus community should be informed of the various services provided by the Truman Institute as a way to support its entrepreneurial core designed to extend the University into the larger community surrounding it. At the same time, the Truman Institute leadership should be able to pursue a host of development opportunities engaging University assets.

A11. The team suggests that the institution consider appointing a Director of Distance Education who would be able to interface with internal constituents (such as Instructional Design Services and faculty members), as well as external constituents interested in University educational offerings. Additionally, the proposed structure should have adequate administrative support to manage.

A12. With an eye toward sustainability of distance education at Truman, the team suggests any further expansion should rely on quality assurance standards (such as the Quality Matters set applicable to online courses design). Moreover, faculty contributions should be supported and recognized as a way to build the critical mass of quality online instructors at Truman.

A13. The team also suggests that the institution streamline the entire experience students get by pursuing distance education opportunities at Truman, from application and enrollment to graduation. This implies effective collaboration among various units on campus responsible for the different aspects of the “Truman experience.”

2. **Evidence that demonstrates that further organizational attention is required**

B14. As the team reviewed the revised strategic plan, it was noted that the university lacks sufficient policies to govern the development, implementation and evaluation of distance education. The creation of such policies would involve the engagement of the entire campus and assist with refining the role and scope of Distance Education in the revised Strategic Plan, with clear financial allocation to ensure that the success of the development of online education is properly funded.

B15. With the lack of sufficient policy in place and as the institution moves toward implementing distance education as a modality for delivery of education and information, the team suggests that there be an engagement of faculty, administrators, and staff to identify and formalize appropriate policies to govern
the development, implementation, and evaluation of distance education at Truman.

B16. With the lack of sufficient policies to govern the development, implementation and evaluation of distance education and with the implementation of distance education, the team recommends the institution develop an assessment plan for the online delivery components of Truman’s academic endeavor by incorporating an adequate mix of direct and indirect measures of student learning. For instance, the use of employer surveys would provide the institution with data related to the degree to which distance education program graduates are able to perform at expected levels based on knowledge acquired and skills developed in the program.

3. Evidence that demonstrates that further organizational attention and Commission follow-up are required

None

C. Other Accreditation Issues [If applicable]

None

D. Recommendation of Team

A. Evidence sufficiently demonstrated. No Commission follow-up recommended

The team recognizes and commends Truman’s accomplishments in the preparation and planning for the distance delivery of the four (4) certificate programs at the post-baccalaureate level to help maintain and enhance quality education for adult learners in business and industry who would be unable to attend Truman face-to-face. The team recommends approval of the change request for the addition of four (4) certificate programs in: Managerial Foundations, Ada Programming, Computer Security, and Sustainability and Environmental Studies only.

E. Rationale for the Team Recommendation

Based on the meetings with a wide range of campus representatives, as well as the review of the print and online materials mentioned earlier, the site team has recommended granting Truman State University approval to offer fully online the proposed four graduate certificate programs. As Truman is in the initial stages of mounting a distance education program, the infrastructure and support systems are adequate for the scope of the proposal. It should also be noted that Truman has demonstrated responsiveness to community needs that required academic course
offerings. At the same time, faculty governance and academic rigor principles have been observed.

Truman State University is clearly on a Level I percentage bracket for the delivery of online courses. No programs have been approved in this format and if further expansion is anticipated, Truman must submit a substantive change request to the Higher Learning Commission.

III. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Summary of Commission Review

Year for next comprehensive evaluation: 2014-2015

B. Nature of Organization

1. Legal status – No Change

2. Degrees awarded – Addition of four post-baccalaureate certificate programs in an online format.

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. Stipulation on affiliation status – No change

2. Approval of degree sites – No change

3. Approval of distance education degree - NA

4. Reports required – None

5. Other visits scheduled – None

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

Year for next comprehensive evaluation – 2014-2015
REPORT OF A COMMISSION-MANDATED FOCUSED VISIT

Advancement Section

TO

Truman State University

Kirkville, MO

April 18-19, 2011

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Gayle A. Kearns, Associate Dean, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK
73034 (Chairperson)

Marius Boboc, Director of Assessment, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH
44115
I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

A. The institution has successfully developed four post-baccalaureate certificate programs to meet the goals of: interest in public-private partnerships in workforce development, outreach to Truman alumni and new revenue streams.

B. Truman is also particularly interested in the continuing education needs of its graduates, the overwhelming majority of whom are full-time employees in businesses some distance away from the university.

C. Truman students interviewed during the visit expressed complete satisfaction with the quality of instruction received in the content and delivery of online instruction. The students expressed their desire to have more offerings in the online format as options during the academic year, not just summer offerings.

D. The institution’s strategic plan supports the development of the online delivery system, and the newly formed Truman Institute has been identified as the academic unit to house and support this concept.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF TEAM

A. With the development of the post-baccalaureate certificate programs in a fully online format, the team feels that the institution must identify a “new home” for Instructional Design Services so that the unit staff has an identified and valid presence on campus that will ensure consistency in online course design for current as well as future classes delivered as distance education.

B. With the focus of the newly formed Truman Institute, the team recommends that the institution refine the role and scope of Distance Education in the revised Strategic Plan to ensure clarity of financial allocation and support.

C. For online or distance education to be successful, the institution must engage faculty, administrators, and staff in identifying and formalizing appropriate policies to govern the development, implementation, and evaluation of distance education.

D. As the institution formulates a distance education strategic plan, the team recommends the establishment of an assessment plan for the online delivery components by incorporating an adequate mix of direct and indirect measures of student learning. For instance, the use of employer surveys would provide the institution with data related to the
degree to which distance education program graduates are able to perform at expected levels based on knowledge acquired and skills developed in the program.

E. The team also recommends that the institution clarify the role of the Truman Institute as a focus on the "promotion of exciting new learning experiences that extend beyond the traditional borders of the University." In this light, the campus community should be informed of the various services provided by the Truman Institute as a way to support its entrepreneurial core designed to extend the University into the larger community surrounding it. At the same time, the Truman Institute leadership should be able to pursue a host of development opportunities engaging University assets.

F. The team recommends that the institution consider appointing a Director of Distance Education who would be able to interface with internal constituents, such as Instructional Design Services and faculty members, as well as external constituents interested in University educational offerings. Additionally, the proposed structure should have adequate administrative support to manage the expansion of distance education.

G. As the institution moves toward sustainability of distance education, any further expansion should rely on quality assurance standards (such as the Quality Matters set applicable to online courses design). Moreover, faculty contributions should be supported and recognized as a way to build the critical mass of quality online instructors at Truman State University.

H. The team also recommends that institution streamline the entire experience students get by pursuing distance education opportunities at Truman, from application and enrollment to graduation. This implies effective collaboration among various units on campus responsible for the different aspects of the "Truman experience."
Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

INSTITUTION and STATE: Truman State University, MO

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Institutional Change

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS): REFER TO CHANGE VISIT: Request to offer the Managerial Foundations Certificate (MFC) online. (d2.5)

DATES OF REVIEW: 4/18/11 - 4/19/11

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Public

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: no change

DEGREES AWARDED: B, M

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: no change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: None.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: no change

APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS: Prior Commission approval required.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: no change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES: New Commission policy on institutional change became effective July 1, 2010. Some aspects of the change processes affecting distance delivered courses and programs are still being finalized. This entry will be updated in early 2011 to reflect current policy. In the meantime, see the Commission's Web site for information on seeking approval of distance education courses and programs.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: no change (but see OP for changes)

REPORTS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: none

OTHER VISITS SCHEDULED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: none

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2004 - 2005

YEAR FOR NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2014 - 2015

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: no change
### ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Truman State University, MO  
**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Institutional Change  
___ No change to Organization Profile

#### Educational Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Distribution</th>
<th>Recommended Change (+ or -)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>48</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs leading to Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Off-Campus Activities

**In-State:**  
- **Present Activity:**  
  - Campuses: None  
  - Additional Locations: None  
  - Course Locations: 4

**Recommended Change:**

**Out-of-State:**  
- **Present Wording:**  
  - Campuses: None  
  - Additional Locations: None  
  - Course Locations: None

**Recommended Change:**

**Out-of-USA:**  
- **Present Wording:**  
  - Campuses: None  
  - Additional Locations: None  
  - Course Locations: None

**Recommended Change:**

#### Distance Education Programs:

**Present Offerings:**

None
Recommended Change:
(+ or -) + online delivery of graduate certificates in
Managerial Foundations
Ada Programming
Computer Security
Sustainability and Environmental Studies

Correspondence Education Programs:

Present Offerings:

None