

Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Policy on Approving Distance Education Programs

as Passed by ICHE on May 11, 2012

Students are increasingly embracing and seeking access to quality distance education certificate and degree programs. Several key, nationwide findings of the report *Going the Distance: Online Education in the United States, 2011* – a collaborative effort of the Babson Survey Research Group and the College Board – support this conclusion:

- Over 6.1 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2010 term, an increase of 560,000 students over the previous year and 4.5 million, or 280 percent, over fall 2002;
- The 10% growth rate for online enrollments far exceeds the 2% growth in the overall higher education student population;
- Fall 2010 online enrollment accounted for 31 percent of total enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions (in fall 2002, online enrollment accounted for ten percent of total enrollment); and
- Thirty-one percent of higher education students now take at least one course online.

In growing recognition of this reality, and consistent with the strategic agenda of *Reaching Higher, Achieving More*, the policy described below, which would be applied to action on certificate and degree programs proposed for delivery via distance education, is formulated with two intertwined objectives in mind: (1) containing instructional fees for students, especially undergraduates and (2) establishing as a deliberate goal for distance education, the realization of instructional productivity gains through the use of technology.

This policy takes effect for all new programs approved by the Commission after its May 2012 meeting. With the expectation that technology can reduce instructional costs, the Commission intends to revisit this policy in the future to consider potential modifications.

Fees for Distance Education Programs

1. As a general principle, the Commission urges institutions to offer distance education courses and degree programs at the lowest possible cost to Indiana residents, enabling students to graduate with minimal debt.

Undergraduate Programs

2. Instructional fees (tuition and technology fees) for Indiana residents enrolled in a program offered through distance education should be the same as or less than the instructional fees for Indiana residents enrolled in the same or similar program offered on-campus, unless higher fees can be justified based on the actual costs of the program and benefits to students.
3. Instructional fees (tuition and technology fees) for Indiana residents enrolled in a program offered through distance education should be lower than the instructional fees for non-Indiana residents enrolled in the same program offered through distance education.

Graduate Programs

4. Instructional fees (tuition and technology fees) for Indiana residents enrolled in a program offered through distance education should be lower than the instructional fees for non-Indiana residents enrolled in the same program offered through distance education.

Distance Education Programs Offered by Indiana University and Purdue University Regional Campuses

1. The Commission places priority on the approval of distance education degree programs that are commonly offered, can broaden access, can demonstrate cost savings, and are offered in collaboration with multiple regional campuses to avoid duplication of effort, where collaboration involves a coordinated strategy toward utilizing the distributed expertise of faculty, aligning curricula, scheduling course offerings, and providing academic and student support services.
2. Other distance education program proposals may be considered by the Commission, if the proposed program draws upon resources that are uniquely available to a regional campus, thus making it difficult or even impossible to offer in collaboration with other regional campuses, in which case the regional campus will be deemed to have a distinctive mission in that program area.
3. Distance education programs approved for regional campuses at or prior to the May 2012 Commission meeting, should be reviewed by Indiana University and Purdue University in the context of the expectation for collaboration described in policy component #1.