

# Distance Education: Opportunities and Constraints

U.S. Department of Education



# Overview

- ◆ The Context: Distance Education in 2001
- ◆ Statutory & Regulatory Limitations
- ◆ Distance Education Demonstration Program



# Context: Rapid Growth

- ◆ Large Number of Institutions Offer Courses
  - Half of all postsecondary institutions
  - Number of courses more than doubled in three years (95-98) from 25,730 to 54,470
  - Enrollments also doubled, reaching 1.6 million in 1998
  - 50% offer 15 or fewer
  - 23% offer 1-5



# Context: Rapid Growth

## ◆ Fewer Offer Degree Programs

- 10-12% offer full degree programs by DE
- Number of programs doubled from 95-98 from 690 degrees and 170 certificates to 1,190 degrees and 330 certificates

## ◆ All have high expectations



# Context: Anytime, Anywhere

## ◆ Asynchronous programs provide flexibility

- Time and place
- When they begin their work
- How many units of work they might wish to undertake
- How long it takes them to complete a given unit of work
- When they wish to take vacations or breaks



# Context:

## New Institutional Arrangements

- ◆ State-based Consortia
  - 35 states and growing
  - Marketing, cross registration, shared course development, specialized services
  - Home and host institution
- ◆ Joint Degree Programs
- ◆ Degree Completion Programs



# Context: New Institutional Types

## Proprietary Degree-Granting

- ◆ Serving adult students
- ◆ Regionally accredited
- ◆ Innovative and responsive
- ◆ May be publicly-traded
- ◆ Complex management structures

Example University of Phoenix



# Context: New Institutional Types

## Virtual Universities

- ◆ No on-site programs
- ◆ Response to great demand from adult learners in the workplace
- ◆ May not be degree-granting
- ◆ Serving individuals and corporations
- ◆ Accreditation issues

Example: Jones International University





# New Academic Structures

- ◆ Sequential courses -- year round
- ◆ Concurrent courses on different calendars
- ◆ Self-paced
- ◆ Frequent starts
- ◆ Overlapping terms
- ◆ Variable length modules
- ◆ Mix of on-campus and distance ed
- ◆ Competency-based approach



# Congressional Concerns

- ◆ Memory of the late 80's and early 90's
- ◆ Quality assurance
- ◆ Possibilities for fraud and abuse
- ◆ Aid requirements structured around traditional concepts of higher education
- ◆ Increase educational opportunities



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

Note that the laws and regulations governing Title IV programs do not use the term “distance education” but rather use the terms “telecommunications” and “correspondence”



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Telecommunications course

A course that is delivered primarily through the use of technology except that this does not include a course that is delivered using video cassette or disc recordings unless that course is also provided n the school's campus during the same award year.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Correspondence Course

A “home study” course in which instructional materials are primarily paper-based and provided to students via the mail; and



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Correspondence Course (continued)

A course in which instruction is provided via video cassettes or video discs unless the school also delivers the same course to students physically attending classes at the school during the same award year; and



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Correspondence Course (continued)

A telecommunications course is considered a correspondence course if total telecommunications and correspondence courses is 50 percent or more of the total courses provided by that school during that award year; and



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Correspondence Course (continued)

If a course is part correspondence and part residential it is considered to be a correspondence course.





# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Educational Program

A school is not considered to provide an educational program if the school does not provide instruction itself, but merely gives credit for instruction provided by other schools; examinations provided by agencies or organizations; or other accomplishments such as "life experience."



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Bottom line

A school cannot contract out an entire program or establish a program that is made up entirely of courses that a student takes at another school ; or

- ◆ Offer a program based on credits earned by means of demonstrated competencies without offering courses in that program.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

- ◆ Can not contract out a program with another school or company - such as a publishing company, a truck driving company, a medical facility, etc. - unless the school provides some courses towards the program itself.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Student Eligibility

A student is not eligible to receive Title IV aid for a correspondence course unless that course is part of a program leading to an associate, bachelor's, or graduate degree.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Bottom Line

Correspondence study students enrolled in certificate programs are not eligible.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Cost of Attendance

For a student engaged in a program of study by correspondence, the student's cost of attendance can include only tuition and fees and, if required, books and supplies, travel, and room and board costs incurred specifically in fulfilling a required period of residential training.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Bottom Line

Generally, there are no living expenses allowed for correspondence students.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Institutional Eligibility

Generally, a school is ineligible if --

1. More than 50% of the school's courses are correspondence and/or telecommunications and/or
2. 50% or more of the school's regular enrolled students are enrolled in correspondence courses





# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Bottom Line

A schools in ineligible if more than 50% of its programs or students are enrolled in correspondence courses or programs

(Rule - School is a sum of its eligible programs)



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

Keep in mind that --

A telecommunications course is considered a correspondence course if total telecommunications and correspondence courses is 50% or more of the total courses provided by that school during that award year.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Bottom Line

- ◆ Virtual Universities are not eligible
- ◆ Schools with large numbers of distance education students and/or programs may not be eligible
- ◆ Schools with large number of students enrolled in correspondence programs may not be eligible.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Student Enrollment Status

Regardless of the number of credits or hours a student is carrying, no student enrolled solely in correspondence study is considered more than a half-time student.



# Statutory & Regulatory Limitations

## Bottom Line

- ◆ Limits the amount of Pell Grant Program funds
- ◆ Limit on deferments under loan program.



# Enter the Distance Education Demonstration Program



# Statutory Purposes of Program

- ◆ Test quality and viability
- ◆ Increase access
- ◆ Help determine:
  - Most effective means of delivering Distance Education
  - Statutory and regulatory changes needed
  - Appropriate level of student assistance



# Status of Program

- ◆ Began July 1, 1999 with 15 participants
- ◆ Ten new participants added July 1, 2001
- ◆ Waivers and PPA amendments
- ◆ Monitoring plan
- ◆ Data Collection
- ◆ Work with accrediting agencies





# Waivers Provided

- ◆ 50% rules
  - Courses
  - Students
  - Telecommunications/ correspondence student
  
- ◆ Time requirements
  - 30 week academic year
  - Definition of a week of instruction



# Waivers Provided

- ◆ Correspondence student - halftime only
- ◆ Cost of attendance for correspondence student
- ◆ Satisfactory academic progress - consistent application
- ◆ Specified for Western Governors University



# New Approaches

- ◆ New methods of enrollment tracking
  - Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium
  - North Dakota University System
- ◆ Multiple Disbursements/Just in Time Delivery
  - Colorado Community Colleges Online (CCCOnline) Consortium
  - Western Governor's University



# New Approaches

- ◆ Exclude living expenses from calculation of cost of attendance
  - Western Governor's University
  - LDS Church Educational System



# New Approaches

- ◆ Decouple credits from time
  - Western Governors' University
  - Several participants with 12- hour rule waiver
- ◆ Individual academic plans
  - Western Governors' University



# New Approaches

- ◆ 2 Plus 2 programs
  - Franklin University
  - Washington State University and Washington Community Colleges
  
- ◆ Debt management
  - LDS Church Educational System



# New Approaches

- ◆ State systems sharing enrollments
  - Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium
  - North Dakota University System
  - Colorado Community Colleges Online (CCCOnline) Consortium
- ◆ Satisfactory academic progress
  - Western Governors' University
  - Colorado Community Colleges Online (CCCOnline) Consortium



# Report to Congress

- ◆ Maps the terrain
- ◆ Recommends further experimentation with “student-based” delivery system
- ◆ Raises lots of questions
- ◆ Is available for your reading pleasure at [http:// www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/PPI/DistDemo](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/PPI/DistDemo)





# Questions Raised in the Report

- ◆ Should the HEA distinguish among various means of delivering education, either between distance education delivery methods, or between distance education and onsite educational delivery, for purposes of Title IV aid?



# Questions Raised in Report

- ◆ Should current rules governing the amount of distance education an eligible institution may provide be retained, modified or replaced?



# Questions Raised in Report

- ◆ Is there an alternative to the “12-hour rule” that would ensure that the amount of instruction is adequate in the variety of ways that academic activity is organized in distance education?



# Questions Raised in the Report

- ◆ Should the current rules that treat correspondence students differently from other students be retained, modified, or replaced?



# Questions Raised in the Report

- ◆ Are there additional waiver authorities that would improve the Demonstration Program and enable it to test more completely new approaches to administering aid?



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