About Us

Crystal Calarusse is the Associate Executive Director of Program Development and Innovation at the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) and a PhD student in the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, College Park, specializing in regulation and quality assurance.

Leah Matthews is the Executive Director of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) since April 2013. She has over 25 years of experience in higher education accreditation.

Areas of Focus for this Presentation

1   Assessing readiness for DE

2   Impact of new technologies in DE

3   Accreditation Focus on DE

4   Regulatory Considerations

5   Q&A

Assessing Institution/Program Readiness for Distance Education

Readiness for Distance Education

- **Technology Infrastructure:** Establishing robust and scalable technology infrastructure to support distance learning platforms, student management systems, and other tools essential for delivering a seamless learning experience.

- **Data Security and Privacy:** Safeguarding sensitive student data and ensuring compliance with data protection regulations (i.e., GDPR), especially with the increased reliance on digital platforms and AI technologies.

Readiness for Distance Education

- **Market Positioning and Differentiation**: Identifying niche markets, understanding competitive landscapes, and crafting unique value propositions to attract students amidst a crowded online education marketplace.

- **Student Engagement and Support**: Implementing strategies to promote active student engagement and provide comprehensive support services to remote learners, including personalized learning pathways

Readiness for Distance Education

- **Quality Assurance:** Maintaining high standards of education delivery and student support services in an online learning environment is crucial for building credibility and trust among stakeholders. (Accreditation Readiness)

- **Financial Sustainability:** Developing a realistic budget and revenue streams to sustain operations and invest in ongoing improvements while balancing the costs associated with technology infrastructure, faculty development, and regulatory compliance.

Readiness for Distance Education

- **Competency:** Connecting the technologies to learning goals. Ensuring that students can demonstrate appropriate online learning skills and that qualified faculty are prepared to deliver learning in this environment (attitude/aptitude test).

- **Oversight:** Maintaining ongoing control of contracts and use of technologies in the program, particularly as it relates to learning and optimal experiences for students.

Key Developments in DE Technologies

Personalized Learning Paths

Online platforms increasingly use AI and machine learning algorithms to analyze student data and tailor learning experiences to individual needs and preferences.

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)

VR and AR are being integrated into online learning environments, providing immersive experiences that simulate real-world scenarios.

Gamification

Adding game elements to online courses makes learning more interactive and enjoyable. Techniques like badges, leaderboards, and challenges motivate students to participate actively and track their progress.

Mobile Learning:

Learning materials are optimized for mobile devices, allowing students to access content anytime, anywhere, and facilitating seamless learning experiences.

Institutional Accreditation Review of DE

Federal Definition of DE

34 CFR 600.2

Distance education means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition 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.

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. Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition

Federal Definition of DE

*2. For purposes of this definition, an **instructor** is an individual responsible for delivering course content and <u>who meets the qualifications for instruction established by the institution's accrediting agency.</u>*

*3. For purposes of this definition, **substantive interaction** is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following—*

- *Providing direct instruction;*

- *Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;*

- *Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;*

- *Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or,*

- *Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.*

*An institution ensures **<u>regular</u>** interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency—*

1. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and

2. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed, on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Key Areas for Accreditor Focus

- State authorization/professional licensure authorization
- Program structure, appropriate use of technology
- Curriculum design
- Student identity verification
- Faculty qualifications and training
- Student achievement and satisfaction
- Financial sustainability

Instructional Design

- Effective use of technology to present content
- Guides the learner in practice and knowledge development
- Provides for independent practice by the learner
- Assessment of student learning at appropriate intervals

Regulatory Considerations

(so fun!)

Regulatory Considerations
Proposed during USED's 2024 Negotiated Rulemaking Sessions

1 <u>Enforcement of state laws where the student is located</u>

- Applicable state laws expanded to include record retention, teach-out plans, tuition recovery funds.

- Would permit any state to condition or revoke authorization for violation of general purpose laws

- Reciprocity boards limited to state employees in reg. jobs

- More than 500 students enrolled in a state for two award years would require individual authorization in those states

- Complaint processes

Regulatory Considerations
Proposed during USED's 2024 Negotiated Rulemaking Sessions

2 Taking attendance in all distance education courses

- determine last academic activity

- document student's withdrawal within 14 days of "last date of attendance

3 <u>Accreditation Substantive Change Thresholds</u>

- replaces 2021 threshold of program being offered "in whole or in part" at a distance

- first program offered 50% at a distance OR exceeds 50% of students enrolled in at least one distance course OR an institution offers at least 50% of its courses at a distance.

Regulatory Considerations
Proposed during USED's 2024 Negotiated Rulemaking Sessions

4 <u>Asynchronous Clock Hour Program Ineligibility</u>

- Asynchronous DE clock hour programs no longer eligible for Title IV

- Regulating for modality reasons (???)

Regulatory Considerations
Proposed during USED's 2024 Negotiated Rulemaking Sessions

5 <u>Virtual Locations</u>

- "offers 100 percent of an educational program through distance education or correspondence courses, not withstanding requirements for students to complete on campus or residential periods of 90 days or less."

- students can access closure benefits if institution discontinues distance programs

- USED can collect more data on DE programs

Regulatory Considerations
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