Distance Education
Overview of Presentation

- Background on DE Demonstration Program
- Title IV Issues Identified by Demo
- Areas of Possible Concern Related to Distance Education
- Proposed Legislation Concerning Distance Education
Distance Education Demonstration Program

- Authorized in 1998
- 15 participants selected in 1999
- 9 selected in 2001
- 5 selected in 2003
- Total of 107 individual institutions
Current Participants

- AIU
- Capella University
- College Court Reporting
- CT Distance Learning Cons
- Eastern Oregon Univ
- Franklin University
- Graceland University
- JesuitNET Consortium
- Jones International Univ
- Kaplan College
- LDS Church Ed System
- Marlboro College
- NTU
- Northcentral University
- ND University System
- Regis University
- Southern Christian Univ
- Texas Tech Univ
- US Sports Academy
- UMUC
- Univ of Phoenix
- Walden University
- Washington State Univ
- WGU
Former Participants

- Brevard Community College
- Community Colleges of Colorado
- Florida State University
- Masters Institute
- New York University
- Washington Community & Tech Colleges
Waiver Authority

- **50% Rules**
  - Limitations on correspondence courses and students
  - Provision that defines a telecommunications course as a correspondence course

- **Time Requirements**
  - 30 week academic year
  - Definition of week of instruction

- **Regulations, under General Provisions, that inhibit the operation of quality distance education programs**
Examples of General Provisions Waivers Granted

- Correspondence student/halftime only
- Cost of attendance for correspondence student
- Application of a uniform SAP standard to all students within categories of students

Not authorized to waive any of the program-specific regulations
Title IV Issues Unique to Distance Education
Interrelation of 50% Rules & Eligibility (Institutional & Student)

- An institution becomes ineligible if, for the latest award year,
  - it offered more than 50% of its courses by correspondence, or
  - 50% or more of its regular students were enrolled in its correspondence courses.
Telecomm Courses = Correspondence Courses

- Telecommunications courses are considered to be correspondence courses if the sum of the telecommunications courses and other correspondence courses the institution provided equaled or exceeded 50% of the total number of courses it provided during the award year.
Telecomm Students = Correspondence Students

- For short-term certificate programs < 1 yr
- If the # of residential courses does not exceed the sum of telecommunications and correspondence courses
- If the institution provides certificate programs, but not degree programs
- If the institution provides more certificate than degree programs
Demo Schools Needing 50% Rule Waivers

- Capella University
- Charter Oak State College
- Eastern Oregon Univ
- Graceland Univ
- Jones International University
- NTU
- Northcentral Univ
- Southern Christian University
- UMUC
- Walden University
- WGU
Is the Program Telecomm or Correspondence?

- Title IV rules are tied to programs, not courses.
- Institutions define their own programs.
- Institutions may offer courses in various formats; students may mix formats to meet degree requirements.
- A program is defined by “prevailing delivery mode” – look at # courses & # enrollments.
Example

- Program consists of 10 courses -- some required, some electives
- Institution offers 15 courses online and 5 courses by correspondence
- If total enrollments in online courses is greater than correspondence, this is a telecommunications program
- If correspondence enrollments are greater, this is a correspondence program
Effect of Type of Program

- Students enrolled in correspondence programs may not be considered more than half-time students.
- For students in correspondence programs, COA is restricted to direct expenses except for during required period of residential training.
Effect of Type of Program (cont)

- Timing of Title IV disbursements for correspondence programs is different
  - Before receiving an FSEOG payment, student must submit the first lesson
  - Before receiving a Pell payment, student must complete a specified percentage of lessons. Percentage varies on whether the program is term-based or nonterm-based.
Title IV Issues Not Unique to Distance Education
What is the Structure of the Program?

- **Standard term** – set beginning and ending dates
  - Semester term: 15 weeks; FT=12 sem credits
  - Quarter term: 10-12 weeks; FT=12 quarter credits

- **Nonstandard term** – set beginning and ending dates; does not meet standard term definition

- **Nonterm** – not organized in terms
Example: Eastern Oregon Univ

- Programs utilize two or more distance education delivery modes: Online, Interactive video, Videotape, Correspondence
  - Correspondence courses were self-paced; students had two quarters to complete
  - All other courses are offered in standard quarter terms
- EOU erroneously considered its programs to be standard term
EOU’s Programs Were Nonterm

- Statistics revealed large numbers of students enrolled in correspondence courses in all the DE programs
- School had two options
  - Administer aid according to nonterm rules
  - Require Title IV recipients to complete correspondence courses in the same term in which they began them
Example: Northcentral Univ

- Virtual university – new to Title IV
- Self-paced courses that begin on the first day of each month
- Students have up to 16 weeks to complete a course
- No cohorts
- NCU’s programs are nonterm
Two Challenges Facing NCU

- Tracking individual students to compare enrollment plan to actual behavior
- Providing a defensible definition of its academic year
  - Structuring courses with at least one scheduled instructional activity per week for each of the 16 course sessions
  - Gathering statistics on student behavior to see whether data support definition
Example: UMUC

- Goal to provide frequent start dates and to retain standard term model
  - Three standard 15-week terms
  - 8-week mini terms embedded
  - 15-week courses beginning half-way through the Fall and Spring semesters
  - January term for one-credit courses
  - Online and residential courses follow the same structure
UMUC Has Reached the Limit

- Twelve starts per year
- Mid-Fall term overlaps Spring term
- Mid-Spring term overlaps Summer term
- Enrollment in overlapping terms is included with the standard semester in which courses were begun
- Allowed only in cases where overlap is minimal
Program Offered in Different Term Structures

- Courses from one version of the program may be applied to other versions of the program
- Student may enroll in courses that have different term structures
- Challenge to determine which version of the program the student is enrolled in
Program Offered in Different Term Structures (cont)

- Examine past enrollment to determine which version of the program the student is enrolled in and administer aid according to rules for that structure

- If enrollment history is inadequate, look at the student’s current enrollment mix to see which term structure is predominant
Year Round Enrollment

- Many institutions serving adults are using this model for degree programs
- University of Phoenix, Walden University and Capella University -- different models, same problem
- Title IV laws and regs do not address “continuous enrollment” for academic degree programs, only for clock hour programs of short duration
Competency-Based Programs
Western Governors Univ

- Competencies tied to each program
- Assessments to demonstrate attainment of competencies
- Does not offer credits or courses
  - Students may enroll in courses offered by others
  - Academic Action Plan for each student
- Initially a “student-based model” – nonterm
WGU: Challenges

- Explaining the model
- Monitoring SAP
  - Standard set by dividing total # of assessments in program evenly over length of Academic Action Plan
  - Half-time student in a two-year program of 8 assessments should complete 2 per year
  - Each assessment does not represent the same amount of work
  - Problems with meeting SAP; retention
WGU Changes

- Limiting program start dates
- Establishing learning communities
- Stronger pre-assessments
- More standardized AAPs
- “Competency credits”
- All students are full-time
- Standard tuition every 6 months
- Nonstandard term
Areas of Possible Concern Related to Distance Education
Accrediting Agency Evaluation

- Responsible for academic quality assurance
- Institutional accreditors do not look at individual programs/courses
- Systems approach to evaluation
  - Regional accreditors work with WCET
    http://wcet.info/resources/accreditation
- Small number of potential reviewers have thorough knowledge of DE
Rapid Growth

- Experience has shown this to be a significant risk factor
  - Need to look closely at financial situation
  - Outside pressures, particularly on for-profit entities
  - Administrative capacity to support large increases

- Accrediting agencies/Dept historically see growth as indicator of health
Diploma Mills

- Revival spurred by the Web
- Bogus accrediting agencies
- Dept of Education developing an affirmative list of schools accredited by agencies recognized by the Secretary
Proposed Legislation
Background

- Summer/Fall 2003 -- House passed bills on Teacher Education, International Education, Graduate Education
- Fall 2003 – McKeon bills dealing with Access and Affordability
- Late Fall 2003 -- S 1793 Senate Democrats
- May 2004 – HR 4283 “College Access and Affordability Act”. Hearings but no vote this year
HR 4283 – 50% Rules

- Telecommunicated instruction not defined as correspondence
  - No change in definition of telecommunications course
    - Television, audio or computer transmission, including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, computer conferencing, or video cassettes or discs, except that such term does not include a course that is delivered using video cassette or disc recordings at such institution and that is not delivered in person to other students of that institution
HR 4283 – Demo Programs

- **Distance Education Demonstration Program continued and expanded**
  - Same limited waiver authority
  - Up to 100 participants; 5 participants correspondence schools

- **College Affordability Demonstration Program**
  - Up to 100 participants
  - Waivers of *any* HEA requirements and regs
HR 4283 – Accrediting Agency Requirements

- Specifies what must be included in review of distance education
  - Comparability of quality of DE education and student support services to that provided in classrooms/on campus
  - Evaluate how institution ensures integrity of student participation in DE programs
Other Aspects

- Loans and Pell Grants
- Transfer of Credit
- College Costs
- Consumer Information
- For-profits included in definition of IHE
- Eliminating 90/10 rule

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