

## Position Statement on Distance Education

Texas A&M University

Texas A&M University recognizes that the State of Texas will continue to become one of the fastest growing states with a highly diverse population. Because of rapid technological change, the State's diverse citizenship will need education that enables it to remain competitive in a high-tech, rapidly changing, and increasingly global work environment. To meet the education needs of the State, Texas A&M recognizes the role it plays in providing traditional degree programs, distance education programs, and continuing education programs for a citizen population increasingly diverse in age, work history, ethnicity, and culture.

While demand for traditional degrees will continue, demand for education from students who cannot come to campus will also continue. Many students will want to access programs and courses from their homes and jobs. Growth in available technology means that they will be able to use computers and interactive telecommunications. Furthermore, in the current competitive environment, state boundaries no longer serve as a barrier to the delivery of higher education; thus it is important to recognize the need for Texas A&M to become a national leader in the area of distance education. Educational strategies will need to be developed to serve these students and to provide learning opportunities appropriate to their needs and situations.

To meet these challenges, Texas A&M supports specific, proactive efforts in distance education:

- To respond to demands of larger numbers of residential and non-residential students, TAMU supports the development of technology-based teaching to complement traditional face-to-face instruction. TAMU recognizes that communication technology offers faculty an increasing number of ways to provide instruction and that the internet allows development of asynchronous learning.
- The University will work with, support, and reward faculty to develop programs and courses, to insure accreditation (as set forth in the Southern Accreditation of Colleges and Universities requirement), and to provide supporting technology and training for successful development and implementation of distance education courses, programs, and methods in graduate, undergraduate, and continuing education efforts. The University will provide compensation, relief from other duties, or some combination of these to aid faculty in developing distance education courses and programs. Effective contributions to distance education, as part of assigned responsibilities, will be a factor in promotion and tenure decisions and merit increase decisions.
- The University encourages and will reward innovative use of distance education to disseminate new knowledge to other researchers and to the public.
- Support for helping faculty use technology to deliver instruction will be available and encouraged, as required by SAC requirements. The University will provide appropriate training for any faculty wishing to develop distance teaching methods for use with on-campus or off-campus students.
- The University will work with faculty to insure appropriate protection of property rights.
- In recognition that distance education involves teaching within a new and competitive environment and that most faculty are unfamiliar with the use of multimedia for instruction, the University will provide appropriate training for assigned faculty responsible for developing distance teaching methods for use with on-campus or off-campus students.

- Delivery of courses and programs via distance will focus on graduate programs and continuing education, although distance methods for leveraging faculty time and expertise will be strongly advocated for high-demand residential and, where appropriate, off-campus undergraduate courses.
- Faculty will be responsible for ensuring and substantiating the quality of any distance delivery at the expectation level anticipated for the on-campus course. The rigor of course material and expectations of student outcomes for off-campus courses should be equivalent to on-campus courses.
- The University, under the leadership of the faculty, will develop appropriate evaluation procedures for alternative teaching via technology. This input will be used to improve alternative delivery of courses. The University will collect data on costs and effective use of different technologies for accountability purposes. Evaluation data will include an assessment in the improvement of on-campus delivery of courses designed and delivered off-campus.
- TAMU will provide adequate library and student services for distance education students. These services will be comparable to those available to resident students.
- TAMU will use distance education to enhance its international presence. Partnerships will be sought with US businesses and international universities to fund these international distance education efforts.
- TAMU will work with other universities within the System, within in the State, and in the United States to provide instruction, as these efforts complement the mission of the University.
- TAMU will continue to assess a distance education fee for courses taught off campus. Distance fees will be used to enhance the development of distance education at TAMU.

The University's position on distance education will be assessed regularly and revised as needed to reflect and meet the responsibilities of the University to the state, nation, and society.

Endorsed by:

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Office of Distance Education  
Advisory Committee

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The Faculty Senate

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Academic Program Council (APC)

Approved by:

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Ronald G. Douglas  
Executive Vice President & Provost

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Ray M. Bowen  
President