

COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Friday, March 9, 2012

DISCUSSION ITEM B: Presentation on Distance Education, Including Costs and Fees

Staff Recommendation

For information only.

Background

This discussion is part of the Commission’s continuing conversation about distance education, with the ultimate goal of adopting a policy in this important area, which can be used in approving new distance education degree programs. At its December 2011 meeting, the Commission discussed a presentation made by Indiana University, Purdue University, and Ball State University on the costs and pricing of distance education programs. In February, the Commission discussed tuition and fees associated with four proposed master’s programs. At that same meeting, the Commission discussed the role of regional campuses in delivering distance education programs.

The presentation at this meeting will be made by Mr. Russ Poulin, Deputy Director for Research and Analysis at the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies.(WCET). WICHE is the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, a 15-member state regional compact similar to the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. WCET was founded by WICHE in 1989, but now has a national as well as regional focus, with members in almost every state, including Indiana (Harrison College, Indiana State University, and St. Mary-of-the-Woods). The mission of WCET is to accelerate “the adoption of effective practices and policies, advancing excellence in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education.”

WCET has been an important national resource on distance education. With the Council on Regional Accrediting Commissions, which includes the Higher Learning Commission, WCET developed *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs*, considered a benchmark for delivering quality distance education programs. Collaborating with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), WCET developed a Technology Costing Methodology – “a set of step-by-step procedures that enable institutional leaders to analyze the costs of using technology in both on- and off-campus instruction.” After the U.S. Department of Education issued its far-reaching “program integrity” regulations in October 2010, WCET has been a primary source of information regarding state regulations and regulatory practices pertaining to distance education.

Russ Poulin's responsibilities include coordinating WCET's efforts in sharing information about the management, financing, and services of electronic consortia. He also directs the WCET role with the Campus Computing Project on the new Managing Online Education survey; this survey includes questions on whether online programs are "profitable" and what fees online students pay relative to on-campus instruction. Mr. Poulin is also assisting in a current effort to draft a proposal, in response to the federal "program integrity" regulations, for establishing reciprocity among states in the authorization of distance education instruction.

Supporting Document

To be distributed.