Proposed: USF System Policy

Number: 10-066

Subject: Identity Verification of Distance Education Students

I. INTRODUCTION (Purpose and Intent):

The University of South Florida System (USF System) is committed to the academic honesty and integrity of its entire community. USF System Regulation 3.027, Academic Integrity of Students, defines academic integrity as the “the completion of all academic endeavors and claims of scholarly knowledge as representative of one's own efforts.” Additionally, USF System Regulation 3.027 (1) identifies and defines violations of academic integrity, e.g., cheating and plagiarism, where students use assistance which has not been authorized by the instructor and presents the work of another as one’s own; (2) defines four levels of violations according to the nature of the infraction; and (3) recommends corresponding sets of sanctions.

Recognizing the unique circumstances in which distance or correspondence education students are instructed and assessed, this Policy on Identity Verification of Distance Education Students is intended to adopt and complement USF System Regulation 3.027 by ensuring that a student who registers in USF System distance or correspondence education courses/programs is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives credit.

Additionally, this Policy is intended to ensure compliance with the requirements of regulatory and accrediting agencies, including the requirements and procedures that are mandated through the Florida Board of Governors (BOG), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
II. DEFINITIONS:

A. Distance Education: A formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course/program occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Examples of distance education courses include:

1.) Online Learning: The USF System, adopting the SACSCOC definition for distance education, defines online learning as noncredit and credit-earning courses and programs where greater than 50% of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) is delivered in an online format, and students and instructors are not in the same place. This definition for online learning differs from the definition referenced in BOG Regulation 7.003 which authorizes universities to assess distance learning fees on courses where at least 80% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and faculty member are separated by time, space, or both.

2.) Correspondence Education: A formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor.

B. Academic Honesty: The completion of all academic endeavors and claims of scholarly knowledge as representative of one’s own efforts.

III. STATEMENT OF POLICY:
A. Knowledge and maintenance of the USF System academic standards of honesty and integrity are the responsibility of the entire academic community, including the instructional faculty, staff, and students.

B. Each student who registers in a distance education course/program is personally responsible for completing all the academic requirements of the course/program, including all academic assignments and methods of assessment.

C. Enrolled students may be asked to personally verify their identity prior to performing any educational assignment or assessment in a format and time to be determined by the USF System.

D. To assist in verifying the identity of individual students in distance education courses/programs, instructional faculty and administrators must use one or more methodologies approved by the USF System, such as a secure log-in and password, or proctored examinations.

E. If the use of approved student identity verification methodologies is not conclusive, the USF System may require the distance education student to re-take or perform an educational assignment or assessment.

F. In conjunction with an advisory board established by the CEO of Innovative Education, Innovative Education shall serve as the administrative unit responsible for securing approval, and providing oversight via policies and procedures, for the methodologies used by instructional faculty to verify the identity of students enrolled in distance education courses/programs.

G. Incremental costs associated with verifying student identity in a distance education course/program shall be established by Innovative Education, and charged to students enrolled in the course or program.
H. Information on additional student fees associated with verifying students’ identities in a distance education course/program shall be provided to the students at the time of enrollment in the course or program.

I. Each college or school within the University System may propose alternative student identity verification methodologies to meet the unique requirements of the discipline. Approvals for alternatives must be obtained as follows (1) Proposals for student identity verification technologies and practices not referenced in this Policy (except for those within USF Health) shall be submitted to the CEO, Innovative Education (2) Proposals for each College or School within USF Health may adopt its own processes to implement this Policy that are at least as restrictive as outlined and which are best suited to its needs as based on consultation with all affected groups, including faculty, staff and students. If a USF Health College or School adopts such processes, they must be submitted to the Senior Vice President for USF Health for appropriate review and approval to ensure consistency with USF Health and University requirements.

J. This Policy is complementary to and must be interpreted in conjunction with existing University Regulations and Policies regarding students with disabilities.

Authorized and signed by:

Ralph Wilcox, Provost and Executive Vice President

Judy Genshaft, President