4.8.1

Verification of Student Identity in Distance or Correspondence Education

An institution that offers distance or correspondence education demonstrates that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (a) a secure login and pass code, (b) proctored examinations, or (c) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

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Narrative

Note: Text for all linked documents below can be increased/decreased for ease of reading by pressing your keyboard's Ctrl key while rotating the mouse wheel.

Angelo State University has procedures in place to ensure that a student who registers and enrolls in a distance education course is the same student that completes the course and receives credit. ASU offers distance learning courses in all of its colleges, and every college uses Blackboard's web-based learning management system as its primary means to provide access to online courses. Students register for all courses through Banner, the institution's database. Blackboard has been integrated with Banner.

For security purposes, each student and faculty member is assigned a unique personal login ID and password to access Banner, Blackboard, email, and other campus systems. With this personal login ID and password, students can register for and access online courses through ASU's secure portal, RamPort. In addition, ASU uses best practices for strong password standards and requires users to change their passwords every 120 days. Students enrolled in distance education courses must adhere to policies on electronic security that prohibit sharing of passwords, and both students and faculty are required to take precautions to prevent others from obtaining access to their university computer accounts (ASU OP 44.00, Information Technology Operating and Security Policy and ASU OP 44.01, Security and Management of Protected Information).

Students are required to comply with the university honor code, which is published in the ASU Student Handbook 2011–2012 (pp. 23–25). The student handbook is available on the ASU website from the Current Students home page, and notification regarding the student handbook is sent via email to enrolled students during each long semester.

The ASU colleges use a wide range of discipline-specific pedagogical strategies for interacting with students to foster learning and to ensure that the student enrolled in a course is the same student taking the course. Faculty engagement with students becomes a critical factor in successfully recognizing identity discrepancies. Examples of pedagogical strategies used by faculty include video submission of work, work

groups, synchronous discussions, frequent instructor/student emails, texting, blogging, video blogging, and face-to-face video conferencing.

In summer 2011, ASU updated its distance education policy to include a more formal structure for the development and delivery of ASU distance education courses. The new structure includes a Distance Education Council composed of campus academic and administrative leaders to oversee policy and operational issues related to distance education (ASU OP 4.11, Distance Education and Attachments A, B, C, and D). In addition, an ad hoc Distance Education Course Design Committee was established by the Distance Education Council in early 2012 to propose a course shell and an Instructor Orientation Course that adheres to industry standards and includes best practices related to online pedagogy strategies. The ad hoc committee submitted the course shell design to the Distance Education Council in early May 2012 and, as of summer 2012, is working on the Instructor Orientation Course. The committee also proposed that all online courses be designed and reviewed following the Quality Matters Standards and rubric, 2011-2013 edition (QM). QM is a set of standards and tools to ensure online course quality based on current research and best practices. QM is an initiative with origins that were funded by the US Department of Education in response to concerns about online course design. ASU is currently implementing a train-the-trainer model to teach faculty best practices for online course design and how to properly assess student learning for distance education courses. This model is being piloted within the College of Education and will be refined and expanded to other colleges over the next year.

ASU continues to explore and employ new pedagogical and technological strategies in distance education courses as options become available and practical.