Principles of Good Practice

The Foundation for Quality of Southern Regional Education Board's *Electronic Campus*

SREB

Southern Regional Education Board 's *Electronic Campus* (www.electroniccampus.org) has been designed to help students find and enroll in high-quality courses and programs at colleges and universities in SREB states. Students will be able to complete most of the coursework electronically and may not need to leave their hometowns or campuses. By using the *Electronic Campus,* students will be able to obtain information over the Internet about each course and program and will know the standards that the colleges and universities have pledged to meet for these distance learning programs and courses. Students interested in enrolling in a program or course will be able to link easily with the college or university offering it.

The *Principles of Good Practice*,* the cornerstone of this "electronic marketplace," were developed to assure students about the quality of courses and programs at the *Electronic Campus.* The principles draw upon the work of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and other organizations. All courses and programs to be listed in the *Electronic Campus* have been reviewed against the *Principles of Good Practice* by the offering colleges or universities and have been coordinated through the state higher education agency.

The goal of the *Electronic Campus* is to provide students with a central point of reference, giving them easier access to quality programs and courses. A first step was to conduct a survey. The report, *SREB State Regulations as They Apply to Distance Learning,* found that **"… there appear to be no significant regulatory considerations that would halt the development of such a regional approach."** Thus, in January 1998, the *Electronic Campus* was launched.

~ Scope of the *Electronic Campus*

The scope of the *Electronic Campus* is higher education academic degree and certificate programs and credit courses offered electronically, as well as support services for students.

* Portions are from the statement *Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs,* Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, Denver, Colo., 1996.

• Use of Principles

The purpose of the *Principles of Good Practice* is to identify the expectations and requirements for participation in the *Electronic Campus*. Each institution that seeks to offer an electronically delivered program or course will be asked to ensure that it complies with these principles. The offering institution and the state's designated higher education agency are responsible for quality control. The principles will be used to:

- guide the development of electronically delivered programs and courses to ensure that characteristics of good teaching and learning are addressed;
- ensure at the institutional level the quality of the program or course that is seeking acceptance by the *Electronic Campus;*
- review the quality of the program or course before it is sent by a state higher education agency for listing by the *Electronic Campus.*

• Basic Assumptions

Several assumptions are central to these principles:

1. The program or course offered electronically is provided by or through an institution that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body and is authorized to operate in the state where the program or course originates.

2. The institution's programs and courses holding specialized accreditation meet the same requirements when offered electronically.

3. The institution may be a single institution or a consortium of institutions.

4. These principles are generally applicable to degree or certificate programs and to courses offered for academic credit.

5. It is the institution's responsibility to review educational programs and courses it provides electronically and to ensure continued compliance with these principles.

6. The appropriate state agencies or organizations in the state where courses or programs are offered will coordinate participation in the *Electronic Campus*.

7. Institutions offering programs or for-credit courses are responsible for satisfying all in-state approval and accreditation requirements before students are enrolled.

8. Participating states agree to accept the listing on the *Electronic Campus* as assurance that courses and programs meet the *Principles of Good Practice*.

9. Institutions should give priority for enrolling in *Electronic Campus* courses and programs to qualified residents of the SREB region.

- # Curriculum and Instruction

  - Each program or course of study results in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.

  - A degree or certificate program or course offered electronically is coherent and complete.
  - The course or program provides for appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students.
  - Qualified faculty provide appropriate supervision of the program or course that is offered electronically.
  - Academic standards for all programs or courses offered electronically are the same as those for other courses or programs delivered at the institution where they originate.
  - Student learning in programs or courses delivered electronically should be comparable to student learning in programs or courses offered at the campus where they originate.

- # Institutional Context and Commitment

Role and Mission
  - The program or course is consistent with the institution's role and mission.

  - Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of the technology being used to meet program or course objectives.

Students and Student Services
  - The program or course provides students with clear, complete and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, prerequisite technology competencies and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services, financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.
  - Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to student services and resources appropriate to support their learning.
  - The institution has admission/acceptance criteria to assess whether the student has the background, knowledge and technical skills required for undertaking the course or program.
  - Advertising, recruiting and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and the services available.

Faculty Support

- The program or course provides faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system.

- The institution ensures appropriate training for faculty who teach using technology.
- The program or course provides faculty with adequate equipment, software and communications for interaction with students, institutions and other faculty.

Resources for Learning

- The program or course ensures that appropriate learning resources are available to students.

- The program or course evaluates the adequacy of access to learning resources and the cost to students for access to those resources. It also documents the use of electronic resources.

Commitment to Support

- Policies for faculty evaluation include appropriate recognition of teaching and scholarly activities related to programs or courses offered electronically.
- The institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program or course for a period sufficient for students to complete a degree or certificate.

Evaluation and Assessment

- The institution evaluates program and course effectiveness, including assessments of student learning, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.
- At the completion of the program or course, the institution provides for assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course.
- Program or course announcements and electronic catalog entries provide appropriate information.

Elaboration of the Principles

These principles serve as guidelines for colleges and universities participating in the *Electronic Campus*. These guidelines will be defined further and will address expanded topics as the *Electronic Campus* grows.

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