The University of Texas of the Permian Basin
Distance Education Policy

1. UTPB Mission Statement

The programs and courses offered via distance education are consistent with the role and mission of the University of Texas of the Permian Basin (UTPB).   The mission statement of the UTPB reflects the institution's commitment to providing high-quality teaching in both face-to-face and online modalities (http://www.utpb.edu/about/mission-statement).

2. Definition of Distance Education

The definition used for distance education in this document is the one adopted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC):

> For the purposes of the Commission's accreditation review, distance education is defined as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet: one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program (*Distance and Correspondence Education: Policy Statement*, 2010).

3. Types Distance Education at UTPB

Distance education course types used at UTPB include:

- Online -- All course activities are completed at a distance and managed online.
- Blended/Hybrid – Courses in which significant course content and instruction is delivered online with scheduled face-to-face opportunities for collaboration and socialization.
- All distance education course types are appropriately identified to students, so they are fully aware of course delivery methods.

4. Distance Education Course and Program Requirements

REACH Certification
UTPB will follow best practices and policies in the development and administration of its distance education programs and courses. Distance education courses will be certified by the Regional Electronic Academic Communication Highway (REACH) Office before they are brought online. To attain certification, online courses must meet best practices criteria by clearly stating course organization and structure, the various types of active learning opportunities, a communication plan, assessment information, provisions for timely feedback and accessibility, required technical requirements and skills, and provide information about student support and

academic services for student success. More detailed information is available in the REACH Distance Learning Handbook.

Course Syllabi

For courses delivered through distance education syllabi must specify hardware, software, and equipment requirements. Syllabi and other materials describing programs delivered through distance education must provide details on the delivery of course and program content, as well as the rationale for choices regarding content, examinations and assessment, time limits for completion of coursework, faculty-student contact, security, integrity, ethical behavior, advising, faculty qualifications, and technical, instructional, and administrative support requirements. Other important information including the academic calendar, grades, financial aid, and refunds are available online to all students, including those enrolled in distance education courses and programs.

Faculty Remuneration

When faculty members develop new courses to be offered via distance education, they are compensated at the established rate with approval from their dean and from the Provost. Courses taught via distance education are part of the faculty member's regularly compensated teaching responsibilities.

Distance Education Committee

Distance education policies are periodically reviewed by the Distance Education Committee which meets no less than twice a year to review distance education policies and makes recommendations to the Provost and Vice President.

5. Distance Education Course and Program Quality, Effectiveness, and Support

Distance education at UTPB will be delivered in a manner that conforms to the appropriate policies of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and other accrediting bodies and the United States Department of Education (DOE). The SACSCOC documents, *Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement*, and *Guidelines in the Application of the Principles of Accreditation to Distance and Correspondence Education*, provide guidance on the development of institutional practices and policies as they relate to distance education. These include, but are not limited to policies governing online program rigor, quality and effectiveness, online student support, online student authentication and privacy, and legal issues.

Program Curriculum

Distance education courses and programs adhere to the same academic standards, policies, and rigor as those offered on campus. The programs and courses offered via distance education are approved through the usual university, University of Texas System (UTS), and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) curriculum approval processes as required. In addition, before online courses and programs are activated they must be certified by the REACH Office to assure that they meet the best practices (Quality Measures) standards in online delivery (See the REACH Handbook for a comprehensive list of certification requirements). UTPB's curriculum development and approval process assures curricula, including online courses and

programs, are under the authority of the faculty, embody a coherent program of study and are directly related and appropriate to the mission and goals of the institution.

Program Length
The Program length of all UTPB programs, including those offered through distance learning, is appropriate and adheres to the commonly accepted standards in higher education standards

Credit Hours
UTPB employs sound and acceptable practices to determine the number of credit hours awarded in online courses, and these polices are compliant with Title 19 of the Texas Administrative Code S. 13.1 (24). All UTPB courses will maintain the same student learning and program outcomes regardless of instructional delivery modality.

Faculty Adequacy and Qualifications
Faculty teaching distance education courses will meet the regular qualifications stipulated by UTPB policies, THECB, SACSCOC, DOE and other accrediting bodies to which the programs are subject. Only qualified faculty members shall teach courses delivered via distance education. Department chairs and deans are responsible for scheduling courses and hiring and evaluating distance learning faculty in the respective disciplines under their supervision.

Qualified Academic Program Coordinators
All of UTPB's online academic programs are coordinated by faculty (department chairs or discipline coordinators) who possess the appropriate academic qualifications and who provide oversight of the courses and programs to ensure the appropriateness of course and program content, rigor, and student learning outcomes.

Physical Facilities and Infrastructure Support
UTPB will provide faculty with adequate infrastructure, equipment, software, and communications access to support interaction with students. The REACH Office provides support and required training to faculty in distance education technology and methodologies. Each faculty member will receive consultation, training, implementation, and evaluation support from instructional design and delivery staff to assure effective, efficient use of the chosen delivery system.

Online Course and Program Effectiveness
For all of its programs, including those delivered through distance education, UTPB identifies expected student learning outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. Additional items to be evaluated shall include, but are not limited to, the effectiveness and efficiency of delivery systems, academic resources, student services, and access to faculty. Finally, students evaluate courses delivered via distance education using the course evaluation procedures in effect for campus-based courses.

UTPB Online Student Identification Cards

UTPB Online Students are in every respect UTPB students and, as such, are eligible to receive a UTPB Student Identification Card. Online Students who wish to obtain a UTPB Identification Card must complete the following:

Using their UTPB email account students should send an email to the UTPB Police at StudentID@utpb.edu which includes the following:

- Full name, address, and student ID number
- A scanned image attachment of another photo-bearing official government ID (driver's license, passport, etc.) for verification in digital (JPEG) format.
- A scanned image attachment of a passport-quality photo (headshot with a plain background) in digital (JPEG) format.

Students who request and receive a UTPB Student ID will be charged $10 and will receive their IDs after it is made.

Student Support Services

Distance education students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their successful completion of course work. These services are comparable to those offered to traditional, on-campus users and include all or most of the following: admissions; accounting; payment processing; bookstore; university catalog; academic advising; technical assistance; registration, withdrawal from courses; financial aid information; academic calendar; services for disabled students (American Disabilities Act of 1990 accommodation); policies, procedures, and protocols for taking courses.

In addition, UTPB ensures that all distance education students have access to library resources to support appropriately the courses in which the students are enrolled and to provide services that represent the closest approximations of those offered to on-campus students. These services include document delivery, electronic access to reference services, reserves, interlibrary loan, and a web page that includes ready links to services, contacts, and self-help modules. The library will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of resources provided to distance education students and will demonstrate that services are improved where appropriate. Instructors will provide distance education students information about library services

Online Student Complaints

UTPB's policies and procedures for handling student academic and non-academic complaints are applicable to all students, including those enrolled in distance education programs and courses. Students with complaints about distance education delivered by UT Permian Basin should follow the process described at http://www.utpb.edu/campus-life/dean-of-students/student-grievances. Students who wish to file a written complaint are encouraged to submit their complaint using the University Complaint Resolution Portal located at http://www.utpb.edu/services/business-affairs/complaint-resolution. If an issue cannot be resolved internally/locally, students may file a complaint about UT Permian Basin with their state of residence or the University's accrediting organization. Information on both is available at http://www.utcoursesonline.org/complaints.html.

Student Authentication for Online Courses
UTPB registers students for online courses using a student information system (SIS) and manages access through a centralized authentication system (LDAP or Shibboleth). The learning management system in which all online courses are hosted authenticates student user accounts and passwords to the UTPB centralized authentication system. To obtain access to online courses in the learning management system, students must establish their identity through a secure login and password.

At least one additional student identification technique will be required within each course. This technique is determined and approved by the faculty member or academic program. The additional method of student authentication using an approved photo ID* must be clearly stated on the course syllabus and may include the following:

- Proctored exams using an approved photo ID.
- Presentation of approved photo ID through a web cam and optional levels of proctoring during assessment.
- Field or clinical experiences using an approved photo ID.
- Synchronous or asynchronous video activities using an approved photo ID.
- Other technologies or procedures specified by faculty in their course syllabus

UTPB requires no additional fees for verification of student identity. If an individual faculty member requires face-to-face proctoring at an off-campus site any associated fees are stated in the course syllabus which is available to students before registration.

*Approved photo identifications are: passports, government issued identification, driver's licenses, military ID from DoD. Dual credit and early college high school students use school district identifications.

Student Privacy
The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines will be followed for all students regardless of instructional environment. Submission of student work online creates an academic record that is subject to FERPA. Online posting of grades must not be viewable to other members of the online class. Exemplary works may be posted with individual student permission. Instructors must not compel online students to reveal private information to classmates. Instructors assign discussions of private information but must respect individual student requests to not post information for class viewing. Private information includes full name, physical address, birth date, birth place, social security number, gender, race, color, marital status, religion, citizenship, immigration status, physical image, information about family, or information a student considers too sensitive to share.

6. **Legal Policies**

Intellectual Property
University and University of Texas System (UTS) rules regarding Intellectual Property can be found in the UTPB Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) Part VI, Section 29 and UTS Regents' Rules Series 90000.

Copyright and Fair Use
Regulations concerning Copyright and Fair Use are located in the HOP Part VI, Section 28; UTS 102.

Acceptable Use of Information Technology
Guidelines related to the acceptable use of information technology are found in HOP Part VI, Section 23; UTS 165, and Regents' Rules 80103.