3.16   DISTANCE EDUCATION AND TRADITIONAL OFF-CAMPUS COURSES AND PROGRAMS

3.16.1   Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards and procedures for offering distance education and traditional off-campus courses and programs and for the operation of designated learning sites. Institutions are responsible for ascertaining and proactively meeting the educational needs in their respective communities as guided by their function statement. In serving those needs, institutions are encouraged to utilize the programmatic and content expertise of peer institutions. Distance education programs and courses should be used to enhance efficiency while increasing institutional sharing of resources, all for the purpose of enhancing access to postsecondary education opportunities to Oklahoma citizens. Above all, the policy is intended to promote cooperation and collaboration among State System institutions.

A.   Scope

The use of distance education and traditional off-campus instruction should be applied to the multiple goals of the State System:

1.   to extend access to place bound and nontraditional students through distance education courses and programs;

2.   to inform business, government, and community organizations about the benefits of this delivery format;

3.   to improve the achievement and skill level of students, whether in traditional campus programs, or in traditional off-campus settings, or by means of distance education by actively engaging them in the learning process;

4.   to facilitate Oklahoma's economic development by strengthening pathways to academic degrees and certificates, increasing the number of college graduates, offering appropriate academic programs and marketing the State System and its institutions as an economic asset of the state; and

5.   to enhance institutional resource efficiency, all for the purpose of improving student participation and enrollment by increasing access to postsecondary education and expanding use of distance education for the citizens of Oklahoma.

B.   Distance Education and Traditional Off-Campus Courses and Programs

The policy applies to courses and programs delivered by Oklahoma State System institutions both within and outside of the state of Oklahoma. This policy incorporates language and standards from the Council of Regional Accrediting

Commissions (C-RAC) *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning).*

C. Learning Sites

A 1998 study conducted by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) found that 93 percent of Oklahoma's population is within 30 miles of an existing campus or site. However, it also found that 63 of Oklahoma's 77 counties have unmet higher education needs of some kind. These educational needs are in low population areas and are episodic in nature; thus the creation of centers, branch campuses, or other traditional higher education infrastructure is not warranted. These higher education needs will be met through this policy.

3.16.2 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in the policy, shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Asynchronous" learning occurs when students and faculty are not present and available at the same time. Regular communication and instruction may be facilitated by e-mail, discussion boards or other electronic formats.

"Blended" programs utilize both on-site and distance education methods. Blended programs are not exempt from online program approval if distance education activity is utilized to an extent which requires approval under sections 3.16.11 or 3.16.12.

"Blended course" is a course in which at least 50 percent, but less than 75 percent, of the instruction occurs via distance education and the remaining portion occurs on-site.

"Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) Guidelines" refers to the Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education Programs (Online Learning) for best practices in postsecondary distance education developed by learning practitioners of distance education.

"Distance Education" for the purpose of this policy includes courses and programs offered through videotape, CD ROM, telecourses, web-based (online), Interactive Television, or other digital methodologies.

"Distance Education Course" is a course in which at least 75 percent of the instruction and interaction occurs through a distance education format.

"Financial Responsibility Index Score" is a United States Department of Education (USDE) issued score to determine a private institution's financial stability for Title IV participation.

"Learning Site" is a site designated by the State Regents with the function and responsibility of ensuring that higher education needs are met either through programs offered by the designated institution or importing courses from sister institutions. Designated learning sites

include the 25 public colleges and universities, and the University Centers of Southern Oklahoma (UCSO) and Ponca City (UCPC).

"Major" for the purpose of this policy is defined as courses in the discipline of the student's declared major, excluding support courses, general education courses, and elective courses.

"National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA)" is the administrative entity responsible for establishing SARA policies and standards and coordinating SARA efforts within the four regional higher education interstate compacts.

"Online Delivery" for the purpose of this policy is defined as teaching and learning that occurs in an online environment through the use of the Internet or other computer-mediated format that results in the awarding of a degree.

"Online Program" for the purpose of this policy is defined as (1) a program that is offered in such a manner that an individual can take 100 percent of the courses for the major through online delivery or other computer-mediated format, or (2) the program is advertised as available through online delivery.

"Physical Presence" is a measure by which a state defines the status of an educational institution's presence within the state.

"Private Institution" is defined as an educational institution controlled by a private individual(s) or by a nongovernmental agency, usually supported by other than public funds, and operated by other than publicly elected or appointed officials. These institutions may be either for-profit or not-for-profit.

"Program" is a sequentially organized series of courses and other educational experiences designed to culminate in an academic degree or certificate. For purposes of this policy, instructional program, academic program, and course of study will be considered synonymous. Programs offered through distance education must also meet the requirements outlined in section 3.16.11 of this policy.

"Regional Compact" refers to the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, New England Board of Higher Education, Southern Regional Education Board, or Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

"State" means any state, commonwealth, district, or organized territory of the United States.

"State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)" is an agreement among member states, districts and U.S. territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs.

"State Portal Agency" means the single agency designated by each SARA member state to serve as the interstate point of contact for SARA questions, complaints, and other communications.

"Synchronous" learning takes place when learners and/or instructors are

in different geographical locations but are able to interact (or meet) in real-time using specific enabling technology.

"Traditional Off-Campus Courses and Programs" are those taught for credit at a location which is remote from the originating campus of a State System institution and is not considered part of the institution's physical plant.

3.16.3 Applicability of Credit

Credit awarded for the completion of courses offered through distance education and traditional off-campus instruction is fully applicable toward the satisfaction of requirements for academic degrees and certificates consistent with State Regents' and institutional residence and degree requirements.

3.16.4 Program and Course Principles and Procedures

The principles and procedures in this section apply to distance education and traditional off-campus programs or courses as indicated.

Note: Courses and programs offered at higher education centers, branch campuses, or constituent agencies are not considered traditional off-campus or distance education offerings as defined in this policy. Branch campuses and constituent agencies may offer courses or programs as indicated in the State Regents' *Functions of Public Institutions* policy.

A. Online and Traditional Off-Campus Programs. Institutional requests for new online or traditional off-campus educational programs shall be submitted in the same manner as on-campus program requests. (See the State Regents' *Academic Program Approval* policy).

B. Online Programs. Existing programs offered through online delivery shall be submitted as specified in 3.16.11 and 3.16.12.

C. Distance Education Programs in Other Formats. Existing courses and programs offered through distance education formats that do not meet the requirements outlined in 3.16.11do not require program approval. However, courses offered through these methodologies remain within the jurisdiction of this policy and must meet requirements as specified in 3.16.5.

D. Traditional Off-Campus. The principles outlined below apply to section 3.16.13.

1. Courses and programs authorized for offering on-campus at State System institutions will form the basis for traditional off-campus offerings at State System institutions. Institutions may offer approved on-campus courses within their geographic service area without separate approval by the State Regents.

2. An institution may offer approved on-campus courses outside its geographic service area without separate approval by the State Regents provided that an institutional off-campus agreement exists with the

institution closer to the class site and is on file at the State Regents' office. Courses outside an institution's geographic service area shall be for a specified time period as outlined in the off-campus agreement.

3.16.5 Academic Standards

The section applies to distance education, blended, and traditional off-campus courses and programs. Certain standards may address particular delivery methods as appropriate. Overall, the expectation is that there is no difference in the academic quality, academic standards including admission and retention standards, and student evaluation standards for courses and programs regardless of delivery method. All State Regents' and institutional policies, standards, and guidelines for on-campus instruction apply to distance education and traditional off-campus instruction. Some of the language in this section is from C-RAC *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning)*.

Distance Education and traditional off-campus courses and programs must meet the following academic standards.

A. Faculty. The work shall be taught by a person qualified for appointment to the faculty of the institution proposing to award the credit. All appointments must be recommended by the academic unit awarding the credit and approved through the established procedures for academic appointments.

   1. The institution shall provide training to ensure technological competency required for teaching at a distance and create professional development opportunities which are based on best practices in distance learning pedagogy.

   2. The originating institution shall appoint qualified faculty with content expertise to provide oversight and ensure that the course objectives, curriculum, and academic requirements are equivalent to those for the courses and programs taught in a traditional format on-campus.

B. Faculty/Student interaction. Institutions offering distance education courses and programs shall make provisions for appropriate real-time or delayed interaction among students and between faculty and students.

C. Academic integrity. The integrity of student coursework and credibility of credits and degrees awarded must be ensured. Methods for ensuring academic integrity shall be in place, including methods for administering exams.

D. Student confidentiality. There shall be methods in place to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of students' personal data.

E. Identity verification. Institutions shall have an appropriate method to verify the identity of students taking distance courses. More detailed information regarding identity

verification can be found in the *Academic Affairs Procedures Handbook.*

F.   Advertising. Institutions that advertise to recruit students must provide adequate and accurate information. This includes, but is not limited to the following: admissions requirements, computer and software requirements, estimated or average program costs, skills needed to complete the programs, curriculum design and time frame for which courses are offered, estimated time to complete, expectations for any required face-to-face, on-ground work (internships, specialized laboratory work), other services available, etc.

G.   Learning resources. Students shall have access to facilities and learning materials (information resources, library, laboratories, equipment, etc.) on essentially the same basis as students in the same program or courses taught at the originating campus. This includes library privileges for students through interlibrary loan and/or electronic resource access, including online access to catalogs, databases, and other materials.

H.   Academic calendar requirements. The standards observed relating to the number of course meetings and total time spent in the course or in satisfying the course requirements shall be comparable to those observed on the originating campus. An exception to course meeting time is allowed as defined in the Competency-Based Learning (CBL) section in the State Regents' *Academic Calendars* policy. Institutions utilizing this exception must have documented and validated methods for students to demonstrate competencies, student assessment, and awarding academic credit as required by the CBL section.

I.   Admission, retention, assessment. The standards for student admission, retention, and assessment shall be the same as those standards observed for the same courses or programs on the originating campus. Similarly, the applicable concurrent enrollment policies apply (see the State Regents' *Institutional Admission and Retention and Assessment and Remediation* policies).

J.   Student services. Students shall have access to program guidance and academic support services, including admissions, enrollment, academic advisement, career counseling, enrollment/registration, tutoring, financial aid, and related services on the same basis as the students located on the originating campus. Online programs shall make these services available to students in electronic format using the working assumption that these students will not be physically present on-campus.

K.   Technical support system. Students in distance education or off-campus courses or programs and faculty shall have access to appropriate technical support services. A comprehensive technical support system will be defined and available for all

hardware, software and delivery systems specified by the institution as required for the courses and program. The support system must include a process for responding to technical problems in a timely manner.

L.   Equipment and software/tools. Institutions offering courses or programs in the formats outlined in this policy shall provide students with accurate information about the technology requirements necessary to complete the course requirements. Students must be informed in clear and understandable terms of the electronic or computer resources necessary for successful completion of the class, including, but not limited to, word processing and other productivity tools, audio/visual components, e-mail, and Internet services. Institutions that serve as a learning site by hosting distance education or traditional off-campus courses or programs delivered by another institution shall provide access to facilities with the electronic or computer resources necessary for successful completion of the class.

3.16.6   Institutional Assessment

The program assessments, which are detailed in the State Regents *Academic Program Review* and *Assessment and Remediation* policies, shall apply to all programs offered via distance education or at traditional off-campus locations. Additionally, all traditional off-campus and distance education courses and programs shall be reviewed in accordance with the originating institution's internal assessment plan. The result of the annual internal assessment plan shall be used to ensure the continuous improvement of program and course content.

3.16.7   Copyright and Intellectual Property

Institutions must have policies in place that communicate copyright laws regarding the appropriate use of text, images, graphic materials, tables, videos, audios, and other protected works.

3.16.8   Out-of-State Activity by Oklahoma Institutions

A.   Courses Offered at Physical Locations Out-of-State

The research universities are authorized on a limited basis to carry out programs and projects on a national and international scale. Other institutions seeking approval to offer courses at physical locations out-of-state must ensure through documentation in a prescribed format that all applicable State Regents' policies are followed, with special attention given those pertaining to educational standards, fiscal provisions, and reporting. (See the State Regents' *Functions of Public Institutions* policy). A State System institution offering courses at physical locations out-of-state shall seek approval and gain authorization from the state agencies or accrediting associations in whose jurisdiction the courses are to be available. Because the primary responsibility of a State System institution is to serve the citizens of the state of Oklahoma, when submitting

this request, an institution shall document that offering courses out-of-state will in no way diminish the performance of that responsibility. This documentation--when audited and upon State Regents' approval --will be provided by the institution when seeking approval from the appropriate state agencies and accrediting associations. Upon approval from the appropriate entities, the institution shall comply with any requirements within those jurisdictions.

B.   Delivering Distance Education Out-of-State/Limited Out-of-State Activity

Based on the State System's commitment to serve the citizens of Oklahoma, institutions shall primarily utilize distance education offerings to meet the needs of students residing within the state. However, an institution offering distance education to students residing out-of-state or conducting limited activity within another state shall:

1.   seek approval and gain authorization from the appropriate state agencies in a state in which the institution is conducting limited activity and/or in a state in which a current distance education student resides. Upon approval from the appropriate entities, an institution shall comply with all the requirements within those jurisdictions; or

2.   seek approval from the State Regents to participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). Public and private institutions which are approved to participate in the SARA shall only engage in activities which are permissible under the SARA. Therefore, when a public or private SARA institution plans to engage in activity which is not permissible under the SARA, including conducting distance education related activities in non-SARA participating states, the public or private institution shall seek approval and gain authorization from the appropriate state agencies and comply with any requirements as noted above.

3.16.9   State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

An Oklahoma public or private institution wishing to participate in the SARA, which meets the eligibility criteria below, shall seek approval from the State Regents. Pursuant to 70 O.S. §3206, the State Regents have the authority to initiate, and preside over, Oklahoma's membership in the SARA. As the state portal agency, the State Regents shall administer the initial approval and ongoing oversight of SARA activities which are performed by Oklahoma public and private institutions. Nevertheless, the State Regents will honor the approval and oversight of SARA state portal agencies permitting out-of-state institutional SARA members to offer distance education and conduct limited activity, which are acceptable under the SARA policies and standards, in Oklahoma. This section outlines the institutional eligibility criteria and compliance

standards associated with participation in this voluntary agreement. More detailed information regarding the SARA application and approval process can be found in the *Academic Affairs Procedures Handbook.*

A. Eligibility

To be eligible for SARA participation, a public or private institution shall have its principal campus or central administrative unit domiciled in Oklahoma and be a degree-granting institution that is accredited by an agency recognized by the USDE. Additionally, a private institution shall have the minimum requisite USDE issued financial responsibility index score, on the most recent year's review, to participate in the SARA. Private institutions which do not attain the required requisite financial responsibility score on the most recent year's financial review, but receive a score within the range which NC-SARA permits states to grant provisional acceptance, may seek conditional approval. Consistent with the USDE, the State Regents deems public institutions financially responsible, for the purposes of the SARA, based on their status as state or municipal institutions

B. Compliance

To participate in the SARA, a public or private institution shall adhere to the principles and practices prescribed in the SARA policies and standards document. Additional information relating to the SARA policies and standards can also be found in the *Academic Affairs Procedures Handbook*.

C. SARA Violations

Alleged SARA policy and standard violations shall be reviewed by State Regents staff. Prior to a conducting a formal investigation, the Chancellor will notify the public or private institution president of the alleged violation(s) and address the nature of the review. Upon request, a public or private institution under investigation shall provide all information relating to the alleged violation, which may include issuing temporary access to specific distance courses. At the conclusion of the review, the Chancellor will submit a SARA compliance report to the institution's president detailing the findings of the investigation as well as a recommendation regarding the institution's SARA membership status.

1. Recommendations

The recommendations must be consistent with this policy and will be one of the following:

a. Revocation

The institution has committed an egregious SARA policy and/or standard violation. In instances when violations of this magnitude

occur, it is recommended that the institution's SARA membership be revoked.

b.   Probationary Status

The institution has committed a non-egregious SARA policy and/or standard violation. It is recommended that the institution continue participating in the SARA on a probationary basis provided that the institution modifies practices and makes adjustments which are necessary to comply with the SARA policy and/or standard. Corrective measures and timelines for improvements will be detailed in the compliance report. The date of a follow-up evaluation to review the institution's compliance with the SARA policy and/or standard that was violated will also be noted in the compliance report. A probationary period shall not exceed 12 consecutive months. Failure to meet the terms and conditions of the probationary status or committing an egregious violation during the probationary period shall result in a recommendation to revoke an institution's SARA membership.

c.   Continued SARA Participation

There is no sufficient evidence to substantiate that the institution violated the SARA policy and/or standard that was investigated. Therefore, it is recommended that the institution continue participating in the SARA.

2.   Correspondence:

An institution receiving a compliance report with a recommendation to have its SARA membership revoked will have 30 days from the date of the compliance report to inform the Chancellor of any objections it may have thereto. If objections are not received within the 30 day time period, the SARA compliance report will be forwarded to the State Regents for their consideration and action.

3.   Institutional Appeal and State Regents Action

The Chancellor will submit the SARA compliance report and any applicable documentation relating to the appeal to the State Regents for their consideration. Throughout the appeals process, the institution shall maintain the SARA status it held prior to the compliance investigation.

In response to an objection, the Chancellor will convene a neutral three-member panel of educators to review the objections. The appeals process will be directed by the Procedures for Denial, Revocation, or Nonrenewal in Accreditation, of the State Regents' *Institutional Accreditation* policy. Upon completion of a hearing, the review panel will submit a report to the State Regents addressing the institution's objections as well as all records that were provided during the proceeding. At the next possible regularly scheduled State Regents meeting, the State Regents will review and discuss the SARA compliance report, the panel review report, and the official documentation pertaining to the objection. The State Regents meeting will also serve as an opportunity for the institution to state remarks to support their objection; however, no new evidentiary materials will be received at this meeting. The State Regents consideration of the matters and action taken thereon will constitute a final State Regents review of the institution's objections to the compliance report. Further information regarding the appeal process can be found in the *Academic Affairs Procedures Handbook.*

D.   Post SARA Activity

A public or private institution which has its membership in the SARA revoked, is not reauthorized to continue participation in the SARA, or voluntarily withdraws from SARA participation shall seek approval and gain authorization, from the appropriate state agencies, in each state in which the institution is conducting limited activity and/or in each state in which a current distance education student resides. Upon approval from the appropriate entities, the public or private institution shall comply with all requirements within those jurisdictions.

3.16.10 Courses and Programs Offered in Oklahoma by Out-of-State Institutions

Out-of-state institutions planning to offer courses for credit in Oklahoma may do so after satisfying the conditions contained in the State Regents' *Institutional Accreditation* policy.

3.16.11 Program Approval Procedures for Online Programs

Institutions that have not been approved previously to offer online programs are required to request approval as follows: (1) if programs are offered in such a manner that an individual student can take 100 percent of the courses for the major through online delivery or other computer-mediated format; or (2) the program is advertised as available through online delivery or other computer-mediated format. For the purpose of this policy, major is defined as courses in the discipline of the student's declared degree program, excluding support courses, general education courses, and elective courses. Criteria for approval are based on qualitative consideration and the compatibility of the requested offering with the institution's mission and capacity as described below. Once an

institution establishes that a verifiable structure is in place including appropriate student and faculty support systems and other required quality standards, subsequent programs may be requested through an abbreviated process (see section 3.16.12).

A.   Program Request Procedures

The institution requesting the State Regents' approval of an existing academic program to be offered in an online format will adhere to the following procedures.

1.   The institutional president must submit a letter of intent to the Chancellor to initiate the request. The Chancellor will then inform the other institutional presidents of this request and provide the opportunity for comment, questions and protests, as well as request for copies of the proposals when received. This "letter of intent" will be active for a period of one year and must be received by the Chancellor at least 30 days prior to the program request.

2.   Submission of a Program Request

Upon the Chancellor's receipt of the Program Request from an institution, copies of the Program Request will be provided to institutions that have asked for a copy. Institutions will have 30 days from the date the copy is sent to provide comment, submit questions, or protest the proposed program.

a.   The institutional governing board must approve the program request prior to the institutional president formally submitting the request to the Chancellor for the State Regents' consideration.

b.   The Chancellor will submit a recommendation to the State Regents.

c.   The State Regents will take one of three actions:

i.   disapprove the program with written explanation to the institution of the reasons for this action;

ii.   defer the program request until the institution meets specified criteria or provides additional information; or

iii.   approve the program for offering in an online format as long as academic standards and policy are followed.

B.   Program Proposal Content:

The program request must address how the institution will meet the Academic Standards specified in section 3.16.5 and the criteria listed below:

1. Mission. The proposal must contain a statement of the program's connection to the institution's mission.

2. Method of Delivery. Describe the method that will be used to deliver the program content (e.g., Blackboard, Desire2Learn, etc.) and the major features that will facilitate learning.

3. Student demand. Evidence of sufficient student and/or employer need for the program in this learning mode. Evidence should demonstrate employers' preference for graduates of the proposed program and target student audience.

4. Duplication. Demonstration that the program does not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs in the state (see the State Regents' *Academic Program Approval Policy* policy).

5. Curriculum. A list of the curriculum will be provided with a request to offer an existing program online.

6. Requests for new programs for offering on-campus and/or through an online format will be submitted for initial approval through the *Academic Program Approval* policy.

7. Program cost. Productivity goals related to the cost and funding of the proposed program must be included in the proposal. (see the State Regents' *Academic Program* policy).

3.16.12 Approval of Subsequent Online Programs

Once the State Regents have approved an institution's offering a program through online delivery or other computer-mediated format, additional programs may be considered that do not require the comprehensive approval method described above. The process for requesting additional existing programs (new programs must be requested through the *Academic Program Approval* policy) through online delivery or other computer-mediated format is for the President to send the following information to the Chancellor: 1) letter of intent 2) the name of the program, 3) delivery method/s, 4) information related to population served and student demand, 5) cost and financing. The State Regents will consider the program request and take the appropriate action. If the program is approved, no additional action is required.

3.16.13 Off-Campus Geographic Service Areas

This section outlines principles and procedures that institutions will use to coordinate traditional off-campus offerings. Coordination with nearby institutions should take place prior to proceeding with traditional off-campus offerings, particularly as it relates to duplication. The geographic service area maps for two-year and four-year institutions shall serve as a reference to detail each institution's geographic service area perimeters.

The primary criterion is that each state institution will have first priority for offering programs and courses consistent with its mission within its approved service area. However, no institution shall deliver higher education services at any site whose location is closer to another institution than the institution desiring to offer the service ("home rule") without having an off-campus agreement on file with the State Regents.

A.   Community Colleges

A map is on file at the State Regents' office that defines the service areas in which the community colleges will have first priority for offering programs and courses consistent with their respective missions.

B.   Regional Universities

A map is on file at the State Regents' office that defines the service areas in which regional universities will have first priority for offering programs and courses consistent with their respective missions.

C.   Research Universities

The research universities will have first priority for offering courses and programs consistent with their respective missions. In addition, to the extent resources are available, research universities are authorized to offer programs and courses on a national and international scale.

D.   Branch Campuses and Constituent Agencies

Courses and programs generally may not be extended off-campus from branch sites or constituent agencies. The technical branches have a statewide responsibility for offering unique technical or specialized programs when expressed need is documented and when the institution's resources permit the meeting of that need.

E.   Unique Programs

Institutions with unique programs will also have statewide geographic responsibility for offering courses and programs when need is documented and resources are available.

F.   Historical Presence

Existing authorization for programs that have a historical presence in a service area other than in the assigned service area of the ~~college or university~~ institution offering the program will be honored.

G.   UCSO and UCPC

Requests for traditional off-campus courses in the proximity of the UCSO or UCPC shall be coordinated with these centers.

When geographical conflicts occur, institutional officials with sufficient authority will meet to resolve the geographical conflict prior to proceeding with the course offering. Any geographical conflict not

resolved at this level will be submitted to the Chancellor who may refer the issue to the Presidents' Academic Affairs Committee, which is advisory to the Chancellor. The State Regents will ultimately be responsible for conflict resolution.

3.16.14 Fiscal Provisions for Distance Education and Traditional Off-campus Instruction

A. It is the intent of the State Regents that, to the extent possible through the authorized fee structure, direct instructional costs be recovered for distance education and traditional off-campus offerings. Direct instructional costs include, but are not limited to, faculty salaries, fringe benefits, materials and supplies, printing, and travel. All new facilities for traditional off-campus offerings shall be provided at no expense to the state.

B. Contract Credit Course Fee. Pursuant to 70 O.S.§3219.3 (2001), the section authorizes the State Regents "….to establish special fees for delivery of courses and programs to governmental entities, including but not limited to the military, profit and nonprofit associations, corporations and other private entities in an amount sufficient to cover the cost of delivery of such courses and programs."

C. This fee allows institutions to negotiate a separate special fee, up to full cost, for delivery of credit courses with business, industry and governmental entities. If the institution negotiates a special fee, the assessment and collection of additional fees from students (resident tuition, nonresident tuition, other special fees, student activity, health facilities fees, etc.) shall be waived.

3.16.15 Oklahoma Learning Site State Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

To achieve the potential and promise of learning sites, the following state goals with accompanying objectives are established. Also detailed are key strategies to achieve the state goals.

A. Statement of Goals

1. Improve the quality of life of Oklahoma citizens.

2. Improve Oklahoma's rankings on national economic indicators – achieve a condition in which Oklahoma's growth rate on national economic indicators is consistently above the national average.

B. Objectives

The State System is committed to pursuing a public agenda for higher education encompassing the following objectives:

1. Provide access for citizens and employers in all geographic areas of the state to needed academic programs and associated support services.

2. Enhance the capacity of Oklahoma's institutions to meet the needs of the individual and the corporate citizens of the state. This capacity should have these

characteristics:

a. Accessibility: Oklahoma institutions will have the capacity to deliver educational content to all parts of the state at appropriate times and in appropriate formats.

b. Programmatic relevance: Consistent with this policy, Oklahoma institutions will have the capacity to provide needed programs or, if necessary, to acquire programs from out of state. The authority to acquire programs from out-of-state institutions shall be based on demonstrated demand and a State Regents' determination that ongoing programmatic capacity should not be created in the state.

c. Quality: As detailed in this policy, Oklahoma institutions will have the collective capacity to provide programs that are competitive in the marketplace with regard to both academic quality and the capacity to be delivered at off-campus locations.

d. Responsiveness: Oklahoma's higher education institutions will respond and will be provided the incentives to respond to client needs in a timely fashion. This responsiveness applies to both academic programs and problem-solving/technical assistance.

e. Cost-effectiveness: Oklahoma will enhance the quality of existing educational assets (physical and human) and utilize these assets to serve a broader array of clients. Decisions to invest in new educational assets will be made on a very selective basis.

C. Strategies to Increase the Educational Attainment Levels of the State's Adult Population

1. A sub-goal is to reduce the within state variation in educational attainment (i.e., reducing the proportion of the population in the lowest categories of educational attainment).

2. Promote the development of an economy that fully utilizes the talents of a more highly educated citizenry.

3. A sub-goal is to reduce the disparities among the state's regions and between urban and rural areas in economic strength (e.g., capacity to attract and retain business, industry, and other employers who provide employment for an educated workforce).

3.16.16 Designation and Operation of Learning Sites

The 25 public colleges and universities, the UCSO and the UCPC are officially designated as learning sites. To most effectively meet the educational needs of the state, the institutional branch campuses must play active roles. At this time, the branch campuses are not officially designated as learning sites. Nonetheless, the home institutions should exercise the philosophy inherent in the learning site initiatives at their branch campuses and work aggressively to meet community educational needs.

These designated learning sites provide geographic access to nearly all Oklahoma residents. Therefore, rather than proactively seeking the development of new sites in additional communities, the State Regents will focus attention on ensuring the capacity of these initial sites to function effectively as learning sites.

The State Regents recognize that communities in addition to those where initial site designations are made may want a learning site as one component of a broader community development strategy. The State Regents will decide the designation of such locations as learning sites on a case-by-case basis. Among the factors that will be considered in making a decision regarding such a designation:

A. The proximity of the proposed site to one previously designated and the extent and nature of adverse impacts on the existing learning sites.

B. The availability of appropriate physical facilities. These facilities can be located either in existing structures – libraries, schools, community centers, or corporate offices – or in structures constructed expressly for this purpose. In the latter case, funding for construction must come from sources other than the state.

C. The availability of necessary technology (bandwidth, computing capacity, interactive video, etc.).

D. Provision for ensuring the availability of the staffing necessary to offer required administrative and student support services at the learning site.

3.16.17 Responsibility

Consistent with the State Regents' functional assignments, each institution is assigned a geographic area within which it, as a learning site, is charged with ensuring that priority educational needs in their assigned areas are met.

In the case of learning sites that are not based at an existing institution, the State Regents will designate an institution as responsible, or the State Regents will assume the responsibility for identifying the educational needs and providers with the advice of clients and local community stakeholders.

3.16.18 Coordination of Multiple Learning Sites in the Same Area

There are instances in which multiple learning sites serve residents of the same geographic area. Initially, the State Regents will recognize each

such learning site as equal within the context of this policy. These learning sites are encouraged to develop a mechanism for working cooperatively to identify and arrange for provision of educational services to residents of their responsibility area.

After monitoring the level of service delivery relative to community need, the practice detailed above may be altered and one or more learning sites may be selected to assume a leadership position in assessing local needs and devising a response to those needs.

3.16.19 Program Approval and Review

This policy and the State Regents' *Academic Program Approval* policy *and Academic Program Review* policy guide new program approval and review.

Consistent with the State Regents' Academic Planning and Resource Allocation initiative, priority for investments in programmatic capacity will be given to selective improvement of existing programs rather than to the creation of new academic programs. The state's existing educational institutions' programmatic capacity is to be utilized to extend the reach to students not currently served by these programs. Institutional identification of programs for selective improvements is to be incorporated into the institutions' academic program review process.

New programs will be approved when, in addition to meeting the requirements in the related State Regents' policies cited above:

A. No acceptable providers either within or outside the state of a needed program can be identified.

B. The State Regents determine that the new program is in the long-term interests of the institution and the state.

C. Opportunities for improved quality, delivery, and cost savings can be achieved through collaboration of several institutions in the development of programs, courses, or modules for off-campus delivery.

3.16.20 Planning

A. Select programmatic areas in which the institution has or intends to develop the capacity to deliver high-quality learning opportunities at sites distant from the campus.

B. Identify areas where the institution should consider collaborating with other institutions to develop joint programs, courses, or modules for both distance and on-campus delivery.

C. Identify areas, in conjunction with the institution's learning site designation, where the institution should import programs, courses, or modules from other institutions to serve both learning site and on-campus students.

D. Identify programs or courses for redesign (perhaps in collaboration with other institutions) to be better suited to distance delivery and/or to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and flexibility of on-campus delivery.

3.16.21 Host Institutions

The objective of new fiscal provisions and incentives for the host institutions/learning sites is founded on the need to develop and maintain essential infrastructure and support services and to incentivize the importing of courses and programs to meet priority needs in the region.

A.   Capacity Building/Sustaining Grants (Receive Site Funding)

Each learning site recognized by the State Regents will receive an annual grant to be used in the creation and maintenance of the basic infrastructure necessary for successful functioning of a site. In the initial years, it is anticipated that the funds will be utilized primarily to equip interactive video classrooms, computer labs, etc. In subsequent years, it is anticipated that these funds will be utilized to replace equipment on a regular cycle and provide some funding for necessary support staff. Since capacity building/sustaining grants are largely institutional grants, institutions with more than one site (a branch campus, center, etc. in addition to the main campus) are encouraged to target their funding on those sites where there is the least potential overlap with other institutions.

B.   Service Level Rewards

In addition to capacity building grants, as funds become available learning sites will be funded for the amount of service provided to clients in the responsibility areas which they serve. As additional funds become available, funding officially designated higher education sites at appropriate levels is the recommended first priority and incentive funding is the recommended second priority. The greater the service provided, the greater the funding that flows to the learning site. This funding mechanism component is based on only service delivered by an institution other that the host institutions, including services produced by another institution that replace those that would normally be taught by an institution's own faculty. (A methodology to determine service level rewards will be developed.)

C.   Priority Investment Fund

To the extent funding is available, the State Regents will develop a priority investment fund tied to economic and workforce development objectives set in cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. The objective of the priority investment funds is to make it cost feasible for institutions to provide new, high-priority offerings for low numbers of potential learners in sparsely populated regions. The intent of the fund will be to ensure that priority programs and services are available and that the target audience can gain access to the services through learning sites.

3.16.22 Provider Institutions

Distance Education Curriculum Development Fund. Because provider institutions need support to develop and deliver high-quality distance education courses, modules, or programs, the State Regents will expand on the cooperative curriculum development project by creating and maintaining a curriculum development fund, as funds become available. The intent of this fund will be to support initiatives from institutions, consortia of institutions, or inter-institutional teams to develop new curricula, modules, or new educational methods. Many of the needs in Oklahoma are likely to be in locations and fields where new approaches to curricular design and delivery will be necessary. To the extent funds are available; grants under this fund will be made annually on a competitive basis. The purpose of the grants will be to develop courses that can be: a) effectively delivered to off-campus locations and b) simultaneously utilized on-campus to deliver instruction in a more effective and efficient way.

3.16.23 Reporting

A.   All distance education and traditional off-campus course data will be an integral part of each institution's unitized data system.

B.   Institutions will utilize the Unitized Data System (UDS) to annually report distance education and traditional off-campus courses to the State Regents.

C.   Copies of signed and executed institutional traditional off-campus agreements will be provided to the State Regents' office prior to the offering of the course(s).

D.   Institutions will annually report on learning site operations in the Academic Plan submitted to the State Regents in July each year. Periodically, a report on the status of learning sites will be published by the State Regents.

3.16.24 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. Benchmarks for evaluating the policy's effectiveness should be based on the academic quality of the courses and programs and the cost and accessibility to Oklahoma citizens. Additional measures for evaluating student success should include retention, grades, graduation rates, general satisfaction with course quality, methods of delivery, and academic support services.