Distance Education is defined, for the purposes of this document, "...as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ correspondence study, or audio, video, or computer technologies." (NCA-CIHE, *Handbook of Accreditation*, 1997, p.170)

The purpose of the *Principles of Good Practice in Distance Education* is to identify the expectations and guidelines for participation in the South Dakota Electronic University Consortium. Each institution that seeks to offer a distance education program or course will be asked to ensure that it complies with these principles. The principles will be used to:

- Guide the development of programs and courses delivered by distance to ensure that characteristics of good teaching and learning are addressed;
- Ensure the quality of the program and course;
- Ensure that curriculum is ready, both in course readiness and delivery readiness before a program or course is offered at a distance; and
- Review the quality of the program or course before it is sent for listing in the Electronic University Consortium.

Basic Assumptions

Several assumptions are central to these principles:

- The program or course offered at a distance 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.
- The institution's programs and courses holding specialized accreditation meet the same requirements when offered by distance education methods.
- The institution may be a single institution or a consortium of institutions.
- These principles are generally applicable to degree or certificate programs and to credit and non-credit courses.
- It is the institution's responsibility to review educational programs and courses it provides through distance education methods and to ensure continued compliance with these principles.
- Distance education courses and programs will be assessed with the same rigor as on-campus courses/programs.
- Distance education should be inclusive of the institution's recognition of faculty performance, recognition and awards.
- Faculty must be qualified and compensation must be fair and equitable.

The Principles

Guiding principles for the delivery of distance education within the South Dakota Electronic University are in six major areas: Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty Responsibilities and Support, Institutional Role and Mission, Library and Learning Resources, Students and Student Services, and Evaluation and Assessment.

Curriculum and Instruction

- Academic guidelines for all programs or courses offered at a distance are the same as those for other courses or programs delivered at the institution where they originate.
- Student learning outcomes in programs or courses delivered at a distance should be comparable to student learning outcomes in programs or courses offered at the campus where they originate.
- Each program and course results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.
- Each program and course provides for appropriate real-time or delayed interaction between faculty and students and among students.
- The institution ensures that the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs and courses.
- The institution ensures the currency of materials, programs, and courses.
- The institution's distance education policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products.

Faculty Responsibility and Support

- The institution's faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight over distance education courses ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction.
- The institution provides appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance education.
- The program/institution ensures appropriate training for faculty who teaches using technology.
- The program/institution provides faculty with adequate equipment, software and communications for interaction with students, institutions and other faculty.
- The institution's faculty assumes the responsibility to recognize the technological requirements and skills for course and program delivery.

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.

Library and Learning Resources

- The institution ensures that appropriate learning resources are available to students.

Student and Academic Services

- The institution provides students with clear, complete, timely and equivalent information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technological competence and skills, technical equipment

requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.

- The institution assisted by EUC provides to students advertising, recruiting, and admissions information equivalent to campus, adequately and accurately representing the programs, requirements, and services available.
- The institution assisted by EUC provides adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, registration, delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling.
- The institution assesses student capability to succeed in distance education programs and applies this information to admission and recruiting policies and decisions.
- The institution provides an adequate means for resolving student complaints.

Evaluation and Assessment

- The institution agrees to evaluate annually the outcomes of its distancelearning offerings. Criteria for evaluation include the following:

    1. Program and course effectiveness, including annual assessments of student learning outcomes, student recruitment and retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.
    2. Assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course at the completion of the program or course.
    3. Accuracy of program or course announcements and electronic catalog entries.
    4. Reasonable levels of resources available to students.
    5. Equivalent academic guidelines for distance courses or programs, as compared to those same classes offered through traditional delivery methods.
    6. Appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students.
    7. Reasonable levels of student services, including advisement, admission, registration and scheduling and information regarding financial aid.
    8. Evaluation and assessment will include the effectiveness of collaboration efforts.The purpose of evaluation and assessment should be formative and summative.

- Sources of evaluation and assessment include students, faculty, administration, and other relevant parties.
- Access to evaluation and assessment data must be available for quality assurance and improvement, and be in compliance with the COHE contract.
- Evaluation and assessment should be tied to self-studies for accreditation.Evaluation and assessment should be authentic, have integrity, be cost effective, and responsive to economies of scale.
- Assessment should involve three distinct areas of (1) content, (2) instruction, and (3) delivery technology.

Academic Honesty

- Guidelines ensuring academic honesty for all programs or courses offered at a distance shall be comparable to those guidelines used for other courses or programs delivered at the institution where they originate.