

4.4 PUBLICATIONS

#1 of 2

Content and Design of Publications

*(Page 37, Line 5): The content and design of publications produced and distributed by an institution **must** be accurate and consistent in describing the institution and rigorously adhere to principles of good educational practice.*

USA publishes many documents to provide information for students, prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community at large. USA is committed to publishing accurate information with consistent descriptions of the University and its mission. Official publications produced and distributed by USA are reviewed and approved by appropriate administrative and academic units for content; stylistic matters are handled by Publication Services, which has developed a style guide to maintain consistency and accuracy (*Standards: University Editorial Style Manual*, Document 4.4: 1 of 2a).

The major USA publications include the annual bulletins (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin* and *College of Medicine Bulletin*), the *Lowdown: A Student Handbook*, and course schedules for each semester. Other important publications undergoing careful review for accuracy and consistency include brochures from specific departments and programs along with various publicity and recruitment materials. Below is a list of further examples, most being available to students and the public through the Admissions Office. The list is not inclusive; numerous other publications exist. (See also Document 4.4: 1 of 2b)

Examples of College, Department, and Program Publications

- *Air Force ROTC*
- *Mitchell College of Business*
- *College of Education*
- *Cooperative Education Program*
- *Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies, Adult Degree Program*
- *Department of Emergency Medical Services Education*
- *Developmental Studies Program*
- *Electronic Commerce*
- *Engineering Cooperative Education Program*
- *Essence: A Program for New Students*
- *Foreign Languages and Literatures*
- *Guide to College of Allied Health Professions*
- *Guide to College of Engineering*
- *Guide to College of Nursing*
- *Guide to Meteorology Program*
- *Guide to the Fine Arts*
- *Health Pre-Professions Program*
- *The Humanities*
- *Natural & Physical Sciences*
- *Pre-Law Program*
- *School of Computer and Information Sciences*
- *Social Sciences*
- *Sport & Event Marketing*

Examples of Graduate Program Publications

- *Ph.D. Program: Department of Communication Science and Disorders*
- *Graduate Program in Basic Medical Sciences*
- *MBA Online*
- *Graduate Program in Microbiology and Immunology*
- *Graduate Program in Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology*
- *Graduate Studies in Physiology*
- *Master of Public Administration*
- *PhD Program: Department of Structural and Cellular Biology*
- *Ph.D. Program: Instructional Design and Development*
- *Ph.D. Program in Marine Sciences*

Examples of Guides and Service Publications

- *Calendar*
- *Campus Map*
- *Career Services Center*
- *CornerStone for your Future*
- *Counseling and Testing Services*
- *Degrees of Distinction*
- *Facts for Juniors: Class of 2002*
- *Guide to Department of Housing*
- *Guide to Expenses 2001-2002*
- *Guide to Transferring to the University of South Alabama*
- *Guide to Scholarships and Financial Aid*
- *Information for Adult Students*
- *Instate Tuition: Mississippi counties*
- *Instate Tuition: Florida counties*
- *Questions and Answers about State Residency*
- *Scholarships for New Students, 2001-2002*
- *Student Health Services*
- *Undergraduate Application for Admission*
- *USA Online*

In addition to the review of hardcopy documents such as those noted above, the USA webmaster continually monitors the accuracy and consistency of official University websites.

Relevant policies for USA websites can be found at

www.southalabama.edu/webservices/webpolicies.html (also see Document 4.4:1 of 2c). USA

also has an Internet/Website Advisory Committee to assist in the design consistency of

University websites (Document 4.4: 1 of 2d).

Because of the ease and the proliferation of electronic publications on campus and their decentralized production and distribution, there might be departmental and individual websites that are not wholly consistent with the more official sites overseen by USA webmaster. The webmaster recommends that college or department webmasters be asked to update annually

those pages for which they are responsible. A template is under development for other college and departmental information, not contained in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin*, which would ensure material is presented in a consistent, accessible manner. Samples of the aforementioned publications are available for inspection in the Self-Study Office (Document 4.4:1 of 2e).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 2

Current Catalogs

*(Page 37, Line 9): An institution **must** make available to students and the public accurate, current catalogs or other official publications containing the following information: entrance requirements and procedures; admissions criteria and policies, including the admission of transfer students; rules of conduct; academic calendar; degree completion requirements; full-time faculty and degrees held; costs and financial obligations; refund policies; and other items relative to attending the institution or withdrawing from it.*

Official USA publications are available in print and are replicated in electronic format on the web. The two major publications addressing the specifics of this **must** statement are the

Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin and the *Lowdown: A Student Handbook*. These documents are also found on the Internet:

- *Bulletin, 2001-2002*: www.southalabama.edu/bulletin
- Previous *Bulletins*: www.southalabama.edu/bulletin/bulletins.html
- *Lowdown*: www.southalabama.edu/lowdown

Below is a summary of where the information listed in this **must** statement can be found in hardcopies of the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002* and in the *College of Medicine Bulletin, 2001-2002*.

Location of Important Information in
Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002

- | | |
|---|---|
| • admissions criteria and policies | pp. 7-8, 10-11 |
| • entrance requirements and procedures | pp. 7-8 |
| • admission of transfer students | pp. 8-9 |
| • rules of conduct | p. 21 (see also <i>Lowdown</i> , pp. 132-138) |
| • academic calendar | cover verso |
| • degree completion requirements | pp. 24-29 |
| • full-time faculty and degrees held | pp. 226-237 |
| • costs and financial obligations | pp. 12-19 |
| • refund policies | p. 13 |
| • other items relative to attending
or withdrawing | pp. 20-24 |

Location of Important Information in
College of Medicine Bulletin, 2000-2001 or
College of Medicine Student Handbook, 2001-2002

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| • entrance requirements and procedures | <i>COM Bulletin</i> , pp. 9-15 |
| • admissions criteria and policies | <i>COM Bulletin</i> , pp. 9-15 |
| • admission of transfer students | <i>COM Bulletin</i> , p. 12 |

- rules of conduct throughout *College of Medicine Student Handbook*, especially p. 51-52
- academic calendar *COM Bulletin*, p. 77
- degree completion requirements *COM Bulletin*, p. 15
- full-time faculty and degrees held *COM Bulletin*, pp. 35-74
- costs and financial obligations *COM Bulletin*, p. 21
- refund policies *College of Medicine Student Handbook*, pp. 69-70
- other items relative to attending or withdrawing *COM Bulletin*, pp. 18-19

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

4.5 DISTANCE LEARNING

#1 of 2

Program Goals

*(Page 37, Line 26): An institution **must** formulate clear and explicit goals for its distance learning programs and demonstrate that they are consistent with the institution's stated purpose.*

USA began its efforts in distance education in early 1998 with the formation of the Distance Delivery Task Force. The Task Force was composed of members from across the University and was charged to accomplish the following:

- Consider, develop, and recommend policy and procedures for distance (electronic) delivery of instruction to include quality assurance, proprietary issues, tuition, SACS and state approval procedures, participation in the SREB Electronic Campus, as well as other related matters;
- Identify areas within programs that have demonstrable potential for developing distance delivery components.

(See Document 4.5: 1 of 2 a from the Interim Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.)

The Task Force reviewed the current practices of sister institutions, supporting documents, and policies on accreditation and course approval from the Alabama Commission of Higher Education (ACHE) and the Southern Regional Education Board.

The initial work concluded with recommendations on the following:

- a policy related to distance education,
- a process for course/program approval using SACS and SREB guidelines, and
- a principles overview.

(See Document 4.5: 1 of 2b from the chair of the Distance Delivery Task Force.)

At the request of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, subcommittees were formed to continue specific work concerning several distance-education issues. The subcommittees focused upon the following:

- administrative issues for distance education courses,
- academic quality of online courses, and

- intellectual property rights.

Each subcommittee made recommendations relating to its delegated areas of concern.

These were forwarded to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and formed the basis for a *Distance Education Policy Handbook*. The following is a brief summary of each of these three areas.

Administrative Issues

It was determined that new courses delivered entirely via the Internet would require more information than currently required by the existing *Curriculum Action Form* (CAF). The memorandum to accompany CAF's was amended to include the distance-education format. Some existing courses will be modified to include a portion of their content delivery via the Internet, while new courses might be entirely Internet-based courses. The depth of information required is different in these cases. A transmittal sheet for online courses was developed for new proposed courses. The purpose of this documentation is to demonstrate that a course change or new proposal has been adequately considered and designed for all the technical requirements of an Internet-based course.

It was further determined that the existing curriculum-approval process (beginning at the department level and progressing through the college to the University Curriculum Committee) was robust and sufficient to include distance-education courses with the recommended additions to the forms and proposal memoranda.

Quality Assurance

Faculty member qualifications are examined prior to engagement in designing and/or delivering a distance-education course. The following three issues were identified and recommendations made.

1. Faculty recognition, training, and development issues:

- Teaching online courses should be equivalent to teaching on-campus courses.
- Faculty members developing an online course should have access to reasonable and necessary workshops, and other learning opportunities.
- Faculty developing e-College supported courses should attend e-College seminars and workshops.
- USA should provide continuing technical assistance for online course developers.

2. Minimum prerequisites for distance-education faculty:

- Establishment of a minimum level of technical competencies for designing and delivering distance-education courses. These basic skills include areas such as word processing, e-mail, computer operation, and Internet browsing.

3. Technical-development skills:

- Faculty involved in distance education can fall into one of three categories: course developer, course adapter/modifier, and course presenter. Each of

these categories have been assigned differing levels of required technical skills.

Intellectual Property Rights

A statement that outlines the intellectual property rights for online course development and instruction has been developed. USA adopted the *USA Distance Education Manual* (see Document 4.5: 1 of 2c from Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs). This policy outlines the rights of use, editing, and revision for any online course developed at USA. In addition, a USA committee is finalizing a Copyright Policy (see Document 4.5: 1 of 2d).

The *USA Online Learning Plan* (on file in the Self-Study Office) includes the following mission, goal, and objective statements:

- **Mission:** The mission of USA Online is to enhance existing programs and increase student access to educational opportunities. This mission is entirely consistent with the USA Mission Statement.
- **Goal:** A major goal of online learning activities at USA is to provide high quality and accessible educational experiences to both local and remote learners.
- **Objective:** An objective of online learning activities is to use all effective educational methodologies to enhance learning including electronic educational technology.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 2

Program Effectiveness

*(Page 37, Line 29): Further, an institution **must** demonstrate that it achieves these goals and that its distance learning programs are effective and comply with all applicable Criteria.*

The Associate Dean of the College of Education was appointed Distance Education/College Administrative Coordinator. A website is available at usaonline.southalabama.edu. USA began formally offering Internet-based education courses in fall of 1999. There has been steady growth in both the number of courses offered and the enrollment (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Growth in Distance-Education at USA

<u>Semester</u>	<u>Number of Courses Offered</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
Fall 1999	18	240
Spring 2000	27	342

Summer 2000	31	443
Fall 2000	49	700
Spring 2001	52	990

Each college, school, and department is responsible for approving the content of each individual distance-education course that it offers prior to forwarding them for central approval. Each department chair and dean monitors course quality and effectiveness in the same way as traditional courses are monitored. USA also has a standing committee charged with monitoring the quality of distance-education courses.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

4.6 CONTINUING EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND SERVICE PROGRAMS

#1 of 10

Relationship to Institutional Purpose

*(Page, 38, Line 5): Continuing education outreach and service programs **must** be clearly related to the purpose of the institution.*

Consistent with USA's mission to "promote lifelong learning and enhance access to education for a variety of individuals and communities," the School of Continuing Education and Special Programs (SCESP) has a primary mission as stated in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002* as "one of advocacy for the adult and non-traditional student in the Metro-Mobile area...to assist individuals and institutions in meeting their educational objectives" (p. 116). To accomplish this task, SCESP delivers a wide variety of educational courses, programs, and services that assist individuals in meeting their educational needs including special program clients who seek both credit and non-credit learning experiences. The Dean of the SCESP has the primary responsibility of ensuring that the School's programs are congruent with USA's mission.

The organizational chart of the SCESP reveals a diverse and complex array of departments and units (see Document 4.6: 1 of 10a) that offer learning opportunities for both traditional and non-traditional students. These departments are as follow:

1. Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS)
2. Department of Emergency Medical Services Training (EMS)
[and the Center for Emergency Response Training (CERT)].

3. Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses (CASC).
4. Department of English as a Second Language (ESL).
5. Developmental Studies Program (DS).
6. International Programs and Development (IPD).
7. University of South Alabama at Baldwin County (USABC).
8. University of South Alabama Brookley Center
9. department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS)

These units offer a variety of credit and non-credit educational opportunities, all clearly related to the mission of USA. The opportunities include a baccalaureate degree program in Adult Interdisciplinary Studies, credit-bearing certificate programs, special programs that improve the basic reading, writing and computational skills essential for educational achievement, outreach programs offered by USA at sites other than the main campus, and a variety of continuing education offerings designed to meet objectives of lifelong learners. Because these units are diverse, the next part of this section offers a brief description of the units' purpose and services as they relate to the USA mission.

Department of Emergency Medical Services Training (EMS)

The Department of EMS offers a nationally-accredited certificate program that prepares graduates for professional careers as emergency medical technicians (EMT's) and paramedics. Clearly, the purpose of the program relates to the University's mission "dedicated to education of Allied Health Personnel." The Department offers three different academic-credit programs to prepare competent practitioners and, thereby,

provide the greater metropolitan Mobile and south Alabama region with emergency medical services of high quality. The EMT-basic course requires one semester to complete. EMT-intermediate and paramedic courses require two additional semesters each for completion. Students applying for the program must satisfy general requirements for admission to USA and may elect to complete only the EMT-basic or EMT-intermediate levels. Those who complete all three levels of training are qualified to work in any area of out-of-hospital emergency care. Students who desire to pursue a baccalaureate degree with an emphasis in emergency medical services may do so through a cooperative agreement between the Department of EMS and the Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies.

The Department of EMS conducts continuing medical-education programs for local and area-wide paramedics and other allied health care providers. These opportunities, including the life-support training ACLS and PALS programs, are non-credit, continuing-education programs.

In addition, EMS operates a non-credit Center for Emergency Response Training (CERT), which serves industry, government, and other agencies with state-of-the-art instruction in the handling of hazardous materials and emergency spills. From course development through delivery, these non-credit continuing-education offerings are tailored to a client's needs and can be conducted on a contract basis upon request. The technical training in CERT's programs follows the guidelines set forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency,

and the Department of Transportation. CERT graduates receive certificates of completion and CEU's for their participation.

Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses

This department is the conventional continuing-education arm of the School of Continuing Education and Special Programs. Serving the south Alabama region from its USA Brookley campus in Mobile, the Department provides professional development seminars, workshops, and conferences reaching business and industry groups, health care providers, and governmental agencies. USA faculty as well as local and national specialists in their fields develop and participate in instructional activities. Programs and special courses are also designed for individuals desiring career advancement and personal enrichment. Examples include vocational development, Elderhostel, Odyssey USA, USA Camps Program, and Suitcase Studies. Academic examination review classes are also offered for students preparing for exams such as the ACT, SAT, GRE, and GMAT.

Department of English as a Second Language (ESL)

The Department of ESL operates the English Language Center and provides a service to the international-student community by offering intensive English language instruction to individuals whose native language is not English. Students taking ESL courses for credit must satisfy general requirements for admission to USA. ESL courses are designed to prepare international students to succeed in EH 101 (Composition I). ESL courses must be taken before and may not be substituted for EH 101 or EH 102 requirements. Credits

earned in ESL courses are not acceptable toward meeting any degree requirements within the University. However, ESL courses may be counted toward the twelve-hour course load required of international students studying in the US with student visas (F-1 students). The English Language Center also administers the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) each semester.

Developmental Studies (DS) Program

The DS Program was developed for traditional students who might not have the high school grades or ACT scores generally required for college admission but who, according to other criteria, indicate a potential for academic success. Applicants follow the standard USA general admission procedure but also request consideration for admission into the DS Program. The focus of DS is the improvement of reading, writing, oral, and computational skills essential for educational achievement. For example, the DS writing curriculum is designed to prepare traditional students to succeed in English 101. Credits earned in the Program are not acceptable toward meeting any degree requirements within the University; however, DS credits do qualify students for financial aid. In addition, the DS Program houses the University Writing Center, which provides free tutorial and consulting services to all USA students and staff.

International Programs and Development Office

This unit is responsible for the coordination and oversight of USA international activities, such as academic programs and projects beyond the territorial limits of the United States

and involving USA faculty, staff, or students. This office administers University Programs Abroad in Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Russia, and Mexico.

USA at Baldwin County (USABC)

USABC is clearly related to the purpose of the institution. The mission statement of USABC begins: "The mission of USABC is to meet the upper-division, higher education needs of the people of the Baldwin County area." USABC is committed to supporting these educational needs by extending the resources of USA to the citizens of Baldwin County. Undergraduate upper-division academic courses are offered each semester that partially fulfill requirements for bachelor's degrees in arts and sciences, business, and education. In addition, graduate-level courses are offered from the College of Education; these partially fulfill requirements leading to graduate degrees in education. Serving as an extension of numerous USA departments, professional staff members of USABC are active members of USA and provide services that are also offered on the main USA campus.

With one notable exception, continuing education, outreach, or service programs are not offered outside of the School of Continuing Education and Special Programs. The USA College of Medicine has a Continuing Medical Education (CME) Program that is clearly related to the purpose of the institution. The Program's mission statement (see Document 4.6: 1 of 10b) in part, is "to provide educational activities designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and clinical competence of physicians in order to improve the quality of health care provided for the citizens of Alabama and the surrounding communities."

This mission statement outlines the purposes, content areas, target audiences, and types

of education activities offered through continuing medical education. The Office of CME provides the administrative support for continuing medical education.

The CME Program regularly sponsors several ongoing educational activities in all medical specialties at USA hospitals, USA clinics, and affiliated hospitals. These activities include didactic lectures, grand rounds, patient-care reviews, journal clubs, and specialty seminars offered regularly by the College of Medicine. An aggressive outreach program affords educational opportunities to rural practitioners. All activities are conducted in accordance with the policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education.

University of South Alabama Brookley Center

The USA Brookley Center is a 327-acre campus that includes conference, meeting, and training facilities, lodging, complete dining services with catered events and special functions, administrative offices, and residential housing units. The recreation activities provided are: a swimming pool, jogging area, and the 18 hole Gulf Pines Golf Course and Clubhouse. The Center offers special programs, seminars, conferences, workshops, and other educational and training programs. The academic units housed on the Brookley Center include the Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses, the Department of Emergency Medical Services Training, the Center for Emergency Response Training, and educational leasing facilities. In any given year, the Brookley Center will serve between 25,000 and 40,000 people.

Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS)

The Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies provides opportunities for adult students through three alternative educational programs: the Adult Degree Program, a flexible, individually designed interdisciplinary degree program; Weekend College, a coordinated effort to offer University courses during weekend hours; and media-assisted study, a series of courses developed to supplement the traditional curriculum.

AIS provides adult students who frequently have unique goals, along with other primary life responsibilities, a more flexible approach to the design of learning experiences, the scheduling of classes, and the formulation of a program of study. To meet these needs, the Adult Degree Program offers a major in Adult Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS) leading to the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree.

Students applying to the Adult Degree Program must satisfy general requirements for admission to the University of South Alabama. In addition, applicants must be at least twenty-five years of age or fulfill the following definitions of an adult learner: someone who has assumed major responsibilities and/or commitments of adulthood (work, family, community), who is operating independently in society, and whose principal identity is other than that of a full-time student.

As the SACS Criteria are addressed below, this section of the report uses the following definitions:

- Outreach programs are defined as off-campus programs offered by USA at sites other than the main Mobile campus. The primary outreach program is at the Baldwin County Campus.

- Two credit-bearing programs (the Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies and the Department of Emergency Medical Services Training) will be considered together since they are degree /certificate granting academic programs.
- Continuing education and special programs will include these non-degree programs: the Department of Conference Activities and Special Programs; the Department of English as a Second Language; the Developmental Studies Program; International Programs and Development; the College of Medicine's Continuing Medical Education Program; and the Department of Emergency Medical Services Training (only the offerings associated with the Center for Emergency Response Training or the Continuing Medical Education Program).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 10

Evaluation of Continuing Education

*(Page 38, Line 18): All continuing education programs, both credit and non-credit, **must** be evaluated regularly.*

For clarity, this section addresses the non-degree continuing education and special programs, both credit and non-credit. The programs involving an academic degree or credit-bearing certificate are addressed below in #6 of 10.

Students/participants evaluate the various courses/activities offered under each of these programs; this evaluation occurs at the end of each course/activity. The evaluation forms permit participants to rate instructors and provide feedback on the effectiveness and structure of the course. These evaluations are analyzed regarding the quality of instructors and the value of the offering. Instructors use this feedback to improve the content and delivery of the program. In addition, this evaluation provides input for the program director, staff, and dean to use in reviewing the effectiveness and appropriateness of course offerings.

Department of Conference Activities and Specials Courses

Program effectiveness is measured by (1) using student/participant evaluation to assess satisfaction with course offerings and (2) reviewing types of courses/activities and student/participant enrollments.

Department of English as a Second Language

Faculty performance is assessed through classroom observations and through student-evaluation of faculty using a evaluation form especially developed for ESL courses.

Additionally, the chairperson evaluates each faculty member on an annual basis. This evaluation information provides input for future faculty development activities and program/course review.

A program for evaluating student achievement is currently being designed that will measure English competency achievement compared to objective standards. This program will be in place for the fall 2002 semester.

Developmental Studies Program

The Developmental Studies Program (DSP) evaluates its effectiveness by comparing the pass rate for students completing the Developmental Studies Program with the pass rate for all USA students in regular English and pre-calculus algebra courses. DSP also compares the college retention rate for DSP students and all USA students. The *Self-Study Report* response to SACS criterion 4.1: 8 of 24 provides the statistical results of these evaluations.

Faculty performance is further assessed through classroom observations and through student evaluation of faculty using a student-evaluation form especially developed for DS courses. Additionally, the chairperson evaluates each faculty ember on an annual basis. This evaluation information provides input for future faculty development activities and

program/course review. Labs are assessed by inviting feedback from faculty regarding impact on successful completion of academic coursework.

International Programs and Development

Program effectiveness is assessed through the following methods:

- Yearly activity reports on all international student/faculty research and study abroad activities involving the University.
- Individual directors' reports on study abroad programs in Britain, Germany, Greece, and Mexico.
- Yearly student assessment of a program's planning and academic content.
- Number of individual and institutional grants generated by the Office of International Programs and Development.

Department of Emergency Medical Services Training

Life-support program effectiveness is assessed through participant knowledge and technical proficiency to fulfill the life-support standards of ACLS or PALS. Faculty use results of the exams to (1) strengthen and prioritize areas of the program where students show weaknesses and (2) identify areas for remedial training exercises. The program effectiveness of the Center for Emergency Response Training is evaluated by (1) using student/participant evaluation to assess satisfaction with overall instruction and technical information and (2) evaluating the participants' knowledge relevant to the appropriate emergency response standards.

College of Medicine

In the College of Medicine, each continuing medical education (CME) activity is evaluated at the conclusion of the activity. Each participant is provided an evaluation form that lists the stated objectives of the speaker. The participant evaluates the activity at the conclusion and submits the evaluation as part of the process for obtaining CME credit. A designated individual summarizes the evaluations, and the summarized copy of the evaluation is then forwarded to the CME Office (see Document 4.6: 1 of 10c for the evaluation form). In addition, the CME Office annually evaluates the overall effectiveness of the CME program by mailing an evaluation form to all attending faculty with a return envelope (see Document 4.6: 2 of 10d). This form contains the CME mission statement followed by ten questions, with space provided for comments.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None

#3 of 10

Program Compliance with Criteria

*(Page 38, Line 18): All continuing education and outreach and service programs offered for credit **must** comply with the requirements of the Criteria and with Section IV in particular.*

The academic departments ensure that all continuing education, outreach, and service programs offered for credit comply with the requirements of the Criteria and with Section IV in particular, including the quality of products and projects by students earning academic credit. The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs approves policies and procedures for credit programs, an approval process that assumes compliance with Section IV of the Criteria. All credit continuing education and outreach and service programs offered by the SCESP must meet all academic policies and procedural guidelines as outlined for traditional credit coursework at USA.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#4 of 10

*(Page 38, Line 23): For non-credit continuing education programs, the institution **should** follow national guidelines for the recording of Continuing Education Units.*

Non-credit continuing-education courses provide either Continuing Education Units (CEU's) or Continuing Medical Education as set forth in recognized national guidelines, such as the *Continuing Education Unit: Criteria and Guidelines* (1990).

Specifically, the Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses (CASC) is the primary provider of non-credit courses offered by USA. CEU's for courses offered through CASC and through the Baldwin County Campus are awarded based on the national guidelines set forth in *Continuing Education Unit: Criteria and Guidelines*.

Program administration includes a systematic approach to course-proposal review, potential instructor review, and course evaluation. A computerized system is in place for managing non-credit student records, recording CEU's, and generating non-credit transcripts. (Samples of *Course Proposal Form*, *Non-Credit Instructor Data Form*, *Course Evaluation Form*, and *Non-Credit Student Transcripts* are available for inspection.)

CASC also has a CEU application and review system in place for USA departments outside the School of Continuing Education and Special Programs (SCESP) and for non-USA organizations wishing to award CEU's for their non-credit educational programs. Student records for these programs are maintained and reported by the Department of CASC. (An application packet is available for inspection.) CASC reports all CEU's generated through the various departments within the School of SCESP. This report is submitted to the Office of Institutional Research, which forwards it to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

The Department of Emergency Medical Services Training offers Continuing Medical Education (CME) for various populations through life-support training in the PALS and

ACLS programs. The Center for Emergency Response Training offers CEU's for its technical training. The Department submits CEU's and CME to be reported on a regular basis. The administration and recording of these CEU's and CME are the responsibility of the Department.

The College of Medicine is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to sponsor CME for physicians. The Continuing Medical Education Office is the provider of not-for-credit CME offerings. In order for an activity to receive CME credits, an application must be completed and submitted to the CME Office. This office reviews the application to ensure that the proposed activity is clearly documented and in keeping with the mission statement of the College of Medicine's CME Office. If all guidelines of the ACCME are met along with proper documentation, the activity is approved for CME credits. Activities such as grand rounds are eligible for Category 1 CME credit and apply toward the American Medical Association Physician's Recognition Award for Continuing Education.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#5 of 10

Resource and Service Support

*(Page 38, Line 27): For outreach and service programs, an institution **must** provide the resources and services necessary to support the programs.*

Outreach programs are defined as off-campus programs offered by USA at sites other than the main campus located within Baldwin County. The Baldwin County Campus (USABC) maintains well-equipped facilities for providing the various programs and services. The budget reflects an amount adequate for routine maintenance. Each classroom is equipped with audiovisual tools, including VCR, monitor, and overhead projector. In addition, video cameras and several portable computer stations are available for the use of computer technology. These are provided at the request of the instructor. Instructors are surveyed regularly regarding their equipment needs.

USABC provides students and faculty with access to computer technology. A computer lab is equipped with fifteen computers having current software compatible with computer labs on the main campus. The staff librarian, who also oversees the computer labs, diligently surveys and researches needed programs and acquisitions for the lab.

USABC provides library services which is staffed with a full-time librarian to assist faculty and students with computer, library, and research needs. The librarian is connected to the main campus library resources via computer and Internet, and fulfills requests of those needing hard copies of materials from libraries on the main campus. The librarian remains a staff member of the USA library system as well as attending

meetings regularly with other library staff, and the librarian stays abreast of the most current library services and resources.

A number of student services are provided at USABC. These include but are not limited to career counseling and testing, limited advising, the making of identification cards in the fall, and occasional entertainment and programming originating from the Student Affairs Division on the main campus.

While most of the course instructors at USABC are also full-time faculty on the main campus, every effort is made to facilitate an easy transition from one campus to the other. Typing, copying, and other material needs are available. In addition, an assistant director serves as a liaison with faculty, ensuring that appropriate services and resources are provided.

The College of Medicine also provides outreach to various health care providers in the south Alabama region. The College provides an annual budget sufficient to support the CME Program. In addition, guest lecturers for individual departmental grand rounds are supported by educational grants from pharmaceutical companies. If there is commercial support for an activity, a letter of agreement is issued from the CME Office to the supporting pharmaceutical company. The money is then held in a special account and is paid to the speaker following the activity.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#6 of 10

Program Evaluation

*(Page 38, Line 29): The institution **must** evaluate the programs regularly.*

The academic degree, certificate, and credit-bearing outreach programs are addressed in this section. Consistent with the diversity of these credit-bearing academic programs within the SCESP, a variety of appropriate methods are used to evaluate program effectiveness.

Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS)

As throughout the University, the AIS degree program carefully and on a regular basis reviews the results of student evaluation of course instructors. Furthermore, exit interviews with graduating seniors assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for the program. The major external evaluation method involves alumni surveys. Within the first three years of graduation, program graduates are surveyed by mail for program-related criteria such as career advancement and long-term satisfaction with their degree. Based on responses from the six hundred AIS graduates surveyed, it is

evident that the general objectives of the degree program are being met. The fact that 85% of the respondents would choose the AIS degree again if they were starting over is strong support of the validity of the program. Finally, assessment measures are used to improve the AIS program and provide input and feedback for future faculty development activities.

Department of Emergency Medical Services Education (EMS)

The Department of EMS offers three academic certificate programs covering five semesters of credit-bearing courses: the EMT-basic, the EMT intermediate, and the paramedic. At each level of training, both internal and external measures are used to assess program effectiveness. Internal measures include (1) standard course evaluations and (2) exit interviews of students upon completion of training. During the last semester of each level of training, students complete comprehensive final examinations based on national curriculum objectives. The Paramedic Program is accredited by the AMA Commission of Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs and the Joint Review Committee on EMT/Paramedic Education (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 118)—an accreditation that enables eligibility to sit for the registry exams. Graduates may elect to challenge the National Registry Examination, which is the mandatory licensure credential in the State of Alabama. Students' scores from the programmatic comprehensive final examinations are correlated to the graduates' National Registry performance.

External measures of program effectiveness include (1) graduates' performance on the National Registry Exam, (2) the success of the graduates in job placement, (3) employers' satisfaction with graduates' job performance, and (4) student satisfaction with the program after employment. Finally, the results obtained from assessment measures are used to improve the various programs in EMS, and provide input and feedback for future faculty development activities.

Baldwin County Branch Campus

The USA at Baldwin County Campus (USABC) is located in downtown Fairhope, Alabama. All instruction for courses offered through USABC occurs at the Fairhope site. USABC currently offers (1) liberal arts and business courses on the undergraduate level and (2) education courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

As any academic unit within the University, all USABC programs are in full compliance with policies and procedures of the USA Office of Academic Affairs. As noted in program literature, USABC academic courses are taught by USA faculty. All appointments and credentials for the teaching faculty are maintained within their respective academic units. Students complete evaluation forms at the conclusion of USABC courses.

Students evaluate instructors to assess (1) advising needs, (2) satisfaction with the on-site USABC registration process, (3) degree plans and academic course requests at the Baldwin County Campus, and (4) library services and computer needs. Businesses and

organizations will be surveyed regarding their higher education needs.

In addition, faculty will be surveyed regarding their satisfaction with the USABC facilities. USABC has set forth the following strategic goals to enhance the quality of its programs:

- Improve the learning environment on the USABC campus by providing teaching tools such as visual aids, computers with high-speed Internet access, and compatible software appropriate for academic coursework.
- Continue to improve library services including the development of websites with links to the main USA library.

Results of evaluations are used to improve the academic programs at the USA Baldwin site. For example, information obtained from student evaluations of instructors are used to improve the instructional program at USA Baldwin County and assist departmental chairpersons in recommended faculty development options for individual faculty members.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#7 of 10

Initiation of Degree Programs

*(Page 38, Line 31): An institution planning to initiate, through continuing education or outreach programs, a degree program **must** inform the Executive Director of the Commission on Colleges in advance of program implementation.*

The SCESP offers one degree-granting program. This exceptional program (AIS) has been in existence for 23 years. Although no new degree programs are planned at this time, the University remains committed to following the above notification requirement in the future.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#8 of 10

Credit for Non-Credit Coursework

*(Page 39, Line 1): An institution **must** not award academic credit for work taken on a non-credit basis without appropriate documentation that the non-credit coursework is equivalent to a designated credit experience.*

Although no academic credit is awarded for non-credit work currently, the Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies is currently conducting a pilot project (beginning in January 2002) whereby an assessment of prior learning using the portfolio-based assessment process will be applied to a small number of students. This pilot project will assist the institution in reviewing and evaluating the future use of assessment of prior learning at the University. A faculty committee has been appointed to assist and monitor the project. The principles of the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) are being followed. An Academic Assessment Center has been approved by the Council of Academic Deans and has been established to supervise the pilot project. Upon completion of the pilot study, the University will determine whether to proceed with the awarding of credit for prior learning.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#9 of 10

Documentation of Credit

*(Page 39, Line 6): In such cases, the institution **must** document that the credit awarded for non-credit coursework represents collegiate coursework relevant to the degree, with course content and level of instruction resulting in student competencies equivalent to those of students in the institution's own degree programs; and coursework taught by faculty members qualified to teach at the appropriate degree level.*

The Office of the Registrar strictly follows the guidelines as recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE).

As indicated above, the Department of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies is only in the feasibility stage of considering awarding academic credit for non-credit work. The intent is to follow the CAEL guidelines and, especially, to ensure that any credit awarded for prior learning is adjudged by qualified academic faculty in the appropriate discipline, as relevant and equivalent to coursework competencies in USA's degree programs.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#10 of 10

Criteria Compliance

*(Page 39, Line 13): All credit-bearing continuing education courses and activities **must** comply with the requirements of the Criteria.*

The academic departments ensure that all continuing education courses and activities offered for credit through the SCESP comply with the requirements of the Criteria, including ensuring the quality of the courses/activities. Principles of good practice in course design and delivery are followed within the SCESP to ensure that courses are conducted in an environment conducive to the varied learning styles of the various traditional and non-traditional student populations. Consistent with USA policy, all credit-bearing courses are subject to the standard curriculum review and approval mechanisms under the auspices of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

4.7 STUDENT RECORDS

#1 of 7

Adequate Student Records

(Page 39, Line 16): *The institution **must** have adequate student records for both credit and non- credit courses.*

The Registrar's Office maintains Student Permanent Academic Files for all credit courses except those offered by the College of Medicine, which maintains its own records. The Registrar's Office adheres to the guidelines set forth in the *Academic Record and Transcript Guide*, published by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (Document 4.7: 1 of 7). State requirements for the archiving of student records are currently under review and development.

Within the College of Medicine, the Office of Student Affairs and Medical Education maintains student academic files for all courses taught in that college. The Office adheres to the guidelines set forth in the *Handbook for Student Records Administrators*, published by the Association of American Medical Colleges, 2001 (pp. 5-8).

Records for non-credit courses are maintained by offices under the auspices of the College of Continuing Education and are maintained by the Department of Conference Activities and Special Programs.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#2 of 7

Academic Record Storage

*(Page 39, Line 18): Official student academic records for credit and non-credit courses **should** be maintained and stored in one central office at the institution.*

All records for credit courses are kept in the Office of the Registrar except those held by the College of Medicine, which keeps its own records in its Office of Student Affairs and Medical Education. Records for non-credit courses are maintained by the Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses at the USA Brookley Center. All transcripts are recorded by the Computer Center, with original files maintained by the Registrar's Office. The College of Medicine maintains non-credit records in the Continuing Medical Education Office, with back-up files kept in Dallas, Texas.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#3 of 7

Back-Up Files

*(Page 39, Line 20): Complete back-up files, such as facsimiles, microfilm or electronic data banks, **should** be maintained continually, one set of which should be stored in a secure area outside the records office, preferably in a different building or at an off-site location.*

In the Registrar's Office, grade sheets are placed on microfilm after four semesters (i.e., after the possibility of grade changes has expired), and copies are kept in the Registrar's Office and in an off-site bank vault at either Regions Bank or South Trust Bank. Transcripts are backed up on microfiche at the end of each term and kept in the Registrar's Office. In addition, the Computer Center produces electronic back-up files of the master student file, master course file, class roll file, and transcript file on magnetic tape once each term; one copy is stored in a keypad-accessed vault at the Computer Center, and one copy is stored in a tape vault at the University Library. All information held by the Computer Center is backed up in disk packs kept at the Computer Center.

All College of Medicine files dating from 1973 to 1996 are on microfiche, with one copy kept in the Office of Student Affairs and Medical Education and another copy in the vault of the University Registrar. Files dating from 1997 are on CD, also with one copy in each location. However, the College of Medicine maintains files dating from 1998 to 2001 as paper files only, with the sole copy kept in the Office of Student Affairs and Medical Education. Grades for coursework are maintained by the Computer Center, with reference to such coursework in the paper files only in case of problems.

Records for non-credit courses kept by the Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses are maintained through a local database, which is backed up every night onto a tape drive kept offsite by the department secretary. The server is also backed up via a mirror drive.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#4 of 7

Security of Student Records

*(Page 39, Line 25): The institution **must** take all steps necessary to ensure the security of its student records, including storage in a secure vault or fire proof cabinet.*

Student records maintained in the Registrar's Office are stored in a specially constructed room with firewalls, fireproof carpet, and heavy fireproof doors with double security locks.

Electronic access to records is limited and must be requested with the appropriate form; electronic access requires an ID and password, and logs are kept as to who accesses and changes records. All staff and students working in the Registrar's Office are required to sign confidentiality agreements. Paper copies of transcripts and enrollment certifications are printed on security paper.

The sole set of academic records for students in the College of Medicine between 1998 and 2001 is maintained in the Office of Student Affairs and Medical Education, and this set is kept in fireproof file cabinets in the office of the Academic Records Specialist. Security consists of limiting access to keys to that office; three such keys exist and are held by the Dean, the Dean's secretary, and the Academic Records Specialist. All grades for students in the College of Medicine are maintained by the Computer Center in a keypad-accessed vault. Copies of files from 1973 to 1997 on microfilm or CD are kept in the University Registrar's vault.

Records of non-credit courses are maintained by the Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses. These are not kept in a secure room but are kept in a fireproof cabinet in a locked building monitored by the Sonitrol security system; the Department's database is password-protected and maintains six discrete levels of access. Copies of these records are stored in two local banks.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#5 of 7

Protection and Back-up of Student Records

(Page 39, Line 27): Since computer generated and stored records present unique security

*problems, the institution **should** have in place special security measures to protect and back up the data.*

Access to computer-generated records kept in the Registrar's Office requires an ID and password, and logs are kept as to who accesses and changes records. Offsite electronic access to that database is limited and must be requested with the appropriate form; access then requires a password and is subject to the logging procedures described above. Electronic back-up files of the master student file, master course file, class roll file, and transcript file are produced on magnetic tape by the Computer Center once each term; one copy is stored in a keypad-accessed vault at the Computer Center, and one copy is stored in a tape vault at the University Library. Finally, all information held by the Computer Center is backed up in disk packs that are kept in a keypad-accessed vault.

All College of Medicine academic grades are maintained and secured by the Computer Center. Its 1973 to 1997 records are stored on microfiche or CD and are secured in the vault of the University Registrar.

Computer-generated records of non-credit courses maintained by the Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses are password-protected at six discreet levels of access; these records are backed up every night onto a tape drive kept offsite by the Department secretary and are backed up via a mirror drive.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Suggestion

None.

#6 of 7

Permanent Record Policies

*(Page 39, Line 31): The institution **must** have policies concerning what constitutes the permanent record of each student, as well as policies concerning retention and disposal of records.*

The Office of the Registrar maintains the following in each student's permanent academic file:

- high school transcript
- college transcripts
- military service papers
- substitution forms
- evaluations
- miscellaneous papers
- graduation application and check sheet
- report cards (if available)

Files on international students also contain the following:

- TOEFL scores
- affidavit of financial support

The Registrar's Office adheres to the guidelines on the retention and disposal of records set forth in the *Academic Record and Transcript Guide* published by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, as well as those set forth in the *Alabama University General Record Schedules* approved by the State Records Commission in August 1997. State requirements for the retention of student records are currently under review and development. At present, all inactive permanent student files are microfilmed and stored on campus and offsite. Pre-electronic files are being filmed, verified, and destroyed as time and resources permit.

The College of Medicine's Office of Student Affairs and Medical Education follows the *Alabama University General Records Schedules* (State Records Commission, August 1997, EG-2-3-8, p. 8, Document 4.7: 6 of 7), as well as requirements specified in the Association of American Medical College's *Handbook for Student Records Administrators* (pp. 18-19). The student academic files include the following:

- limited admissions information,
- LCME matriculation form,
- LCME change of status forms (as needed),
- any documentation related to course work (e.g., letter of exemption from a class, evaluation forms for junior- and senior-level work),
- copies of any correspondence between the Office of Student Records and the student,
- copies of any correspondence regarding their academic standing (e.g., scholastic non-cognitive forms, letters regarding academic standing, ACLS documentation), and
- health data form and pertinent medical information.

Admissions documents retained by the Office of Student Records in the College of Medicine include the following:

- Supplemental application
- AMCAS application
- Biographical/Academic Profile (AMCAS)
- All undergraduate and graduate transcripts
- Letter of admission from the Dean
- Letter of acceptance from the student

The non-credit student files maintained by the Department of Conference Activities and Special Courses contain the student's name, address, phone number, social security number, and number of Continuing Education Units awarded. The files are retained permanently (those prior to 1989 on the USA mainframe, and others in the Department's main office). The Department adheres to the policies and procedures described in *The Continuing Education Unit: Guidelines (1994)*, Fifth Edition, published by the Commission on Colleges, The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#7 of 7

Publication of Information-Release Policies

*(Page 39, Line 34): It **must** establish and publish information-release policies, which respect the rights of individual privacy, the confidentiality of records, and the best interests of the student and institution.*

USA complies with the information-release policies set forth in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and has formulated the following general policy statement in accordance with the Act:

No information from records, files, or data directly related to a student other than that defined as “directory information” shall be disclosed or released to any individual or agency outside the University without the prior written consent of the student, except according to lawful subpoena or court orders, or except in the case of need by other educational agencies or governmental agencies. Such information will be available to personnel and faculty for legitimate educational purposes. The student shall have the right of access to and review of all such information with those exceptions that are defined within this policy statement.

This statement, along with information for students wishing to request non-disclosure of directory information, is published in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002* (p. 28). The full Student Record Policy is published in the student handbook, the *Lowdown: A Student Handbook, 2001-2002* (pp. 102-106).

The College of Medicine's information-release policies follow the requirements of the Association of American Medical College's *Handbook for Student Records Administrators*, (July 2001, pp. 17-20). These policies are published in USA's *College of Medicine Student Handbook, 2001-2002* (pp. 66-67). (See Document 4.7: 7 of 7.)

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.