



## Postsecondary Distance Learning

### ***What is a postsecondary distance learning course?***

For purposes of statute governing institutions in the Florida College System (FCS) and State University System (SUS), a postsecondary distance learning course is defined to mean a course in which 80 percent or more of the direct instruction is delivered using some form of technology while the student and faculty member are separated by time or space or both.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Where may information about postsecondary distance learning courses be obtained?***

The Florida Higher Education Distance Learning Catalog (Catalog)<sup>2</sup> is an interactive, Internet-based, centralized listing of many distance learning courses and degree programs offered by institutions in the FCS and SUS and by certain private institutions that are members of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF).<sup>3</sup> FCS and SUS institutions are required to list in the Catalog all distance learning courses for which the institution assesses a distance learning fee, while ICUF institutions may voluntarily elect to participate in the Catalog.<sup>4</sup> The Catalog may be accessed at <http://www.distancelearn.org/>.<sup>5</sup> Students may also wish to consult individual postsecondary educational institutions to learn about available distance learning courses that are not listed in the Catalog.

For the 2009-10 academic year, the Catalog listed 24,441 distance learning courses: 17,423 offered by FCS institutions, 5,962 offered by SUS institutions, and 1,056 offered by ICUF institutions. In addition, the Catalog listed 299 distance learning degree programs: 33 associate degree programs, 58 baccalaureate degree programs, and 208 graduate-level degree programs.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sections 1009.23(16)(a) and 1009.24(17)(a), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> The Catalog was initially established in 1997, and was codified in statute by the Legislature during the 2008 Regular Session. Section 2, ch. 2008-148, L.O.F., *codified at* s. 1004.09, F.S.; *see* House of Representatives Bill Analysis for CS/HB 7105, at 3 (April 21, 2008), *available at* <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=39587&SessionIndex=-1&SessionId=57&BillText=&BillNumber=7105&BillSponsorIndex=0&BillListIndex=0&BillStatuteText=&BillTypeIndex=0&BillReferredIndex=0&HouseChamber=H&BillSearchIndex=0>.

<sup>3</sup> Membership in the ICUF is comprised of 28 private, not-for-profit educational institutions that are chartered in Florida and accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. A list of these institutions may be found on the ICUF's website. Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida, *Our Schools*, <http://www.icuf.org/newdevelopment/schools/> (last visited Nov. 5, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Sections 1004.09(1), 1009.23(16)(a), and 1009.24(17)(a), F.S.; telephone interview with Florida Distance Learning Consortium staff (Nov. 9, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Florida Distance Learning Consortium, *At Your Service*, <http://www.distancelearn.org/> (last visited Nov. 5, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Email, Florida Distance Learning Consortium (Oct. 13, 2010).

Currently for Fall 2010, eight of the 11 SUS institutions,<sup>7</sup> each of the 28 FCS institutions, and Saint Leo University, an ICUF institution, have distance learning courses and programs listed in the Catalog.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Which entity administers the Florida Higher Education Distance Learning Catalog?***

The Catalog is administered by the Florida Distance Learning Consortium (Consortium), which was statutorily established by the Legislature during the 2009 Regular Session.<sup>9</sup> The Consortium is subject to the joint oversight of the Board of Governors (BOG) and State Board of Education and is also responsible for duties that include:

- ❖ Facilitating collaboration among public postsecondary educational institutions in their use of distance learning in order to increase student access to associate and baccalaureate courses and degree programs.
- ❖ Identifying new technologies and instructional methods and supporting institutions in their use of technology.
- ❖ Coordinating the negotiation of statewide licensing and preferred pricing agreements for distance learning resources.
- ❖ Developing and operating a central instructional content repository that allows faculty to search, locate, and use instructional resources, including open access textbooks.
- ❖ Developing strategies to promote and increase the use of open access textbooks.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, the Consortium is required to develop a plan, in consultation with the FCS and SUS, to implement by the 2011-12 academic year a streamlined, online registration process for undergraduate students who have been admitted to a FCS or SUS institution and who wish to enroll in a course listed in the Catalog. The plan must be submitted to the Legislature, Governor, BOG, and state board by December 1, 2010.<sup>11</sup>

### ***How does a student enroll in a postsecondary distance learning course?***

To register for a course listed in the Catalog, a student must contact the postsecondary educational institution offering the course. Contact information is provided for each course listed

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<sup>7</sup> The eight SUS institutions offering distance learning courses and programs for Fall 2010 are: Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida International University, Florida State University, University of Central Florida, University of Florida, University of North Florida, University of South Florida, and University of West Florida. The three SUS institutions that are not offering distance learning courses are: Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Florida Atlantic University, and New College. See Florida Distance Learning Consortium, *Search Courses*, <http://www.distancelearn.org/courseSearch.cfm> (last visited Nov. 5, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Section 1, ch. 2009-92, L.O.F., *codified at* s. 1004.091, F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 1004.091, F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Section 1004.091(2)(b), F.S.

in the Catalog. Each institution determines the process for enrolling in a distance learning course.<sup>12</sup>

As discussed above, the Consortium is currently developing a plan to implement a streamlined, online registration process for undergraduate distance learning courses. This process will enable students to register for a course listed in the Catalog on the Catalog website, rather than requiring the student to contact the institution offering the course.<sup>13</sup>

### ***How much does it cost to take a postsecondary distance learning course?***

Tuition and fees for each course are determined by the institution offering the course. A distance learning course offered by FCS and SUS institutions is subject to the same tuition and fees applicable to traditional courses, except that these institutions may also assess a distance learning fee for each course listed in the Catalog. The amount of the fee “may not exceed the additional costs of the services provided which are attributable to the development and delivery of the distance learning course.” Institutions that assess a distance learning fee may not assess any other fees to cover these additional costs.<sup>14</sup>

The Consortium conducted a survey of distance learning fees assessed for courses listed in the Catalog in April 2010. For FCS institutions, the distance learning fees ranged from \$0 to \$35 per credit hour. For SUS institutions, the distance learning fees ranged from \$0 to \$190 per credit hour.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Where may I obtain additional information?***

#### ***Florida Distance Learning Consortium***

(850) 922-3359

<http://www.fldlc.org/>

#### ***Florida Distance Learning Catalog***

(850) 922-3359

<http://www.distancelearn.org>

#### ***Florida House of Representatives***

Education Committee

(850) 488-7451

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>

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<sup>12</sup> Florida Distance Learning Consortium, *Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.distancelearn.org/faq.cfm#register> (last visited Nov. 5, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Section 1004.091(2)(b), F.S.; telephone interview with Florida Distance Learning Consortium staff (Nov. 9, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Sections 1009.23(16) and 1009.24(17), F.S.

<sup>15</sup> Email, Florida Distance Learning Consortium (June 2, 2010).



