State Authorization Q & A

Why are we talking about this?
- Our students’ success could be impacted if the validity of an unauthorized program is questioned.
- The federal government could require USF to reimburse Federal Financial Aid Funds.
- USF could run afoul of Department of Education “misrepresentation” regulations.
- States could file cease-and-desist orders and assess fines.
- Public media could alert students outside Florida that USF courses are not authorized.
- Public media could inform policy makers in Florida that USF is out of compliance.
- Students could file lawsuits.

What do we need to do?
- USF must assess each program and online course against the requirement of each state.
- University College will act as the single point of contact for information for USF and for communication with the state.
- University College must receive a completed questionnaire from the appropriate academic unit for every online program and individual online course that is not part of a fully online program offered by USF. Be aware that traditional programs delivered outside the State of Florida with physical presence characteristics may also trigger a need for authorization.
- University College will submit program and institution information to applicable states in an effort to receive an exemption status in states that offer it.
- When authorization or licensure is required by the state, University College will provide academic departments with information on the state requirements and application process to enable them to make an informed decision on whether or not to pursue.
- University College will notify programs as soon as State Authorization is received.

When must the questionnaires be completed?
- The sooner University College has the questionnaires, the sooner some programs and online courses will be authorized to enroll students.
- For some states exemption can be determined shortly after the questionnaire is submitted to University College. Questionnaires will be evaluated in the order they are received.
- For other states exemption will be determined after the state reviews our application and evidence and finds USF meets the criteria. The packet will be sent as soon as all the programs comply. Some states take more than a year for the approval process.
- USF must continue progressing consistently to show “good faith.”

Who is involved in the state authorization process?
- States
- Department of Education and Congress
- Higher Education
- United States students

Where can I find more information?
- University College, Sally Davis, sdavis14@usf.edu
- http://wcet.wiche.edu

How will USF successfully comply with State Authorization?
• Follow State Authorization policy
• Conduct University College Q & A Sessions
• Engage in strong communication between all parts of USF and University College because there are so few definite answers and new questions arising daily.

❖ What else should we be aware of?
  • There are very few definite answers because what began as state law then became a DOE regulation. We must expect that state requirements will change during this process.
  • State authorization is usually given to an independently accredited institution. Any program that is not in compliance jeopardizes the university.
  • New online degree programs have a higher risk since they might not be authorized but would have to teach out.
  • Many associations are trying to find a less burdensome way to comply.