



**Higher Learning Commission**  
A commission of the North Central Association

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June 4, 2013

Dr. David L. Chicoine  
President  
South Dakota State University  
Box 2201, AD 222  
Brookings, SD 57007-2298

Dear President Chicoine:

The Change Panel has reviewed South Dakota State University's change application for an expansion of distance delivery into percentage bracket three. In addition, Commission staff have reviewed both the Panel's work and recommendation. The Change Panel has recommended to the Institutional Actions Council your request to be approved. Your change is not approved until final action by the IAC and until you receive the dated action letter. The Panel's report is attached.

The Institutional Actions Council (IAC), a Commission decision-making body, will act on the Panel's recommendation on July 1, 2013. As allowed for by policy, the institution can submit a written institutional response. The IAC will consider the institutional response and may agree with or revise the Panel's recommendations.

Please complete and return the enclosed form to Stephanie Kramer [skramer@hlcommission.org](mailto:skramer@hlcommission.org), no later than two weeks from the date of this letter. The institution's response becomes part of the official record of the evaluation and is included in the materials sent to the decision process.

If the Commission does not receive a response within two weeks, it will conclude that the institution accepts the accreditation recommendation and will forward the appropriate materials to the IAC for review and action. More information on the Commission's decision process is provided on the attached form and available on the Commission's website ([www.ncahlc.org](http://www.ncahlc.org)).

I encourage you to review the Panel's comments and to contact your Commission liaison if you have questions.

Higher Learning Commission of NCA

Enclosures

cc: Change Panel Members  
Steph Brzuzy, VP for Accreditation Relations

**Substantive Change Recommendation Form:  
Change Panel**

After the panel achieves consensus, the Primary Reader completes this form to summarize and document the panel's view. Notes and evidence should be essential and concise — a bullet or two, 50 words maximum.

Institution: South Dakota State University City, State: Brookings, South Dakota

Change requested: Authorization to increase distance delivery program offerings from Bracket 2 (up to 20% of its programs) to Bracket 3 (up to 100% of its programs)

**Part A: Analysis** (See Part 1, General Questions in change application)

Item	Accurate, clear, complete	Inaccurate, vague, incomplete	Notes
Requested Change	<b>X</b>		<b>South Dakota State University plans to expand its distance delivered program offerings which will require a change in assigned percentage from bracket 2 (“up to 20% of total degree programs”) to bracket 3 (“up to 100% of total degrees programs”).</b>
Classification of Change(s)	<b>X</b>		
Institutional Context	<b>X</b>		<b>SDSU is a public state university offering degrees at the associate, bachelor, master, and doctoral degree levels. The institution is authorized to offer up to 20% of its programs via distance delivery. SDSU offered its first fully online masters degree program in nursing in 2001 and has been offering courses online since 1998. SDSU is part of the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (GP-IDEA); as part of the alliance, SDSU works cooperatively with alliance institutions to offer online degree programs.</b>
Special Conditions	<b>X</b>		<b>There are no special conditions.</b>
Required Approvals	<b>X</b>		<b>An email communication from the South Dakota Board of Regents indicates that no state approvals are required to pursue this change. There is no evidence in the application for approval for delivery outside of South Dakota.</b>

<b>Essential Elements</b> The categories below relate to the evidence expected across subsections of Part 2 of the change application.	Acceptable	Acceptable if Modified	Not acceptable	Evidence

<p><b>Commitment to, preparation for, and fit</b> of the proposed change to the institution (characteristics, history, planning, design) (See <i>Parts 1, 2, 3, 4 of change application.</i>)</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p>SDSU has provided evidence that it has a successful history of distance delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement with GP-IDEA</li> <li>• Offered its first online courses in 1998 and first fully online MS in Nursing Fall 2001.</li> <li>• Gradual expansion consistent with mission and strategic plan.</li> <li>• Expanded faculty development and the technical infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Capacity</b> (people, structures, and resources) for implementing and sustaining the change(s) (See <i>Parts 1, 3, 5, 6 of change application</i>)</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p>Evidence demonstrates growth in capacity that is commensurate with expanded distance delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing and Extended Education, deans, department heads collaborate and approve new program development and determine resources to support programs.</li> <li>• Revenues distributed back to support student services; students have adequate access to career services information and technology support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategies for systematically monitoring and evaluating</b> the effects, performance, and/or quality of the change(s) (See <i>Parts 1, 7 of change application.</i>)</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p>Evidence provided shows that SDS has a comprehensive assessment program and that face to face and distance delivery programs adhere to same standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online courses are reviewed regularly using the <i>Quality Matters</i> rubric.</li> <li>• Institutional Program Review conducted every 7 years.</li> <li>• Centralized assessment and feedback processes help with systematic evaluation of distance delivery.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategies for addressing strengths, challenges, or strategic issues</b> (especially those previously identified by the Commission) related to the change(s) (See <i>Parts 3, 7 of change application.</i>)</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p>There were no specific challenges or strategic issues noted. The institution appears to have successfully offered distance delivery courses and programs for a number of years.</p>
<p><b>Potential positive or negative effects</b> of the change(s) on other institutional operations (See <i>Parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 of change application</i>)</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p>Modest growth planned for distance delivery is consistent with expectations from the strategic plan, thus allowing the institution to continue to reach more students. Evidence from the application suggests that programs are thoroughly planned and budgeted.</p>
<p><b>Quality standards</b> incorporated that would make successful implementation likely (See <i>Parts 1, 7 of change application.</i>)</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p>A number of quality standards are in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty teaching online participate in training or show mastery in 6 different areas prior to developing or teaching an online course</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All courses are reviewed prior to delivery</li> <li>• Faculty members receive advanced training and can get formal certification as an online instructor.</li> </ul>
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**Part B: Recommendation and Rationale**

**Recommendation:**     Approve Request     Approve Modified Request     Deny Request

**Note:** In the rare circumstance that you concur that a decision requires information only available through an on-site visit, check here \_\_\_\_\_, explain the determination in the rationale section below, and submit the form without completing the other sections. Commission staff will review the recommendation for an on-site visit for appropriateness and for consistency with Commission practice and may contact the panel.

**Rationale for the panel's recommendation (100 words maximum).** *If the recommendation is a modification of the institution's request, make clear how the Panel modified the original request.*

The institution has been offering full programs via distance delivery since 2001. SDSU provided evidence that offerings are consistent with the strategic plan, appropriately budgeted, and adequately assessed as part of the institutional assessment plan. There are a number of measures implemented to ensure teaching quality, and student and faculty have adequate technology support. The team considered this as one of the best and most well written applications its members have reviewed.

**Clarification of Information.** *If applicable, identify the date and topics of any requests for clarification or communication with the institution and the results.*

**Organizational Profile.** *If the request indicates an addition to the Organizational Profile, identify it here.*

**Stipulations or limitations on future accreditation relationships.** *If recommending a change in an institution's level for review of future changes (locations, programs, delivery, etc.), state both the old and new level, and provide a brief rationale for the recommended change. Check the Statement of Affiliation Status for the current wording.*

**Monitoring:** *The Panel may recommend that the Commission monitor the institution's implementation of the change through a variety of methods. Check the method(s) recommended.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Progress report   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cover in detail in next PEAQ Comprehensive Self-Study Report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring report |   |

- Focused visit*
- AQIP Action Project*
- Cover in detail in next AQIP Systems Portfolio*
- Report achievements via Assessment Academy*
- Other (explain below)*

*Specify any schedule or deadlines for the monitoring and briefly describe the concerns and the goals and expectations of the monitoring in relation to these concerns.*

***Additional feedback:*** *If recommending denial of the request, explain what was inadequate.*