Distance and Correspondence Education Policy

a. Purpose
The purpose of Distance and Correspondence Education at the Appalachian College of Pharmacy (ACP) is to support and expand the mission of the College to address the health-related needs of rural and under-served communities, particularly those in Appalachia, by providing students with more flexible and affordable quality learning opportunities. All distance and correspondence education courses taught at ACP must adhere to federal (e.g., U.S. Department of Education), state (e.g., State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)), regional accreditation (e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)), and Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) requirements.

b. Definitions
Appalachian College of Pharmacy uses the most current definitions of distance education and corresponding education from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC):

i. Distance education: distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

ii. Correspondence education: correspondence education is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced.

c. Classification of Distance Courses
Appalachian College of Pharmacy classifies distance courses as follows:

i. **Online** – Courses that are delivered 100% online

ii. **Hybrid** – Courses that are delivered 51 – 99% online

iii. **Blended** – Courses that are delivered 25 – 50% online

iv. **Face-to-face** – Courses that are delivered < 25% online

v. **Off-campus instruction sites** – Locations that are geographically separate from the main campus and where students can complete 25% or more of the educational program credit hour
requirements.

d. Policy Statements

In accordance with the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, the College will use the following policy statements in implementing and reporting on distance and correspondence education.

i. ACP ensures that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives course credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in coursework as outlined in the College's Student Identity and Privacy Policy.

- All students are issued a unique username and student ID. The unique username or student ID is used along with a unique password or PIN for all ACP activities including email (via Google G Suite for Education), Sonis (student information system), CORe (experiential education platform), ExamSoft (secure assessment software), and Moodle (learning management system (LMS)).
- Student identity is verified through secure login, proctored examinations (e.g., supervised face-to-face, electronic, and/or online services), and/or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.
- All students and faculty are required to use a secure login/password to access online courses through Moodle, ExamSoft, and/or other platforms (e.g., Google Classroom, Google Meet). Links to GoToMeeting and Zoom are housed in Moodle. Use of these platforms allows for regular and timely interactions between students and faculty.

ii. ACP protects the privacy of all students, including distance and correspondence education students, through strict adherence to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 as Amended (FERPA).

- ACP's LMS utilizes user roles (e.g., course coordinator, course faculty, student, etc.) to restrict access to course and student information. Students are only able to access course content and information necessary to complete course requirements. Students are unable to access protected information of other students in the LMS.
- Only students registered for the course are enrolled in course sites.
- Only users that have completed FERPA training have access to the control panel (e.g., Gradebook tool) and protected student information in course sites.
- ACP utilizes SONIS to report and maintain student course grades in a secure environment.

iii. ACP does not charge additional fees for verification of student identity.

iv. ACP will accurately report the enrollment headcount annually as required.

v. All distance and correspondence education courses and programs at ACP comply with the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, ACPE Standards 2016, and state (SCHEV) requirements and will use the guideline statements listed below in the College's implementation and reporting for distance and correspondence education programs.

e. Guideline Statements

i. Mission
- The purpose of Distance and Correspondence Education at ACP is to support and expand the mission of the College to address the health-related needs of rural and under-served communities, particularly those in Appalachia, by providing students with more flexible and affordable quality learning opportunities.

ii. Curriculum and Instruction
- Appropriately credentialed faculty are responsible for the design, development, implementation, and revision of distance and correspondence education courses/programs.
- All distance and correspondence education courses at ACP are comparable to traditional face-to-face courses in terms of pre-requisites, learning objectives, rigor, student effort, assessment, evaluation, and student support, and are approved through the same curriculum approval processes as traditional campus face-to-face-based courses.
- Analogous instructional activities and assignments conducted in traditional campus face-to-face courses and programs will be utilized in distance and correspondence education courses and programs.
- Since the student learning outcomes and assignments for distance courses are the same as face-to-face courses, and distance students are required to engage with the instructor and other students (e.g., synchronous sessions, discussion boards), the in-class and out-of-class time for the distance course is equivalent to the face-to-face course and the credit hours are the same. (see Credit Hour Policy)
- In general, laboratory, skills, and experiential courses may not be offered via distance education (see Credit Hour Policy for exceptions)
- All academic programs, regardless of delivery mode, engage in similar institutional assessment efforts, including annual reports and accreditation reviews, as appropriate.
- Distance and correspondence education courses will be delivered by reliable methods that allow for regular student-faculty interaction, and the College will provide technical, academic, clerical, and instructional design support services to faculty. Technical and academic support will be provided to students as

appropriate. Expectations concerning the use of technology will be clearly communicated to students via course syllabi.

- Materials created by faculty members for distance-education courses will be similar to materials created by faculty members for traditional courses.
- Decisions to offer courses or programs through distance and/or correspondence education will reflect student needs and availability of resources.
- If a degree program is designed to be offered entirely by distance and/or correspondence education, the enrolled student must satisfy all requirements of that degree program and the program must be of an appropriate length.
- The College monitors individual student academic progress through programs, including those that involve distance education.
- Academic support services will be offered to students that enroll in distance and/or correspondence education courses.
- SCHEV requires the college to report the course delivery mode according to a schedule in which modes are defined. The Registrar's office will have copies of this schedule.
- ACP does not have any consortial arrangements or contractual agreements for the delivery of courses or services offered by distance education.

iii. Faculty
- All faculty assigned to develop, design, and teach distance and/or correspondence education courses will be equally qualified and credentialed as faculty for campus-based programs and courses.
- Criteria for evaluation of faculty teaching distance and/or correspondence education will be similar to those used for evaluation of campus-based courses.
- Faculty members involved in distance education will receive training to enhance their skills with respect to technology and teaching, as well as mentoring, engaging, and evaluating students enrolled in distance learning courses or activities.
- Prior to teaching an online course, all faculty must receive appropriate training on the necessary instructional technologies.
- All academic programs regardless of delivery mode have a sufficient number of qualified faculty to develop, design, and teach the courses/programs.
- Faculty are provided computers that meet the Minimum Technology Specifications for distance learning.
- ACP has an IT department that is available to provide faculty with IT training and support services.

iv. Security and Privacy
- Students' privacy and identity will be secured using an array of techniques, including secure login and password, proctored examinations (supervised face-to-face, electronic, and/or online services), authenticated assessments,

and/or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification. (see Student Identity and Privacy Policy)
- For all proctored assessments, students must present an official, current ACP photo ID prior to taking the assessment or use ExamID in ExamSoft.
- All students are required to use a secure login/passcode to take online courses through Moodle (LMS) and/or other platforms (e.g., Google Classroom, Google Meet). Sharing user names and passwords is a violation of this policy and constitutes a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy

v. Institutional Effectiveness
- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment will assist departments offering online courses and programs in the implementation of an evaluation process.
- The College's review of distance education programs is analogous to campus-based programs, including assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention, monitoring and student satisfaction, and will ensure comparability of distance and campus-based courses.
- The College will regularly assess the effectiveness of its provision of library/learning resources and student support services for distance or correspondence education students.

f. Resources for Academic and Student Support

i. Library and Learning Resources
- Equivalent online library and learning resources will be available to students enrolled in distance education programs and courses as students enrolled in campus-based programs and courses. Students will receive an online orientation on available resources and their use following matriculation into the College.
- Elements of library support and learning resources available to students will include electronic document delivery, electronic journals, full-text databases, end-user searching, reference assistance and instruction, reciprocal borrowing and interlibrary loan services, and cooperative arrangements with other libraries for collection access.
- The library will regularly evaluate learning resources provided to distance education students and make recommendations.
- Students enrolled at ACP will have access to necessary laboratories, facilities, and equipment regardless of course/program delivery mode.

ii. Student Services and Tutoring
- Students enrolled in distance education courses will have adequate access to a range of student support services comparable to those offered to traditional on-campus users, including admissions, orientation, academic advising, tutoring, registration, course/program withdrawal, payment processing, financial aid information, disability and counseling services, complaint resolution.

- Students receive training for technology policies, computer usage, educational software (e.g., SONIS, Moodle, and Exam Soft) during Student Orientation.
- ACP has an IT department that is available to provide students with necessary IT training and support services.

iii. Facilities and Finances
- Financial support for distance education, including funding for faculty, staff, services, and technological infrastructure, is part of the annual budgetary process for the College.
- Appropriate technical expertise, technological infrastructure and support will be available to meet the needs of faculty, staff, and students engaged in distance education programs and courses.

g. Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Complaints

i. Student Rights and Responsibilities
- Distance education students have the same rights as students participating in face-to-face instruction as outlined in the Student Handbook.
- Distance Education students will be held to the same academic and professional standards as students participating in face-to-face instruction, and are subject to the Academic Integrity and Student Conduct policies as outlined in the Student Handbook.
- All students are required to have a laptop computer that meets the Minimum Technology Specifications for distance learning.
- ACP has an IT department that is available to provide faculty with IT training and support services.
- Students must complete an Online Readiness Assessment that assesses student self-motivation, commitment, basic technological skills, competencies, and support needed to succeed in a distance-learning environment prior to completing distance education courses/programs.

ii. Student Complaint Information
- ACP complaint process: Students enrolled in an ACP course who have a complaint about a course or experience should follow ACP's complaint, grievance, and appeal procedures as outlined in the Student Handbook.
- SARA-complaint process: Student complaints not resolved at the institutional level (ACP) may be appealed to the SARA state portal entity – the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. The state portal entity has final authority on SARA complaints.

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State entity SARA Website

For a complaint that has not been resolved through these grievance procedures, students residing outside Virginia may file a complaint with the state in which you reside. (https://www.nc-sara.org/)

Students in California, which is not a member of SARA, may contact the state Attorney General Office of California or the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education.

- SACSCOC complaint process: Students may submit a complaint about a SACSCOC-accredited institution using the SACSCOC complaint process (https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/ComplaintPolicy-1.pdf).
- ACPE complaint process: Students may submit a complaint about an ACPE-accredited institution using the ACPE complaint process (https://www.acpe-accredit.org/complaints/).

iii. International Students
- International students must maintain full-time enrollment; however, regulation: 8 C.F.R 214.2(f)(6)(i)(G) 3.20.7 Distance Education Limits: No more than the equivalent of one on-line/distance education class (or 3 credits) per session may count towards the "full course of study" requirement.

h. Disclosures

i. Regulatory Requirements
- All distance and correspondence education courses must adhere to federal (e.g., U.S. Department of Education), state (e.g., State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)), regional accreditation (e.g., SACSCOC), and Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) requirements.

ii. Accreditation
- ACP is accredited by SACSCOC to award doctorate degrees. The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) recognizes SACSCOC for the accreditation and pre-accreditation of degree-granting institutions of higher education in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia, including the accreditation of educational programs offered via distance and correspondence education within these institutions. Accreditation by SACSCOC may be used by an institution accredited by the agency to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs.
- ACP is accredited by ACPE to award the Doctor of Pharmacy degree. ACPE is recognized by the US Department of Education (USDE) for the accreditation and pre-accreditation, within the United States, of professional degree

programs in pharmacy leading to the degree of Doctor of Pharmacy, including those programs offered via distance education.

iii. Authorizations/Certifications
- SCHEV has certified the Appalachian College of Pharmacy to operate in Virginia and to confer the Doctor of Pharmacy degree.
- Institutions must be authorized to deliver online instruction to students in other states or to place students in clinicals, internships, or practica out of state.
- The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) establishes national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education programs among member states. The agreement creates a system for institutions offering distance education to receive authorization from states other than their home state, by placing the responsibility for regulation, quality assurance, and student protection on the institution's home state. Institutions participating in SARA can offer educational opportunities in all SARA member states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico without seeking individual approval in each state.
- ACP is a member of NC-SARA through the state portal entity, SCHEV.
- See the National Council of State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) website for an updated list of states that participate (https://www.nc-sara.org/)

iv. Licensure
- Federal Regulations require disclosure to students located out of state if the degree offered at ACP will be recognized as meeting the educational requirements of a state's professional licensing board.
- ACP's PharmD program is fully is accredited by ACPE and is designed to prepare students to apply for licensure in Virginia. Graduation from ACP with a PharmD degree meets the requirements set forth by the National Board of Pharmacy (NABP) to sit for the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX) and Multistate Pharmacy Jurisprudence Exam (MPJE). All states require a passing score on the NAPLEX as a condition of licensure, while most states also require that the MPJE be successfully passed for licensure as a pharmacist. Individual states may have additional requirements for licensure.
- Appalachian College of Pharmacy provides information to its students and information is available to potential applicants regarding whether the college's PharmD program meets the licensure requirements for other states. Completion of ACP's program may not meet educational and/or other requirements for pharmacy licensure in another state. Individuals may also contact the state Board of Pharmacy in other jurisdictions for licensure requirements. (https://nabp.pharmacy/boards-of-pharmacy/)