

**POLICY ON DISTRIBUTION OF DISTANCE LEARNING FEE TO COLLEGES/SCHOOLS**  
**Effective Summer 2015**

**I. Overview**

Florida Statute 1009.24(17) (b) allows the university to charge a Distance Learning Fee for all online courses that generate fundable student credit hours. Up to 25% of the funds collected from this Distance Learning Fee for courses that are not taken by students enrolled in fully online undergraduate degree programs<sup>1</sup> have been set aside for Colleges/Schools to use to support their faculty who develop and deliver such online courses and to provide student support that is unique to such online courses. This policy describes how the distance learning fee funds can be used and how Colleges/Schools can request a distribution from the Distance Learning Fee collected from their eligible online courses.

The guidelines for the permissible use of the Distance Learning Fee are based on the recommendation of FIU's Office of Internal Audit and are in accordance with Florida Statute 1009.24 (17) (b) which states that "the amount of the distance learning course fee may not exceed the additional cost of the services provided which are attributable to the development and delivery of the distance learning course."

The Distance Learning Fee to be charged beginning Fall 2013 is \$53.33 per credit hour. Each College/School is eligible to receive up to 25% of the Distance Learning Fee (\$13.33 per credit hour) collected from their eligible online course enrollments.

**II. Expense Guidelines**

Consistent with Florida Statutes and the Florida Distance Learning Task Force report, the following set of comprehensive guidelines for how Colleges/Schools can use the Distance Learning Fee will be in effect as of Fall 2014.

Each College/School's Distance Learning Fee annual Budget Request may include the following expenses:

1. Development, recording, and/or acquisition (licensing) of instructional content for online courses.

---

<sup>1</sup> Colleges/Schools receive the same funding for enrollment in courses taken by students enrolled in fully online undergraduate programs. However, this support comes from E&G, not the distance learning fee, and therefore is not governed by this policy.

2. A faculty stipend for development of an online course up to \$3,000 per course.
3. Faculty training and development that is related to the design, development, and delivery of online courses.
4. Assistance for online course sections on condition that the same assistance is not provided for face-to-face (FTF) sections of the same course. A digital assistant can do everything to assist an online instructor **except teach and grade**. Digital assistants can help respond to discussion board posts from students, monitor student progress on group projects and offer assistance and suggestions, respond to emails from students, hold virtual office hours to help students prepare for tests or quizzes, advise on writing assignments for the professor, and respond to student issues with Blackboard.
5. Credentialed Academic Coaches.
6. Student support services that are only offered to online students.
7. Virtual proctored exams.
8. Bonus of up to \$1,000 to faculty who successfully complete the Quality Matters certification process for their online courses.
9. Salary for administrative personnel whose **sole** responsibility is for the oversight, quality control, and management of the development and scheduling of online courses.

**Note: No portion of salary for academic administrators or professional staff members that serve both students taking online courses and those taking face-to-face (FTF) courses can be paid by the distance learning fee.**

### **III. Request Process**

During the University budget period, FIU Online will provide each College/School an estimate of the Distance Learning Fee revenues that they are eligible to receive. In order to receive funds from the Distance Learning Fee, each College/School must complete and submit a Distance Learning Fee – Academic Unit Budget Request Template to FIU Online, together with appropriate supporting documentation that details their planned expenditures for the Distance Learning Fee for the fiscal year. Each College/School must also enter this same budget amount into the Panthersoft Financials system for their respective activity number(s) by the University's budget deadline. Revisions to the Distance Learning Fee – Academic Unit Budget Request Template will be accepted until May 31<sup>st</sup> of the fiscal year for which the request is intended. Expenses contained within these requests must not exceed the Distance Learning Fee allocation estimate provided by FIU Online and must be in line with the expense categories described above. FIU Online will approve the annual Budget Request after consultation with the College/School as necessary.

Funds to pay for allowable expenses must be disbursed in the same fiscal year in which expenses are incurred. Since Distance Learning Fee funds are for **cost recovery only**, a College/School that does not submit an annual Budget Request by the predetermined deadline will not be eligible to receive Distance Learning Fee revenue disbursements for the year. Eligible funds do not carry over fiscal years.

After the Spring semester's 25% drop date, FIU Online will notify each College/School of their eligibility to amend their original annual budget by submitting an additional Budget Request.

#### **IV. Disbursement Process**

Each semester, after the 25% Drop date, FIU Online will transfer Distance Learning Fee revenues to the College/School based on actual instances of enrollment up to the approved annual budget amount that the College/School is eligible to receive. If an additional Budget Request is submitted, FIU Online will process the College/School's Spring Distance Learning Fee transfer once this request is approved.

#### **V. Documentation of Actual Expenses**

Each College/School that receives funding from the Distance Learning Fee is required to send to FIU Online a report at the end of each fiscal year that compares funding received from the Distance Learning Fee to actual expenditures. Along with actual expenditures, this report should include enough detail so it is easy to see that the expenditures are in line with the submitted budget.

Colleges/Schools should ensure that the Distance Learning Fee funds received in any fiscal year are spent in accordance with the approved budget. **Colleges/Schools should be vigilant to ensure that unspent distance learning funds do not accumulate from year to year.**