

March 2017

## Distance Learning & Student Services (DLSS)

### GOAL: INNOVATE

One of the major activities for Distance Learning and Student Services (DLSS) involves working with Florida's colleges and universities to support their efforts to deliver courses and programs over the Internet. While the majority of students served by our institutions reside in Florida, a considerable number participate in courses and programs from other states or countries. Several years ago, DLSS conducted some research and found that there our institutions enroll students in every state in the country. As many know, over the last five years, there has been increased attention

devoted to compliance with state authorization regulations. While always a requirement, little attention had been focused on the state authorization requirements for Internet-based courses and programs. With the general spread and acceptance of the Internet and with additional attention from the U.S. Department of Education on requiring that all forms of educational delivery demonstrate authorization to operate in any state where students were enrolled, increased enforcement began. Generally, a college or university must be approved to deliver instruction in every state where they have enrolled students. Navigating the variations in policy and costs for such approval in each state is a complicated and expensive task. In many cases, a staff position might be devoted just to maintain and seek approval for all of the courses and programs offered outside of Florida. In an effort to simplify this complex regulatory process, the National Council of State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements was created. Once a state joins this group, it's member institutions are automatically approved in all other member states for an Internet-based course and program delivery. Think of it like a driver's license for education. Once Florida grants you a driver's license, you can use it to drive in any other state. The same basic principle applies to those institutions approved to participate under the NC-SARA umbrella.

For Florida to join the NC-SARA group, new legislation authorizing our participation will be necessary. In an effort to assist our institutions, the DLSS Members Council held a statewide Symposium where some of the most knowledgeable people in the country participated to provide a complete understanding of the possible timeline, procedures, and requirements for joining NC-SARA. The overall goal was to provide enough critical information so that each institution could begin work on the application materials and institutional approvals in

order to be ready once the Florida Legislature takes up the proposed authorizing legislation. By all accounts, the Symposium was a complete success! Participants were very complimentary of the experience and the information provided. Board of Governors and Division of Florida Colleges staff participated in the panels, and during the event, we learned that the necessary bills had been introduced in the Legislature.

Pulling off a statewide event like the Navigating State Authorization Symposium takes a lot of work and cooperation. Not only DLSS staff but those in Business Services, DoIT and Marketing and Communications pitched in to bring this very visible and critical event to fruition. Thanks to all for a job well done and one that was very much appreciated by our constituent groups. If you would like to learn more about the event or the state authorization issue, please check out the resources located [here](#).