Policies and Procedures for Planning and Conducting Distance Education

1. General Information and Purpose
The administration of Sam Houston State University recognizes the significance of organizing the distance education initiatives of the institution so that a well-coordinated program will be delivered. Coordination of distance education initiatives is required to provide the resources and assistance for faculty, to provide support services for distance education students, to maximize the use of university resources with a minimum of duplication, and to ensure consistent and fair policies and procedures related to faculty and students. Organized and well-coordinated programs facilitate marketing and promotional strategies and strengthen the University's image as an innovative and technologically sound institution.

Rapid advancements in technology will undoubtedly create new methods for providing and delivering distance education. Therefore, policies and procedures that impact distance education will continuously change and these guidelines should be considered "interim" in nature and reflect the latest developments at the time of printing. As changes occur that are internally developed, required by the Texas State University System Board of Regents (BOR), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), or the Commission on Colleges (COC) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), this document will be revised to incorporate those changes.

The following distance education policies and procedures are intended to assist with planning, coordination, and technological support for participating administration, faculty and staff. These policies and procedures are built on current SHSU Academic Policy Statements, the University Mission Statement and Strategic Plan and shall apply to new distance education activities as well as to existing courses and programs in which the method of delivery has changed significantly from that approved in the original curriculum proposal.

2. Definitions
Distance education - For the purposes of this document, distance education will be defined as instruction delivered through electronic means such as television, interactive video conferencing, or
computer networks.
Distance education course - an individual course in which the majority of instruction occurs when the student and the instructor are not in the same physical setting. The course is considered distance education if the student receives more than 50% of the instruction at a distance. Distance education courses must first be approved for on-campus delivery before being offered via distance education.
Distance education program - an approved collection of courses or course of study where a student can earn 50% or more credits necessary to qualify for a degree through distance education.

3. Planning for Distance Education Activities
The appropriateness and viability of distance education programs must be carefully considered in the planning process. Distance education programs should be focused on the University Mission and Goals, consistent with the Colleges long range planning, and supportive of the educational strategies of the department. Distance education programs should be designed and evaluated according to guidelines similar to those utilized for on-campus programs.
The design and development of distance education courses and programs should follow priorities established by the Colleges. These priorities should be based on educational requirements, market studies, public demand, community and business needs, and the competitive advantages of SHSU. Development of distance education programs should maximize university research and educational goals, promote the development of resources unavailable at other institutions, and encourage collaboration with other institutions.

4. Academic Requirements and Quality Standards
The following standards represent important guiding principles for developing, conducting and evaluating distance education instruction activities at SHSU.
4.01. Sam Houston State University engages in distance education courses and programs which are consistent with the institutional role and mission.
4.02. Distance education conducted at SHSU will comply with the Principles of Good Practice for Academic Degree and Certification Programs and Credit Courses Offered Electronically as presented
by THECB and in accordance with the COCSACS ÒBest Practices For Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate ProgramsÓ.

4.03. The course or program that is being proposed as a degree-related distance education activity shall meet the same quality standards applicable to on-campus instruction.

4.04. Distance education credit courses will be listed in the undergraduate or graduate course inventory.

4.05. Each distance education course provides for planned interaction and timely feedback between students and faculty member(s) teaching the course.

4.06. The instructor will be responsible for the delivery of instruction and for evaluating student progress.

4.07. Faculty will be selected and evaluated by the same standards and procedures required to select faculty responsible for on-campus.

4.08. SHSU will provide the appropriate training and support for faculty providing distance education.

4.09. The same policies concerning admissions requirements, scholastic standards, and the administrative processes apply to distance education as they do for on-campus classes.

4.10. Students enrolled in a distance education will have access to academic support, including library services, advising, counseling, and financial aid appropriate for distance education.

5. Administrative Approval and Coordination of Distance Education Courses and Programs

5.01. Distance education instruction will be offered with the consensus of the responsible academic department chair, academic dean, and the office of the vice president for academic affairs.

5.02. The institution shall provide the means for assessing the quality of the distance education offerings in comparison with traditional instructional approaches.

5.03. All distance education instruction shall be administered by the same entity administering the corresponding on-campus instruction.

5.04. Distance education course proposals are prepared according to the guidelines in Attachment A. Course proposals will be submitted for review and recommendation in the following order: appropriate department chair, academic dean, Academic Instructional Technology and Distance Learning, and Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
5.05. Distance education program proposals are prepared according to the format and guidelines in Attachment B. Program proposals will be submitted for review and recommendation in the following order: appropriate department chair, academic dean, Academic Instructional Technology and Distance Learning, and Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

5.06 The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will review approved program proposals for compliance with the TSUS, THECB and SACS guidelines.

5.07. The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will seek the required approval to offer distance education from the TSUS, THECB, and SACS.

5.08. Removal of distance education programs is proposed through a memorandum from the departmental chair of the academic unit, via the college dean to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Requests to delete a program should contain the following information: name of the program, justification for the program removal (including the impact of enrolled students), and the proposed effective date.