A Unit of the Technical College System of Georgia

Distance Education
Policies and Procedures
Manual

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Introduction
Augusta Technical College is a higher education institution of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG). Augusta Technical College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award Associate of Science Degrees, Associate of Applied Science Degrees, Diplomas, and Technical Certificates of Credit. Contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, telephone 404-679-4500, http://www.sacscoc.org for questions about the accreditation of Augusta Technical College.

Purpose and Scope
The Distance Education Procedures Manual of Augusta Technical College complements the Technical College System of Georgia Policy Manual and the Georgia State Personnel Board Rules and Regulations. The manual defines general procedures that pertain to faculty responsibilities in the area of distance education. This manual is to be used in conjunction with the Augusta Technical College Policy Manual, college catalog, program standards, program guides, and all appropriate agency and college procedural guides.
Section I
Purpose and Goals

1.1 Distance Education and the Purpose of Augusta Technical College

Augusta Technical College provides distance education programs as part of the overall purpose of the institution. The following Mission and Goals of Augusta Technical College are based on the concept that lifelong education benefits the individual, business and industry, and the community:

Mission
Augusta Technical College, a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, is a public postsecondary institution that promotes and provides the education, economic, and community development needs of its five county service area. Associate of Science Degrees, Associate of Applied Science Degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit are provided through traditional and distance delivery methods. The College achieves its mission by providing academic and technical education, student support services, customized business and industry training, economic development services, continuing education, and adult education services.

Goals
- To provide competency-based associate degree, diploma, and technical certificate of credit programs to prepare students for employment.
- To provide adult education services to prepare students for access to postsecondary education.
- To provide learning support courses to prepare students for access to postsecondary education.
- To provide opportunities for lifelong learning through credit and non-credit courses, workshops, and seminars.
- To contribute to the development of business and industry and the community through customized education, job training, and retraining.
- To provide a seamless education system by collaborating with area secondary and postsecondary institutions.
- To provide support services and activities to enable students to develop and achieve educational, personal, and career goals.
- To provide opportunities that allows employees to remain current in their respective positions.
- To provide a planning and management system for the allocation of resources to support programs and services.
- To provide a positive image through marketing and public relations activities.
- To provide an institutional development program to enhance the College mission.
- To provide services and resources to enhance planning and decision-making.

Offering distance education courses allows Augusta Technical College to serve a broader base of citizens beyond the confines of regularly scheduled on-campus classes. The option of taking a distance education course is particularly effective in promoting lifelong learning; people’s life circumstances change and they have flexible options for continuing their education. Augusta Technical College offers distance education courses in support of Associate Degree programs, Diploma programs, and Certificate programs.

1.2 Purpose Statement for Distance Education at Augusta Technical College

The Distance Education program at Augusta Technical College supports the mission of the college by providing access to high quality, asynchronous educational opportunities to a diverse community of learners through the internet. By providing instruction, learning resources,
services comparable to campus-based programs, the distance education program seeks to engage the student in the learning process by the effective use of technology.

1.3 Distance Education Mission Statement

To provide flexible course offerings and a variety of delivery methods to students seeking an alternative to the traditional classroom environment.

1.4 Strategic Planning and Distance Education

The Vice President of Academic Affairs is assigned administrative responsibility for the Distance Education program at the College. The Associate Dean of Distance Education, in conjunction with the Distance Education Steering Council, conducts planning and evaluation activities and reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

The Associate Dean of Distance Education is the liaison between the distance education program at the College and the umbrella organization of Georgia Virtual Technical Connections (GVTC). Responsibilities of the Associate Dean of Distance Education include the following: Provides training and technical assistance for the development of all distance education courses. Provides feedback and assistance to instructional managers and faculty regarding online instruction. Generates evaluations, analyzes data, and calculates statistics for all distance education courses. Purchases, maintains, and trains faculty in new hardware and software to remain technologically up-to-date. Facilitates the creation, organization, and implementation of professional staff development activities related to distance education professional development. Updates and enhances online courses already developed. Reports to the VPAA concerning directives and information from GVTC headquarters. Updates the course list and descriptions for Augusta Tech distance education courses on the GVTC web site. Maintains Institutional Effectiveness documentation for the distance education department. Develops and updates the distance education web page as part of the College web site. Continues to increase the number and variety of distance education courses offered. Effectively markets distance education courses to the community.

The Distance Education Steering Council consists of a six person committee along with the Associate Dean of Distance Education. The Distance Education Steering Council is composed of faculty who are developing and teaching distance education courses. The Distance Education Steering Council responsibilities include troubleshooting problems that arise in the development and delivery of distance education courses, proposing solutions to problems, and acting as a resource for faculty who are new to the development process. The members are selected based upon experience, and may be rotated as needed. The Distance Education Steering Council also suggests and reviews distance education procedures for adoption by the College.

Goals for distance education are formulated in accordance with the Mission and Goals of the college by the Distance Education Steering Council, Associate Dean of Distance Education, and Vice President of Academic Affairs. The goals of distance education are as follows:

1. Continue to increase the number and variety of distance education courses.
2. Update and enhance developed courses.
3. Effectively market distance education courses to the community.
4. Maintain hardware and software updates in support of faculty and students in distance education.
Section II
Augusta Technical College and Georgia Virtual Technical Connections

Augusta Technical College is a founding institution of the Georgia Virtual Technical Institute (GVTI). The GVTI was conceptualized in June of 1997 by representatives of six technical institutes operated under the governance of DTAE. GVTI was created to be a consortium of schools offering online technical education that could be accessed anywhere, anytime, anyplace, as long as the student has access to a computer and an internet service provider. The name was changed to the Georgia Virtual Technical College (GVTC) in June 2000, and then to Georgia Virtual Technical Connections in August 2011. GVTC now includes all 26 of Georgia’s technical colleges.

The mission of GVTC is to provide support, guidance, and assistance to the state’s Technical Colleges in the design, development, and delivery of distance education and technology based learning initiative and to manage the state level online student application portal.

Member institutions develop individual distance education courses offered through the GVTC consortium. Administrative responsibility for individual course offerings is vested with the institution that offers the course. Prospective students may apply online with GVTC; however, the admissions applications and registration requests are forwarded to the technical college that offers the course for processing.

Section III
Distance Education Procedures

3.1 Process for Distance Education Course Development and Implementation

3.1.1 Procedure for Approval to Develop an Online Course

The Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) approves all requests for the development of distance education courses. The VPAA may approve the course or refer the request to the Associate Dean of Distance Education for further discussion and research. Requests to develop online courses should be initiated at least one full semester prior to the semester during which the course is expected to be offered.

A request for approval to develop an online course must be submitted to the VPAA according to the following procedure:

1. Initiation of an Online Course

Courses selected for online offerings may come from either the occupational or general education curriculum. Suggestions for course offerings may come from the faculty or administration. The courses are developed in congruence with the operational and strategic goals of the college. The college may be requested to develop a course by business and industry groups, TCSG, or GVTC. Non-credit course development is initiated and administered through the Vice President for Economic Development and do not adhere to the guidelines set by the Distance Education Department.

2. Proposal to VPAA

The instructor initiating an online course (or creating the course in cases where the course is requested by another party) submits the request to the
Department Head and Dean/VPO. Once approved, the instructor submits the request for the course to the Associate Dean of Distance Education using the appropriate Request Form. (A copy of the Course Development Request Form may be found in the Appendix.) The instructor must have classroom experience teaching the requested course, as well as have previously taught a hybrid course prior to teaching online. Special approval may be granted by the VPAA. The Associate Dean of Distance Education reviews the course proposal and makes a recommendation. The Associate Dean of Distance Education then presents the proposal and recommendation to the VPAA. The VPAA may approve, deny, or postpone the development of the course.

3. Instructor Training/Course Development

Upon approval to create an online course, the developer, in consultation with the VPAA, Dean, and Associate Dean of Distance Education, attends training appropriate for the development and implementation of the course. The training will include an eight hour Basic Angel training session and other training courses as appropriate. After appropriate training, the instructor proceeds to develop a Master shell for the course in accordance with guidelines for maintaining the academic integrity and rigor of the course. The course competencies and student learning outcomes of the course, as with traditional courses, are developed based on established credit hours and standards found in the TCSG Curriculum Data Base (A copy of Course Self-Review Form may be found in the Appendix).

4. Review by the Associate Dean of Distance Education

The course developer presents an overview of the completed course to the Associate Dean of Distance Education prior to the course being offered. The Associate Dean of Distance Education evaluates the course using criteria established in the Self-Review Form. (A copy of this form may be found in the Appendix). After reviewing the course, the Associate Dean of Distance Education recommends implementation of the course, implementation after suggested revisions, or delayed implementation for substantive revisions. The Associate Dean of Distance Education may also recommend the course not be added to the offering if there is a compelling reason. The overview is also sent to each respective Dean/VPO for further evaluation of content.

5. Distance Education Course Offering

The new course, copied from the Master shell, shall be included in the schedule of course offerings. Students may register for the course during scheduled times of registration. The instructor, in consultation with the Dean, VPAA, and Associate Dean of Distance Education shall determine how often and during what semesters the course shall be offered. A detailed description of Online, Hybrid, and Web Enhanced courses is posted in SmartWeb beside the registration link, as well as in other designated areas of the website. The date and place of the proctored even will be listed in Banner. All online courses must show at least one, and up to three, on campus events in Banner.

6. Distance Education Course Self-Review

Instructors complete a Self-Evaluation Form for every Distance Education course taught to demonstrate that the criteria of the course(s) have been met.
These evaluations are completed once per year and reviewed by the Associate Dean of Distance Education for Best Practices demonstrated and improvements made. Deans/VPOs can request the self-evaluations for further evaluation of content.

### 3.1.2 Procedure for Approval to Develop a Hybrid Course

The same procedures are followed as in 3.1.1 with the following variations.

1. The instructor initiating the course (or creating the course in cases where the course is requested by another party) completes and submits the Hybrid Request Form. (A copy of Hybrid Request Form may be found in the Appendix.) Instructors complete a Hybrid Approval Request Form for every hybrid course offered.

2. A Hybrid course will be offered at a max of 50% online (K1) or at 33% online (K2). Any variation from the 33% is requested on the form.

3. If an instructor wishes to teach a K1 hybrid course, he or she must have 1) attended the full Basic Angel Training Course and 2) previously taught a course using Angel as Web Enhanced for at least one semester.

4. If an instructor wishes to teach a K2 hybrid course and has not yet completed the full Basic Angel training, he or she must first attend the Basic Hybrid Entry Training Course. A template is provided for the instructors and contains the basic requirements needed for a 33% hybrid course. The instructor is not allowed to proceed past the 33% online offering until he or she attends the full Basic Angel Training Course and is approved based on the Hybrid Request Form. These instructors will also complete a Basic Hybrid Self-Review Form by mid-term of each semester.

5. Hybrid courses taught at 50% or more online (K1) will adhere to the same requirements and restrictions of the online courses. All hybrid instructors will complete a Hybrid Self-Review Form for each Hybrid course offered. This form is designed to monitor Best Practices development for hybrid courses. (Example: A course that offers up to 50% online should show numerous varieties of online assignments and interaction similar to an online course.) The Hybrid Self-Review Form must be completed and submitted by mid-term of each semester (A copy of Hybrid Self-Review Form may be found in the Appendix).

6. Hybrid courses must be ready for student interaction on the first day of the semester. Students will have access to Angel on that day, even if the physical class meeting is not until later in the week. Note that on some occasions, a hybrid class may not meet in person until the 2nd or 3rd week of the term. In such cases, the instructor is responsible for emailing students to welcome and orient them to the class site and assignments. Students should be given an assignment in Angel, but it cannot count against students’ grades if they do not complete the assignment before the physical class meets. The first assignment should be submitted within the week of the first class meeting.

7. Attendance policy for hybrid courses is based on the 10% rule by combining the percentage of seat time and online time. Instructors have students post assignments online that demonstrate student attendance comparable to class-time. Failure to submit these assignments results in the student being counted
absent for that particular percentage of class time. Once the combined results exceed 10% of total class time, the student may be suspended from class. Students who have logged in to Angel or attended a class session before No Show rosters are submitted cannot be reported as No Shows. Angel log in counts as attendance.

8. Only the actual times/dates that students will be required to be on campus are scheduled in Banner.

9. Classrooms will not be scheduled during the online portion of the class. It will be understood by the student that when registering for a hybrid course, a percentage of the work will be done online.

### 3.1.3 Procedure for Adopting an Existing Course

1. **Request to Adopt an Existing Course**
   At least one semester prior to the projected date of offering, the instructor should submit a request to the appropriate department head, Dean, and the Associate Dean of Distance Education to adopt an existing course. The request should include the course name and its projected offering date.

2. **Approval to Adopt a Course**
   The Associate Dean of Distance Education will present the adoption request to the VPAA. The VPAA may approve or deny the request.

3. **Obtaining the Course**
   The Associate Dean of Distance Education will make a copy of the course on the Angel server and set the instructor access.

4. **Instructor Training/Course Adaptation**
   Upon approval to adapt an online course, the developer shall, in consultation with the VPAA, Dean, and Associate Dean of Distance Education, attend training appropriate for the revision and implementation of the course. The training must include Angel training and may include other training courses as appropriate. After appropriate training, the instructor may proceed to make adaptations to the course. The course will be evaluated as previously described under the Procedure for Approval to Develop an Online Course.

5. **Course Offering**
   The new course shall be included in the schedule of course offerings as previously described under the Procedure for Approval to Develop an Online Course.

### Section IV
**Distance Education Faculty and Students**

**Faculty**

### 4.1 Credentials for Teaching Online Courses

All faculty members teaching or developing distance education courses must meet the same criteria for academic and professional preparation as those teaching courses delivered in
traditional formats. In some instances, third party vendor certifications may be required as well as the appropriate academic credential.

4.2. Adjunct Faculty

Adjunct faculty teaching distance education courses are held to the same academic and professional qualifications as full-time faculty members. All adjunct instructors are required to provide students with contact information. This information should be documented in the course syllabus.

4.3 Training

Faculty (full-time or adjunct) developing and/or teaching distance learning courses must participate in training activities necessary to successfully deliver a distance education course. Such activities may include training in the principles, instructional methodologies, evaluation procedures, and technologies used in the development and implementation of distance education courses.

Appropriate training for faculty involved in developing distance education courses shall be provided by the College. Training activities will be selected according to the individual's specific needs, appropriateness for the mode of distance education delivery, and appropriateness for the nature of the class being taught. Training activities may include formal classroom preparation, successful completion of training activities conducted by the Associate Dean of Distance Education, participation in training provided by third party or proprietary vendors, participation in training provided by other educational organizations, mentoring conducted by a faculty member already involved in the delivery of distance education course, or a combination of the above.

All Distance Education instructors are required to complete at least fifteen hours of their required annual staff development training hours toward the enrichment of their distance education courses.

4.4 Equipment and Resources

Augusta Technical College shall provide the equipment and software resources necessary to create, teach, and administer a distance education course. This may be done through resources available at either the College or in conjunction with GVTC.

A faculty development center is located in room 225 of the Instructional Technology Center (ITC/1000 building) on the Augusta Campus. Instructional technology available in this room includes computers, scanners, specialized software, digital cameras, and other equipment. The faculty development center is available to all faculty for the development of distance education courses.

On occasion, an instructor may wish to use specialized software or hardware in order to create or deliver an online course. Requests for the purchase of specialized software or hardware may be made to the Associate Dean of Distance Education who will process and send to the appropriate administrator for approval. Purchase requests for specialized hardware or software used in the development and/or delivery of a distance education course must be made through the request for purchase procedures at the College.
4.5 Teaching Loads

A faculty member developing a course for distance education delivery may be relieved of class teaching assignments for the purpose of course development and implementation. The amount of release time shall be the number of contact hours equivalent to the number of contact hours of the class being developed. This reduction in teaching assignments shall terminate with the successful development of the course. Release time for the development of any given course shall not exceed two semesters. The VPAA may grant an extension of release time for development purposes when appropriate. When a distance education course is implemented it is considered to have the same number of contact hours as a traditional class and factors into the teaching load accordingly.

4.6 Faculty Responsibilities in Distance Education Instruction

Faculty responsibilities in online instruction are similar to those for the traditional classroom setting. While the responsibilities are similar, it is recognized that the methods of meeting these instructional responsibilities may differ from those used in traditional classroom settings.

During the first week of each term, instructors of online and hybrid courses must
a. Direct students to the SmarterMeasure Assessment and collect student scores.
b. Maintain roster accuracy on a daily basis. Students who are removed from the roster in Banner must be disabled in (not deleted from) Angel.
c. Disable any course that has been cancelled, so students will not have access. Then let the Distance Education Department know to delete the course in Angel.
d. Base 7 day roster attendance on a log-in report set to begin the first day of classes. Note that on some occasions, a hybrid class may not meet in person until the 2nd or 3rd week of the term. In such cases, the instructor is responsible for emailing students to welcome and orient them to the class site and assignments. Students should be given an assignment in Angel, but it cannot count against students’ grades if they do not complete the assignment before the physical class meets. The first assignment should be submitted within the week of the first class meeting.
e. If a student logs into a hybrid Angel course but does not physically attend class by the 7-day roster date, the student will not be considered a NS since the hybrid portion of the course will be available on the first day of the semester. If the student continues to miss class after the 7-day roster is due, then the 10% withdrawal rule will apply.
f. Disable students who are no-showed on the 7 day roster.
g. Require an assignment that students must submit either in Angel or a third-party software to prove interactive attendance.
h. Manage courses in which students received Incompletes from the previous quarter. These courses must be disabled at midterm.

For each online or hybrid course taught, the instructor shall
• Follow the course request process and submit the appropriate forms
• Provide a syllabus detailing course competencies, schedule, course requirements, grading policies, and other pertinent information. See 4.6.1.
• Provide contact information including email, office phone, and fax number (when appropriate). Preferred method of contact and days/hours of availability must be indicated.
• Respond to all student emails within 24 hours, except on weekends or days identified on the syllabus as unavailable to students. Emails should include a salutation to address students by name when possible.
• Keep records of student work and participation in class. The gradebook in Angel or the third part software must be an accurate and current reflection of each student’s progress.
• Run a course back-up on a weekly basis
• Provide students with assignments (at least one per week) and due dates. Title IV requires that students submit work every week.
• Require interaction among students such as discussion assignments, blogs, or team work
• Interact with students on a weekly basis, at a minimum, through announcements, emails, discussion boards, or gradebook comments
• Use Angel or third-party software for submission of all assignments. Assignments should not be sent using SmartWeb. Attachments are too large and will fill up the system, and many will be deleted so it is not a reliable source.
• Provide students with assessment and grading information.
• Provide students with an opportunity to evaluate the class and the instructor.
• Protect student academic confidentiality.
• Map assignments to Student Learning Outcomes.
• Adhere to copyright laws. Refer to TEACH Act legislation for more information: http://www.copyright.gov/docs/regstat031301.html
• Post work ethics assignments and information in Angel (except Gen Ed).
• Turn on student tracking in all folders and assignments to assess student site use.
• Maintain an LOR for larger content items, such as audio or video files
• Compress PowerPoint files to reduce size
• Complete a course review form each year and ensure course compliance with all items on the review form
• Maintain a Master shell and, when possible, copy each semester’s course shells from the Master at least two weeks prior to the first day of classes. Courses must be copied and ready at least 24 hours before the first day of the semester.
• Adhere to institutional policies as detailed in the Augusta Technical College catalog and this document.
• Complete 15 hours (per year, not per course) of staff development pertaining to Angel or online teaching and keep abreast of the content on the Distance Education Staff Development web page in the secure section of the Augusta Tech site.

Additionally, for each online course, the instructor shall

• Deliver all required content and assignments asynchronously. No synchronous activities may be required except for the proctored events.
• Schedule and proctor at least one and not more than three graded assignments on campus. Students with other class and/or employment conflicts must be accommodated. The proctored event should be reflected in the course schedule in Banner.
• Keep records of students’ proof of identification (any valid photo identification) provided at each proctored event.
• Complete and keep records of proctoring forms for out of town students.
In all regards, the distance education course is to maintain the same academic integrity as those delivered in traditional classroom formats. It is the instructor’s responsibility to ensure that academic integrity and rigor are maintained in each distanced education course taught.

Distance education courses are subject to a review both before implementation as a general course offering and at other times deemed appropriate (after necessary revision, upgrade, etc.).

4.6.1 Syllabus Requirements, in addition to course specific, school, and departmental requirements

Syllabi for all hybrid courses must include the following:

a. **Student Code of Conduct:** A student’s password will allow access only to his/her own account. Students should not give out their passwords or allow any other person, including family members, to access their account for any reason. It is a violation of section K.1f of the student code of conduct policy for any student to log into to a course as another student. It is also a violation of the policy for a student to permit another person to log in to a course using the password belonging to the student registered for the course or interact in the course in any way.

b. **Hybrid Attendance Policy:** Attendance policy for a Hybrid courses will be based on the 10% rule by combining the percentage of seat time and online time. The student will be required to post assignments in Angel that demonstrate student attendance comparable to class-time. Failure to submit these assignments will result in the student being counted absent for that particular percentage of class time. Once the combined results exceed 10% of total class time, the student will be suspended from class.

c. **Student-Initiated Withdrawal from Course(s):** If a student decides to drop the class, the student will need to withdraw officially from the class by completing and submitting a Schedule Change Form to the Financial Aid Office.

Syllabi for all fully online courses must include the following:

a. **Student Code of Conduct:** A student’s password will allow access only to his/her own account. Students should not give out their passwords or allow any other person, including family members, to access their account for any reason. It is a violation of section K.1f of the student code of conduct policy for any student to log into to a course as another student. It is also a violation of the policy for a student to permit another person to log in to a course using the password belonging to the student registered for the course or interact in the course in any way.

b. **Testing Rules:** Augusta Tech students who attend any of the three campuses, are enrolled in a program, and taking an online course, must take any proctored event/exams at the campus of their instructor.

   GA Technical schools transient students are proctored through their home school and need to contact instructors in advance.

   Other transient students must locate an official proctoring site in their area – the public library, other colleges, military base education site, etc. and provide instructors the contact information in advance. Students will be responsible for any fees associated with using an outside proctoring site.

   A Proctor Request form is available under the CollegeInfo tab in every course.

   Student’s picture ID will be checked prior to the administering of any proctored event.
c. **Online Attendance Policy:** To complete this class successfully, students are required to participate in Angel and complete assignments within a weekly period (7 calendar days). Failure to follow the attendance policy may result in withdrawal from class. Withdrawal from a class may affect a student's present and future academic and financial aid status.

d. **Student-Initiated Withdrawal from Course(s):** If a student decides to drop this course, he or she must complete an official drop form through admissions, or email LaTosha Hicks (latosha.hicks@augustatech.edu) and Mike Violette (mviolette@augustatech.edu) in student records, as well as the instructor, and request a drop. The email should include the student's name and student ID number, as well as the course name. Once the email has been received, the student will be officially dropped from the class.

### 4.7 Class size

A full class size for distance education courses is calculated at 20 students. The minimum class size must be approved by the VPAA.

### 4.8 Teaching Load and Remuneration

**Full-time Faculty**

When an online class causes the hours teaching to exceed the normal teaching load, a contract can be awarded for that class.

**Adjunct Faculty**

Adjunct faculty will be issued a contract based on the number of hours taught and the academic and professional preparation of the faculty member.

### 4.9 Faculty Evaluation

The Deans of the respective academic divisions of the college evaluate faculty members annually. Performance in all Distance Education courses will be included as a part of the instructor's evaluation process. Performance in Distance Education courses shall be treated on an equal basis with performance in traditional classroom settings.

Faculty members teaching Distance Education courses must include ten hours per year of relevant professional development activities for online instruction in their professional development plans.

### 4.10 Intellectual Property

All intellectual property rights associated with any distance education course developed by an employee of Augusta Technical College when produced as a voluntary or assigned duty or with substantial use of college resources, facilities, or funds shall belong to the Technical College System of Georgia.

Any scholarly article, thesis, dissertation, or instructional material prepared by the course creator as a part of the routine teaching process shall be the proprietorship of the course creator even if created as a result of online course development.

In order that the Department be able to utilize to the best and fullest extent all works produced for it, and all works provided for its use, anyone producing work for the Department and anyone providing work for the Department's use, represents and warrants that such works:
• Do not violate any law;

• Do not violate or infringe any intellectual property right (including but not limited to copyright, trademark, patent, or right of publicity) of any person or firm; and

• Do not libel, defame, or invade the privacy of any person or firm.

4.11 Evaluation of Online Courses

4.11.1 Course Integrity

Faculty are encouraged to explore new technologies that may enhance delivery of distance education instruction as they become available. Instructors are also required to provide a variety of assignment and interaction throughout the course that will encourage individual responses from students. Consistent dialog with students allows the instructors to develop a profile of each student which helps determine the validity of their coursework.

4.11.2 Review Procedure

The Distance Education instructors must submit the proposed course for approval as described in Section 3.1.1. As a part of the evaluation process, the online instructor shall submit a Self-Review form for the course to the Associate Dean of Distance Education. The Associate Dean of Distance Education shall use the overview to assess the course and may make one of the following recommendations:

1. Course may be offered in subsequent semester without revision.
2. Course may be offered after noted revisions.
3. Course needs to be revised and re-submitted to the committee for approval.
4. Course should not be offered.

Courses may be given an additional review when they have been revised or substantially altered in content, instructional methodology, or at other appropriate occasions.

4.11.3 Student Evaluation

Distance Education students shall have the opportunity to evaluate each course for which they are registered on a semester basis. All students are sent an email to their campus student email account to evaluate all courses for which they are registered. All instructors and deans, as well as appropriate administrative personnel, have access to the evaluation summaries. The results of the student course evaluations will be used in the annual evaluation of the instructor as well as in any necessary longitudinal studies (see Appendix).

4.12 Retention Plan

In order to encourage retention in online courses, the Distance Learning office has developed a three tiered plan designed to assist instructors, students, and counseling staff.

4.12.1 Instructional Resources

The Distance Education office provides support materials for distance education instructors. Instructors are required to attend training prior to distance education instruction and then a
minimum of 15 hours per year thereafter. Training sessions include techniques for tracking and improving retention. Review of new courses and individual meetings with the Associate Dean of Distance Education encourage the use of a variety of the techniques described below.

- Early Alert Reports

All distanced education courses should have assignments linked to Student Learning Outcomes (SLO). Instructors should set up automated reports to identify students who do not have a 70% average per SLO. Instructors should follow up the reports with an email to students identified, encouraging improvement and listing additional academic and counseling resources.

- Learning Communities

Instructors are taught techniques to foster community ties within the online environment. The core of community building is dynamic communication between the instructor and the students and between students themselves.

First, frequent and personal communication between the instructor and students creates a bond that leads to higher retention rates. Quick response to student emails is essential to dynamic communication between the instructor and the students. The acceptable time frame for instructors is set by the Associate Dean of Distance Education at 12-24 hours. Students who receive frequent communication from the instructor develop a sense of belonging that is key to finishing the course. Additionally, instructors make use of weekly announcements and assignment feedback to assure students of the instructor’s presence and availability. Tokens, html coding throughout the course pages, are also available to address students by name and develop a personal learning environment.

A second component of building a learning community is interaction between students. These types of opportunities include use of LMS email to ask questions of other students, chat rooms where students can interact and ask questions of one another, and Q and A discussion boards where students can view the questions that other students are asking of the instructor. Instructors are required by the Associate Dean of Distance Education to demonstrate use of activities or tools, such as those above, which foster engagement and relationships among students.

4.12.2 Student Resources

The distance education department addresses student needs through self-assessment, tutoring, and counseling options.

- Self-Assessment

The Distance Education Office encourages students to make use of SmarterMeasure online readiness testing. Students are scored in several skill and learning style areas to indicate readiness for online learning. Instructors and students have access to a student’s scores, and additional resource sites are listed on each score report to encourage students to improve their skills in areas that are deemed troublesome.

- CollegeInfo Tab
A CollegeInfo tab has been added to all courses listed in the LMS. This tab contains easily accessible answers to Frequently Asked Questions to ensure that lack of Angel proficiency is not a reason for student attrition. The tab also includes links to counseling services, so that students who are at risk because of personal issues have easy access to helpful resources. The counseling link offers services to help students choose a career, discuss appropriate classes, establish academic adjustments, improve grades, and overcome personal barriers to success. Additionally, academic tutoring resources are described on the CollegeInfo tab. Students in online classes have access to SmartThinking, an online tutoring service. The service is provided at no cost to the students. Every online class is required to have the nugget for entry to SmartThinking on the front page of the course.

4.12.3 Counseling Staff

- Warning Emails

The Counseling staff is available to work with students via phone and email as well as in person, so online students have access to counseling services. Instructors are trained in the use of Agents, automated reports targeting students who need additional academic support. Warning emails can be sent to students who are in danger of not successfully completing the course or meeting acceptable standards for any single Learning Objective of the course. These warnings include the following list of links to counseling services:

- Counseling Center: http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center.html
- Academic Counseling: http://www.augustatech.edu/AcademicCareerCounseling.htm
- Special Needs/Disability Counseling: http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center/specialneeds.html
- Special Populations Counseling: http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center/specialpop.html

- Early Alerts

The Counseling Center also has an Early Alert system, so instructors can inform the Counseling staff of a student who is not successfully completing course work. The Staff will contact the student to offer counseling services.

4.13 Library Services

4.13.1 Access

Faculty and students participating in distance education courses shall have full access to the facilities of the library at Augusta Technical College and to libraries with which the College has a resource sharing agreement. Faculty and students may access library services online from the College website, as well as the CollegeInfo tab that is included in every Distance Education course. An online library orientation is available to students as well as an “Ask a Librarian” contact link.

4.14 Students

4.14.1 Registration Process (through 2014)

- Current student attempts to register for Distance Education courses via Banner.
• Student is directed to the Online Courses Registration Information link for a list of courses, an online orientation, and other online information.
• Student views the course schedule page and decides which course(s) he or she would like to enroll in.
• Student returns to Banner
• Student registers for class.
• GVTC students and all other transient students register through Student Services.
• Student is added to the course in Angel on the first day of the semester by the Associate Dean of Distance Education.

4.14.2 Student Services/Transient Student Registration

For transient students, Student Services performs the following functions:
• Validates each student’s eligibility to take course(s).
• Checks course enrollment number.
• Replies to student to confirm or deny enrollment in classes and provides instructions for contacting the instructor.

4.14.3 Withdrawal Process

• Student will email the instructor and the designated persons in Student Records of the intent to withdraw.
• The designated persons in Student Records will withdraw the student and send notification to the student and the instructor.
• Faculty disables student from the course and emails the student’s LDA to Student Records

4.14.4 Administrative Withdrawal Process

• Students may be administratively withdrawn for failure to demonstrate attendance by logging into their online courses and failing to submit required assignments for 7 consecutive days during the first 60% of the semester.
• The instructor will send the student an email informing him or her of the withdrawal and send a copy of the message to the Dean under which the course falls.
• The student may contact the Dean and the instructor to appeal the withdrawal.
• The Dean will then communicate with the instructor regarding the outcome of the appeal proceedings.
• Once withdrawn, the student will be disabled from the online course roster and be unable to access course materials.
• Instructors must maintain attendance and grade records for withdrawn students, so should not those students from Angel.

4.14.5 Student Privacy

In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Augusta Technical College protects the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses by ensuring the privacy and integrity of the communications and records used within the approved Learning Management System (LMS) course. Student access to online course content is protected by a unique and secure login and password. A secure grading system is provided. Access to student coursework
is restricted to the instructor and LMS administrators. Augusta Technical College also adheres to the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC) Privacy Policy.

Only course or school email addresses are used for communication within the course. Students accessing grades within the system are limited only to their own. Once a course has been completed, student records are stored within an archived version of the course which is completed at the administrative level every few months. Instructors export and maintain their own electronic versions of course grades and other pertinent information.

Personal information is specific to the user. The only personal information displayed within a distance education course is information that the student elects to provide in response to a discussion board or an assignment. These said postings are only available to members of the class. Students are required to use only course or school email for communication. Any other personal information residing within a course is restricted to LMS administrators and is not shared with any source outside of the Technical College System of Georgia.

Every student registered in a distance education course at the College receives a unique login. The identification number assigned to students allows them access to their course content which resides within the College LMS. The password provided is generic and requires that students change the password prior to accessing their course content. The students also have access to change their password at any time after that. A secondary secure login and password is also required for entry to any third party software associated with the LMS (see Appendix Institutional Policy IV.D.1.a).

4.14.6 Student Complaints

Students who have complaints about academic issues should follow the established chain of command based on the Grievance Policy found in the student handbook and first attempt to contact their instructor. Should the issue not be resolved, they can then contact the Associate Dean of Distance Education who will direct the student to the appropriate academic dean if needed. For content delivery issues, the students should contact the Associate Dean of Distance Education (see Appendix).

4.14.7 Proctored Events/ Student Authentication

Augusta Tech online students who attend any of the College campuses are required to participate in one to three proctored events. Any student enrolled in a program and taking an online course must take the scheduled proctored event(s) at the campus of the course instructor. The event(s) must be monitored by the instructor of the course.

Transient students from GA Technical schools will have their events proctored through their home school and need to make arrangements through the instructor of the Augusta Tech class. The instructor will contact the responsible party at that school for proctoring information.

Other transient students must locate an official proctoring site in their area – the public library, other colleges, military base education site, etc. and provide instructors
the contact information in advance. Students will be responsible for any fees associated with using an outside proctoring site.

A Proctor Request form is available in every course under the CollegeInfo tab.

Students’ picture IDs will be checked during attendance at each proctored event. There are no additional fees associated with the authentication of student identification (see Appendix Institutional Policy IV.D.1.b).

Proctored events scheduled as final exams will be administered during the last week of the semester (to include the scheduled exams days). All course content pertaining to the proctored events must be completed no later than one day prior to the scheduled event. In-class exams scheduled during the normal exam days will take precedence over online events.

Proctored event dates and times will be scheduled as such in Banner. Make-up or alternate dates will be listed in the course syllabus or calendar.

4.15 Learning Management System Disaster Preparedness Documentation

A copy of the Disaster Preparedness Documentation for the Angel/Blackboard LMS may be found in the Appendix.
Appendix

Documents associated with Distance Education

Note: These documents are reference only and are not to be distributed or copied.

I. Online Course Development Request Form
II. Hybrid Course Development Request Form
III. Online Course Self-Review Form - used by the Instructors to document development of an online course, and used by Associate Dean of Distance Education and Deans to evaluate the development of an online course
IV. Hybrid Instructor Self Review Form – used by the Instructors to document development of a hybrid course, and used by Associate Dean of Distance Education and Deans to evaluate the development of a hybrid course
V. Online Course Evaluation Form – delivered online and used by students to evaluate online courses
VI. Hybrid Course Evaluation Form – delivered online and used by students to evaluate hybrid courses
VII. Distance Education Retention Plan
VIII. Augusta Technical College Policy IV.D.1.a Procedure for Distance Education Student Privacy
IX. Student Complaints
X. Augusta Technical College Policy IV.D.1.b Distance Education Procedure for Projected Additional Student Charges
XI. Learning Management System Disaster Preparedness Documentation
Augusta Technical College - Online Course Development Request Form  
SPRING SEMESTER 2013  ***Note – course content must be completed and reviewed prior to offering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Instructor</th>
<th>Program/Curricular Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Request</td>
<td>Timeline for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and Title of Proposed Online Course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term to be developed</th>
<th>Estimated date of completion (must be prior to delivery)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term to be delivered</td>
<td>How often will this course be offered online?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has this course been previously delivered as Online? Yes ☐ No ☐</td>
<td>Has this course been previously delivered as Hybrid? Yes ☐ No ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has this instructor previously taught a Hybrid course? Yes ☐ No ☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rationale for Offering (does the course content lend itself to a full on-line model, lab requirements, etc.)

Administrative Use Only
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Decline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

____________________  ________________
Department Head  Date

Comments:______________________________

1. Decision:

2. Decision:

____________________  ________________
Department Dean/VPO  Date

Comments:______________________________

3. Decision:

☐ Approve
☐ Decline

Instructor meets training requirements  Yes ☐ No ☐
Director of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness notified
Yes ☐  No ☐

______________________________
Associate Dean of Distance Education  Date

Comments:

4. Decision:

☐ Approve
☐ Decline

______________________________
Vice President of Academic Affairs  Date

Comments:

5. ________________
Vice President of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness  Date

Return to Tammy O’Brien at this point

---

**Augusta Technical College Angel Hybrid Request Form**

***Note – Courses offered over 33% online must be completed and reviewed prior to offering***

Please complete the form on the computer, print and then route through the proper signatures

***Be thorough with your answers***

Previously approved requests do not have to be resubmitted

1. Instructor's Name  
   Click here to enter text.
2. Course ID (Prefix and Number – Ex: COMP1000)  
   Click here to enter text.
3. Request to Offer Course  
   Choose an item.
4. Instructor Completed Angel Training  
   Choose an item.
5. Proposed Online/In-Class Percent  
   Choose an item.
6. Total Course Contact Hours (from standards)  
   Click here to enter text.
7. **Banner** Dates and Times *(in-class times only)*
   - Start Time: *Click here to enter text.*
   - End Time: *Click here to enter text.*

   - Days: M □ T □ W □ R □ F □ S □ S □

8. Estimated date of content completion (must be prior to delivery)

9. Rationale for Online Component ***Explain with some detail what part of the course content lends itself to online learning as opposed to in-class.***
   *Click here to enter text.*

Instructor’s Signature __________________________ Date____________

Dept Head Signature____________________________ Date____________

Dean/VPO Signature____________________________ Date____________

Assoc Dean of Dist Ed Signature__________________ Date____________

VPAA Signature ______________________________ Date _____________

Comments:____________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Augusta Technical College
Online Course Evaluation

1. How many online courses have you previously taken?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3
   e. 4 or more

2. Has taking this course increased your knowledge of the topic?
   a. not at all
   b. somewhat
   c. quite a lot

3. How many hours did you devote to this class per week?
   a. 1-2 hours per week
   b. 3-4 hours per week
   c. 5-6 hours per week
   d. 7-8 hours per week
   e. 9 or more hours per week
4. About how many times did you contact the instructor for assistance during the course?

   a. 1-2 times
   b. 3-4 times
   c. 5-6 times
   d. 7-8 times
   e. 9 or more times

5. How do you rate your style as an online learner?

   a. highly motivated and able to complete the required online work
   b. motivated and able to complete the required online work
   c. sometimes motivated and self-disciplined enough to complete the required online work
   d. not motivated or self-disciplined enough to complete the required online work

6. How effective was the instructor in his/her distance instruction methods?

   a. highly effective
   b. effective
   c. somewhat effective
   d. not effective

7. During the term, the instructor used a variety of instruction methods and technologies.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

8. How satisfied were you with the technical support received during this course?

   a. Very satisfied
   b. Satisfied
   c. Somewhat satisfied
   d. Not satisfied

9. Did technical problems interfere with you learning the content?

   a. Yes
   b. No

10. The instructor interacted with me each week by:

    a. email
    b. announcements
    c. feedback on assignments
    d. discussion boards
    e. online chat or in person
    f. more than one of the above
    g. none of the above

11. The instructor responded to my emails with an average response time of:

    a. 1-2 days
    b. 3-4 days
    c. 5-6 days
    d. 7 or more days

12. Effective use of communication was used throughout the course.

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Disagree
    d. Strongly disagree

13. Instructor encouraged interactivity among students in discussions and/or activities.
14. Instructor provided feedback on assignments and projects in a timely manner.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

15. Instructions for the course lessons, projects, and assignments were easy to follow.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

16. The purpose, objectives and grading procedures for the course were clearly stated on the syllabus.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

17. Examinations and graded assignment or graded activities were consistent with course objectives.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

18. Would you recommend this course to others?
   a. yes
   b. no

19. Would you enroll in other Angel delivered courses (hybrid or online) given the opportunity?
   a. yes
   b. no

20. The course web site was available at times I tried to access it.
   a. Always
   b. Frequently
   c. Occasionally
   d. Never

21. The computers on campus were available and working when I needed them.
   a. Always
   b. Frequently
   c. Occasionally
   d. Never
   e. I did not use them

22. How did you register for this course?
   a. I registered myself using web registration
   b. My advisor registered me
   c. Student Services registered me
   d. Other
23. During registration, I was given sufficient guidance to begin the online course.
   a. True
   b. False

24. For the most part the admissions staff responded to me:
   a. Quickly and courteously
   b. Slowly and courteously
   c. Quickly and rudely
   d. Slowly and rudely

25. During registration and throughout the quarter, the financial aid staff responded to me:
   a. Quickly and courteously
   b. Slowly and courteously
   c. Quickly and rudely
   d. Slowly and rudely

26. Please add any comments that you have about the course.

---

**Augusta Technical College**  
**Hybrid Course Evaluation**

1. During registration and throughout the quarter, the financial aid staff responded to me:
   a. Quickly and courteously
   b. Slowly and courteously
   c. Quickly and rudely
   d. Slowly and rudely

2. For the most part the admissions staff responded to me:
   a. Quickly and courteously
   b. Slowly and courteously
   c. Quickly and rudely
   d. Slowly and rudely

3. How many hybrid courses have you previously taken?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3
   e. 4 or more

4. Has taking this course increased your knowledge of the topic?
   a. not at all
   b. somewhat
   c. quite a lot

5. In which way did the online work enhance the on campus work?
   a. Online assignments sufficiently reinforced and expanded upon material covered in class.
   b. Online assignments sufficiently reinforced material covered in class, but did not add anything to the content.
   c. Online assignments were not used to sufficiently reinforce or cover required material.
   d. There were few required online assignments.
   e. There were no required online assignments.

6. How many hours per week did you spend working on hybrid assignments outside of class?
7. How do you rate your style as an online learner?
   a. highly motivated and able to complete the required online work
   b. motivated and able to complete the required online work
   c. sometimes motivated and self-disciplined enough to complete the required online work
   d. not motivated or self-disciplined enough to complete the required online work

8. How effective was the instructor in his/her distance learning instruction?
   a. highly effective
   b. effective
   c. somewhat effective
   d. not effective

9. Rate your attitude toward the hybrid format:
   a. The flexibility to do work on my own in combination with some on campus time is best for me.
   b. I would prefer entirely online classes.
   c. I would prefer entirely on campus classes.

10. How satisfied were you with the educational experience gained in this course?
    a. Very satisfied
    b. Satisfied
    c. Somewhat satisfied
    d. Not satisfied
    e. Did not use

11. How satisfied were you with the technical support received during this course?
    a. Very satisfied
    b. Satisfied
    c. Somewhat satisfied
    d. Not satisfied

12. Did technical problems interfere with you learning the content?
    a. Yes
    b. No

13. The instructor used in-class sessions effectively.
    a. Always
    b. Most of the time
    c. Some weeks
    d. No weeks

14. The instructor responded to my emails with an average response time of:
    a. 1-2 days
    b. 3-4 days
    c. 5-6 days
    d. 7 or more days

15. Effective use of communication was used throughout the course.
    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Disagree
    d. Strongly disagree
16. Instructor encouraged interactivity among students in discussions and/or activities.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

17. Instructor provided feedback on assignments and projects in a timely manner.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly Disagree

18. Instructions for the course lessons, projects, and assignments were clear.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

19. The purpose, objectives and grading procedures for the course were clearly stated on the syllabus.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

20. Examinations and graded assignment or graded activities were consistent with course objectives.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

21. Would you enroll in other Angel delivered courses (hybrid or online) given the opportunity?
   a. yes
   b. no

22. The course web site was available at times I tried to access it.
   a. Always
   b. Frequently
   c. Occasionally
   d. Never

23. The computers on campus were available and working when I needed them.
   a. Always
   b. Frequently
   c. Occasionally
   d. Never

24. Would you recommend this course to others?
   a. yes
   b. no

25. Please add any comments that you have about the course.

**Evaluation example**
### Online Course Evaluation

**Description:**

Date Created: 2/14/2012 4:31:48 PM  
Date Range: 2/15/2012 12:00:00 AM - 6/1/2020 11:59:00 PM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1 How many online courses have you previously taken?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0[Code = 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1[Code = 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2[Code = 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3[Code = 4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more[Code = 5]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required answers:** 1  
**Allowed answers:** 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2 Has taking this course increased your knowledge of the topic?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quite a lot[Code = 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat[Code = 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all[Code = 1]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required answers:** 1  
**Allowed answers:** 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3 How many hours did you devote to this class per week?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours per week[Code = 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 hours per week[Code = 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 hours per week[Code = 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8 hours per week[Code = 4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or more hours per week[Code = 5]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required answers:** 1  
**Allowed answers:** 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4 About how many times did you contact the instructor for assistance during the course?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times[Code = 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times[Code = 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 times[Code = 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8 times[Code = 4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or more times[Code = 5]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required answers:** 1  
**Allowed answers:** 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5 How do you rate your style as an online learner?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly motivated and able to complete the required online work [Code = 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated and able to complete the required online work [Code = 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes motivated and self-disciplined enough to complete the required online work [Code = 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not motivated or self-disciplined enough to complete the required online work[Code = 4]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required answers:** 1  
**Allowed answers:** 1

---

**Distance Education Department**  
**Retention Plan**
In order to encourage retention in online courses, the Distance Education office has developed a three tiered plan designed to assist instructors, students, and counseling staff.

**Tier 1: Instructional Resources**

The Distance Education office provides support materials for online instructors. Instructors are required to attend training both before beginning as an online instructor and then 10 hours per year thereafter. Training sessions include techniques for tracking and improving retention. Review of new courses and individual meetings with the Associate Dean of Distance Education encourage the use of a variety of the techniques described below.

**Early Alert Reports**

All online courses have assignments linked to Student Learning Outcomes (SLO). Instructors should set up automated reports to identify students who do not have a 70% average per SLO. Instructors should follow up the reports with an email to students identified, encouraging improvement and listing additional academic and counseling resources. Early Alert Report Forms are posted on the Distance Education Staff Development website.

**Learning Communities**

Instructors are taught techniques to foster community ties within the online environment. The core of community building is dynamic communication between the instructor and the students and between students themselves.

First, frequent and personal communication between the instructor and students creates a bond that leads to higher retention rates. Quick response to student emails is essential to dynamic communication between the instructor and the students. The acceptable time frame for instructors is set by the Associate Dean of Distance Education at 12-24 hours. Students who receive frequent communication from the instructor develop a sense of belonging that is key to finishing the course (Herbert, Michael. “Staying the Course: A Study in Online Student Satisfaction and Retention.”) Additionally, instructors make use of weekly announcements and assignment feedback to assure students of the instructor’s presence and availability. Tokens, html coding throughout the course pages, are also available to address students by name and develop a personal learning environment.

A second component of building a learning community is interaction between students. Students in online courses have responded negatively to being required to interact with other students (Herbert). However, opportunities for optional engagement are appreciated. These types of opportunities include use of Angel mail to ask questions of other students, chat rooms where students can interact and ask questions of one another, and Q and A discussion boards where students can view the questions that other students are asking of the instructor. Instructors are required by the Associate Dean of Distance Education to demonstrate use of activities or tools, such as those above, which foster engagement and relationships among students.

**Tier 2: Student Resources**

Online students are typically independent learners, yet surveys cite personal problems as the main reason among online learners for not completing a course (Herbert). The Distance Education Office addresses student needs through self-assessment, tutoring, and counseling options.
**Self-Assessment**

The Distance Education Office encourages students to make use of SmarterMeasure online readiness testing. Students are scored in several skill and learning style areas to indicate readiness for online learning. Instructors and students have access to a student’s scores, and additional resource sites are listed on each score report to encourage students to improve their skills in areas that are deemed troublesome.

**CollegeInfo Tab**

A tab called CollegeInfo has been added to all Angel classes. This tab contains easily accessible answers to Frequently Asked Questions to ensure that lack of Angel proficiency is not a reason for student attrition. The tab also includes links to counseling services, so that students who are at risk because of personal issues have easy access to helpful resources. The counseling link “offers services to help students choose a career, discuss appropriate classes, establish academic adjustments, improve grades, and overcome personal barriers to success” (ATC Counseling Center web page). Additionally, academic tutoring resources are described on the CollegeInfo tab. Students in online classes have access to Smarthinking, an online tutoring service. The service is provided at no cost to the students. Every online class is required to have the nugget for entry to Smarthinking on the front page of the course.

---

**Tier 3: Counseling Staff**

**Warning Emails**

The Counseling staff is available to work with students via phone and email as well as in person, so online students have access to counseling services. Instructors are trained in the use of Agents, automated reports targeting students who need additional academic support. Warning emails can be sent to students who are in danger of not successfully completing the course or meeting acceptable standards for any single Learning Outcome of the course. These warnings include the following list of links to counseling services:

- Counseling Center: [http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center.html](http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center.html)
- Academic Counseling: [http://www.augustatech.edu/AcademicCareerCounseling.htm](http://www.augustatech.edu/AcademicCareerCounseling.htm)
- Special Needs/Disability Counseling: [http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center/specialneeds.html](http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center/specialneeds.html)
- Special Populations Counseling: [http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center/specialpop.html](http://www.augustatech.edu/counseling_center/specialpop.html)

**Early Alerts**

The Counseling Center also has an Early Alert system, so instructors can inform the Counseling staff of a student who is not successfully completing course work. The Staff will contact the student to offer counseling services.

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**Institutional Policy IV.D.1.a**

**IV. D. 1. a. Augusta Technical College**

**Procedure for Distance Education Student’s Privacy**

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**Procedure for Distance Education Student's Privacy**
In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Augusta Technical College protects the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses by ensuring the privacy and integrity of the communications and records used within the approved Learning Management System (LMS) course. Student access to online course content is protected by a unique and secure login and password. A secure grading system is provided. Access to student coursework is restricted to the instructor and LMS administrators. Augusta Technical College also adheres to the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC) Privacy Policy.

Only course or school email addresses are used for communication within the course. Students accessing grades within the system are limited only to their own. Once a course has been completed, student records are stored within an archived version of the course which is completed at the administrative level every few months. Instructors export and maintain their own electronic versions of course grades and other pertinent information.

Personal information is specific to the user. The only personal information displayed within a distance education course is information that the student elects to provide in response to a discussion board or an assignment. These said postings are only available to members of the class. Students are required to use only course or school email for communication. Any other personal information residing within a course is restricted to LMS administrators and is not shared with any source outside of the Technical College System of Georgia.

Every student registered in a distance education course at the College receives a unique login. The identification number assigned to students allows them access to their course content which resides within the College LMS. The password provided is generic and requires that students change the password prior to accessing their course content. The students also have access to change their password at any time after that. A secondary secure login and password is also required for entry to any third party software associated with the LMS.

Students are required to show picture identification prior to taking any proctored event. Only instructors or authorized proctors check the identification of a student. There is no other technology use to verify the identity of a student at that time; therefore, the privacy of the student is secured during exam time.

**Student Complaints**

**DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENT COMPLAINTS**

**General Complaints**

Complaints or grievances should be forwarded in writing to the Vice President of Student Affairs (Mr. Eddie Howard, Building 1300, (706) 771-4035) for appropriate referral. The standard procedure for reporting and settling these complaints and/or grievances are listed under “appeal procedure” found in the Student Handbook.

**Academic Complaints**

Students who have complaints about academic issues should follow the established chain of command based on the Grievance Policy found in the Student Handbook and first attempt to contact their instructor.

Should the issue not be resolved, they can then submit a Help Desk ticket to the Associate Dean of Distance Education who will direct the student to the appropriate academic dean if needed.

**Content Delivery Issues**
For content delivery issues, the students should first attempt to contact their instructor. Should the issue not be resolved, they can then contact the Associate Dean of Distance Education who will then assist the student.

Institutional Policy IV.D.1.b

**IV. D. 1. b. Augusta Technical College**

**Distance Education Procedure for Projected Additional Student Charges**

Augusta Tech online students who attend any of the College campuses are required to participate in one to three proctored events. Any student enrolled in a program and taking an online course must take their scheduled proctored event(s) at the campus of their instructor. The event(s) must be monitored by the instructor of the course.

Transient students from GA Technical schools will have their events proctored through their home school and need to contact their instructors in advance as well. The instructor will contact the responsible party at that school for proctoring information.

Other transient students must locate an official proctoring site in their area – the public library, other colleges, military base education site, etc. and provide instructors the contact information in advance. Students will be responsible for any fees associated with using an outside proctoring site.

Student's picture identification must be checked prior to administering any proctored event. The Distance Education Online Course Instructions letter notifies students prior to registration of the proctored events and states that there are no additional fees associated with the identification process.