University of California
Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS)

<u>Requirements for Online Courses and Programs to Receive "a-g" Approval</u>

BOARS recognizes that while online courses and programs offer students unique learning opportunities, they also present a number of challenges related to quality and access. BOARS has identified the following elements as necessary for ensuring a high-quality online learning experience. We expect each of these quality measures to be present in all K-12 online courses and programs seeking approval for "a-g" credit, and we strongly encourage them to be present in all other online courses and programs offered in K-12.

- All students in the program have equal access to all courses for which they are qualified, regardless of socioeconomic status, disabilities or other factors. This concern is particularly relevant for online instruction, where it is an unfortunate fact that access to the internet is not uniformly available, and studies have shown that the demographics of students taking courses online are substantially different than of the population as a whole. Students in low socioeconomic groups must not be disadvantaged compared to their wealthier classmates in access to online courses.

- Online courses must be developed by content experts in conjunction with those who understand how best to use technology involved to enhance student learning.

- Online courses used to fulfill admission requirements to the University of California must be consistent, in terms of content, depth, and academic rigor, with the <u>"a-g" guidelines</u> provided by the University.

- Online courses must provide opportunities for substantial interactions between students and the teacher, and between students and other students. Learning is not merely the acquisition of facts. It is a dynamic, social activity that requires inquiry, dialogue, exploration, and engagement with other learners and feedback from teachers. Students must have access to content experts as they learn.

- Student progress and learning are to be assessed frequently through a variety of tools, and feedback to the student must be prompt.
- Institutions offering online courses that are to be considered for admission to the University of California must be accredited by one of the six regional accrediting agencies recognized by the University of California.

- Institutions offering online courses must adhere to the promising practices found in the iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Programs.

- Institutions must provide qualified teachers who are content experts and are capable of supporting their students' learning throughout the online course. These teachers must provide adequate professional development to effectively support students in their online

learning, and be assigned a number of students that allows for the interaction necessary to achieve positive learning outcomes.

- Institutions must ensure that the technology infrastructure is adequate for effective learning and that students enrolled in an online course have access to both the necessary hardware and software required to be successful.

- Institutions offering online courses must provide students entering a course appropriate advice to ensure that they have the necessary background and technology to succeed.

- Institutions must ensure that students have local access to qualified professionals (teachers, mentors, counselors, etc) or paraprofessionals who can support their online course participation. However, such local support staff must not be expected to replace the teacher as a primary source of content.

- Institutions must have a process in place to ensure that the person submitting material for assessment is actually the student enrolled in the course. While concerns about academic integrity certainly exists for both face-to-face and online courses, there is added concern that the authenticity of the person providing the material could be more easily compromised in the online setting.

- Institutions must be willing to provide the performance data on the students in their courses.