

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS POLICY LETTER

Authentication of Student Identity

March 25, 2011

Policy

Ferris State University verifies the identity of each student enrolled in and completing its courses and programs. Students' identity will first be verified upon enrollment, when official records (including transcripts) are required through the admissions process. The University re-verifies student identity through a variety of methods that are outlined in its student authentication procedures, including the requirement that students access their online courses through a secure login process. Online courses should provide sufficient interaction between students and instructors to further contribute to verifying a student's identity. The University continuously monitors the requirements associated with student authentication at the accreditor, state, and/or national levels and evaluates whether its approaches best meet its requirements.

Procedures

1. Students enrolled at Ferris are required to possess an official identification document that includes their picture. This may include a driver's license, passport, or a Ferris ID.
2. Students enrolled in online courses are required to enter their login ID and a password to access their online courses. At present, that secure access is provided through the MyFSU/FerrisConnect system. The login takes place through a secure connection.
3. Present University Information Technology policy requires that passwords must be changed frequently. Passwords must be sufficiently complex that they are not easily decoded in that, at present, they must be between 8 and 30 characters and require the inclusion of at least one upper-case letter, one lower-case letter, and one numeral.
4. Students are asked to set up a challenge question at the time they establish the password
5. Online courses are, by design, available to University personnel through the course management system (FerrisConnect, currently a WebCT product), just as the face-to-face classes are visible within the university in their physical classroom presence.
6. Faculty and/or program leaders will determine the situations when a proctored examination will be required. Proctored exams are another of the many methods employed by Ferris to verify a student's identity. Frequently arrangements are made at regional sites or with community colleges to provide this testing oversight.

7. The University does not assess additional charges for verification of identity unless it makes such requirements known as fees associated with the course at the time of a student's enrollment. Such additional fees must be included on the course syllabus and must be approved by the University's Student Fees committee. Exceptions may exist if a student requires proctoring of an examination or other activity at a center that assesses a fee for this service. In the future the university may require the student to purchase some technology to better ensure student identity, and students will be responsible for these costs.
8. Students' personal information is protected through the University's policies and practices related to FERPA.
9. The Coordinator of Instructional Technology, in the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, working collaboratively with representatives of the faculty, administration, and Information Technology staff (especially the e-learning administrator) assumes responsibility for monitoring changing requirements for institutions of higher education as well as options available for meeting the expectations of assuring students' identity.
10. Ferris online "Best Practice Guidelines" further encourage that all online courses utilize a variety of instructional and assessment strategies, including frequent instructor/student interactions, multiple measures of learning outcomes assessment, and varied approaches to assessment of learning.