

**FAILURE TO VERIFY IDENTIFICATION OF ONLINE STUDENTS:
ADVANTAGES, COSTS, AND CONSEQUENCES.**

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ABSTRACT

Leading Universities are increasingly coming under scrutiny regarding not only the quality of the online classes they offer but whether classes are even completed by the individual of record. Without verification of identity and monitored testing, universities are not able to state with any degree of confidence that the grade was earned by the officially registered individual. In 2010, the NCAA banned online courses from BYU and the Illinois-based American School due to cheating online of which the institutions were apparently unaware.

Policies regarding verification of identity have taken a back seat to ease obstacles facing online students. Although universities may benefit in the short term by increased FTE and corresponding cash flow, in the long term they place their programs and the quality of those

programs at risk by being perceived as a paper mill.

It is in the best interests of universities to develop verification of identity policies that address the needs of a variety of stakeholders rather than wait for legislation or accrediting board reactions. Many stakeholders will benefit including: employers, taxpayers, current and future students, alumni and ultimately the university itself.

It is the purpose of this panel to further examine the problems raised by widespread usage of on-line instruction, including student verification, learning assurance, and evaluation of instruction. Difficulties, both philosophical and practical, will be explored and, with other MEA members, practical solutions suggested.