

## Verification of Student Identity Policy

### **Overview:**

Frostburg State University (FSU) must operate in compliance with the provisions of the United States Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, Public Law 110-315 that requires the verification of student identity in distance or correspondence education.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish identity verification procedures for students enrolled in distance education courses. According to the provisions of the HEOA, all credit-bearing courses and programs offered through distance education methods must verify that the student who registers for a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives academic credit. The HEOA has identified the following as acceptable methods of identity verification:

- An individual secure login and password,
- Proctored activities, and/or
- Other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

### **Scope:**

This policy applies to all credit-bearing distance education courses and programs offered by Frostburg State University.

### **Policy Statement:**

This policy ensures that Frostburg State University operates in compliance with the provisions of the HEOA concerning verification of student identity in distance and correspondence education. All methods of verifying student identity in distance education must protect the privacy of student information. The student must be notified of any projected fees associated with student identity verification. Responsibilities for the consistent application of student identity verification procedures must be clearly stated and described.

### **Verification Methods:**

Frostburg State University uses a secure login and complex password to ensure that the student who registers for a course is the same student who participates in the course.

- During the Admission's process, each student receives a unique Student ID Number.
- Upon matriculation, each student receives a unique and secure network account that is linked to the Student ID Number. This network account is used to authenticate into FSU's Learning Management System, Canvas, as well as other major applications i.e. PeopleSoft Administrative Workflow System (PAWS), Email, etc.
- First time users must establish their identity by visiting the Password and Account Management Portal to set up a complex password and four security questions. Users can manage their password resets through this Portal using their secure questions or a mobile

number. More information about FSU usernames and passwords can be found at <http://www.frostburg.edu/computing/get-connected/fsu-accounts/usernames-passwords/>

- If a student requires assistance from the FSU IT Help Desk that requires access to any student information, three forms of identity must be verified before proceeding with a telephone request. Possible identifiers are: Student ID Number, Birthdate, Last 4 digits of Social Security Number, Home Address, and Home Phone Number. During an in-person request, the student's identity is verified with their Student ID Card that contains their picture and Student ID Number.
- Students are required to authenticate each time they log into the Learning Management System to access their course(s).
- All online course work that is graded or contributes to a student's grade is submitted via a system that verifies a student's identity through a unique and secure login.
- For courses delivered through interactive video, the identity of the students is verified visually by the instructor.

### **Student Privacy:**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is designed to protect the confidentiality of education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the US Department of Education. FSU ensures FERPA rights of their students through the following methods:

- Students gain access to their education records and courses through a secure login with their unique username and complex password.
- Students can manage their password resets through the Password Portal using their secure questions or the mobile number they have entered into PAWS, FSU's Student Information System. More information about FSU usernames and passwords can be found at <http://www.frostburg.edu/computing/get-connected/fsu-accounts/usernames-passwords/>.
- FSU has installed up-to-date network security that safeguards against unauthorized access that could threaten student privacy. This includes an Intrusion Prevention System, Firewall, and Anti-Virus Software.
- In compliance with Maryland Law, FSU does not collect any personal identifiable information from any visitor to their website except for specific university services, such as Admissions Applications, Registration for events or contests, Submitting an Official FSU Form, etc. This privacy policy is located at [http://static.frostburg.edu/fsu/assets/File/Administration/policies/fsupolicy/3\\_109.pdf](http://static.frostburg.edu/fsu/assets/File/Administration/policies/fsupolicy/3_109.pdf)
- Strict identity verification methods are employed by the FSU IT Help Desk as described earlier in this document.

### **Fees:**

FSU does not charge additional fees for student identity verification. However, it is routine practice for students in an online course to have a web camera and headset for audio and microphone capabilities. Faculty provide this specific information in their course materials and syllabus.

### **Responsibilities:**

- *The Provost's Office* is responsible for defining and publishing acceptable ethical and academic behavior in the Student Handbook including information on Academic

Dishonesty, Plagiarism, and the Student Code of Conduct. These policies are located at <http://www.frostburg.edu/fsu/assets/File/Administration/policies/policystatements.pdf>

- *Students* are responsible for knowledge of the information contained in the Student Handbook and Course Syllabi. Failure to read university/college/program/course guidelines, requirements, procedures, and policies will not exempt users from responsibility.
- *Students* have the responsibility of maintaining the security of their usernames, passwords, and personally identifiable information. Students must abide by FSU's Responsible Computing Policy located at [http://static.frostburg.edu/fsu/assets/File/Administration/policies/fsupolicy/2\\_046.pdf](http://static.frostburg.edu/fsu/assets/File/Administration/policies/fsupolicy/2_046.pdf). The policy states that the user should not reveal his/her password and is responsible for all activity related to their account. This policy further states that users will not violate the privacy of others, intentionally or unintentionally.
- *Faculty* who teach distance education courses at FSU should first obtain a Certification for Online Teaching through the Office of Information Technology. This 6-week course is designed to teach faculty best practices in online teaching and pedagogy.
- *Faculty* are responsible for applying pedagogical practices that are effective in verifying student identity. Possible methods used include: Virtual class meetings using video display; Reviewing student writing samples from written assignments; Routine interaction with the student (through email, phone, and video); Group assignments; etc.
- *Faculty* are responsible for including information on Academic Dishonesty in their course syllabus. Faculty must also include any hardware and software requirements in their course syllabus and materials.
- Because technology and personal accountability may not verify identity absolutely or ensure academic integrity completely, *Faculty* are responsible for noticing changes in student behavior and coursework such as sudden shifts in academic performance, writing styles, or behaving differently in group assignments.
- *The Office of Information Technology (OIT)* is responsible for having an up-to-date Learning Management System, Network Security, robust Password Management protocols, and stringent IT Help Desk procedures. They are also responsible for providing instruction and support to Faculty on FSU's Online Teaching protocols and practices.

### **Definitions:**

Distance Education/Online Course:

A method of education or a single course that relies on the internet for part or all communication, collaboration, participation, and assignment submission.

Correspondence Education:

A method of education that occurs when an institution provides instructional materials by mail or electronic transmission.