

***Core Requirement 2.10 (Student Support Services): The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that are intended to promote student learning and enhance the development of its students.***

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*“The institution did not provide sufficient evidence that students enrolled in distance education programs have adequate access to student support programs, services, and activities appropriate to the programs offered through distance education. The institution should address how students enrolled in distance education programs can learn about and access the range of services appropriate to support the academic programs offered through distance education.”*  
(Wheelan, Notification Letter, July 15, 2012).

**Narrative:**

Tennessee Technological University provides a wide variety of programs, services, and activities that are consistent with its mission to support the life-long success of our students, scholarly activity, extracurricular activities, diversity, personal growth, and a healthy society whether on or off campus. An active learning environment is created when students become involved in their academic endeavors, both scholarly and social.

All distance learning students are encouraged to take advantage of the services and programs offered by the University through direct contact via e-mail, phone, or online class announcements. The TTU website lists all opportunities and sends a daily reminder of campus events and announcements via **Tech Times**, an electronic student newsletter, to all who hold a TTU e-mail account.

Distance learning students have access to a myriad of services that support students in their academic studies and in the transition from college to career. TTU utilizes the iLearn portal/interface through the Desire2Learn learning management system to deliver reliable and meaningful support to students. The following services and programs are available to all online and distance learners.

**I. General Student Services for Distance Education Students**

All online learners have access to student services via Tennessee Technological University’s online resources. These services provide students with all of the functionality of an on-campus experience with the convenience and 24/7 access of an online environment. Included is the virtual bookstore, library services, career services, virtual tutoring, advisement, and other

services that are available at Tennessee Tech and through the TBR Regents Online Degree Programs (RODP).

### **iLearn**

iLearn is TTU's integrated, online Learning Management System, based on the Desire2Learn platform. It is available to all students and faculty who take part in both distance and face-to-face learning, and it provides a unified space for participants to discuss class topics, provide feedback and assessment, and exchange documents. The system provides step-by-step instructions on how to use e-mail, dropbox, discussion boards, the calendar, and technical information via an online orientation. This online learning environment gives students in distance-learning settings an opportunity to achieve the same rich classroom experience that all TTU students receive on campus. iLearn is a secure learning management system requiring authorization via an account through which students and faculty log in to share information, assignments, assessments, and evaluations.

### **Virtual Bookstore**

Students may purchase all textbooks and course materials from the TTU Online Bookstore and RODP Virtual Bookstore. It is as simple as selecting the program, term, department, and course; and students are instantly provided with the required course materials. Students may check their textbook condition preference, view their shopping cart, and securely check out. Extensive Help/FAQ sections are available for all student questions and concerns.

### **Library Services**

The Angelo and Jennette Volpe Library at TTU provides a range of online resources for distance students and faculty. These resources include over 100 online databases with full-text articles in all academic disciplines offered at the University online and on campus. Additionally tens of thousands of e-books and online reference materials are offered from the library webpage. Online tutorials are available for searching for and accessing library materials online and in print.

The library maintains "EAGLESEARCH," an access software system available on the library webpage that provides searching from one search box in a "Google-like" search; this online search capability covers almost all resources including the majority of online databases, library print books, and e-books. The library website provides webpages devoted to online and distance learners using multiple webpages. These include tutorials, resource finding help, and on-demand document delivery services for distance students. Contact information is provided

for the distance learning librarian and other library staff responsible for electronic resources and library web pages.

Librarians are available to assist distance students through the “Ask a Librarian” web chat service available from multiple library webpages, including from within databases. This service provides a “virtual librarian” help desk available from the library website in a text message question and answer format. Librarians are available by e-mail and telephone. The library has a dedicated distance learning librarian to assess and ensure that distance students receive equal access to services and resources that on-campus students receive. Document delivery service from library staff provides on-demand delivery of print books and print journal articles. The library maintains an interlibrary loan system named “Illiad” providing full-text articles using predominately .pdf files sent to the student’s web account on demand and no cost to the student. Librarians are actively engaged as “web services librarians” (formerly embedded librarians) in RODP online courses. This program is expanding this year to include TTU iLearn online courses. Within the University’s Course Management System (CMS), a link to the library website is available within each online course.

Annually, the TTU library surveys all students using an online form available from the library website to assess library resources and services. Active website statistical analysis of usage includes individual library webpages downloads of articles from library subscription databases, and usage of individual electronic resources. These usage reports are generated for monthly analysis by a team of library staff classroom faculty.

The RODP Virtual Library is another library resource available to online learners. The Virtual Library's mission is to provide online services that are equivalent to services provided at traditional campus libraries. The library provides the following services:

- Reference Library Services via e-mail and webpage
- Reference Service from any Board of Regents Library: includes e-mail, live chat, and reference desk phone support
- Interlibrary Loan Services via home campus
- Universal Borrowers Cards issued via college or university library of record. Provides on-campus services and lending privileges to the book and journal collections of the nearest Board of Regents college or university library

The Virtual Library was established to provide online search capabilities, reference materials, databases, journals, and other research services to students and faculty by joining the resources of the Board of Regents' libraries. This student service is accessible through iLearn.

## **Career Services**

TTU Career Services provides online virtual career counseling services to all on-campus and off-campus students and alumni ([www.tntech.edu/career](http://www.tntech.edu/career)). Through the software platform Perfect Interview™ students have access to a virtual “mock” interview system that allows them to practice interview questions, record interview responses, and seek out tips/advice from the on-line career coach. Over 1,000 students accessed the virtual interview system in 2012. In addition, career advice videos are available on a 24/7 basis via the website through three channels: CareerSpots, CandidCareer, and TTU-produced videos. Information and testimonial videos are provided on all career-related topics including interviewing, job searching, networking, and writing resumes. The CandidCareer system also provides testimonials from career professionals regarding career path and career overviews. TTU-produced videos include advice from the Career Ambassadors (student peer mentors) that covers interview techniques, resume suggestions, and additional services offered by the office.

TTU Career Services provides 24/7 student access to an online job posting and interview-scheduling system, Experience eRecruiting. This system allows students to see all available jobs posted by TTU employers as well as jobs posted by employers throughout the United States. Students may also apply for jobs and schedule on-campus or telephone/Skype interviews through this system. The Experience eRecruiting system allows TTU to communicate to all students regarding events, career fairs, and workshops. Several times per year major-specific virtual career fairs are linked through the system to allow students to access these events in a virtual environment.

The RODP Virtual Career Center is an interactive website designed to provide students, recent graduates, working adults, and non-working adults with a wealth of information to achieve their career and educational goals. It provides information and resources to

- Research occupations that match student interests, skills, and experience
- Consider a career change or further education - over 700 careers are featured
- Find an educational institution that offers programs of interest - links are provided to over 900 U.S. accredited educational institutions
- Write or rewrite the student’s resume
- Develop confident interviewing skills
- Perform industry-specific job searches
- Explore job opportunities across the U.S.
- Review hot career opportunities available through 2014

### **Virtual Tutoring - Smarthinking**

**Online Tutoring** -- Online student tutoring is available in numerous subjects including writing, reading, mathematics, science, business, English, Spanish, and nursing via the Smarthinking service. Smarthinking services include live, online tutoring; writing labs; and reading labs. Students connect to live educators from any computer that has Internet access; no special software installation or equipment is required. Live, online tutoring is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week enabling students to get the help they need when they need it.

**On-Demand Tutoring** -- Using an advanced queuing system with little to no wait time, students are connected on-demand with an expert educator. Students work one-on-one, in real-time with a tutor, communicating using a virtual whiteboard technology. Scientific and mathematical notation, symbols, geometric figures, graphing, and freehand drawing can be rendered quickly and easily.

**Schedule an Appointment** -- Students who prefer to plan ahead can schedule a 30 minute appointment with a tutor of their choice. At the scheduled time, the student and tutor connect live using the virtual whiteboard technology. All sessions are archived and available for students to review at any time for studying or test preparation. For institutional implementations, individual and aggregate student usage information is reported and transcripts of every tutoring interaction are available to the campus program administrator.

**Writing Lab** -- The Smarthinking Online Writing Lab is designed to assist secondary, post-secondary, and graduate students become stronger writers. Students receive a detailed, personalized critique of any written assignment, such as an essay, paragraph, report, or creative work. When applicable, students can select specialists such as ESL, Technical Writing, or Creative Writing experts. Students can submit writing 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition to academic writing assignments, students may also submit career writing such as a personal statement, cover letter, or resume. As with all critiques, tutors will not edit the writing, but will provide personalized feedback in order to improve the writing for the applicable audience.

### **Advisement**

The advisement for students in distance education programs is arranged through academic programs or through Advising Centers/Student Success Centers in colleges. All students are notified through e-mail, Twitter, and/or Facebook regarding the beginning of the advising period and the first day of registration. Students are provided with telephone numbers and e-

mail addresses of their college advisor. Academic advisors use various tools, such as e-mail, phone, Skype, or other social media, to advise online learners. Each student must receive a unique personal identification number (PIN) before registering for the spring semester and a different number for the summer/fall semesters. This PIN is provided to students only after they have personal contact with the advisor.

### **Other services**

TTU's student complaint policy and procedures are online at <http://www.tnitech.edu/deanofstudents/stucomplaint/>. On this site, on-campus and online students can find links to information and forms for various concerns and issues, as well as an online form that may be used to submit a complaint of any kind. The Dean of Students office works with the students and helps them with their complaints.

Students taking online courses (RODP or distance learning) are eligible for financial aid as long as they are admitted to a degree-seeking program and are otherwise eligible in regards to satisfactory academic progress. These students would fall under all the same guidelines as any on-campus student. All students must complete the FAFSA to determine federal and state financial aid eligibility. Once all documentation has been received and the file is verified if applicable, students will be awarded and notified by e-mail through their TTU e-mail account how to view their awards online.

TTU makes every effort to provide the same accommodations or academic adjustments for students with disabilities as provided to on-site students. The Office of Disability Services works with instructors to ensure that students with disabilities have the same level of access and academic experience as their peers. Accommodation/Adjustment forms are provided to all instructors via e-mail. Examples of services provided via online format include extended time on tests or quizzes, alternate format books, supplemental notes, any necessary software, etc. Each request for services is considered on an individual basis as required by law. The professionals and support staff in Disability Services collaborate with instructors or RODP representatives as appropriate to coordinate any additional needs (e.g., captioned videos, scribes for proctored exams). All students with disabilities regardless of delivery format (online, or on-ground), also receive priority registration to ensure that their needs will be met.

## II. Customized Services Offered through Distance Education Programs

### **Distance Master of Business Administration (DMBA)**

**Online Courses** -- Each distance-based course consists of three major components: internet-based lecture files (alternately, a set of CD-ROMs will be supplied if requested), access to an iLearn website for course communications, and a text. While each course requires different levels of communication frequency, the courses are designed to be very flexible with respect to the student's schedule. No on-campus meetings are required. All exams and quizzes are administered over the TTU iLearn framework.

Internet-based Lecture Files or CDs -- The number of files/CDs for each course varies. Each CD has four areas where information can be found. The "Getting Started" section contains the information about the types of files on the disk and the software required to view them. The "Welcome" section contains a welcome message from the Director of MBA Studies. The "Content" section contains the main content of the course. This section is divided into chapters, units, or modules and includes instructor videos, PowerPoint slides, and/or other media. Please note that some videos may take several minutes to load. The "Resources" section includes any downloads needed for the course, such as an Adobe Acrobat Reader. In addition, the instructor may include case materials, assignment documents, spreadsheet templates, and other PDF files for the student to access. The course CDs are for the student to keep.

iLearn Access -- iLearn is an internet-based course management system that is used to facilitate internet-based communication for distance courses. Each course in the distance MBA utilizes the iLearn tool. In addition to the MBA courses, an MBA information section is available on the site. This site contains an academic calendar, a bulletin board area, and employment opportunities, and is used for general e-mail announcements. iLearn is used for several different types of communication such as calendar, chatroom discussion, course grades, e-mail, quizzes and exams, threaded discussion cases, and written cases.

Course Texts -- The course syllabi and textbook information is posted on the class iLearn homepage. In addition, textbook lists are e-mailed to all MBA students (using their TTU e-mail account) several weeks prior to the start of each term.

**Advising** -- Students enrolled in the MBA program are advised in the same manner, whether they take classes on campus or via distance education. Information regarding the curricular requirements is available to students on the University website ([www.tntech.edu/mba](http://www.tntech.edu/mba)). The

MBA Director, who is also a faculty member, is the assigned advisor for all students. Students may choose to receive advising through a face-to-face meeting, telephone call, or e-mail. The advisor guides students by considering their program of study, desired concentration, and likely class availability. Students are also informed that they may contact their advisor at any time if they have additional questions. The advisor is available for face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, and e-mail contact.

***Technical Support for Online Learners*** -- Online DMBA students have immediate and helpful technical support via e-mail from the Department of MBA Studies. In addition, students have access to the services of IT support via telephone during regular business hours. After hours, students may contact the Johnson Hall Computer Lab Help Desk for assistance.

***Career Planning and Counseling Services for DMBA Students*** -- Online students may take advantage of the services offered by the University Career Services office. All job opportunities are posted and accessible 24/7 on the Career Services website at (<http://www.tntech.edu/career/home/>). Career videos, skill-building workshops, and career tips videos are available via the website along with live online counseling or video counseling using Skype or Apple Facetime via iPhone or iPad. Interview preparation is available via an online resource called Perfect Interview. All online students are invited to participate in on-campus interviews via Skype or teleconference. To accommodate online learners, Career Services provides access to all career fair recruiters via electronic resume book services that are posted for on-campus career fairs.

***Other DMBA Resource Access*** -- The Angelo and Jennette Volpe Library and Media Center has an extensive array of online accessible research articles, journals, e-books, and videos that are available for all DMBA online learners.

### **Distance Master of Arts in Exercise Science, Physical Education and Wellness (MAEXPW)**

The Department of Exercise Science, Physical Education and Wellness houses a Master of Arts in Exercise Science, Physical Education and Wellness (MAEXPW) program with areas of emphasis in elementary and middle school physical education, physical education licensure, fitness and lifetime wellness, and adapted physical education. The program is 100% online, and is designed to offer professional training for teachers, coaches, and fitness specialist wellness professionals.

Graduate students in MAEXPW are required to participate in an initial on-campus orientation before starting classes. Orientations are offered on specific Saturdays in August, January, and May prior to the start of the academic term. The orientation addresses the online course

management system, outlines course sequences for each program of study, and provides an overview of appropriate online academic practices. Students are also required to take comprehensive exams on campus.

Communication, including tutoring and academic support, between MAEXPW students and faculty/advisor is handled via e-mail, telephone, or iLearn. Students purchase textbooks through the virtual bookstore. Faculty on campus provide assistance with the required paperwork through campus channels for students when necessary, but student-specific concerns like financial aid or graduation applications are handled directly by students via telephone or e-mail.

### **Online Master of Science Degree in Computer Science (MSCS)**

The Department of Computer Science offers advanced studies leading to a Master of Science degree in Computer Science (MSCS) with a concentration in Internet-Based Computing. The online MS degree program in Computer Science is driven by several factors including the global employer demand for computing expertise, a need for existing personnel to upgrade their professional skills, and the need for a strong academic program that prepares graduates to pursue a terminal (PhD) degree in Computer Science.

The program focuses on Internet-Based Computing and its applications in different disciplines, thereby providing a distinctive learning experience for TTU graduates and preparing them for computer and internet-based jobs in various industries. Graduate students may carry out research for a thesis or project in any Computer Science - related area, under the supervision of a faculty member having expertise in that area.

In addition, the MSCS distance learning option allows individuals across the United States access to an educational experience that parallels on-campus studies. Classes and assignments are communicated using streaming media technology and the internet, in which both on-campus and distance students can equally partake.

Each graduate student is assigned an academic advisor with advising taking place via the internet, e-mail, Skype, or teleconference. Distance learning students have all of the support they need to register, pay, and participate as an off-site student that they would have as an on-site student. Students receive career planning and career counselling through the office of Career Services by accessing the online job posting services offered by that office. In addition to online job postings, internet resources are available to assist in improving interview skills and job search skills. One-on-one personal career counselling takes place via e-mail, teleconference, and Skype.

Graduate students participating in an online distance education program have full access to state-of-the-art online learning technology. For example, distance learners have access to the online TTU library that includes online journal articles and e-books. Using iLearn, students have the ability to collaborate with students from across the globe to complete assignments in a virtual environment. Finally, students have access to technology support via e-mail or telephone.

### **Undergraduate and Graduate Programs in Curriculum and Instruction**

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction offers an off-site undergraduate Multidisciplinary Studies and graduate Reading Specialist 2+2 program, an online graduate (master's and specialist) program in Curriculum, and a hybrid (off-site, on-site, and online) graduate (master's and specialist) program in Instructional Leadership. These programs use iLearn, the internet-based course management system used to facilitate internet-based communication for distance courses. iLearn is used for several different types of communication: calendar, chatroom discussion, course grades, e-mail, quizzes and exams, threaded discussion cases, and written cases. The course syllabi and textbook information is posted on the class iLearn homepage.

The 2+2 program is offered at a number of local community colleges. Students complete their first two years at the community college and their last two years through TTU. The College of Education's Advising Center staff travel to the community colleges to help the 2+2 students coordinate their programs of study and provide advisement each semester. The College supports the 2+2 programs with their own technology specialist who travels to the community colleges to ensure full access via technology. 2+2 students also have access to TTU's virtual library and bookstore, and a TTU librarian offers direct service to students by traveling to the 2+2 sites.

The concentration offered in Curriculum, both master's and specialist, is conducted primarily through iLearn; 2 classes (6 semester credit hours) are on ground. Students in this concentration are advised either by coming to campus to meet with their assigned advisor or through e-mail or telephone.

The master's and specialist programs in Instructional Leadership are offered in a hybrid format. While some courses are offered online, students are required to come to campus to meet with program faculty at least once a semester. Courses are delivered through iLearn; and faculty are available to students via iLearn, telephone, and e-mail.

### **Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies (BSIS)**

The Interdisciplinary Studies Fast-Track BS program offered by the School of Interdisciplinary Studies is a 2+2 partnership with Roane State and Motlow State Community Colleges (Crossville, McMinnville, Oak Ridge, Oneida, and Tullahoma). Students in the program complete their first two years at the community college and then complete junior and senior years through TTU's 2+2 program. Courses are delivered using a 5-week accelerated model (intensive instruction), and some of the sites also include traditional courses each semester. These courses utilize iLearn for the online components of the courses (discussion boards, online quizzes, access to materials) that supplement the in-class contact hours.

All students in the program have access to textbooks using the virtual bookstore. These students are advised by TTU advisors that travel to the site to provide face-to-face advising and also through periodic telephone/e-mail advisement as needed. They take all of their classes online, and are required to complete UNIV4995 – culminating project. For this online course, all submissions are made electronically, and all interaction is conducted through iLearn. Students use the TTU library online journal access extensively in their research for the course.

### **III. Programs Offered through Tennessee Board of Regents Online Degree Programs (RODP)**

The Regents Online Degree Program (RODP) offers courses through a consortium of the six universities and thirteen community colleges in the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) system. The consortium model allows the universities in the TBR system to share their most valuable resources to enrich program offerings.

All RODP Courses are delivered entirely online via Desire2Learn and the eLearn learning system. Students and faculty access their courses and online support services via <https://elearn.rodg.org/>. From this homepage, students who have difficulty registering, need help with username and password information, or need to perform a pre-semester systems check can access links for assistance. Student technical support is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week via <http://help.rodg.org> or via a hotline 1-866-550-7637.

An RODP contact person is available on TTU campus who can connect the students to any support services they need. This contact provides a single point of contact for information. Students enrolled in TTU via the Regents Online Degree Program have access to all student support services available online. Faculty members work with these students using the learning management system Desire2Learn. When taking courses offered only at TTU, the students log in through the iLearn portal at <https://elearn.tntech.edu/>. When students are accessing RODP courses they log in through the eLearn server at <https://elearn.rodg.org/>.

### **Bachelor's Degree Programs**

The Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies (BSIS) and the Bachelor of Science in Professional Studies (BSPS) are offered through the Regents Online Degree Program (RODP). Courses for the BSIS and BSPS degrees are divided among six universities and thirteen community colleges in the TBR system and are taught by credentialed faculty from each institution.

The RODP campus contact at TTU sends students a worksheet of the BSIS degree or the BSPS degree after they are admitted to Tennessee Tech and then assigns them to an appropriate faculty advisor for their designated programs. The faculty advisor assists them with their advisement via e-mail and telephone. In addition, the students receive a welcome letter in their RODP courses at the beginning of each semester introducing them to their RODP campus contact so that they may contact someone for help with linking to any student service they need.

Students have access to the RODP virtual library as well as the libraries at their home community college or university in the consortium. Other online student services available to the RODP students include orientation, Smarthinking, the tutorial service, the virtual bookstore, student disability services, test proctoring, technical help, plus much more.

### **Master of Science in Nursing**

The Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) through the RODP is a collaborative effort among colleges and schools of nursing in the Tennessee Board of Regents system. The program is designed to increase student access to high-quality, affordable, student-centered graduate education in nursing. Classes are taught by faculty from all six universities. Faculty members are recognized experts in their content area, regardless of institution of employment.

**Advising** -- Once students are admitted to the RODP MSN program at Tennessee Tech, they will be contacted and provided with an informational letter and a plan of study. A faculty member in the School of the Nursing serves as an advisor for RODP MSN students to assist with the process of advisement. All students are advised via e-mail and telephone. In addition to the campus contacts and faculty advisor, clinical liaisons are available to assist RODP MSN students throughout their program of study.

**Library** -- Full library services are available online for RODP MSN students from the Regents virtual library ([http://vl.rodop.org/RODP\\_login.htm](http://vl.rodop.org/RODP_login.htm)), which offers extensive full text databases

and 100% of the library resources recommended for graduate nursing students. Students also have access to the libraries at the six participating universities in the consortium.

### **Master of Professional Studies**

The Master of Professional Studies (MPS) degree at Tennessee Tech is one of the programs offered through the Regents Online Degree Program. The program affordably and flexibly meets the educational needs of working adults who are not generally served by traditional methods. Offered completely online and available 24/7, this unique program is taught by professors who are best suited to help the students develop the skills necessary to excel in their career field.

Following admission to the MPS program at TTU, students receive informational materials from the graduate admission office. An MPS faculty advisor is available to assist the student with advisement via e-mail and telephone. After completing 15 hours, the student, working with an advisor, files a program of study with the Office of Graduate Studies. Similar to the other RODP online degree programs, the RODP MPS program provides students with full access to all available online student support services. Students may contact the TTU RODP campus contact for help with any other student service.

### **IV. Supporting Documentation:**

<http://www.tntech.edu/techtimes>

<http://www.tntech.edu/institute>

<http://tntech.edu/its>

<http://tenn-tech.bncollege.com>

<https://www.bkstr.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/>

<http://www.tntech.edu/library>

[http://vl.rodop.org/RODP\\_login.htm](http://vl.rodop.org/RODP_login.htm)

<http://www.tntech.edu/career>

<http://careers.rodop.org>

<http://services.smarthinking.com/login/login.php>

<http://www.tntech.edu/deanofstudents/stucomplaint/>

<http://www.tntech.edu/deanofstudents>

<http://www.tntech.edu/financialaid>

<http://www.tntech.edu/disability>

<http://www.tntech.edu/mba/about/>

<http://catalog.tntech.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=1750>

<http://www.csc.tntech.edu/academics/graduate-program/distance-education>

<http://www.tnitech.edu/education/2plus2>

<http://www.tnitech.edu/insl/home>

<http://www.rodpc.org/degree-programs-courses/bachelors>

<http://www.rodpc.org/degree-programs-courses/bachelors/interdisciplinary-studies>

<http://www.rodpc.org/degree-programs-courses/masters/masters-professional-studies>

<http://www.rodpc.org/degree-programs-courses/masters/masters-science-nursing>

<http://www.tnitech.edu/admissions>