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To: Presidents /CEOs of NYS Colleges and Universities

From: William P. Murphy

Subject: Extension of Distance Education Flexibility for the Spring 2021 Semester

In New York State, programs at Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) are required to be registered in the distance education format if 50% or more of the program can be completed through distance education. Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the NYS Education Department (NYSED) allowed colleges and universities to exceed the 50% distance education threshold for the Spring, Summer and Fall 2020 semesters; permitting institutions to offer distance education courses in programs without triggering the need to register those programs in the distance education format, even if the 50% threshold would be reached.

NYSED is now extending the distance education flexibility described above to include the Spring 2021 semester. This extension permits institutions to continue to offer distance education courses in programs, during the Spring 2021 semester, without triggering the need to register the programs in the distance education format, even if the 50% threshold will be reached.

Since this flexibility is scheduled to end at the end of the Spring 2021 semester, institutions should begin to do a thorough review of each program now to determine the appropriate delivery mode(s) for each program. Institutions should then request the addition of the distance education format to those programs that, beginning after the Spring 2021 semester, will be able to be completed 50% or more through distance education. NYSED is finalizing an expedited application to add the distance education format to registered programs and will let institutions know when the form has been posted on the Department's website.