

Student Identity Verification in Distance and Correspondence Education

**Compliance to US Department of Education,
Office of Postsecondary Education
Regulation 34 CFR 602.17(g)**



Overview

Like many of our peer institutions, there are a number of courses at Downstate which utilize a mixed-methods approach to student learning. Most of these courses, however, still use traditional, in-class or in-lab evaluations and testing (including computer-based testing done on campus and under supervision of proctors and members of the faculty). The campus is in the process of updating its existing policies relating to courses that incorporate mixed or non-traditional methods of delivering course content. As a matter of policy, on an annual or semester basis (depending on how each individual school or college submits their course information), the Office of the Registrar obtains information from each course instructor as to whether their course is a distance learning course or has components that use distance learning.

At the present time, SUNY Downstate Medical Center (DMC) does not have any programs that are, in their entirety, offered only by distance learning. The School of Public Health, the College of Nursing, and the College of Health Related Professions have each developed some online courses. The current model of instruction tends to be part of a course utilizing online materials, discussion boards, drop-boxes for assignment submission and other electronic formats available through our Course Management System (PRIME, utilizing the Angel Course Management software) but other parts of the course are taught in a traditional manner (e.g. classroom/lab), which serves to verify the confirmation of the identity of the student in the course. We have 16 courses (see pg. 12 of this document for online course titles) that can be offered to

students online in conjunction with other courses located on campus. We have convened a Distance Learning policy and implementation committee to monitor these efforts and set policy campus wide.

Methods used to ensure Student Identity Verification

Along with submitting applications that include identifying data, students matriculating into the Colleges of Medicine, Health Related Professions, Nursing, and the Schools of Public Health and Graduate Studies must complete a background check to further verify their identity. Downstate has a few non-matriculating students, primarily in the School of Public Health who are required to submit information such as Drivers License or Passport along with their application.

Access is then provided to the students upon acceptance using their SID (Student Identification Number) and secure password provided to them. This provides access to all relevant systems at Downstate for courses that the individual student that is enrolled in through our LMS (Learning Management System) and Banner system. A diagram of steps used to provision accounts is attached, along with an accompanying detailed description.

We are currently reviewing technology such as biometric Signature recognition and remote exam proctoring software as we plan for our expected increase in Distance Learning.

Methods used to ensure Student Privacy

Student records are kept within our Student Information system (Banner), which utilizes secure sockets layer communication (SSL) and is accessible only on campus or from off campus via VPN (Virtual Private Network). Staff are provisioned with accounts that provide access to information they need, and there is a monthly Team Leader meeting in which issues such as provisioning other access to information is vetted. We are in the first phase of planning to install an add-on to our system called Banner Data Security, which will allow more robust security features as well as better auditing capabilities.

Students have access to their own records through Banner Self Service and can view some grading information in our LMS. Both systems share the same secure password and while students can share their own information with whomever they choose, they are advised not to provide this access to others as it reveals very personal information. Students can change passwords online through the email system or via a request to the helpdesk which is detailed in the attached account creation flowchart.

Notification regarding extra costs related to Identity Verification (such as proctoring)

College of Medicine students pay for the Background check via a service provided by the AMCAS and the results are included in the application submission to DMC. Other students are informed of the process to acquire background checks as part

of their application package. We do not currently ask students to incur any other costs related to this area.

Written procedures indicating offices responsible for the consistent application of Identity Verification

The offices of Student Affairs, Admissions, Academic and Library Computing, Information Security and the Helpdesk are responsible for the consistent application of Identity Verification. In addition to the workflow outlined on the attached diagram, representatives from the offices meet on a regular basis to review and look for improvement the processes as both policy and technology changes.

Statement Review and Approval

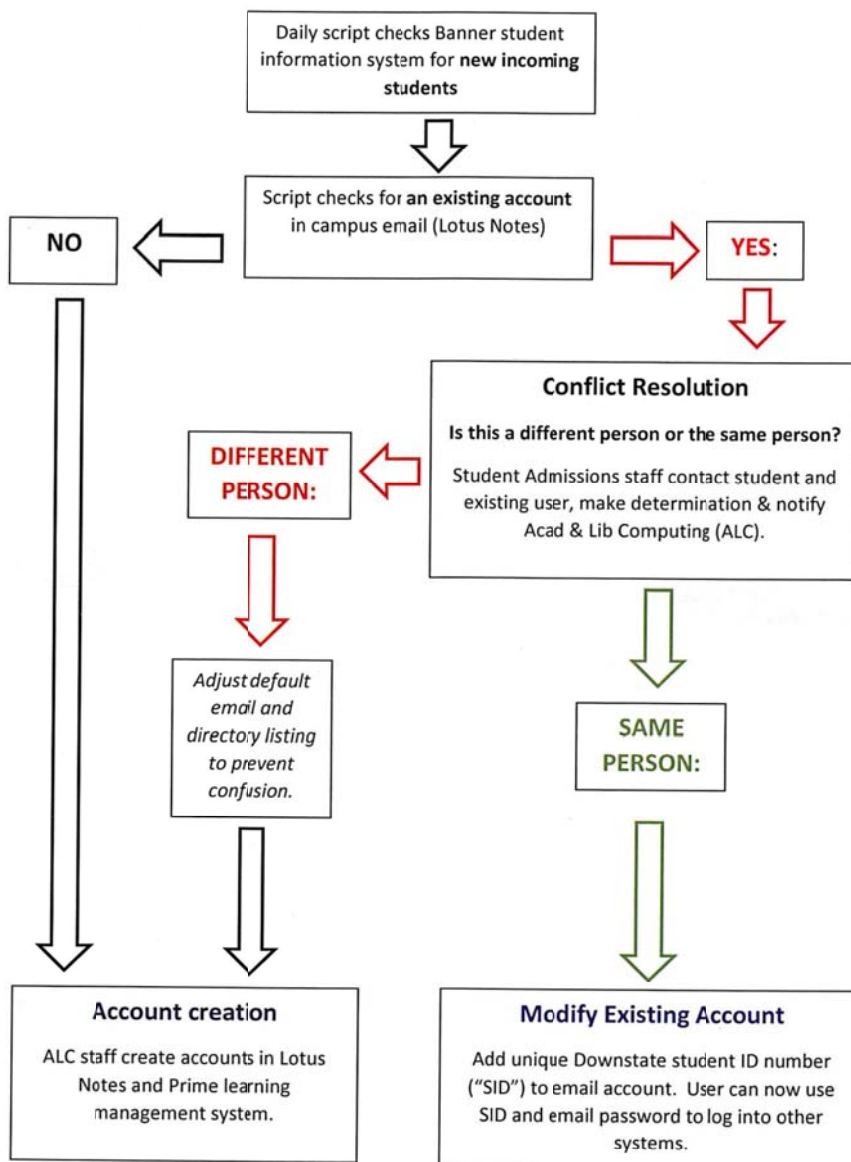
This statement and its contents have been reviewed and approved by the following individuals:

- Daisy Cruz-Richman, PhD, RN – Dean and Professor, College of Nursing
- Pascal J. Imperato, MD, MPH&TM, MACP – Dean and Distinguished Service Professor, School of Public Health
- Margaret Kaplan, PhD, OTR/L – Interim Dean and Associate Professor, College of Health Related Professions
- David Loewy – Information Security Officer
- Dilip Nath – Associate Chief Information Officer
- Carlos N. Pato, MD – Dean, College of Medicine
- Jeffrey Putman, EdD – Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students

- Mark Stewart, MD, PhD – Dean, School of Graduate Studies, Vice Dean for Research

Input and review was also provided by Admissions, the Registrar's Office, Academic Computing and the Helpdesk.

Flowchart – Student Account Creation Process



Account Management Detail

Student account **creation** workflow.

1. Cycle runs from February to October each year.
2. Student Admissions creates new records in Banner student information system as Accepted students reply back and agree to attend.
3. **Passwords:** a custom program generates a random mix of lower case letters and numbers that is unique for each student. This information is stored in a secure encrypted MySQL database separate from Banner. Access is restricted to key staff in Student Admissions, Academic & Library Computing and Student Services.
4. An script running once a day Monday through Friday checks Banner for new records and sends their information to key staff for further action:
 - a. An add-on software application (Appworx by Ellucian) checks for newly Admitted records in the Banner student information system that do NOT have school email addresses populated.
 - b. It runs a check of the combined first/last name against the campus LDAP/email system (Lotus Notes).
 - c. **If no match is found**, it sends the record into output labelled "New students, please create accounts".
 - d. **If a match is found** to a preexisting Lotus Notes user, AppWorx adds the record into output labelled "Possible conflict, please check".
 - e. These two files are emailed once a day (11 am) to key staff in Student Admissions, Academic & Library

Computing (ALC) and the Network Technology Group (NTG).

5. Account Creation (ALC):

- a. **EMAIL:** ALC key staff import the information from the “New students” file into an existing Excel spreadsheet. A formula in a cell creates the text which staff copy and paste into a plain text file. That file is saved and imported into Lotus Administrator Console (LAC) application installed on their computer. Each account’s information displayed in the LAC is manually checked to verify successful import and remove any “forbidden” characters (spaces and apostrophes) that were not previously identified and removed. Accounts are assigned to master group to assist with targeting center wide emails. The batch process is then triggered and email accounts are created.
- b. **PRIME:** ALC Staff use the same Excel file to create a plain text file and run a separate process to create accounts in Prime, the campus learning management system.

6. Account Notification (Student Admissions): Students receive an informational email sent by Student Admissions to their outside email account. The email contains their username – their nine-digit Downstate student ID number (SID) – and their password. The email includes information that they can use this username/password combination across several systems (email, Banner, Prime) that share authentication against a single LDAP. Note that notification is run separately from creation, and that Student Admissions does not verify first that the email/Prime accounts have been created.

7. **Resolving possible conflicts:** Student Admissions staff contact the incoming student to verify identity and determine whether they are the same person as the existing user in Lotus Notes. In the majority of cases, the existing Lotus Notes account does belong to the new student. (They may have been an employee or a former student in another degree program.) Student Admissions forwards the answer to ALC.
- i. **Same person:** ALC modifies the existing email/LDAP account's username information to include the SID. This allows other systems to check authentication against this account.
 - ii. **Different person:** ALC confers with NTG to determine how to modify the old and new account email Directory name and email address. Usually the degree program is appended to each. The existing user and the new user are both notified of changes and the differences in their email addresses are highlighted.
8. **Account checks:** Student Admissions will send an up-to-date listing of new incoming students to ALC one or two days before their arrival. Staff run a scripted check against the campus LDAP to 'flush out' any unresolved account issues with conflicts and to identify any new incoming students who don't have email/LDAP accounts. ALC Staff follow up to determine underlying causes of issues and to generate missing accounts.

Student account password reset workflow.

1. New students attend an Orientation workshop where they are directed to retrieve their account username/password information from their outside email account.
2. Students can reset passwords themselves in the email interface if they can log into email.
3. Those who can no longer log in are directed to the campus HelpDesk. Staff in the HelpDesk verify identity by requesting the students SID and last 10 digits of their ID card then reset the password. The helpdesk in the process of identifying software to allow self help password changes.

Student account deletion workflow.

4. Cycle is run once a year in March.
5. A list of recently graduated students from the previous year is exported from Banner.
6. ALC staff run several checks:
 - a. Check Banner and remove any students who have re-matriculated or who are in dual-degree programs.
 - b. Check graduated medical students against the current list of residents, removing any who have become residents here at Downstate.
 - c. Check Prime and follow up if any are in current active courses.
7. ALC staff send an email notification about impending deletion to this list, collect responses and modify the list as necessary.
8. After two weeks, the list is sent to NTG email system administrators. They deactivate access to the accounts.
9. After a safe period of time has elapsed (months), the deactivated accounts are deleted.

Online Courses

College of Health Related Professions

ADMN 3100/5400	Healthcare Delivery in the US
NRMW 5302	International Women's Health Care Policy
NRMW 5401	Research I
NRMW 5402	Research II
NRMW 5403	Health Care Policy & Community
NRMW 5407	Introduction to Teaching
OTMS 6312	Introduction to Early Intervention (in late 2016)
OTMS 6313	Topics in Early Intervention (in late 2016)

College of Nursing

NRMS 5207	Informatics & Healthcare
NRBS 3600	Contemporary Issues
NRBS 4360	Organizational and Systems Leadership

School of Public Health

EOHS 5200	Issues in Environmental Health
HPMG 5206	Introduction to Health Policy & Management
HPMG 5203	Health Management Concepts
HPMG 5204	Access, Cost and Quality of Care
HPMG 5207	Principles in Hospital Management