



## **New Mexico SUN Online**

### **A Guide to Online Course Sharing:**

#### **The SUN Online Vision**

SUN Online is committed to increasing access to quality online education for students across New Mexico.

#### **SUN Online Mission**

- Establish an online course sharing system in New Mexico in collaboration with the state's colleges and universities to provide students with greater access to courses, certificates and programs.
- Provide faculty professional development for excellence and consistency in online learning.
- Foster collaboration between colleges that will result in less duplication of courses, resources and programs.
- Increase student retention and reduce time to completion.

## Introduction

Through funding from Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training grant program, Santa Fe Community College--in conjunction with a consortium of NM colleges--is implementing a state-wide online course sharing system. SUN Online will allow students greater access to certificate and degree courses and reduce duplication of courses and resources across institutions.

## What is Course Sharing?

The SUN Online course sharing system enables interested schools to share available seat space in designated online courses. Because online learning allows students and instructor to be logistically separated from one another in both space and time, schools that are quite far apart from one another can share virtual space in a course. For example, a college offering a section of an online course that it knows will not fill can make seats available to peer institutions. A college can provide a few seats in a course or two institutions could agree to have one provide an entire course for the other.

## How does Course Sharing work?

SUN Online is based on a Home/Provider model. The *Home Institution* is where the student is enrolled. The *Provider Institution* is the school that provides the course and instructor. One way to describe the role of the Provider Institution is that of vendor. The Home Institution effectively "outsources" the instruction on a seat-by-seat basis to another school or "vendor" through the course sharing process.

- The Home Institution maintains its relationship with the student. The student registers for courses from the Home Institution course schedule, using Home Institution course numbers, and pays tuition rates set by the Home Institution. The student has a standard fiscal relationship with the Home Institution. The Home Institution is the school from which the student receives the degree and consequently it is the school that maintains the student's transcripts.
- The Provider Institution maintains its relationship with the faculty. The Provider Institution also oversees the integrity of the curriculum and the learning process, and grades the student's work. These grades are then communicated back to the Home Institution for inclusion in the student's permanent record (transcript). The process is transparent from the student's perspective.



1. Student registers and pays at Home Institution.



2. Home Institution “outsources” instruction to Provider Institution.



4. Instructor at Providing School provides instruction.



3. Provider Institution includes student in existing online class.



5. Provider Institution sends grade(s) to Home Institution.

## Why would a Home Institution out-source instruction to another school?

- The student may need a particular course to graduate and there are no viable local options for meeting the student’s need
- The student may be off-calendar with an infrequently scheduled course
- The Home Institution may have a few students who need the class but not enough students to justify opening another section
- Two or more institutions may be considering offering a program for which none has the resources itself to do so.
- The Home Institution may lose an instructor for a published course or not have an instructor for a specific discipline
- The Home Institution may want to increase the variety of online courses it can offer to its students

## **How does a Home Institution select a viable course to use as an instructional resource?**

The basic maxim underpinning course sharing is “If a course will meet curriculum requirements through the transfer process, then it can be shared.” However, if several apparently similar courses are available, department personnel may prefer to review those courses before choosing the course that they want to share. They may consider a number of factors including the content of the course, the type of activities included in the course, or the textbook. The SUN Online site will be designed to allow Home Institution personnel to review the content of courses submitted for sharing so that the course with the “best fit” can be determined.

## **How can the Home Institution be assured that the course meets quality assurance standards?**

The question of quality is central to SUN Online. For this reason, SUN Online is making Quality Matters (QM) available to participating institutions. Quality Matters is a faculty-centered, peer review process that is designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses. SUN Online is being built on the QM model and representatives from participating colleges are currently being trained in this process. It is the goal of the program to eventually have all SUN classes reviewed using the QM rubric.

## **Why would the Provider Institution want to share courses?**

- A low-enrollment course does not have to be canceled if unused seats can be filled
- There may be mutual exchange with other member schools for program sharing (i.e. two member schools may want to share an entire program by offering alternate courses)
- Providing courses gives the Provider Institution “credit” in the Seat Bank which in turn can be used for adopting courses
- Financial compensation can be used for distance education costs

## **How does a Provider Institution decide what courses to share?**

A Provider Institution can decide what courses to share in a variety of ways. Many Provider Institutions simply offer their low-enrollment courses with the goal of filling all online classes. Some will offer entire sections of popular courses to gain credits in the Seat Bank. And still others may offer courses based on a specific program.

## How the Seat Bank works financially:

- Each credit hour will be valued at \$75/credit hour. All disciplines are considered equal, 1 credit = 1 credit.
- If the number of credits a school adopts equals the number of credits they provide to a peer school then the school's Seat Bank account balances.
- If a school adopts more credits than it provides, it will owe SUN Online money at the end of the fiscal year (\$75 per credit).
- If a school provides more credits than it adopts, SUN Online will pay the school at the end of the fiscal year (\$75 per credit).
- At the end of the fiscal year the Seat Bank will "zero" out. SUN Online does not make money from the Seat Bank.

### Seat Bank Balancing:

A credit can't be given  
unless it is taken

**A:**

$$+6-2= +4 \text{ credits}$$

**A**

6 credits

**B**

**B:**

$$-6+2+4= 0$$

2 credits

2

credits

**C:**

4 credits

$$-4-4 = - 8 \text{ credits}$$

**C**

4 credits

**D**

**D:**

$$-2+4+2= +4 \text{ credits}$$

In this example, at the end of the fiscal year:

1. School A would receive a \$300 check from SUN Online.
2. School B would neither receive a check nor need to pay anything.
3. School C would pay SUN Online \$600.00.
4. School D would receive a check from SUN Online for \$300.

At the end of this fiscal year, SUN Online has received \$600 and paid out \$600, thus "zeroing" out the Seat Bank account.

## The Role of the Site Administrator

Every member institution has a Site Administrator (SA) who maintains updated information about the online courses and handles the Seat Bank interactions. In addition, every member institution has a link on SUN Online that gives information about ALL the online courses that institution offers. The Seat Bank is a SUBSET of those courses – it includes ONLY the courses the institution wishes to share. It might include all of them but usually does not. However, all courses are listed so potential students can see each member institution's full list of online course offerings. While the full list of each institution's online courses is available to the public, currently the Seat Bank course lists are only available for viewing by the Site Administrators.

The SA has a secure login to access the Seat Bank area of the SUN Online website. The SA uses a template to provide information about each course her/his institution will share. This process only has to be done once per course, as the information can be carried forward for future semesters.

The SA has access to all the shareable courses from all the member institutions. To adopt a seat in a course the SA selects that course from the list, and fills in the number of seats needed. In the SUN Online model, an auto-email system will notify that providing institution's SA and she/he then emails the requesting SA back with a "yes" or "no." Once the seats are granted, the requesting SA registers the students. **As part of the continuous quality improvement cycle, SUN Online will work on automation processes for registration, class availability and grade exchange.**

The next step, after registering students, is to provide the students' information to the SA of the providing institution. The providing SA will then give it to the appropriate person to add to the course roster in the learning management system. **The student is only added to the course roster, not into the providing institution's data system.** When the course is over, the providing SA will send the grades back to the adopting SA (and then to the registrar). In other words, the SAs are liaisons between the institutions.

The course is treated as a normal course by the adopting institution --**it is not considered a transfer.** The adopting institution assigns the adopted course with its own course number and the process is transparent. In other words, the student does not necessarily know that the course is provided by another institution (though most institutions indicate this somewhere). **There will be nothing on the student's transcript that will indicate where the course originated.**

## Terms

**Seat Bank** – Seat bank refers to the collection of online courses available for adoption by any SUN Online institution.

**Site Administrator** – SA is the representative from each SUN Online institution who keeps updated information on shareable online courses and handles all Seat Bank interactions.

**Seat** – one place in any given online course. Each student in a course uses a single seat.

**Credit Hour** – the unit used for Seat Bank invoices and payments. The number of credit hours multiplied by \$75.00 is the amount charged (paid) to an adopting (providing) institution.

**Home Institution** - The Home Institution purchases seats for students and compensates the providing college for those seats according to the fixed rate of SUN Online. For example, at a rate of \$75 per credit hour, the providing school will be paid \$225 for that seat. The home college would garner the FTE (full-time equivalency) for each student.

**Provider Institution** - The Provider Institution is where the course originates. It is delivered by the providing school's faculty and supported (technical, LMS, and course) by the providing school's support staff. Grades are transferred to the Home Institution via a site administrator.

**Site Administrators** - Site administrators are the conduit for information from one institution to another. They are responsible for tracking students and grades, communicating with providing faculty, and adding seats to the seat bank. New Mexico SUN Online is working to automate data collection, class information, and registration through the seat bank, minimizing the need for site administrators to monitor each facet of the process. When this is complete, Site Administrators will access the Seat bank and provide data for both institutions. For example, the Site Administrator would enter grades into the Seat Bank at the completion of a class.

**Quality Matters** - Quality Matters is the rubric for online classes that is built into the SUN Online grant and provides a model for excellence in online instruction and delivery. The requirement of SUN Online is that all courses in the seat bank meet Quality Matters standards by their second semester in the seat bank and that institutions become licensed members of that organization. For the first year of the project, the SUN grant is paying for those licenses and for training for up to three representatives from each college to go through a sequence of trainings to become peer reviewers for online courses.

**Course Review and QM Rubric** - When courses are reviewed, there are three peer reviewers involved: a subject matter expert, an in-house peer reviewer, and an outside reviewer. These people are compensated in accordance with the requesting college's policies, so the rates vary from college to college. Reviewers have the option to either accept the job or not. Courses do not have to be reviewed to be offered initially in the Seat bank; they do have to be engaged in the training of reviewers and working toward the QM standards.

**Registration** - SUN Online data collection will be done via the Seat Bank and verified by site administrators. A short form that meets the basic criteria for all the institutions' data collection and assessment systems will be included in the seat bank forms.

**Transcripting** - When seats are purchased from the seat bank, the transcription of the course is the responsibility of the Home Institution. SUN Online classes will have their own section designation (PSYCH201SUN for example) so that all data can be retrieved for the college's data system and the class is entered into the Home Institution's system. The providing college only logs the students taking the class through their system and not the SUN section of that class.

**Invoicing and Payment** - The current plan is for invoicing and payments to happen at the end of each fiscal year with SFCC compiling and administering this system.

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