

*Statutory Language:*

**SEC. 1107. INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS.**

(a) Independent Evaluation- The Secretary of Education shall enter into an agreement with the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a statistically valid evaluation of the quality of distance education programs, as compared to campus-based education programs, at institutions of higher education. Such evaluation shall include--

(1) identification of the elements by which the quality of distance education can be assessed, which may include elements such as subject matter, interactivity, and student outcomes;

(2) identification of distance education program success, with respect to student achievement, in relation to the mission of the institution of higher education;

(3) identification of the benefits and limitations of distance education programs and campus-based programs for different students (including classification of types of students by age category) by assessing access, job placement rates, graduation rates, and other factors related to persistence, completion, and cost; and

(4) identification and analysis of factors that may make direct comparisons of distance education programs and campus-based education programs difficult.

(b) Scope- The National Research Council shall select for participation in the evaluation under subsection (a) a diverse group of institutions of higher education with respect to size, mission, and geographic distribution.

(c) Interim and Final Reports- The contract under subsection (a) shall require that the National Research Council submit to the authorizing committees--

(1) an interim report regarding the evaluation under subsection (a) not later than June 30, 2009; and

(2) a final report regarding such evaluation not later than June 30, 2010.