

## Distance Learning Licensed Data Set—2008 Database Overview

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Peterson's Distance Learning Database is one of the most comprehensive and complete databases in the field. Within this data set you will find information on programs and courses delivered at a distance via a wide spectrum of media by over 900 institutions. The data set includes information on available program and course subjects, equipment requirements, and expenses, as well as the availability of financial aid and other student resources and services. Distance learning unit head and student application contact information is also part of this data set.

This Overview is designed to give you a broad sense of the database. A Data Dictionary, comprised of detailed descriptions of the tables and fields in the database, is available in a separate document.

### **UNIVERSE:**

The Distance Learning Data Set for 2008 includes 978 institutions and units in the United States (including U.S. Territories) and Canada offering 7,015 degree/award programs and reporting classifications for 21,811 non degree-related courses. Twenty six of the institutions in the database are represented by more than one unit, each with distinct sets of distance learning offerings. The degree/award programs, from the associate's to the graduate and professional levels, cover 824 program subject areas; the course classifications, at the non-credit, undergraduate, and graduate levels, cover 351 course subject areas.

To be included, an institution must either have full accreditation or candidate-for-accreditation (preaccreditation) status granted by an institutional or specialized accrediting body that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Recognized accrediting bodies include the six regional associations of schools and colleges (Middle States, New England, North Central, Northwest, Southern, and Western), Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACC SCT), Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE), Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE), Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools (AARTS), Association of Theological Schools in United States and Canada (ATS), Council on Occupational Education (COE), Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), and Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TACCS). Program registration by New York State Board of Regents is considered to be the equivalent of institutional accreditation. Canadian institutions must be chartered and authorized to grant degrees by a provincial government, affiliated with a chartered institution, or accredited by a recognized U.S. accrediting body. Specialized accrediting bodies exist in over forty different fields, each of which is authorized to accredit specific programs in its particular field. This can serve as the equivalent of institutional accreditation for specialized institutions offering programs in only a single field (e.g., schools of art, optometry, music, theology, etc.).

Each year, Peterson's conducts a thorough review of institutions offering distance learning programs. Since 1996, when the first licensed data set became available, the Distance Learning Database has grown by almost 6,000 programs.

### **TIME FRAME:**

The database contains information from the most current academic year. The database is updated annually, in conjunction with the release of updated guides and electronic products. Data collection for 2008 began in April and continued through August. Annual files are archived beginning with the 1995–96 academic year; databases from the 2000-2001 academic year forward are stored in structures consistent with the current set.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA VERIFICATION:**

Each spring, *Peterson's Distance Learning Programs Survey* is made available to the appropriate personnel at all institutions in the United States and U.S. territories and Canada eligible for inclusion in Peterson's Undergraduate Database that indicated the availability of distance learning programs. Accredited institutions and consortia outside that group that expressed an interest in being represented in the database, and that offer comparable programs, are also included.

For schools that have previously been included, prior year figures are available for review. Officials from the schools submit responses by confirming that preexisting information is correct or providing new or updated information.

## **GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE:**

As noted above, the Distance Learning Database includes approved/accredited institutions in the United States and U.S. territories and Canada.

## **DATABASE VERSATILITY AND EXTENT OF USE:**

Information from Peterson's Distance Learning Database is published on Peterson's Education Supersite (Online Degrees & Distance Learning Programs search) at <http://www.petersons.com/> and also in Gale's College Blue Book.