Expectations for FEM Partnership Agreement (3/5/2021)

Requirements in the FEM Standards related to partnerships:

- Partnership must include a college or university located in the U.S. or its territories, accredited to offer a graduate degree by a U.S. regional institutional accrediting body for higher education and in good standing with that accrediting body. (RE 1.1)
- Must be a formal written agreement to sponsor a single program. (RE 1.1.a)
- An organization chart must clearly show the relationship of the graduate degree program to other programs/services offered by the sponsoring organizations and the relationship among the sponsoring organizations. (RE 1.1.b)
- Partnerships must document the responsibilities of and resources provided by each partnership organization. (RE 1.2.a.1)
- Program Director must be a full-time employee of the sponsoring organization (or one or more of the sponsoring partnership organizations. (RE 1.4.b.3)
- In a partnership, one individual must serve as program director and have primary responsibility for the program and communication with ACEND. (RE 1.4.b.5)

Guidance for programs about the partnership agreement:

The partnership agreement must be detailed in a memorandum of understanding (MOU). At a minimum, the MOU must:

- Be a written agreement to sponsor a future education model program signed by the program director and administrators with authority to sign for each collaborating organization; includes duration of the agreement and provisions for review, renewal, change, perceived breach and termination of the agreement
- Identify the program name and official address
- Indicate all collaborating organizations, one of which must be a regionally accredited college or university and indicate which organization is the lead sponsor
- Detail the responsibilities of each collaborating organization (i.e., who provides program director; who provides instructors for courses and preceptors for experiential learning; who confers the degree; who provides the verification statement; who is responsible for maintaining documents; how assessment of prior learning will be determined, if applicable; how data will be shared, etc.)
- Detail the resources provided and guaranteed by each collaborating organization (i.e., administrative/clerical support, IT support, facilities, student support services, financial aid). (Note: additional financial aid review will be needed if the partner offering access to federal financial aid is offering less than 75% of the program)
- Detail the financial management arrangement (i.e. fees/tuition paid by students to each collaborating organization for time/credit hours spent at each organization; financial resources/obligations of each collaborating organization)
• Detail the responsibilities of the designated program coordinator at each collaborating organization (one of whom may be the appointed program director); for each designated coordinator, provide the time allocated for program responsibilities
• Detail the percent of time spent with the students at each organization (Note: at a minimum, 75% of the students’ time, or credit hours, must be at the college or university or partner that is offering access to federal financial aid; see additional considerations below)
• Describe the protection afforded to students if the partnership agreement is changed or dissolved
• Detail the procedure for an enrolled student grievance regarding any aspect of the education-related component
• Describe how the program will be identified and marketed

Additional Considerations:

• At least 75% of the credits (or time spent with students) must be offered by the university/college/partner offering access to federal financial aid (A substantive change request must be made to ACEND when an institution not certified to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs offers more than 25% and up to 50% of the program.) (USDE requirement)
• University/college must confer the degree
• Financial agreement must be established to separate student tuition between the university/college and the tuition collected by the collaborating organization that is not certified to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs
• An institution may house more than one ACEND-accredited program and more than one partnership; however, each partnership will pay fees and participate in the program’s site visit process.
• Each collaborating organization in the partnership must designate a coordinator (one of whom may be the appointed program director) for the program within that organization who is employed by the organization. The appointed program director can only direct one partnership (one ACEND-accredited program), whereas the coordinator who is not the program director may serve on several partnerships.
• Educational institutions partnering with experiential learning sites/organizations may not grant course credits for student work completed at these sites/organizations unless the work or student is supervised by a faculty member:
  o Faculty must be an instructor or adjunct with the educational institution; and/or
  o Examples of supervision include: Developing the experiential learning curriculum, overseeing assignments, delivering didactic content, or regular interaction (in-person, e-mail, etc.) with the preceptor