

## **Substantive Change**

**Title:** Substantive Change Policy

**Policy Abstract:** This policy is to ensure that all incidences of substantive change in the mission and academic programs, sites, and agreements of the College be reported in a timely manner as required by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools- Commission on Colleges.

**Responsible Office:** Office of the President, Office of Academic Affairs, SACS-COC Liaison

**Official:** President of the College, Provost of the College, SACS-COC Liaison

**Contact(s):** Office of the President, 205-226-4620, Office of the Provost 205-226-4650, SACS-COC Liaison 205-226-4671

**Applies to:** The mission and academic programs, sites, and agreements of Birmingham-Southern College

**Effective Date:** February 1, 2014

**Revision Dates:**

### **2. Introduction/Background:**

It is an institutional obligation that colleges accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges notify the Commission of any substantive changes in a timely fashion and seek prior approval, when required, before initiating those changes. Institutions are also required to have a policy and procedure to ensure compliance with this requirement.

### **3. Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all substantive changes in the mission and academic programs, sites, and agreements of the College be reported in a timely manner and approved by the Commission when required before implementation as required by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges.

### **4. Applicable Regulations:**

[\*SACS-COC Principles of Accreditation\*](#), Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1: "The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission's substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes."

### **5. Policy Statement:**

The College is to notify SACS-COC of all instances of substantive change and, as required, have changes approved by the Commission prior to implementation in accordance with the Commission's policy, "[Substantive Change for Accredited Institution of the Commission on Colleges](#)."

Whenever an Officer of the College believes that a substantive change as outlined in the details below may be pending, notification is to be sent to President's Council for thorough discussion of the change and consultation with the College's SACS-COC liaison.

#### **6. Details:**

The following details are summarized directly from the SACS-COC [statement on substantive change](#), which should be consulted for **additional clarification, procedures, and timelines**.

Some changes require as many as six month notification and approval prior to implementation.

#### **Substantive Changes Requiring Approval before Implementation:**

- Initiating coursework, certificates, or programs of study at a different level than those previously approved by SACSCOC.
- Initiating certificate programs for workforce development.
- Initiating other certificate programs.
- Initiating an off-campus (additional) site (site-based/classroom group instruction) at which students can earn at least 50% of the credits toward an educational program.
- Initiating degree completion programs.
- Initiating a branch campus.
- Initiating distance learning or correspondence courses and programs by which students can earn at least 50% of a program's credits through delivery in a format other than face-to-face.
- Expanding at the institution's current degree level (*significant departure from current programs*).
- Initiating a significant change in the established mission of the institution.
- Changing from clock hours to credit hours.
- Changing significantly the length of a program, substantially increasing the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program.
- Relocating a main or branch campus.
- Initiating a collaborative academic program with another institution not accredited by SACS-COC.
- Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs.

#### **Substantive Changes Requiring Only Notification Prior to Implementation:**

- For site-based/classroom group instruction (where the instructor is present)
  - Initiating an off-campus site at which a student may earn at least 25% but less than
  - 50 % of credits toward a program.
  - Moving an approved off-campus instructional site within the same geographic area
  - to serve essentially the same pool of students.

- For distance learning/technology-based group or individual instruction (where the instructor and student are geographically separated), offering for the first time credit courses via distance learning/technology-based instruction by which students can obtain at least 25% but less than 50% of their credits toward an educational program.
- Initiating program/courses delivered through contractual agreement or a consortium. This provision *does not apply* to articulation agreements with other institutions, clinical agreements, or internship agreements.
- Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution.
- Repackaging of an existing approved curriculum to create a new degree level.

### **Closing a Program, Instructional Site, Branch Campus or an Institution: Teach-Out Plans and Teach-Out Agreements**

An institution is required, by Federal regulations, to submit a teach-out plan for the closing of a designated program for any of the following reasons,

- The USDOE notifies the Commission that it has initiated an emergency action against an institution or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in any Title IV, HEA program.
- The Commission terminates accreditation or candidacy.
- The institution notifies the Commission that it intends to cease operations entirely or close a location that provides at least 50% of at least one program.
- A State Licensing or authorizing agency notifies the Commission that an institution's license or legal authorization to provide an educational program has been or will be revoked.

Either a teach-out plan or a teach-out agreement with another institution is required, and must be approved by the Commission, if an institution decides to close an educational program, approved instructional site, branch campus, or the entire institution. See the SACSCOC Good Practices document "[Closing a Program, Site, Branch or Institution](#)" for additional procedures.

### **7. Definitions:**

In accordance with the SACS-COC policy on substantive change,

"Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution

- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
- The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or reaffirmation.
- A change from clock hours to credit hours
- A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program.
- The establishment of a branch campus
- Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution
- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
- Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution
- Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs"

(<http://sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>)

## 8. References:

SACS-COC, Substantive Change

<http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>

SACS-COC, *Principles of Accreditation*, 2012,

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAccreditation.pdf>

SACS-COC, Substantive Change for Accredited Institution of the Commission on Colleges

<http://sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>

SACS-COC, Closing a Program, Site, or Branch Institution

<http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/Closeprogramcampusinstitution.pdf>

Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20seeking%20reaffirmation.pdf>