

9-12\*

## SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

**Responsible Executive:** Provost

**Approving Official:** Provost

**Effective Date:** 6/01/22

**Revision History:** Adopted 2/15/13; Amended 7/13/17, Substantially rewritten (in compliance with SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy)

\*This policy number will be changed to 3-12

### I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to establish the requirements, procedures, and processes necessary to ensure timely coordination and notification of substantive changes involving Florida State University. The university is required to report substantive changes to the university's regional accreditor in the form, timeframe, and manner dictated by the SACSCOC. This policy complies with the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality as well as the Commission's policies and guidelines.

### II. POLICY

In order to meet the commitment undertaken by virtue of its membership in SACSCOC and its reaffirmation of accreditation, it is the policy of the university to demonstrate continuing compliance with the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement by adhering to all standards, requirements, policies, and procedures associated with the definition and scope of a substantive change and found in the latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions.

The vice presidents, associate and assistant vice presidents, deans, and directors should recognize that if the university fails to follow the current version of the SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it may lose its Title IV funding, be prohibited from receiving federal contracts and grants, or be required by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to reimburse the USDOE for federal funds received by the institution for programs. Institutions found out of compliance with the Substantive Change policy may be referred to SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal of membership.

#### A. GENERAL

A substantive change is defined as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. SACSCOC is required by the U.S. Department of Education to consider and evaluate substantive change to member institutions. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees requires notification of substantive changes as a condition of accreditation and, in some cases, requires approval prior to implementation. This

policy and its associated procedures address substantive changes identified through federal regulations and those required by the SACSCOC Board.

1. DEFINITION AND TYPES OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE. Substantive change refers to a modification or expansion to the nature or scope of the institution. Specifically, as indicated by SACSCOC (June, 2021 revision), substantive changes include:
  - Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
  - Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
  - Changing the governance of an institution.
  - Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
  - Acquiring another institution or any educational program or location of another institution.
  - Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
  - Offering courses or educational programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
  - Adding graduate educational programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate educational programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credentials).
  - Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
  - Adding an educational program that is a significant departure from the existing educational programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
  - Initiating educational programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
  - Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered educational program.
  - Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
  - Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) educational programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs.
  - Substantially increasing or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more educational programs.
  - Adding competency-based education programs.
  - Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
  - Adding educational programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.

- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed educational program or off-campus instructional site.
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their educational program of study.
- Closing an institution, an educational program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or an educational program at an off-campus instructional site.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

- a. Academic Award – A student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions in prescribed curricula leading to each institution granting academic awards at the same credential level.
- b. Branch Campus – A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is
  - (1) permanent in nature,
  - (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other for-credit credential,
  - (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
  - (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

For the purpose of this university substantive change policy only, the latest revision of the SACSCOC policy (June 2021 revision) should supersede the definition in Board of Governors Regulation 8.009 regarding educational sites. In the cases of conflict and for the purposes of this policy, the SACSCOC policy should prevail.

- c. Certificate – A certificate is an organized curriculum of college credit courses offered as a distinct area of study that leads to specific educational or occupational goals, and for which the university awards a certificate, diploma, or similar form of recognition upon completion. No credit hours for a certificate may be earned at an off-campus site unless the site is noticed or approved for the program by SACSCOC.
- d. Closure – The ending of instruction:
  - in an educational program,
  - at off-campus instructional site,



- in an educational program at an off-campus instructional site or main campus,
  - by a method of delivery, or
  - at an entire institution,
  - such that a student cannot complete their educational program of study as planned.
- e. Cooperative Academic Arrangement – An agreement between a SACSCOC-accredited institution and another entity (or entities) to deliver program content recorded on the SACSCOC institution’s transcript as its own. Examples include geographic or denominational consortia, statewide distance education agreements, collaborative agreements with international institutions, and contractual instruction, among others.
- f. Distance Education – A method of delivery in which the majority (50% or more) of instruction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same location. It includes synchronous (live or in real-time) and asynchronous (not live or in real-time) instruction.
- g. Educational program – A coherent course of study leading to a for-credit credential, including a degree, certificate, or other generally recognized credential. Exception: General education, for substantive change purposes, is usually considered an educational program even if a credential is not awarded.
- h. Joint academic award – A student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions in prescribed curricula leading to the institutions granting a single academic award bearing the names, seals, and officials’ signatures of each participating institution.
- i. Method of delivery – The principal method by which instruction is delivered to include:
- Competency-based education (all forms),
  - distance education, and
  - face-to-face instruction
- j. Notification – An official communication from an institution’s chief executive officer, or his/her designated representative, to the SACSCOC President summarizing a proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the complete physical address if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site or branch campus. The policy and procedures for reporting and review of institutional substantive change are outlined in the document – Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges.
- k. Off-campus instructional site / additional location – A location that is geographically apart from an institution’s sole main campus and where instruction is delivered. An off-campus instructional site may qualify as a branch campus.

- l. SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison – The individual at the institution who is responsible for ensuring the timely submission of annual institutional profiles and other reports as requested by the Commission.
- m. Teach-out Agreement – An optional written agreement with an institution under which students covered by a teach-out plan may complete their educational programs of study. A teach-out agreement may include student eligibility criteria, time limits, fee waivers, tuition parity, or other negotiated terms.
- n. Teach-out Plan – A written plan developed by an institution for students to complete their programs of study because it decided to end a program, off-campus instructional site, method of delivery, or to close the institution. A teach out plan provides an orderly process, the equitable treatment of students, minimal disruption and additional costs to students, and covers all enrolled students regardless of their progress to completion. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation. See Appendix I for reference.

### 3.SCOPE

This policy involves any changes, including those to academic and non-academic educational programs and activities that may be considered a substantive change according to the latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions. It applies to all university officers who can initiate, modify, review, approve, and allocate resources toward such changes.

Within academic areas, such substantive changes can originate with

- (1) individual groups of faculty members,
- (2) department committees,
- (3) Department Chairs,
- (4) Deans and Associate Deans,
- (5) Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs,
- (6) Faculty Senate, or
- (7) any other area reporting to the Provost. For academic changes requiring a substantive change review, Deans will have primary responsibility for their disciplines.

In those areas outside the Division of Academic Affairs, potential substantive changes may arise in (1) individual units, (2) among supervisors in each area, (3) executive management teams within Vice Presidential or Executive Director areas, or (4) with the Vice Presidents/Executive Directors themselves. Further, a potential substantive change may come to the attention and involve the President or those in his direct reporting line. For non-academic changes requiring substantive change review, Vice Presidents will have primary responsibility for their areas of operation.

### 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Vice Presidents, Assistant/Associate Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors must:

- Be aware of the substantive change policy.
- Recognize potential substantive changes.
- Ensure that all potential substantive changes are identified and inform the Provost and SACSCOC Liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals/actions that may be considered a substantive change for the university.
- Provide any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with the SACSCOC policy when requested.
- Conduct an annual review of internal operating procedures to ensure reporting of substantive change proposals.

2. University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison in the Office of the Provost will be responsible for :

- Monitoring Florida State University's compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive policy;
- Reviewing proposed changes to determine if the proposed change falls under SACSCOC's substantive change policy;
- Provide guidance to the academic officers and offices requesting the change;
- Oversee the process of preparing appropriate notification, in conjunction with those involved with the change, according to the requirements in the latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions and other related policy and accreditation documents maintained by SACSCOC;
- Submitting the appropriate substantive change paperwork to SACSCOC;
- Notifying the affected academic officers when the institution is notified by SACSCOC that the change has been approved, denied, or if additional materials are necessary;
- Coordinating with SACSCOC and the appropriate university vice president concerning needed actions and follow up activities;
- Maintaining information on SACSCOC substantive changes submitted by the university to SACSCOC; and
- Making recommendations to the Provost for updating this policy as SACSCOC policies and principles change.

## 5. PROCESSES FOR SUBMITTING SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES TO SACSCOC

SACSCOC procedures distinguish between those changes which require only notification prior to implementation and those which require notification and approval prior to implementation. In some cases, substantive changes require submission of required information by a specified date in order to be implemented in a certain timeframe. In



some cases, advance notification of at least twelve months is required. The SACSCOC accreditation liaison will determine which SACSCOC process applies to a potential substantive change.

The SACSCOC accreditation liaison will work closely with the requesting unit(s) to write a notification or prospectus that meets SACSCOC requirements. The SACSCOC accreditation liaison will submit the required documentation to SACSCOC and communicate the SACSCOC decision or approval to the relevant unit(s) upon its receipt from SACSCOC.

If a substantive change has been implemented without notification to the Provost and the university's SACSCOC liaison, the appropriate vice president has the responsibility to notify the Provost and the university's SACSCOC liaison immediately. The university's SACSCOC liaison then has the responsibility for notifying SACSCOC of the change as provided in the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

To ensure the potential substantive changes do not go unreported, vice presidents, assistant/associate vice presidents, deans, and directors should review internal processes periodically to ensure timely reporting of substantive changes. The substantive change policy must be referenced in academic department and college bylaws.

#### 6. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

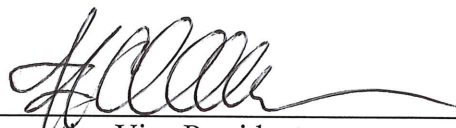
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

### III. LEGAL SUPPORT, JUSTIFICATION, AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Article IX, section 7, Florida Constitution, Section 1001.706, Florida Statutes, BOG Regulations 1.001, 8.011, 8.012, and 8.015 governs academic program review.

The Florida State University Board of Trustees has delegated authority to the President who has delegated to the Provost the authority to make academic policy.

Approved



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Provost and Executive Vice President