

Title of Policy: Substantive Change

Responsible Executive: President

Approving Official: Provost

Effective Date: March 2013

## 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 to the university's regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The policy complies with the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality as well as the Commission's policies and guidelines.

## II. STATEMENT OF 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 latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions.

If a substantive change is discovered to have been implemented without notification to the SACS accreditation liaison, the appropriate vice president has the responsibility to notify the SACS accreditation liaison immediately. The SACS accreditation liaison is then responsible for notifying SACSCOC of the change as provided in the latest version of the SACSCOC substantive change policy. Vice Presidents should conduct an annual review of their internal operating procedures to ensure reporting of future substantive change proposals.

The vice presidents, associate and assistant vice presidents, deans and directors should recognize that if the university fails to follow the latest 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 to reimburse it for money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change. In addition, the institution's case may be referred to SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership.

## III. ADDITIONAL SECTIONS

### A. GENERAL

A Substantive Change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. A current list of such changes can be found in Appendix I.

SACSCOC is required by the federal government to monitor the compliance of its member colleges and universities with the substantive change policy and to grant permission for major changes to occur. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees requires notification of substantive changes as a condition of accreditation and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. This policy and its procedures address substantive changes identified through federal regulations and those required through SACSCOC Board approval.

Under federal regulations

1. A 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 percent 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
2. There are three procedures established by SACSCOC that enable universities to comply with federal law regarding a substantive change. They are:

Procedure One – SACSCOC procedure associated with a substantive change that requires SACSCOC notification and approval prior to implementation. Changes under Procedure One require notification, a prospectus or application, and may involve an on-site visit.

Procedure Two - SACSCOC procedure associated with a substantive change that requires only SACSCOC notification prior to implementation.

Procedure Three – SACSCOC procedure associated with Closing a Program, Instructional Site, Branch Campus or an Institution.

### 3. Definitions

- a. 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 recognized educational credential; (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority. For purposes of the university substantive change policy, the latest revision of the SACSCOC policy should be used in preference to the Florida Board of Governors Regulation definition in Board of Governor Regulation 8.009 regarding educational sites. In the case of conflict and for purposes of this policy, the SACSCOC definition shall govern.
- b. Certificate –A Certificate is a defined program of study associated with the requirements for certification to practice in or master technical aspects of an occupation. Certificates shall require a minimum of 12 credit hours, and shall be recorded on the student's transcript. Students must apply for admission to all certificate programs. Each certificate must identify, assess, and report on three associated student learning outcomes as part of the process of the institutional effectiveness portal. 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. Certificate programs will be reviewed and their ongoing status will be determined during regularly scheduled Quality Enhancement Review (QER) processes for the colleges and/or departments in which they reside.
- c. Distance Learning - a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction

may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's and CD-ROMS if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

- d. Educational program -- a coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential (*i.e.*, a degree, diploma or certificate).
- e. Level - Merger/Consolidation - The Commission on Colleges defines a consolidation as the combination or transfer of the assets of at least two distinct institutions (corporations) to that of a newly-formed institution (corporation), and defines a merger as the acquisition by one institution of another institution's assets. For the purposes of accreditation, consolidations and mergers are considered substantive changes requiring review and approval by the Commission on Colleges. (Examples include: a senior college acquiring a junior college, a degree-granting institution acquiring a non-degree-granting institution, two junior or senior colleges consolidating to form a new institution, or an institution accredited by the Commission on Colleges merging with a non-accredited institution.)
- f. Notification - a letter from an institution's chief executive officer, or his/her designated representative, to 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 (June 2011).
- g. President's Cabinet – The President's Cabinet is appointed by the President of the University and composed of the President, as chair, the Provost, all Vice Presidents, General Counsel, and the Athletic Director.
- h. SACS 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. With the Chief Executive Officer, the Accreditation Liaison is responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted to the Commission and for ensuring ongoing compliance with Commission standards, policies, and procedures beyond reaffirmation.
- i. Significant Departure – A program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site for the mode of delivery in question. The relatedness of a program is judged against whether: additional library or learning resources will be needed; significant numbers of new faculty will be required; a significant number of new courses will be required; significant additional financial resources will be needed; significant additional equipment or

facilities will be needed. It also requires determination of the ways in which existing programs are related.

- j. Teach-out Plan – A written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 50% or more of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions. This applies to the closure of an institution, a site, or a program. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.
- k. Teach-Out Agreement - A written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 50% or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. This applies to the closure of an institution, a site, or a program. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation.
- l. Contractual Agreement – Typically is one in which an institution enters an agreement for receipt of courses/programs or portions of courses or programs (i.e., clinical training internships, etc.) delivered by another institution or service provider.
- m. Consortial Relationship – A consortial relationship typically is one in which two or more institutions share in the responsibility of developing and delivering courses and programs that meet mutually agreed upon standards of academic quality.

## B. SCOPE

This policy applies to all university officers who can initiate, modify, review, approve, and allocate resources to any changes, including those to academic and non-academic programs and activities that may be considered a substantive change according to latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions. Within academic areas, such changes can originate with (1) individual or 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.

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 (5) with the Vice Presidents/Executive Directors themselves. Further, the need for a potential substantive change may come to the attention of the President or those in his direct reporting line.

### C. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Each individual, position, or entity designated as within the scope of this policy is required to be familiar and comply with this policy.
2. Each College and Academic Department is required to incorporate this policy into its By-Laws and report proposed actions or changes covered by this policy to the appropriate Dean and Vice President.
3. Each College and Academic Department is required to distribute the current Substantive Change Policy at annual meetings with the faculty and discuss its implications.
4. Each College is required to provide a written report to the Provost on or before April 30, and on or before October 31 that should confirm, in writing, that the College is in compliance with the university's substantive change policy and that the SACSCOC Institutional Summary is correct.
5. Vice Presidents, associate and assistant vice presidents, deans, and directors have the responsibility to be aware of and familiar with the substantive change policy. They must inform the appropriate Vice President of proposals that may result in a substantive change for the university at the earliest possible stage of consideration of such proposals. They must provide information or prospectus needed to comply with SACSCOC policy when requested.
6. At the earliest stage of consideration and at least two months before the timeframe specified in Appendix I, any potential change or action that could be deemed substantive (as defined in this policy) must be submitted in writing via the applicable reporting line to the appropriate vice president and to the President as outlined in section D. The vice presidents or President will bring forward each potential substantive change to be discussed by the President's Cabinet. In order to ensure timely notification to SACSCOC, members of the President's Cabinet will keep the Provost apprised of the continuing status and progress toward the implementation of the potential change. The Provost will subsequently notify the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison as to the nature, scope, and proposed date of the potential change.
7. The SACS accreditation liaison will maintain information on SACSCOC substantive changes submitted by the university to SACSCOC. The liaison will update associate and assistant vice presidents, deans, and directors about changes in SACSCOC policy at least annually. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will 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. The liaison will coordinate with SACSCOC and the appropriate university vice president concerning needed actions and follow up activities. The liaison will make the recommendations for updating this policy to the Provost as SACSCOC policies and principles change.

#### D. PROCEDURES

At the earliest stage of consideration, any proposed change that could be deemed substantive according to the latest revision of SACSCOC policy must be submitted in writing to the Provost or appropriate Vice President, as outlined above in Section C. This notification must include:

- (a) Title of the proposed change;
- (b) A brief description of the change including its potential impact on students, faculty, location, scope and means of instruction;
- (c) The name and position of the responsible individual will act as contact;
- (d) A tentative timeline for approval; and
- (e) The earliest date possible for implementation.

These preliminary notifications will be reviewed and approved for further action by the President's Cabinet.

The definition of Substantive Change and the applicable institutional notifications are codified in latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions. Appendix I lists the types of institutional changes that are considered to be substantive under this policy.

1. If the proposed change or action is considered appropriate for internal development by the President's Cabinet, the Provost will instruct the SACS Accreditation Liaison to record the title, description, date of approval for internal development, the name of the individual responsible for its development, anticipated approval date, and earliest possible implementation date. Individuals responsible for the proposed changes will be instructed to notify the Provost and the SACS Accreditation Liaison as well as their appropriate Vice President/Executive Director regarding the progress of the proposed change.
2. The anticipated earliest date of implementation will be recorded to ensure that adequate time exists for SACSCOC notification, including the development of a Substantive Change Prospectus, if necessary. If the planned implementation date does not allow for timely SACS notification, the implementation date will be adjusted to allow for timely notification to SACS.
3. The SACS Accreditation Liaison will regularly monitor and record the progress and outcomes of the proposed change including events associated with the university's established policies and procedures for internal and external review and approval for various changes at the University. Working with the Provost and

other senior university officers, the SACS Accreditation Liaison will regularly contact the designated individuals responsible for each potential change to ensure that progress toward approval and implementation is carefully tracked.

4. When all internal reviews and approvals have been obtained, the SACS Liaison will send SACSCOC a written notification of the proposed change. Depending on the type of change and subsequent instructions from SACSCOC, the University may be required to submit a Substantive Change Prospectus and/or an Application for approval, within a minimum of three months and up to as many as 12 months prior to implementation of the change (per Appendix I). The decision to close an educational program, instructional site or branch campus shall be accordance with university Teach-Out Policy. From this point forward, for many types of changes, a minimum of six months is required to obtain formal approval by the University's Board of Trustees and, if necessary, the Florida Board of Governors. Implementation of the approved substantive change will occur no sooner than three months following submission of the prospectus or application to SACSCOC, where applicable. If SACSCOC approval is required, the program cannot commence until such approval is attained.
5. In the event a decision is made to close an educational program, instructional site, or branch campus, the appropriate unit must develop and submit a teach-out plan to SACSCOC for approval in accordance with university policy.

#### E. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

#### IV. LEGAL AUTHORITY

Section 1001.706, Florida Statutes, and section 7 of the Florida Constitution grants authority to the Florida Board of Governors to establish rules and regulations for the state universities. Section 1.001 (2)(e) Board of Governors regulations grants authority to the President to implement the policies and procedures of the Board relating to university operations.

Board of Governors (BOG) Regulations 8.009, 8.011 and 8.012 establish the major policies toward the educational sites, authorization and termination of academic programs. BOG Regulation 8.015 sets the expectations of the Board of Governors toward continuous program improvement. The Florida State University Board of Trustees has delegated authority to the President and the Provost to make determinations regarding matters of substantive change consistent with state law and make recommendations to the university Board of Trustees and Florida Board of Governors, as appropriate.



**Provost Approval:**

*Garnett S. Stokes*

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Garnett S. Stokes, Provost

*2/15/2013*

Date

# Appendix I

## Types of Substantive Changes

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved	1	NA	NA	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: April 15 or September 15
Expanding at current degree level ( <i>significant departure from current programs</i> )	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a branch campus (See definition of “branch campus” on p. 3 of this document.)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program at employer’s request and on short notice					
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	NA	NA	Yes	Modified prospectus

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus
Initiating other certificate programs					
... using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
... at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	NA	NA	Yes	Contact Commission Staff ( <i>Also, see page 16, item 9</i> )
Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution: (See: "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards.")					
Joint programs .....with another SACSCOC accredited institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
.....with an institution not accredited by	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
SACSCOC					
Dual programs	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School and dual enrollment programs offered at the high school)					
....Student can obtain 50% or more credits toward program	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
....Student can obtain 25-49 % of credit	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification
....Student can obtain 24% less	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites					
....Adding programs that are significantly different from current programs at the site	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

<b>Types of Change</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Prior Notification Required</b>	<b>Time Frame for Contacting COC</b>	<b>Prior Approval Required</b>	<b>Documentation</b>
...Adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs at the <u>site</u>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altering significantly the length of a program	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating distance learning...					
...Offering 50 % or more of a program <u>for the first time</u>	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
...Offering 25-49 %	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Offering 24 % or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement
Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs					
... if the entity provides 25% or more of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus

<b>Types of Change</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Prior Notification Required</b>	<b>Time Frame for Contacting COC</b>	<b>Prior Approval Required</b>	<b>Documentation</b>
... if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Copy of the signed agreement
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	See SACSCOC policy “Mergers, Consolidations and Change of Ownership: Review and Approval.”	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or September 15
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	See SACSCOC policy “Mergers, Consolidations and Change of Ownership: Review and Approval.”	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or September 15
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification with new address and starting date



<b>Types of Change</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Prior Notification Required</b>	<b>Time Frame for Contacting COC</b>	<b>Prior Approval Required</b>	<b>Documentation</b>
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	NA	NA	Yes	Justify reasons for change, indicate calculation of equivalency, and other pertinent information
Altering significantly the length of a program	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating degree completion programs	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution					
...Institution to teach out its own students	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification
...Institution contracts with another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement detailing terms included with notification
Acquiring any program or site from another institution	See SACSCOC policy "Mergers, Consolidations and Change of Ownership: Review and Approval."	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing	See SACSCOC policy "Mergers, Consolidations and Change of Ownership: Review and Approval."	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus