PROV-021

Substantive Change for Institutional Accreditation

Effective Date Monday, October 8, 2012

Status Final

Last Revised Wednesday, August 5, 2026

Policy Type Executive Vice President & Provost

Contact Office Institutional Research and Analytics

Oversight Executive
Executive Vice President and Provost

Applies To Academic Division.

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Reason for Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with the "Substantive Change Policies and Procedures" established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The U.S. Department of Education requires institutional accrediting bodies, such as SACSCOC, to ensure that any substantive change to the educational mission, programs, or services of an accredited institution does not adversely affect the institution's capacity to continue to meet the agency's standards. To do so, SACSCOC has established substantive change policies and procedures that require the University to notify and/or seek approval from SACSCOC when institutional actions occur that may qualify as substantive change. Failure to comply with SACSCOC's Substantive Change Policies and Procedures may jeopardize the University's accreditation and/or ability to receive federal funds.

Definition of Terms

Substantive Change

Description

A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution, including any change that may impact the quality of educational programs and services (see Code of Federal Regulations § 602.22 Substantive changes and other reporting requirements). Actions that fall under substantive change 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 any assets (e.g., programs or locations) of another institution.
- Offering courses or programs (i.e., credentials) at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- 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 a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
- Initiating programs by distance education.
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- Entering into a written cooperative academic 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) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.
- 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 programs.
- Adding course-based competency-based education programs.
- Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
- 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 program of study.
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.
- Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

Policy Statement

To ensure compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures, the following roles and responsibilities have been established. Each school is expected to designate an individual to serve as the school's academic compliance contact for SACSCOC substantive change purposes.

1. **Responsibilities:**
   The ***University's SACSCOC liaison*** is responsible for:

   - Coordinating with the University's schools to ensure institutional activity complies with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures; and
   - Acting as the institutional authority on the SACSCOC policies and procedures on substantive change, inclusive of managing all notifications and related correspondence to SACSCOC regarding a substantive change.

   School academic compliance contacts are responsible for:

   - Familiarizing themselves with this policy, the SACSCOC policies and procedures on substantive change, and the procedures outlined in "Review and Approval Processes" related to academic

compliance actions;
- Alerting the University’s SACSCOC liaison in advance of any activity that may constitute a substantive change; and
- Promoting adherence to institutional policies and procedures that support compliance with SACSCOC substantive change policies and procedures.

Procedures

Review and Approval Processes

Related Information

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policies and Procedures
Institutional Accreditation
Review and Approval Processes
Substantive change requirements of the U.S. Department of Education: 34 C.F.R. § 602.22

Major Category Executive Vice President & Provost Policies

Next Scheduled Review Sunday, August 5, 2029

Revision History

Revised to align with SACSCOC update of 6/2026 8/5/26; Edited definition 9/21/23; Edited line "University’s SACSCOC liaison" 7/26/21; Updated 5/10/21; 8/18/14.

Approved By Executive Vice President and Provost

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