

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE REPORTING POLICY (DRAFT, 9/24/12)

I. PURPOSE

Longwood University recognizes the importance of compliance with the *Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges* policy statement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC, 2011), which requires the University to report all substantive changes accurately and in a timely manner to the Commission on Colleges (COC). This policy exists specifically to establish, clarify and communicate the requirement that all University changes deemed to be “substantive” must be approved by the President and Board of Visitors, with subsequent notification to and/or approval by the COC for the University’s regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

SACS accredits the University and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. The SACSCOC is recognized by the United States Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in federally funded programs. SACS requires accredited institutions to follow the substantive change procedures of the COC. In order to retain accreditation, the University is required to comply with SACS and COC procedures concerning substantive changes.

While the purpose of this policy is to document the approval and transmittal process to SACS, new, revised or discontinued degrees and establishment of distance learning sites may also require reporting and prior approval from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). The requirements of both agencies must be met; compliance with one does not constitute compliance with the other. This policy is primarily designed to address academic programs and curricular issues, although other defined substantive changes are also covered.

II. 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
 1. The location is permanent in nature.
 2. The location offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential.
 3. The location has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization and has its own budgetary and hiring authority. Source: SACSCOC.

- B. **Degree Completion Program**: A program typically designed for a non-traditional undergraduate population such as working adults who have completed some college-level course work but have not achieved a baccalaureate degree. Students in such programs may transfer in credit from courses taken previously and may receive credit for experiential learning. Courses in degree completion programs are often offered in an accelerated format or meet during evening and weekend hours, or may be offered via distance learning technologies. Source: SACSCOC.

- C. **Distance Education**: 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. Source: SACSCOC.

- D. Dual Degree: Separate program completion credentials each of which bears only the name, seal, and signature of the institution awarding the degree to the student. Source: SACSCOC.
- E. Educational Program: A coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential (*i.e.*, a degree, diploma or certificate). Source: SACSCOC.
- F. Geographically Separate: An instructional site or branch campus that is located physically apart from the main campus of the institution. Source: SACSCOC.
- G. Joint Degree: A single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the two or more institutions awarding the degree to the student. Source: SACSCOC.
- H. Level: SACSCOC's taxonomy categorizes institutions by the highest degree offered. Longwood University is designated as a Level III institution because it offers the master's degree as the highest degree.
- I. Merger/Consolidation: SACSCOC 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 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). Source: SACSCOC.
- J. Notification: A letter from an institution's chief executive officer or his/her designated representative to SACSCOC President to summarize a proposed change, provide the intended implementation date, and list the complete physical address, if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site or branch campus. Source: SACSCOC.
- K. 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. Source: SACSCOC.
- L. Procedure Two: SACSCOC procedure associated with a substantive change that requires SACSCOC notification prior to implementation. Source: SACSCOC.

- M. Procedure Three: SACSCOC procedure associated with approval of a consolidation/merger. Source: SACSCOC
- N. Significant Departure: A program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the mode of delivery in question. To determine whether a new program is a significant departure, it is helpful to consider the following questions:
1. What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
 2. Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
 3. Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
 4. Will a significant number of new courses be required?
 5. Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
 6. Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?
 7. Will the CIP code change?
- Source: SACSCOC, SCHEV.
- O. Substantive Change: A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. According to SACS, substantive change includes:
1. Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution.
 2. Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution.
 3. 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.
 4. 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.
 5. A change from clock hours to credit hours.
 6. A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program.
 7. 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.
 8. The establishment of a branch campus.
 9. Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution.
 10. Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement such as a dual degree program or a joint degree program with another institution.
 11. Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution.
 12. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution.
 13. 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.
- Source: SACSCOC.
- P. Teach-Out: The process by which the University provides instructional and academic support services to students enrolled at a site that has been closed and/or in a program that has been discontinued. The teach-out process often extends well beyond the closing of a site or program to allow time for enrolled students to complete their programs in a reasonable amount of time.

- Q. **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 percent or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation. Source: SACSCOC.

III. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all University officers who can initiate, 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 SACSCOC *Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions*. Within academic areas, such changes can originate with individuals or groups of faculty members, Department committees, Department Chairs, Deans and Associate Deans, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Faculty Senate, or any other area reporting to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

In those areas outside of Academic Affairs, potential substantive changes may arise in individual units, among supervisors in each area, executive management teams within Vice Presidential areas, or with the Vice Presidents or Cabinet. Further, the need for a potential substantive change may come to the attention of the President or those in his/her direct reporting line.

Each individual hereby designated is required to be familiar and comply with this policy.

IV. POLICY

As the University pursues structural and programmatic changes, all of those changes deemed to be “substantive” changes require approval by the President, Board of Visitors and the SACSCOC.

The University will follow the substantive change procedures of SACSCOC, and inform the SACSCOC of such changes and proposed changes in accord with those procedures. Regardless of the origination point, all substantive changes must be tracked and reported under this policy.

V. ENFORCEMENT

A. Responsibility

1. **SACS Accreditation Liaison**: The Vice President for Academic Affairs serves as the SACS Accreditation Liaison. In the years between accreditation reviews, the liaison is responsible for ensuring the timely submission of annual institutional profiles and other reports as requested by the Commission. The 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. During the Reaffirmation Cycle, the liaison serves on the SACSCOC Reaffirmation Leadership Team and oversees all staffing aspects of the Reaffirmation process. The liaison is responsible for internal and external monitoring of substantive change progress, and responsible for reporting final change status.

2. **Vice Presidents:** The vice presidents are responsible for their respective areas bringing forward any potential substantive changes under this policy.
 3. **President:** The president, with the SACS Accreditation Liaison, is responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted to the COC and for ensuring ongoing compliance with COC standards, policies, and procedures beyond reaffirmation. The president is responsible for oversight and final reporting of substantive changes to SACSCOC.
- B. Sanctions: If Longwood University fails to follow SACSCOC procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its total accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. For that reason, the sanction for failure to follow this University policy must be sufficient to avoid such failure. If an academic program, unit or officer initiates a substantive change without following the procedures outlined in this policy, the President or Vice President for Academic Affairs may direct the immediate cancellation or cessation of that change, with due regard for the educational welfare of students, when it is discovered. In areas outside of Academic Affairs, the same sanction may be applied by the President or relevant Vice President.

VI. PROCEDURE

NOTE: Procedures do not require approval of the Board of Visitors.

Approved by the Board of Visitors (Insert Date)

Revised (Insert Date - if applicable)