As you know, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) has an obligation to the U.S. Department of Education to review and approve changes of a substantive nature initiated by its member institutions between decennial reviews. In 2010, SACSCOC revised its Substantive Change Policy to include expanded reporting requirements mandated by new federal regulations. Due to this increased burden on institutions and on the Commission to approve newly-regulated changes, at its meeting in December 2012 the SACSCOC Board of Trustees revised the Substantive Change Policy to eliminate the need for prior notification of many, but not all, types of substantive change.

The revised Substantive Change Policy has been posted on our Web site, www.sacscoc.org. It indicates the changes that will continue to require notification prior to implementation. Staff has prepared the list of those below. Immediately following that list is a summary of changes that no longer require a letter of notification.

Other changes to the policy include (1) referencing the revision and name change of the current Commission policy, “Collaborative Academic Arrangements,” to that of “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards,” (2) updating processes for approval of substantive change to ensure that all final approvals rest with the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, (3) updating the table that lists all substantive changes that require notification and/or approval, (4) adding, where appropriate, references to the Commission policy, “Distance and Correspondence Education,” (5) adding a brief phrase on page 18 indicating that an institution’s response to the Report of a Substantive Change Committee should be submitted within five months of the committee visit, and (6) inserting as part of the prospectus in Appendix B the requirement to address student support services (Item 7 on p. 26).

**Substantive Changes requiring letters of Notification prior to implementation:**

- Initiating an off-campus site at which a student may earn at least 25% but less than 50% of credits toward a program *(please be sure to include the street address and starting date)*.
- Moving an approved off-campus instructional site within the same geographic area to serve essentially the same pool of students. The letter of notification must include the address of the old site, the address of the new site, and the starting date of the new site.
- 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 programs/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. A copy of the signed agreement must be provided.
- Repackaging of existing approved curriculum to create a new degree level, such as an institution that offers a full 120-hour baccalaureate program creating an associate degree from its lower-division offerings.
• **Initiating a merger/consolidation**, change of governance/means of control

**Substantive Changes NOT requiring letters of notification and not requiring Commission approval:**

- Adding approved programs (significantly different or not) to an approved off-campus site.
- Adding approved programs to the institution’s electronically delivered offerings.
- Adding approved correspondence courses/programs that are different from those initially approved for delivery via correspondence.
- Initiating articulation agreements with other institutions, clinical agreements, or internship agreements.
- Initiating degree completion programs offering 25%-49% of an educational program at an off-campus site.

**Please DO NOT send letters of notification in advance of submitting a prospectus for the following changes that require Commission approval prior to implementation:**

- Submitting an Application for Level Change.
- Submitting a prospectus for approval of an off-campus site to offer 50% or more of a program.
- Submitting a prospectus to offer, for the first time, 50% or more of a program via distance delivery.

For these three cases, please submit only the prospectus/application with a cover letter indicating the nature of the change.

If you have any questions after reviewing the lists and reading the Substantive Change Policy, please feel free to contact Dr. Sarah Armstrong, Director of Substantive Change, at sarmstrong@sacscoc.org.

**Belle Wheelan**

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