



FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

University Substantive Change Policy

NOTIFYING THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS, COMMISSION ON COLLEGES (SACSCOC) OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

Date of Creation: 3 October 2013

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish institutional procedures for recognizing and approving substantive change to include level changes **and ensuring timely notification** to the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

B. DEFINITIONS

Degree Level Change - When initiating coursework or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), an institution must complete two documents: (1) "Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Review" and (2) the "Application for a Member Institution Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level."

Substantive change - A significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. (See Table 1)

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.

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.

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.

Correspondence education - A formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced.

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.

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.

Educational program – A coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential (*i.e.*, a degree, diploma or certificate).

Geographically separate - An instructional site or branch campus that is located physically apart from the main campus of the institution.

Modified prospectus - A prospectus submitted in lieu of a full prospectus for certain designated substantive changes. When a modified prospectus is acceptable, the Commission specifies requested information from the institution.

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."

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:

- What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
- Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
- Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
- Will a significant number of new courses be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

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.

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.

C. POLICY STATEMENT

Fort Valley State University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The U.S. Department of Education recognizes SACSCOC as an agency whose accreditation enables its members to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. **As a standard of accreditation the University must notify the COC of substantive changes before they occur and in a timely manner based on SACSCOC policy.** Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. The SACSCOC policy on substantive change incorporates federal requirements into its substantive change policy and procedures (34 CFR 602.22). This Fort Valley State University’s policy applies to all types of substantive changes to include level changes.

D. PROCEDURES

1. The administrative heads of both academic and non-academic units are responsible for being knowledgeable as to what SACSCOC considers a "significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution" and for being aware of

related accreditation information (see <http://www.sacscoc.org>). Additionally, they will be aware of the development, implementation, and ongoing review of processes that are consistent with the substantive change policy, including publication of and adherence to relevant timelines, submission deadlines, and approval forms.

At the earliest stage of conceptualization, any proposed change that could be deemed substantive according to SACSCOC policy must be submitted in writing to the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) or appropriate Vice President. These notifications must include: (a) title of the proposed change; (b) a brief description of the change including its scope; (c) responsible individual to act as contact; (d) tentative timeline for approval; and (e) earliest date possible for implementation. These preliminary notifications will be reviewed by the President's Cabinet.

It is the duty of the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs or appropriate Vice President to ensure that the **University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is notified of planning for a modification that may prove substantive.** The president remains informed of all substantive changes that require submission to SACSCOC. Implementation of a change that clearly is or may be substantive cannot occur until the University complies with SACSCOC procedures and receives approval as appropriate.

2. If the proposed change is considered appropriate for internal development by the President's Cabinet, the Provost will instruct the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to record in Fort Valley State University's New SACSCOC Change Tracking Database 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/Vice President of Academic Affairs or appropriate Vice President and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison regarding the progress of the proposed change. 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. Should the planned implementation date not allow for timely SACSCOC notification, the implementation date will be adjusted to allow for timely notification to SACSCOC.
3. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will regularly monitor and record the progress and outcomes of the proposed change in Fort Valley State University's SACSCOC Change Tracking Database, 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/VPAA and other members of the President's Cabinet, the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will regularly contact the designated individuals responsible for each potential change to ensure that progress toward approval and implementation is carefully tracked. When all internal reviews and approvals have been obtained, the President 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, Modified Prospectus, Letter of Notification and/or an Application for approval, within a minimum of three months and up to as many as 6 months prior to implementation of the change. 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.

E. INFORMING CAMPUS COMMUNITY

This University policy shall appear on the FVSU website and, following annual review at the beginning of each fall semester, be distributed electronically by the FVSU SACSCOC liaison to all of the above-named administrators.

F. SCHEDULED REVIEW OF POLICY

An annual review will be conducted at the beginning of each fall semester. Any revisions to this policy shall be incorporated in the policy itself, as published on the FVSU website. In addition, an announcement regarding the revised policy shall be distributed via email or other electronic means to the faculty, staff, and administration.

G. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

It is the duty of the Provost/VPAA or appropriate Vice President to ensure that the **University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is notified of planning for a modification that may prove substantive.** The president remains informed of all substantive changes that require submission to SACSCOC. **Compliance with the procedures is mandatory.**

H. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY

The methodology for developing the policy consisted of following Fort Valley State University's procedure for policy creation. The procedure started with submitting a proposal for a policy change to the Educational Policy Subcommittee, which is a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee. The policy was reviewed by the Educational Policy Subcommittee and forwarded to the Curriculum Committee for review. Next, the policy proposal was submitted to the faculty as a recommendation from the Curriculum Committee. Upon the approval of the faculty, the policy proposal was submitted to the President of Fort Valley State University for final approval.

The final approved document contains a statement that mandates compliance with the policy.

POLICY HISTORY

Curriculum Committee & Responsible Officer Approval to Proceed:

Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs

Date

SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison

Date

Chair, Curriculum Committee

Date

President

Date

Policy Dates: 3 October 2013

Schedule Review Date: 3 October 2014

APPENDIX: TIMELINE (Table 1)

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 ...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program) ...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	1	NA	NA	Yes	Modified prospectus
	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus
Initiating other certificate programs ... using existing approved courses ... at a new off-campus site (previously approved program) ...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	NA	NA	Yes	Contact Commission Staff (Also, see page 16, item 9)
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
	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus

.....with an institution not accredited by 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 ...Student can obtain 25-49 % of credit ...Student can obtain 24 % less	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification
	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 ...Adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs at the site	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	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 for the first time ...Offering 25-49 % ...Offering 24 % or less	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
	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
	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Copy of the signed agreement

... if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution					
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
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	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification
...Institution to teach out its own students	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
...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
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

Table 1