

PROCEDURE

Subject	Substantive Change Policy	Number: 1.45
Source	Vice President, Academic Affairs	Reference (Rule) #6HX14-1.45
President's Approval/Date: 2/28/2014		

State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF) is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (“SACSCOC” or the “Commission”) to award associate and baccalaureate degrees. Member institutions are required to notify the accrediting agency of substantive changes in accordance with the SACSCOC substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes. Each member institution is required to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion.

The SACSCOC Policy Statement on “SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE FOR ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON COLLEGES” is incorporated herein by reference. The substantive change process must follow the timelines and formats set out in the aforementioned-document(found on the SACSCOC Web site www.sacscoc.org). (The most recently approved version on the SACSCOC Web site will take precedence in this process.)

A “substantive change” is defined by SACSCOC as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, 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 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 such as a dual degree program or a joint degree 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.”

These are only some of the activities that would trigger the need for communication with SACSCOC regarding the institution of a change.

There are different procedures for substantive changes, depending on the nature of the change. Some changes require no notification, others only require notification prior to implementation of the change and another group requires notification and approval prior to implementation. Some require only a letter, others also require a prospectus (i.e.: a new program significantly different from currently approved programs), modified prospectus (i.e.: initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice at a new off-campus site) or an application (i.e.: to offer degree programs at a different level).

The President of SCF or the SCF Accreditation Liaison must provide SACSCOC with timely notification and other documentation. These timelines are calculated from the proposed initiation of the activity that comprises the substantive change. Therefore, changes must be planned well in advance, giving notice as set out in the SACSCOC policy statement.

RESPONSIBILITIES AS TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES:

SCF's Accreditation Liaison Duties:

The Accreditation Liaison is responsible for notifying the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in advance of any and all substantive changes in accordance with the substantive change policies of the Commission. The Liaison is also responsible for familiarizing faculty and staff with the requirements of these policies and coordinating the completion and submission of letters, reports, prospectuses and/or other documents required by SACSCOC for specific substantive changes. The Liaison will also notify the President of the potential need to submit notification of a substantive change or other materials to SACSCOC prior to the implementation of any planned change. The Liaison will coordinate any needed follow-up. The Liaison will also maintain a repository of materials dealing with substantive changes and related correspondence from the accrediting offices of SACSCOC.

Duties of SCF faculty and staff:

It is the duty of the vice-presidents, provosts, academic chairs, program managers, directors and selected committee chairs to ensure that SCF's Accreditation Liaison is notified of any plans for a modification that may prove substantive. Implementation of a change cannot occur until after SCF notifies SACSCOC of its intention and either: (1) notification satisfies the requirements of the SACSCOC substantive change policy; (2) SCF receives notification of SACSCOC approval with no need for submission of additional documentation or (3) SCF submits all required reports, applications or prospectuses required and receives SACSCOC approval to implement the proposed change. If a visit from a team convened by SACSCOC is required, the accrediting agency will notify SCF of when the proposed change can be implemented.

The vice-presidents, provosts, academic chairs, program managers, directors and selected

committee chairs are responsible for (1) becoming familiar with the SACSCOC substantive change policy; (2) notifying the SCF Accreditation Liaison as early as possible about proposed activities and programs that may be considered substantive changes; (3) providing the Liaison with supporting data and documentation necessary for reporting such changes to the SACSCOC; (4) supporting the writing of documents required for SACSCOC approval of the proposed substantive change and (5) adhering to the timeline set forth by SACSCOC for purposes of review and approval of the proposed substantive change before its implementation.

LATE AND UNREPORTED SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

If a substantive change is reported late or goes unreported, “the accreditation of the institution may be placed in jeopardy, the institution’s case may be referred to the Commission for the imposition of a sanction, the institution may lose its Title IV funding 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.”

For this reason, it is imperative that the following procedures be adhered to strictly.

PROCEDURE

The SCF Accreditation Liaison will query academic departments, relevant administrative offices, curriculum and other appropriate committees annually about changes, additions and closings pertaining to: (a) academic programs, (b) collaborative educational agreements, (c) programs offered at off-site locations and (d) online program delivery. The Liaison will report these proposed changes to the President’s Advisory Council in April, with quarterly updates on substantive change documents submitted to SACSCOC, altered priorities regarding projected changes and additions or deletions to the list of projected changes for the year.

Compliance Steps and Timeline:

There are three SACSCOC procedures for substantive change. Most foreseeable changes for the near future deal with Procedure 1 and Procedure 2. Please note that some issues escalate their requirements as the identified change intensifies. For example, with initiating other certificate programs; if the certificate program is initiated using existing, approved courses; there is no need for notifying SACSCOC. However, if an approved certificate program is offered at a new off-campus site, notification must occur at least six months in advance of the implementation and a prospectus must be submitted at least 90 days prior to the scheduled implementation of the program. (Offering a program at a different level requires advanced notice of at least 12 months and an application due by specific dates listed in the SACSCOC policy.)

The most common timeline for the SACSCOC policy is a requirement for at least six (6) months advanced notification to the SACSCOC President accompanied by a prospectus or modified prospectus (if required). Please note the SACSCOC policy states: “Once the prospectus has been submitted, the institution may advertise and recruit students to a new program or site as long as all materials clearly state that the program or site is pending approval by SACSCOC.” With this in mind, SCF adopts the following policy:

All proposed changes must be presented to and approved by the individuals making up the chain of command related to the department/unit to implement the change:

1. Nine to Twelve (9-12) Months Prior to Planned Implementation:
 - a) Present a recommendation of the proposed change to the head of the department or unit of the area proposing to implement the change (i.e.: department chair, program manager, director, etc.). The proposed change must be submitted simultaneously to the SCF Accreditation Liaison so that he/she can: (a) monitor the progress of the recommendation, (b) consult with the President as to the proposed change's support for the College mission, goals, strategic priorities and available resources; and (c) guide the review and approval process.
 - b) Recommendation by the chair, manager or director to the appropriate associate vice president or other administrator at the next level of reporting for further approval.
 - c) Recommendation by the appropriate associate vice president or other administrator to the appropriate vice president(s) for approval.
2. When contracts, MOUs and/or agreements are involved, recommendation to and approval from General Counsel and the President's Advisory Council will also be required. (These agreements may require board action in addition to approval by SACSCOC.)
3. When curriculum approval is a prerequisite for implementing a change (e.g., establishing a new program), the curriculum must be approved by the Curriculum Development Review committee, the VP of Academic Affairs and the Board of Trustees prior to notification.
4. Eight (8) Months Prior to Planned Implementation:

The proposed substantive change, approved by the above-mentioned individuals/groups is submitted to the SCF Accreditation Liaison at least eight (8) months prior to the proposed implementation date for the program.
5. Eight (8) Months Prior to Planned Implementation:

Recommendation to the President and the President's Advisory Council by the SCF Accreditation Liaison for review. Upon the approval of the President, a letter of notification to the President of SACSCOC will be submitted by the President or Liaison at least six (6) months prior to the planned implementation of the proposed substantive change.
6. Six to eight (6-8) Months Prior to Planned Implementation
If a prospectus or other documentation is required, content-area specialists will lead the effort to develop the required documentation in a timely manner usually at least six months prior to planned implementation.
7. Substantive changes requiring a prospectus or other documentation often require SACSCOC approval prior to implementation, thus it is advised to submit materials to SACSCOC well in advance of the submission timeframe.

Changes proposed by committees or other work-groups must be reported directly to the SCF Accreditation Liaison for further guidance, at least nine (9) months before the scheduled implementation of the proposed change.

This timeframe anticipates that the internal approval process will take three months or less. However, curriculum development and approval and other aspects of the planning phase may

take far more time. These activities should be initiated at least 18 months before the proposed implementation date.

There are a few cases where the timeframe is more compressed (initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice), but specific elements of a modified prospectus may still be required. In all cases, the SACSCOC policy statement will dictate the situations requiring notification and any other documentation required. When there is any doubt about the reporting criteria, extent of documentation, etc., the SCF Accreditation Liaison will contact the appropriate SACSCOC vice president to assure that SCF remains in compliance with the mandate regarding the reporting of substantive changes in a timely fashion.

State College of Florida, Manatee - Sarasota