University Policy AC-18.01-03/14

Policy Title: Substantive Change Policy

Originator: Dr. George Ellenberg, Vice Provost

Responsible Office: Office of the Provost

Reason for Policy/Purpose:

The University of West Florida is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate, baccalaureate, master’s, specialist, and Doctor of Education degrees. As a member institution, UWF is required to both report changes in accordance with SACSCOC substantive change policy and to have policy and procedures in place to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion. If a branch or campus adds or modifies a program, it constitutes an expansion of scope and requires SACSCOC notification.

If UWF fails to follow SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to reimburse it for money received by the Institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change. In addition, the University’s case may be referred to SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership accreditation entirely.

Who Does this Govern and Who Needs to Know this Policy?

This policy is applicable to all UWF employees.

Definition of Terms:

SACSCOC Definitions:

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.
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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
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.

All definitions quoted from 2012 SACSCOC Resources Manual Appendices beginning page 101
Policy Statement:

A. Types of Substantive Change that Need to be Reported to the Provost’s Office: Substantive changes that need to be reported to the Provost’s Office to ensure timely and proper notification to SACSCOC and the BOG include but are not limited to

- Any change in the established mission or objectives 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% 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 that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic 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

B. Timeline for Prior Notification and/or Prior Notification Approval of Substantive Change:
Unless otherwise approved by the Provost, contemplated substantive changes require up to 9-month prior notification to the Provost’s Office and may require prior approval of the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) and/or SACSCOC.

C. Administrator’s Responsibility for Reporting Substantive Change: The administrative heads of both academic and non-academic units are responsible for being attentive to what SACSCOC considers a "significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution" and for being aware of related information resources concerning accreditation.

It is the duty of the Vice-presidents, Deans, Chairs, Directors, and like administrators to ensure that the Provost is notified of planning for a modification that may prove substantive and that the President be informed of the determination of its status as soon as possible.

It is the responsibility of the chair of a department whose intent it is to offer a course at a new off-campus location to notify the Office of the Registrar and the duty of the Registrar to alert the Office of the Provost of the request.
The Provost’s Office has established procedures that must be followed by all units to ensure timely notification to the BOG and/or SACSCOC of all substantive changes.

D. Role of UWF SACSCOC Liaison (or designee): The UWF SACSCOC Liaison (or designee) in the Provost’s Office will review each proposal to determine if it constitutes a substantive change that needs to go through the notification and/or approval process for the BOG and/or SACSCOC. Implementation of a change that clearly is or may be substantive cannot occur until the University notifies the BOG and/or SACSCOC of its intention and receives approval.

All correspondence and communication with the BOG and/or SACSCOC will be submitted by the President or the SACSCOC Liaison in the Provost’s Office. Substantive change may require reporting to the UWF Board of Trustees.

E. Correspondence with SACSCOC: The UWF SACSCOC Liaison (or designee) in the Provost’s Office will review each proposal to determine if it constitutes a substantive change that needs to go through the notification and/or approval process for the BOG and/or SACSCOC. Implementation of a change that clearly is or may be substantive cannot occur until the University notifies the BOG and/or SACSCOC of its intention and receives approval.

All correspondence and communication with the BOG and/or SACSCOC will be submitted by the President or the SACSCOC Liaison in the Provost’s Office. Substantive change may also require reporting to the UWF Board of Trustees.

Authority and Related Documents:

FSA 2.5.7 Changes to Location, Branch, or Campus

Volume 2 - School Eligibility and Operations 2012-2013 Federal Student Aid Handbook
Chapter 5 Updating Application Information

34 CFR 600.20(c)(1) Notice and application procedures for establishing, reestablishing, maintaining, or expanding institutional eligibility and certification.
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&SID=69265548ef9b972c35305ec8a92fe2b9&rgn=div8&view=text&node=34:3.1.3.1.1.2.23.1&idno=34

34 CFR 600.21 Updating application information.
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&SID=69265548ef9b972c35305ec8a92fe2b9&rgn=div8&view=text&node=34:3.1.3.1.1.2.23.2&idno=34

34 CFR 668.188 Preventing evasion of the consequences of cohort default rates
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-
BOG 8.009(4) Educational Sites

SACSCOC 3.12.1

SACSCOC Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges
http://www.sacscoc.org/

SACSCOC CLOSING A PROGRAM, SITE, BRANCH OR INSTITUTION-Good Practices

SACSCOC SEPARATE ACCREDITATION FOR UNITS OF A MEMBER INSTITUTION
http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/separate%20accred%20for%20units.pdf

SACSCOC Substantive Change: Helpful Supporting Documents
http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChangeReporting.asp

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement

SACSCOC Unreported Substantive Changes Discovered or Reported during Reaffirmation

**APPROVED By:** Dr. Judith A. Bense, President  
**Date:** 3/31/14

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