Procedure for Monitoring and Reporting Substantive Changes

Substantive Change is defined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. In many cases, substantive change requires notification and possibly prior approval by SACSCOC.

The Associate Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment (IRPA) is responsible for monitoring and reporting compliance with the SACSCOC’ Substantive Change Policy Statement. Compliance will be ensured through (1) educational efforts across the institution and (2) review of curriculum and teaching site proposals/changes prior to implementation. Particular attention will be given to:

- Any change in the mission, goals or objectives of the institution;
- Any change in legal status or ownership;
- Initiating programs or courses at a degree level different than that during the last reaffirmation;
- Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure from those offered during the last reaffirmation;
- Substantial changes in clock or credit hours;
- Addition of an off-campus teaching site where a student can earn more than 25% or more than 50% of their degree credits;
- Closing a program from an off campus site or branch;
- Significantly changing the length of a degree program;
- Acquiring another institution or program;
- Initiating programs delivered through contractual agreement or consortium; and,
- 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.

If there is uncertainty regarding whether or not a change is substantive in nature, the Associate Vice President for IRPA should contact the designated SACSCOC staff member for consultation.

Procedure:

1. Deans or their representatives requesting changes pertaining to teaching sites, new program, and adding or permanently closing degree programs, majors or concentrations must notify the Associate Vice President for IRPA by email and then complete the Academic Program Request Form (APR).
2. The Dean is responsible for obtaining college and university committee approvals before signing the APR.

3. The Dean then forwards the APR to the Associate Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment who reviews the proposal details for compliance with SACS and Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) requirements and takes the appropriate action according to SACS and ACHE policies. In many cases, 6-8 months or longer is necessary to complete the process.

4. Once compliance is ensured, the Associate Vice President forwards the APR to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs or the Vice President for Health Sciences, as appropriate.

5. After all signatures are obtained, the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs forwards the APR to the Registrar’s Office. The Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Health Sciences are responsible for circulating the approved substantive changes to members of Deans’ Council.

6. Changes pertaining to other issues subject to the Substantive Change Policy but not addressed on the APR form should be discussed with the Associate Vice President of IRPA and the appropriate Dean and Vice President prior to implementation.

Approved by:

V. Gordon Moulton, President

January 11, 2012