



UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

Department: Provost's Office	Effective Date: Jan. 1, 2013
Policy Number: ACC 1-2013	Date Approved: December 21, 2015
Policy Description: Substantive Change Policy	Approved By: Academic Cabinet
Revised: November 17, 2015 to allow for flexibility in school representatives August 26, 2014 to reflect title and SACSCOC name changes	Reviewed: December 21, 2015 by Academic Cabinet
Cognizant University Official: University SACSCOC Liaison	Replaces Policy Dated: September 17, 2012

PURPOSE:

The University of Richmond is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). As a standard of accreditation the University must notify SACSCOC of substantive changes before they occur. In addition, the federal government requires us to notify SACSCOC of other changes in order to remain eligible to participate in federal financial aid programs. These changes may include new degree programs; new majors, minors, or concentrations; changes in existing programs; suspension or termination of existing programs; changes in instructional delivery methods (e.g. the addition of on-line courses); and the addition or closure of off-campus sites. The purpose of this policy is to establish institutional procedures for recognizing and approving substantive change and ensuring timely notification to the SACSCOC. The University's Substantive Change Committee is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to the University of Richmond and all of its Affiliates. As used in this policy, the term "Affiliates" means organizations or entities in which the University owns a controlling interest or has the right to elect the majority of the entity's governing board.

POLICY:

Definitions

A. **The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges** is the recognized regional accrediting body in the 11 U.S. southern states and in Latin America for those institutions of higher education that award associate, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degrees. The Commission is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. To maintain its recognition by the U.S. Department of Education, the Commission has incorporated federal requirements into its substantive change policy and procedures. Some of those requirements expect an institution to seek approval prior to the initiation of a substantive change so that the change can be included in the institution's scope of accreditation.

B. **Substantive change** is a federal term pertaining to any "significant modification of the nature and scope of an accredited institution." Colleges and Universities must notify their accrediting body of potential or actual substantive change in a timely fashion, and in many cases must receive approval for such change from the accrediting body before the initiative is implemented. The University of Richmond's regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), is required by the federal government to monitor its constituents' compliance with the substantive change policy and to grant permission for major changes to occur. In order to ensure the University's compliance, all proposers of new programs, degrees, and other major initiatives should review the substantive change policy, as well as the relevant portion of the SACSCOC website, which contains much useful information: (<http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>)

C. **Notification** to the SACSCOC regarding substantive change means that the Provost of the University shall send a letter to the President of SACSCOC summarizing the proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the street address if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site.

D. A **prospectus** is a concisely worded narrative that describes a proposed substantive change according to a format specified by the SACSCOC.

E. **The Accreditation Liaison** is the individual appointed by the President of the University to help ensure the University remains in compliance with SACSCOC accreditation requirements and policies. At the University of Richmond, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness serves as the SACSCOC liaison.

F. **A branch campus** is 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.

G. **An off-campus site** is a location of an institution that is geographically apart, but not independent, of the main campus. The site may be used in an ongoing manner to deliver programs or courses leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, but it does not have its own faculty, administrative organization or budget.

H. **Distance education** is a formal educational process in which the majority (50% or greater) of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical location. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may employ correspondence study, or audio, video, or computer technologies.

I. **A degree completion program** is an adult or accelerated program, typically at the baccalaureate level, in areas such as management and organizational leadership in which the first two years of the degree program are completed at one institution and a second institution delivers the remaining two years on the first institution's campus.

J. **A teach-out agreement** is a written agreement between accredited institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students if one of those institutions stops offering an educational program before all students enrolled in that program complete the program. In accord with federal regulation 34 CFR 602.24(c), if an institution enters into a teach-out agreement with another institution, it shall submit the agreement to the office of the Commission on Colleges for approval prior to its implementation.

Procedures

- A. The following executive administrative officers serve ex officio on the institution's Substantive Change Committee:
 - Director of Institutional Effectiveness (Co-chairperson)
 - University Registrar (Co-chairperson)
 - Associate Provost
 - An Associate Dean from each school or other designee
 - Associate Dean, International Education
- B. Each Dean will appoint the associate dean or other faculty member who will serve as the representative on the Substantive Change Committee each academic year.
- C. Each school representative is responsible for monitoring changes being discussed within their school and will provide the Substantive Change Committee with written status reports each meeting.
- D. The Committee will meet quarterly (March, June, September, December) to review the Commission's Substantive Change policy, to discuss the possible changes planned for each school and the University as a whole that might be substantive in nature or require SACSCOC notification, and to examine the

institution's current offerings and operations to make certain that the University is in compliance with the Commission's Substantive Change policy.

- E. Proposed changes are reviewed by the committee to determine if they are substantive or if they warrant notification to SACSCOC for other reasons (such as for federal compliance). If any of the changes are substantive, then the committee also determines the specific SACSCOC procedure required for reporting the change to the Commission as outlined in the SACSCOC's *Policy Statement on Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges*: 1-Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation; 2-Notification Prior to Implementation; or 3-Procedure for Closing a Program, Site, Branch Campus or Institution.
- F. The co-chairs of the Substantive Change Committee are responsible for finalizing all correspondence to SACSCOC. If a prospectus or additional documentation is required, the co-chairs, with assistance from the Substantive Change Committee, are responsible for preparing the documentation and for organizing any on-site substantive change committee visits. Additional committees can also be organized to assist in these tasks.
- G. The Provost is responsible for officially notifying SACSCOC of any Substantive Changes and maintaining the official University files of all correspondences to and from SACSCOC.

REVIEW:

The co-chairs of the committee will provide the Academic Cabinet with an annual report summarizing the effectiveness of the Substantive Change Committee. The co-chairs will also be responsible for monitoring changes in SACSCOC policy and federal compliance requirements to determine if any changes to this policy are required. Any changes to this policy must be approved by the Academic Cabinet and must conform to SACSCOC policy and federal compliance requirements.