

Policy on SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures

Introduction

The federal government requires Bethune-Cookman University's regional accrediting agency, the **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges** (SACSCOC), to monitor compliance with the substantive change policy and to approve any major changes. Under the U.S. Department of Education regulations (**34 CFR 602.22**), substantive change is defined as "a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution."

A. Policy

As a member institution, Bethune-Cookman University is responsible for notifying SACSCOC of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required seek approval prior to the initiation of changes as a condition of its continued accreditation by the SACSCOC. Failure to follow this substantive change policy and its procedures may place the accreditation of the University in jeopardy. The SACSCOC may imposition of a sanction on the University; the University may lose its Title IV funding; or the U.S. Department of Education may require the University to reimburse money received for Unreported Substantive Changes.

Substantive changes occur at different levels and the University may address them in several ways based on SACSCOC reporting requirements. Examples of substantive changes may include, but are not limited to, establishing a new site at which students can earn 50% or more of the credits toward a B-CU degree, or the first offering of joint program with another institution through which B-CU credit may be earned. If a school, department or unit is considering one or more of the following changes, then the University must notify SACSCOC to obtain approval before implementing the change.

Program/Course Level Changes:

1. Adding courses or programs of study at a different degree or credential level than currently approved
2. Adding courses or programs that represent a significant departure from current practice, either in content or method of delivery (such as distance learning)
3. Initiating certificate programs at new off-campus sites or which differ significantly from existing programs
4. Initiating a collaborative academic arrangement, such as a joint or dual degree program with another institution
5. Increasing the length of a program significantly
6. Initiating degree completion programs
7. Closing a program approved at an off-campus site, branch campus, or institution

College/School/Department Level Changes:

1. Initiating an off-campus site (including Early College High School programs offered at a high school)
2. Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites
3. Initiating distance learning
4. Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium
5. Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs

Institutional Level Changes:

1. Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution
2. Initiating a branch campus
3. Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution
4. Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution
5. Relocating a main or branch campus
6. Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographical area)
7. Changing from clock hours to credit hours
8. Acquiring any program or site from another institution
9. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing

B. Responsibilities for Substantive Change

Institutional Responsibility

Bethune-Cookman University is responsible for compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy as a condition of its continued accreditation.

Administrative Responsibility

The University President, Provost, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, College/School Deans, Academic Department Chairs, and Program Coordinators have the fundamental responsibility to be aware of the substantive change policy; inform the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison at the earliest point regarding possible proposals that may be considered a substantive change; and provide the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison with any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy when requested. The University President, or his/her designee, is responsible for notifying the SACSCOC of any substantive changes and must review and sign all substantive change notification letters.

Every SACSCOC member institution has an Accreditation Liaison, who reports directly to the University President and ensures compliance with accreditation requirements.

The current SACSCOC Liaison for Bethune-Cookman University is:

Dr. Narendra H. Patel

Senior Advisor to the President for Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance

386-481-2072

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The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is responsible for the following:

1. Providing the Provost, College/School Deans, Department Chairs and other University administrators with information about the SACSCOC substantive change policy, including annually maintaining the substantive change policy on the B-CU website.
2. Ensuring that all such proposed changes comply with SACSCOC regulations regarding substantive change; reviewing proposed changes in a timely fashion; assisting departments and other units in identifying the best way in which to meet the regulations; and for ensuring that the College/School Deans, Department Chairs and other University administrators meet their responsibilities with regard to substantive changes.
3. Notifying the Provost, College/School Deans, Department Chairs, and other University administrators about any changes in the SACSCOC policy on substantive change; ensuring of any actions that may qualify as substantive change and thus require compliance with this policy through University's Governance Committee attendance and periodic visits with college/school deans and other administrators SACSCOC.

Please contact the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison with questions or requests for more information about any planned actions that will qualify as substantive changes and for the procedures to follow to obtain the necessary approvals prior to implementation of the proposed

action. The SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and the procedures for reporting the types of substantive changes can found at:

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

C. Procedures for Processing Substantive Change

A college/school, department or unit that is considering any possible substantive change or program modifications, including significant on-line program delivery or new degree programs, must discuss the required notification with the Provost and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison. Depending on the specific change, notification to SACSCOC must be made between 3 and 6 months before the change is made. Most substantive changes require the preparation of a comprehensive prospectus and the majority of them require approval from SACSCOC before implementation.

The SACSCOC procedures for processing a substantive change vary in depth and length of time required depending on the specific nature of the substantive change initiated by the University. The College/school, department or unit must first determine the precise nature of the substantive change. Contact the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance early in the process for an unofficial determination of what category of change under which the proposal falls. Although only SACSCOC can make an official determination of the category of a change, the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will facilitate the process by assessing the change internally and coordinating all communication with SACSCOC.

1. The College/School Deans, Department Chairs, and other University administrators will inform the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison and the Office of the Provost when discussing any changes that may constitute substantive in nature as described in this document.
2. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison and the Provost will determine if the proposed change is one that falls under the definition of Substantive Change.
3. With the assistance of the Office of the Provost, the college/school, department or unit proposing the change will complete the prospectus required by SACSCOC.
4. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison and the Provost will review the prospectus by before transmission to SACSCOC.
5. The University President (or his/her designee) will send the prospectus and other required materials to SACSCOC facilitated by the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison.

****SACSCOC notification and/or approval cannot occur prior to securing all internal University approvals****

D. Notification to SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison of Proposed Changes

If a change is substantive, the University must notify SACSCOC as much as 12 months in advance of implementing the change. The University must provide written notification of the change to the President of the Commission. Upon becoming aware of a proposed change that may be substantive, the University President, Provost, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, College/School Deans, or Department Chairs proposing the change should notify the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison utilizing the SACSCOC Checklist (*See Appendix*)

Appendix

Notification and/or Approval Process for Substantive Change

Step 1: Submit Notification of Changes to SACSCOC – six (6) months prior to implementation (at least). The department/unit initiating the change must draft a written “Notification Letter” detailing the change. The University President signs the letter. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will facilitate and support this process.

Elements of a Notification Letter include:

- Approximately 1-2 pages depending on the nature of the change and in language understandable to an outside reader
- General statement of proposal (program, where, when)
- Degree (including how long in existence on the main campus)
- Location of site
- With Whom: Institution/University/Corporation
- When – When courses are scheduled to begin, length of degree
- Who - Targeted group, needs
- How it fits into University, school, department’s mission, vision, goals, and especially University academic themes
- Teaching Methodology: Face-to-face, Internet, video
- Percentage of curriculum - Classroom, internships, trips, guest speakers, etc., instructional language
- Student Enrollment: Numbers, cohorts or on-going
- Differences in admission and/or graduation requirements
- Faculty Qualifications – Roster for each individual teaching at site; must meet SACS standards
- Financial Resources
- Physical Resources
- Learning resources - Libraries, computers, computer networks
- Support Services – E.g., Admission, registration, advising, orientation
- Program Quality - Ways to monitor and ensure quality of courses, instruction and program as a whole: evaluation methods, instruments, who is responsible for implementation, how results will be used to make improvements

Step 2: Submit Substantive Change Prospectus – 3 months prior to implementation

- If the proposed change includes offering 50% or more of students’ credits toward a degree, it is advisable to submit the prospectus with the notification letter
- SACSCOC requires use of their *Substantive Change Prospectus Template*
- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance provides support and background information for this process

Step 3: SACSCOC Response – A number of responses from SACSCOC are possible

- Accept notification letter and require no additional information
- Accept notification letter and require a Substantive Change Prospectus (template above)
- Accept Substantive Change Prospectus and require no additional information
- Accept Substantive Change Prospectus and require Substantive Change Visit

Late Notification of SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison

If an existing program may constitute a substantive change without notification of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, the appropriate College/School Dean, Department Chair, or Program Coordinator has responsibility to notify the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison immediately. It is then the responsibility of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to notify SACSCOC as provided in the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy. When reviewing *all* program proposals, the Provost, School Deans, Department Chairs, and other University administrators should consider the substantive change policy.

CHECKLIST FOR PROPOSALS INVOLVING A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

This change...		Yes	No
1.	Involves the proposal of coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved		
2.	Expands current degree level (significant departure from current programs/no closely related counterpart exists among previously approved programs in the curriculum)		
3.	Requires new faculty		
4.	Involves courses of which at least 25% are new		
5.	Requires new library or other learning resources		
6.	Initiates a new branch campus		
7.	Involves coursework at foreign sites		
8.	Initiates off-campus sites where		
9.	Students can obtain 50% or more credits toward program		
10.	Students can obtain 25-49% or more credits toward program		
11.	Initiates or expands distance learning 50% or more course credits obtained through distance learning 25-49% of course credits obtained through distance learning		
12.	Involves a contractual agreement or consortium		
13.	Changes the number of credit hours required for successful program completion		
14.	Involves a change in governance, ownership/control or legal status		
15.	Involves a merger with another program		
16.	Significantly alters the length of a program		
17.	Involves closing a program		

Proposed Program: _____

School(s): _____

Point-of-Contact: _____

Date: _____