

## Substantive Change Policy

### Scope

This policy applies to all departments, Colleges, programs, and distance learning programs of Virginia State University.

### Purpose

Virginia State University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). According to the “Substantive Change For SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement” the university is required to “notify the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes.” As a member institution, Virginia State University is “required to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion. “

### Definition

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:

- A. Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution.
- B. Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution.
- C. 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.
- D. 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.
- E. A change from clock hours to credit hours.
- F. A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program.
- G. The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program.
- H. The establishment of a branch campus.
- I. Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution.
- J. Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution.
- K. Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution.

- L. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution.
- M. 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.

**Responsibilities:**

**The President of the university is responsible for:**

- Submitting substantive change notification letters and associated documentation to the President of the SACSCOC and providing a copy of the letters and documentation to the Accreditation Liaison.

**The President and Vice Presidents are responsible for:**

- A. Informing relevant personnel under their supervision about the existence of the SACSCOC Policy on Substantive Change;
- B. Consulting with the College's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison regarding questions about substantive changes within their units
- C. Providing sufficient time to notify the SACSCOC prior to the implementation of any changes
- D. Assisting with the writing of appropriate documentation and notification of substantive changes as needed by the SACSCOC

**Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs and Directors are responsible for:**

- A. Recognizing pending substantive changes;
- B. Informing the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change for the university;
- C. Providing the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison with any data, information, or proposal necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy when requested;
- D. Ensuring that all relevant notification and approval processes for approval of undergraduate and graduate curricular proposals are followed;
- E. Maintaining records of all approvals and related correspondence regarding institutional changes;
- F. Reviewing annual reports and internal processes relevant to their units to ensure that reports that would be considered to be substantive changes do not go unreported.

**The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is appointed by the President and is responsible for:**

- A. Remaining up-to-date with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement;
- B. Serving as the contact person and communication liaison between SACSCOC staff and the university regarding substantive change matters;
- C. Meeting with the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs, and Directors yearly to review the policy and planned initiatives;

- D. Working with Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs, and Directors to determine whether a proposed change is substantive;
- E. Working with the Provost to develop a plan of action and timeline for any substantive change actions requiring approval from the SACSCOC;
- F. Preparing a substantive change prospectus in collaboration with the appropriate administrators and faculty;
- G. Maintaining records of substantive changes, initiatives, action plans and their status.

**Violations of the Policy**

If Virginia State University is not compliant with the SACSCOC substantive change policy its accreditation as an institution may be in jeopardy and sanctions imposed.

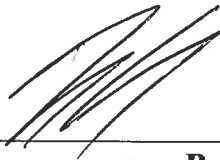
**Point of Contact:** SACSCOC Liaison/ Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director for Institutional Effectiveness

**Reference**

Substantive Change For SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement. See <http://www.SACSCOC.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

34 Code of Federal Regulations § 602 (The Secretary’s Recognition of Accrediting Agencies). See <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2013-title34-vol3/pdf/CFR-2013-title34-vol3-part602-toc-id612.pdf>

Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_



President

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

5/1/17

Virginia State University

Substantive Change Procedures Guide

Type of Change	SACS-COC Procedures						VSU Procedures		
	SACS-COC Procedure <sup>1</sup>	Prior Notification Required to SACS-COC	Time Frame for Contacting SACS-COC	SACS-COC Approval Required Prior to Implementation	Documentation Required by SACS-COC	Time Frame for Notifying Academic Affairs Prior to Implementation	EARLY AA NOTIFICATION* Responsible Administrators Notifying Academic Affairs During Initial Planning	SAFEGUARD PROCESSES* VSU Procedures Providing Double-check Flag	
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	1	Yes	12 months	Yes	Application for level change Due dates: April 15 or October 1				
Expanding at current degree level ( <i>significant departure from current programs</i> ) <sup>2</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	Deans	Policies and procedures for undergraduate and graduate programs	
Initiating a branch campus <sup>3</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	President or designee	BOV approval process	
Initiating joint degrees with another institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	Deans	Policies and procedures for undergraduate and graduate programs	

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Initiating a certificate program (typically for workforce development)...									
...using only courses that are a subset of an existing approved program	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA			
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	Yes	Prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus	12 months	Deans	Policies and procedures for undergraduate and graduate programs	
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs <sup>2</sup>	1	Yes	Prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus	12 months			
Initiating off-campus sites (including early college high school programs offered at the high school)...									
...student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program <sup>1</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	Provost	Procedures for the reporting of Instructional Site	
...student can obtain 25-49 percent of credit	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of Notification	9 months			
...student can obtain 24 or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA			

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Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites... ...adding programs that are significantly different from current programs	2	Yes	Prior to Implementation	No	Letter of Notification	12 months	Provost and college deans	Procedures for the Reporting of Instructional Site and Annual Survey of Instructional Sites and Distance Learning Programs	
...adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA			
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution <sup>4</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	President or designee	Strategic planning process	

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Initiating distance learning...								
...offering 50 percent or more of program	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus			
...Adding subsequent programs that are significant departures from the originally approved programs <sup>2</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Letter of Notification	N/A	College deans, director of distance education	Annual Survey of Instructional Sites and Distance Learning Programs
...offering 25-49 percent	2	Yes	Prior to Implementation	No	Letter of notification			
...offering 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA			
Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to Implementation	No	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement	12 months	Provost, deans, VP for Research and Economical Development, and Director of International Education	Academic affairs, Office of Research and Economic Development, and BoV approval process.
Initiating a merger or consolidation with another institution	3	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or October 1	12 months	President or designee	BOV approval process
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	President or designee	BOV approval process

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Relocating an off-campus instructional site	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification	12 months	Provost and college deans	BOV approval process
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	President or designee	BOV approval process
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	President or designee (provost)	Policies and procedures for undergraduate and graduate programs
Altering significantly the length of a program <sup>5</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	Deans	Policies and procedures for undergraduate and graduate programs
Initiating degree completion programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	12 months	Undergraduate and graduate deans	Policies and procedures for undergraduate and graduate programs



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Closing an institution or program: (see Commission policy "Closing a Program or Institution")...								
...closing a program with internal teach-out protocol	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Description of plan	12 months	President or designee	BOV approval process
...closing a program with a teach-out agreement with another institution	2	Yes	Prior to Implementation	NA	Copy of teach-out agreement	12 months		
...closing an institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Description of plan	12 months		

<sup>1</sup> 1 = notification and approval prior to implementation; 2 = only notification prior to implementation; 3 = review and approval of consolidations or mergers

<sup>2</sup> A significant departure in program is one in which the proposed new program has no closely related counterpart among the previously approved programs in the curriculum. To determine if a new program is a "significant departure," it is helpful to ask if the program requires numbers of new faculty, many new courses, new library or other learning resources, new equipment or facilities, or a new resource base.

<sup>3</sup> A branch campus is defined as 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 permanent in nature; offers courses leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

<sup>4</sup>Significant changes in mission are those that lead to a fundamental shift in nature of the institution, such as an institution that had offered only professional programs deciding to add general education offerings, or a technical college transforming itself into a comprehensive community college.

<sup>5</sup>Significant changes in program length are those with noticeable impact on the program's completion time (e.g., increasing a baccalaureate degree from 124 hours to 150 hours).

\*Academic Affairs Early Notification Procedure: Administrator's responsible for notifying Academic Affairs of proposed substantive changes should inform the VSU SACS-COC liaison at time of initial planning. Several existing VSU procedures noted herein serve as safeguards for flagging substantive change proposals not identified during the early planning process.

#### **Associated Fees and Expenses**

All fees associated with reporting substantive changes to SACS-COC are the responsibility of the initiating unit.

#### ***Fees and Expenses (effective June 2009)***

1. Fees related to the review of an application or prospectus

The following fees will be assessed to institutions for the review of an application *or* prospectus:

- \$300 For an institution seeking review of a substantive change prospectus *or* application for level change
  - \$150 Per institution for a collaborative effort between two member institutions seeking review of a single prospectus
  - \$100 Per institution for a collaborative effort among three or more member institutions seeking review of a single prospectus
2. Fees related to Substantive Change Committee visits

In addition to the fee assessed for reviewing the substantive change prospectus, the following fees will be assessed to an institution hosting a Substantive Change

#### **Committee visit:**

- The actual cost of the committee. (Includes travel, lodging, food, and related expenses), plus
- 25 percent of the total cost of the committee