

Piedmont Virginia Community College

Section I – Academic Affairs Policies

I – 115.0 Substantive Change Reporting Policy

Effective Date: September 2008

Last Revised: April 2026

Responsible Depts: Vice President of Academic Affairs and Workforce Development

1. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that the college proactively identifies, manages, and reports to its accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), all substantive changes to the institution, in the timeframe and manner as outlined in the Commission's Substantive Change Policy and Procedures and the Principals of Accreditation.

2. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the college to maintain compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) substantive change policy and procedures through appropriate and timely reporting on areas of substantive change.

2.1 Definition of Substantive Change

According to the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures, "substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution." Under federal regulations, substantive changes include:

- a) Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- b) Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- c) Changing the governance of an institution.
- d) Merging/consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- e) Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.

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- f) Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- g) Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- h) Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and another for-credit credential).
- i) Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated.
- j) Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
- k) Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- l) Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- m) Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs.
- n) Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
- o) Substantially increasing or decreasing the number of clock or credit hours awarded, or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs.
- p) Adding competency-based education programs.
- q) Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
- r) Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- s) Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- t) Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site."
- u) Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

3. Definitions

N/A

4. Applicability

The college is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change.

The college is responsible for maintaining compliance with Standard 14.2 (Substantive Change) of the Principles of Accreditation and with the Substantive Change Policy and Procedures and related policies.

The President will notify SACSCOC of any Substantive Changes.

5. Responsibilities

Compliance with the Commission's substantive change policy and procedures will require collaboration and cooperation across the college. In general, responsibilities and processes are assigned as described below.

5.1 President

The college President will sign and send to the President of the SACSCOC, as appropriate for the substantive change, the following:

- a. Timely notifications summarizing proposed changes, or
- b. A timely substantive change prospectus or application.

5.2 SACSOC Accreditation Liaison

The College's SACSOC Accreditation Liaison, as appointed by the President as required by SACSCOC, will be responsible for the following:

- a) Ensuring that compliance with substantive change requirements is incorporated into the planning and evaluation process of the institution.
- b) Preparing substantive change notification letters for the signature of the college President in accord with the substantive change policies of the SACSCOC.
- c) Preparing or ensuring preparation of any required substantive change prospectus or application for the signature of the President in accord with the substantive change policies of the SACSCOC.
- d) Educating faculty and staff regarding SACSCOC Substantive Change policies and procedures, particularly when such policies or procedures are revised by the Commission.
- e) Maintaining a database of substantive change initiatives, action plans, and status.
- f) Presenting reports to Cabinet and the Academic Deans on active substantive change issues.

- g) For any initiative that requires substantive change notification or approval, collaborating with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Workforce Development in initiative planning and implementation so that all SACSCOC requirements are satisfied in a timely manner.
- h) Serving as a contact person and communication liaison between SACSCOC staff and the college regarding substantive change.

5.3 Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Development

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Development will be responsible for the following:

- a) Learning about and maintaining awareness of current Commission on Colleges Substantive Change policies.
- b) Identifying and ensuring appropriate training for faculty and staff in their area who should maintain awareness of Substantive Change.
- c) Initiating communication with the College's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison whenever any initiative is being considered that might meet the current Definitions.

6. Procedures for Implementation

There are three procedures for addressing the different types of substantive changes, listed below. **Appendix 1** (a separate document) outlines the types of Substantive Changes that are possible within the PVCC system and the procedures for approval and compliance.

6.1 Procedure 1

Procedure One (1) for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation – in some cases, as much as 12 months prior approval is needed before implementation.

6.2 Procedure 2

Procedure Two (2) for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Only Notification Prior to Implementation – usually in the form of a letter signed by the President.

6.3 Procedure 3

Procedure Three (3) for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Approval Prior to Implementation – typically six months before implementation.

The SACSCOC substantive change compliance matrix has been adapted, below, to clarify the types of substantive changes of which the college must be aware and to delineate responsibilities in identifying, reporting, and documenting each type of change. It will be the responsibility of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to maintain this table and to coordinate its implementation throughout the college.