



UNIVERSITY POLICY AC-18.02-09/23

TO: The University of West Florida Community

FROM: Dr. Martha D. Saunders, President

SUBJECT: Substantive Change

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Office of the Provost

I. Purpose:

The University of West Florida (UWF or the University) is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), an accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education. As a member institution, UWF is responsible for following the SACSCOC substantive change policy by informing SACSCOC of changes in accord with the stated procedures to include seeking approval prior to initiating changes as specified.

If UWF fails to follow SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, the University could lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to reimburse it for money received by the University for programs related to the unreported substantive change. In addition, the University's case may be referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership accreditation entirely.

II. Definitions:

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) – An institutional accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education for the accreditation of degree-granting institutions of higher education.

State University System of Florida Board of Governors (BOG) – The governing body of the State University System of Florida and its member institutions to include the University of West Florida with statutory authority as established in the Florida Constitution, Article IX, Section 7.

Substantive Change – A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution that can impact the quality of educational programs and services. Substantive changes include but are not limited to the following:

- 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;
- 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 other for-credit credentials);
- I. 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;
- J. Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated;
- K. Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses;
- L. Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program;
- M. Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement;
- N. Entering into a written arrangement under 34 CFR §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; an agreement offering more than 50% of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation;
- O. Substantially increasing or decreasing the number of clock hours 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 programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency;
- S. Awarding dual or joint academic awards;
- T. Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site;
- U. Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location, including a branch campus;
- V. Adding a permanent location at a site where 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;
- W. Closing an institution, program, method of delivery, off-campus instructional site, or program at an off-campus instructional site; and
- X. Other substantive changes including those required by federal regulations or appropriate accrediting body.

Substantive Change Categories – Classified as instructional changes, program changes, and off-campus instructional site/additional location changes

UWF Board of Trustees (BOT) – The legal corporate body with specific authority over the entire University with authority established in the Florida Constitution with specific powers and duties delegated by the State University System of Florida Board of Governors.

III. Policy:

A. General Statement

UWF reports substantive changes to SACSCOC as outlined in SACSCOC policy and in compliance with federal law and regulations established by the United States Department of Education. Furthermore, UWF reports substantive changes to the BOG as required under state statute and in accordance with regulations established by BOG. Academic and non-academic units engaged in activities that can impact the quality of educational programs and services will communicate these activities to the Office of the Provost in order to ensure the timely reporting of substantive changes to all appropriate accrediting and regulatory bodies so as to maintain compliance with accreditation standards and state and federal regulations.

B. Timeline for Prior Notification and/or Prior Notification Approval of Substantive Change

Many substantive changes need both internal and external approval prior to implementation, including, but not limited to, program closures, closure of off-campus instructional sites, and the implementation of new off-campus instructional sites. It is important that academic departments and colleges engaging in plans to add programs or delivery modalities or close programs or delivery modalities include the Office of the Provost in these discussions at the earliest stages of planning to ensure that all internal stakeholders and external accrediting and regulatory bodies such as SACSCOC and BOG are notified in an appropriate and timely manner in accordance with all applicable standards, regulations, and statutes. In some cases, non-academic units may also become aware of plans or changes that could have an impact on the quality of educational programs and services. It is important that these non-academic units also engage the Office of the Provost in these discussions at the earliest stages of planning as well. Unless otherwise approved by the Provost, contemplated substantive changes require notification or approval no less than 12 months in advance to the Office of the Provost. However, the amount of time needed to maintain compliance with SACSCOC and BOG will vary based upon the type of substantive change, the timeline for implementation, and the level of notification and approval required and may take longer than 12 months. Ultimately, the timeline for maintaining compliance with SACSCOC and BOG will determine when some substantive changes can be implemented.

C. Administrator's Responsibility for Reporting Substantive Change

The administrative heads of both academic and non-academic units are responsible for being attentive to what SACSCOC considers a "significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution that can impact the quality of educational programs and services" and for being aware of related information resources concerning accreditation.

It is the duty of the vice-presidents, deans, chairs, directors, and similar administrators to ensure that the Provost is notified of planning for a modification that may prove substantive and that the President is informed of the determination of its status as soon as possible.

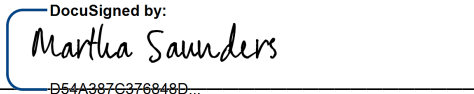
It is the responsibility of the chair of a department whose intent it is to offer a course at a new program, add a modality to an existing program, close a program, or close a modality to notify the Office of the Registrar, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and the Office of the Provost of these plans at the earliest stages of planning such changes.

The Office of the Provost has established procedures that must be followed by all units to ensure timely notification to the BOG and SACSCOC of all substantive changes.

D. Correspondence with SACSCOC and BOG

The UWF SACSCOC Liaison (or designee) will review each proposal to determine if it constitutes a substantive change that should be reported for notification or approval to BOG or SACSCOC. Implementation of a change that clearly is or may be substantive cannot occur until the University notifies the BOG and SACSCOC of its intention and receives approval as appropriate.

All correspondence and communication with the BOG and SACSCOC will be submitted by the President, the Provost, or the SACSCOC Liaison . Substantive change may also require reporting to the UWF Board of Trustees.

Approved by:  Date: 09/15/2023
Dr. Martha D. Saunders

Authority: BOG Reg. 8.009, Educational Sites
BOG Reg. 8.011, Authorization of New Academic Degree Programs and Other Curricular Offerings
BOG Reg. 8.012, Academic Program Termination and Temporary Suspension of New Enrollments

Cross Ref.: None

History: Created March 2014; amended September 2023

Last Review: September 2023