



SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

September 18, 2020

Dr. Debbie L. Sydow
President
Richard Bland College
11301 Johnson Road
South Prince George, VA 23805

Dear Dr. Sydow:

The following action regarding your institution was taken by the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) during its meeting held on September 3, 2020:

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees reaffirmed accreditation and removed the institution from Warning. Your institution's next reaffirmation will take place in 2029 unless otherwise notified.

In order to ensure continuing compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, the Committee requested that the institution provide a Follow-Up Report, due at the time of the Fifth-Year Interim Report, addressing the following referenced standards of the *Principles*:

CR 13.1 (Financial resources)

This standard expects an institution to have sound financial resources and a demonstrated, stable financial base to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The institution should provide evidence that it has sound financial resources and a demonstrated stable financial base to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

CR 13.2 (Financial documents)

This standard expects a member institution to provide the following financial statements: (a) an institutional audit (or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the A/CPA for those institutions audited as part of a system-wide or statewide audit) for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or Standard Review Report) guide; (b) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (c) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board.



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As part of the report, the institution is required to submit financial audit reports for the two most recent fiscal years and include its most recent financial aid audit. The most recent year is defined as the fiscal year ending immediately prior to the due date of this report. In addition, the institution is required to include a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year.

Please submit to your Commission staff member a **one-page** executive summary of your institution's Quality Enhancement Plan. The summary is due **October 15, 2020**, and also should include: (1) the title of your Quality Enhancement Plan, (2) your institution's name, and (3) the name, title, and email address of an individual who can be contacted regarding its development or implementation. This summary will be posted to SACSCOC's website as a resource for other institutions undergoing the reaffirmation process.

All institutions are requested to submit an 'Impact Report of the Quality Enhancement Plan on Student Learning' as part of their 'Fifth-Year Interim Report' due five years before their next reaffirmation review. Institutions will be notified 11 months in advance by the President of SACSCOC regarding its specific due date. Directions for completion of the report will be included.

We appreciate your continued support of SACSCOC's activities and work. If you have questions, please contact the SACSCOC staff member assigned to your institution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW:rg

cc: Dr. Stephanie L. Kirschmann, Vice President, SACSCOC
Mr. John E. Little, Chair of Governing Board, Richard Bland College



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
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Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097*

REPORTS SUBMITTED FOR SACSCOC REVIEW

Policy Statement

Institutions accredited by SACSCOC are requested to submit various reports for review by an evaluation committee or the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Those reports include:

- Compliance Certification
- Focused Report
- Quality Enhancement Plan
- Documentation for an Interim Off-Campus Instructional Sites Committee Review
- Documentation for a Substantive Change Committee Review
- Fifth-Year Interim Report
- Institutional Special Report
- Substantive Change Prospectus
- Response Report to the Visiting Committee
- Referral Report
- Follow-Up Report
- Monitoring Report

When submitting a report, an institution should follow the directions below, keeping in mind that the report will be reviewed by a number of readers, most of whom will be unfamiliar with the institution. The institution should also comply with the appropriate deadline for submitting the report. These deadlines may be found either published on the SACSCOC website or in formal correspondence from SACSCOC staff. Documentation for review by an Accreditation Committee, an On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, an Interim Off-Campus Instructional Sites Committee, or a Substantive Change Committee authorized to visit the institution is due to the members of the Committee and to SACSCOC staff six weeks before the start of the visit.

Procedures

Presentation of Reports

SACSCOC prefers that requested reports be submitted in electronic format. Should an institution determine that it has insufficient financial or human resources to produce and submit its reports in electronic format, that institution may request an exception from the President of SACSCOC to allow the report to be submitted in print format. Such a request must be made in writing to the SACSCOC President at least ninety (90) days prior to the deadline for submitting the report.

For electronic submissions, please comply with all steps outlined below:

Presentation of the Compliance Certification Report

Institutions should submit their Compliance Certification narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. The preferred format is a pdf, and all hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable. Some third-party vendors offer the option of an html or pdf format; either format is acceptable, provided the documents are easy for peer reviewers to access and navigate.

Institutions should also include:

- An instruction document which contains (a) clear directions on how to access the electronic documents, (b) the name and contact information of a technical support person at the institution who can assist an evaluator experiencing difficulty accessing electronic information, and (c) the name and contact information of the person at the institution who will provide print materials if an evaluator requests such.
- A **current** "Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews"
- An organizational chart
- Current Catalog(s)

One copy of the institution's submission should be sent to each member of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee, and two copies should be submitted to the institution's SACSCOC Vice President's office.

Additional Submission Requirements. All institutions should send the following information to their SACSCOC Vice President's office to enable the Commission to maintain its historical archive:

- One copy (pdf) of the institution's Compliance Certification narrative *without supporting documentation*
- Two copies (pdf) of the most recent audit and any accompanying correspondence
- One copy (pdf) of the **current** "Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews"

A copy (pdf) of the institution's most recent audit and any accompanying correspondence should also be sent to the Chair of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee and to the Committee's Finance Evaluator (designated on the roster with an asterisk).

Focused Report

In preparation for the visit of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, institutions have the option of submitting a Focused Report addressing the preliminary findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. Institutions should submit their Focused Report narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. All hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable. Some third-party vendors offer the option of an html or pdf format; either format is acceptable, provided the documents are easy for peer reviewers to access and navigate.

Institutions should also include:

- An instruction document which contains (a) clear directions on how to access the electronic documents, (b) the name and contact information of a technical support person at the institution who can assist an evaluator experiencing difficulty accessing electronic information, and (c) the name and contact information of the person at the institution who will provide print materials if an evaluator requests such.
- A **current** "Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews"
- The Compliance Certification narrative and supporting documentation (may be on a separate flash drive)

submit the appropriate Documentation for a Substantive Change Committee Review. The institution should choose the appropriate template from those available at <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange2.eCommitteeVisit.asp>.

Institutions should submit their Documentation narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. All hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable. Some third-party vendors offer the option of an html or pdf format; either format is acceptable, provided the documents are easy for peer reviewers to access and navigate. One copy of the institution's submission should be sent to each member of the Substantive Change Committee, including the institution's SACSCOC Vice President.

Fifth-Year Interim Report

Member institutions are required to submit a Fifth-Year Interim Report for review by the Fifth-Year Interim Committee. This Report is submitted a little more than four years prior to an institution's next scheduled reaffirmation. Institutions are notified by letter regarding the timing and requirements of their Fifth-Year Interim Report; general information (including a timeline by reaffirmation class) may be found on the Commission's website (<http://www.sacscoc.org/FifthYear.asp>). Institutions may choose to submit their Report in electronic or print format. Institutional representatives responsible for preparing and submitting the Fifth-Year Interim Report should follow carefully the instructions contained in the letter from SACSCOC and those found in the Template for the Fifth-Year Interim Report.

Institutions should submit their Fifth-Year Interim Report narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. All hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable. Some third-party vendors offer the option of an html or pdf format; either format is acceptable, provided the documents are easy for peer reviewers to access and navigate.

Institutions should also include an instruction document which contains (a) clear directions on how to access the electronic documents, (b) the name and contact information of a technical support person at the institution who can assist an evaluator experiencing difficulty accessing electronic information, and (c) the name and contact information of the person at the institution who will provide print materials if an evaluator requests such.

Reports submitted for SACSCOC staff and/or Board of Trustees Review

Substantive Change Prospectus/Application

Member institutions may be required to submit an application or prospectus to seek approval of a substantive change (see SACSCOC Policy "Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions"). Depending on the nature of the substantive change submission, these documents will be reviewed by SACSCOC staff members or the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Preparation of an Application or Prospectus

The institution should follow the instructions found in the SACSCOC Policy "Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions." Some substantive change applications will also require reference to other relevant SACSCOC policies.

Presentation of Reports

An institution's prospectus or application should comply with all steps outlined below:

for review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the institution should submit its Response Report addressing recommendation(s) included in the Committee's Report. A formal Transmittal Letter will be included with the Committee's Report transmitted from the SACSCOC Vice President's office to the institution's Chief Executive Officer. This Transmittal Letter provides vital information regarding the institution's Response Report, including the due date and number of copies required.

Definition. A Response Report addresses the findings of a visiting committee. It provides updated or additional documentation regarding the institution's compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*.

Audience. The Response Report, along with the Committee Report and other documents, is reviewed by SACSCOC Board of Trustees and is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the initiation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.

Report Presentation. Structure the response so that it addresses committee recommendations in the order that they appear in the report. For each recommendation, provide the number of the Core Requirement or Standard and state the recommendation exactly as it appears in the visiting committee report. Describe the committee's concerns that led to the recommendation by either summarizing the concerns or inserting verbatim the complete narrative in the report pertaining to the recommendation. Provide a response with documentation.

Due Date and Number of Copies. The Response Report is due on the day indicated in the transmittal letter from SACSCOC staff accompanying the visiting committee report. The transmittal letter will also indicate the number of copies that should be submitted.

Referral Report

Definition. This report addresses continued concerns of compliance identified by the Committee on Fifth-Year Interim Reports and referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Audience. The Referral Report is reviewed by SACSCOC Board of Trustees and is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the initiation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.

Report Presentation. Structure the response so that it addresses the concerns described in the letter from the SACSCOC President in the order that they appeared. For each standard cited, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement or Standard exactly as it appeared in the letter; (2) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the standard cited (reference notification letter from the President of SACSCOC); and (3) prepare a response to the finding.

Due Date. The Referral Report is due on the date specified in the notification letter sent by the SACSCOC President. Requests for extensions to the date must be made to the President at least two weeks in advance of the original due date. (*See SACSCOC policy "Deadlines for Submitting Reports."*)

Number of Copies. See the letter from the President of SACSCOC requesting the Report.

Follow-Up Report

Definition. Some member institutions are asked to submit a Follow-Up Report at during the same period as their Fifth-Year Interim Report will be reviewed. This report addresses ongoing compliance with one or more standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*, and institutions are usually asked to submit such a report when they encountered significant difficulties documenting compliance during their previous review.

Document History'

Edited and Revised for the Principles of Accreditation: December 2003

Updated: January 2007, January 2010, May 2010, January 2012

Edited: June 2015, December 2017

Edited for the 2018 Edition of the Principles of Accreditation: August 2018

Revised: December 2018; June 2019

Procedures Revised: December 2019

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SANCTIONS, DENIAL OF REAFFIRMATION, AND REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP

Policy Statement

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires that a member institution be in compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement (Principles)*, comply with SACSCOC policies and procedures, and provide information requested by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees in order to maintain membership and accreditation. When an institution fails to comply with these requirements within a maximum two-year monitoring period, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may impose sanctions. Monitoring reports submitted during this period are not sanctions.

If the SACSCOC Board of Trustees determines that an institution's progress is insufficient during the two-year monitoring period but not significant enough to impose a sanction, SACSCOC will advise the institution that if progress or compliance is insufficient at the time of its next formal review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the institution could be placed on sanction or removed from membership. (Institutions applying for membership with SACSCOC should refer to the *Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions* policy for procedures concerning the denial or removal of candidacy, or the denial of initial membership.) Failure to make adequate progress toward compliance at any time during the two-year period or failure to comply with the *Principles* at the conclusion of two years may result in SACSCOC action to remove the institution from membership. An institution may submit monitoring reports for a maximum of four consecutive years, inclusive of the Monitoring period, Warning period, Probation period, or Probation for Good Cause period. In all cases, the institution bears the burden of proof to provide evidence why the SACSCOC Board of Trustees should not remove it from membership.

SACSCOC's requirements, policies, processes, procedures and decisions are predicated on integrity. SACSCOC expects integrity to govern the operation of institutions. Therefore, evidence of withholding information, providing inaccurate information to the public, or failing to provide timely information to SACSCOC may be construed as a lack of a full commitment to integrity and may result in the imposition of sanctions or removal from membership.

Monitoring Period and Sanctions

An institution found to be non-compliant with the *Principles of Accreditation* must correct the deficiencies within a two-year monitoring period. Failure to demonstrate progress toward becoming compliant could subject the institution to being placed on one of two sanctions during the monitoring period: Warning or Probation. These sanctions are not necessarily sequential; however, Warning cannot follow Probation. At the Board's discretion, an institution failing to demonstrate compliance with all accrediting standards during the monitoring period may be placed on Probation for Good Cause, provided it meets the provisions of Good Cause. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may place an institution on sanction with or without reviewing a visiting committee's report and with or without having previously requested a monitoring report, depending on the seriousness and extent of noncompliance. In certain circumstances, an institution may be removed from membership without having

SACSCOC Board of Trustees must either (1) remove the institution from membership, or (2) continue accreditation for Good Cause. If accreditation is extended for Good Cause, the institution must also be placed on Probation for Good Cause. A Special Committee must be authorized to visit the institution (unless the institution has hosted a Special Committee within the past six months).

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may continue accreditation and place an institution on Probation for Good Cause when an institution has served two consecutive years on Probation. The Board may extend accreditation for Good Cause for six or twelve months at a time. At the conclusion of that period on Probation for Good Cause, the institution must appear before a Committee on Compliance and Reports of the Board of Trustees at a meeting on the record to provide evidence as to why its period for remedying deficiencies should be extended again for Good Cause. The maximum consecutive time that an institution may be on Probation for Good Cause is two years. The decision to continue accreditation and place an institution on Probation for Good Cause is at the Board's discretion and can only be provided if the institution provides a persuasive case regarding the factors outlined below.

An institution's accreditation may be extended for Good Cause if

1. the institution has demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing non-compliance, *and*
2. the institution has documented that it has the "potential" to remedy all deficiencies within the extended period as defined by the Committee on Compliance and Reports; that is, that the institution provides evidence which makes it reasonable for the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to assume it will remedy all deficiencies within the extended time defined by the Committee on Compliance and Reports, *and*
3. the institution provides assurance to SACSCOC that it is not aware of any other reasons, other than those identified by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, why the institution could not be continued on Probation for Good Cause.

As noted above, an institution may submit monitoring reports for a maximum of four consecutive years, inclusive of the Monitoring period, Warning period, Probation period, or Probation for Good Cause period. In all cases, the institution bears the burden of proof to provide evidence why the SACSCOC Board of Trustees should not remove it from membership.

Denial of Reaffirmation of Accreditation with the Imposition of a Sanction

If an institution seeking reaffirmation of accreditation is judged by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to be out of compliance with a Core Requirement, its reaffirmation will be denied. If an institution is judged to be significantly out of compliance with one or more of the Standards, its reaffirmation of accreditation may be denied. When an institution's reaffirmation is denied, the institution will also be placed on sanction. The institution's accreditation may not be reaffirmed while it is on Warning or Probation, but its accreditation will be continued. Denial of reaffirmation does not affect the decennial review schedule.

Removal from Membership

An institution may be removed from SACSCOC membership at any time, depending on the Board of Trustee's judgment of the seriousness of noncompliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* or with SACSCOC's policies and procedures. Removal from membership, however, usually occurs after persistent or significant noncompliance during a monitoring period or any time an institution has been placed on Probation for Good Cause. A serious instance of noncompliance or repeated instances of noncompliance may result in removal of membership without a monitoring period. If an institution has filed bankruptcy, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may revoke the institution's accreditation for failure to comply with the *Principles of Accreditation* during the pendency of the bankruptcy.

institution dispute the final action of the Appeals Committee, the institution must submit the dispute to arbitration before bringing any legal action (see SACSCOC policy *Arbitration of Adverse Actions*).

Delay of Review Dates

If an institution is on Probation during the time of its scheduled reaffirmation of accreditation, the President of SACSCOC may act to defer action on reaffirmation pending resolution of the institution's probationary status. Likewise, if an institution is on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause at the time of its scheduled Fifth-year Interim review, the President of SACSCOC may act to defer the submission of the institution's Fifth-Year Interim Report pending resolution of the institution's status.

Document History

Approved: Commission on Colleges, June 2003

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Revised: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, July 2005, June 2011,

December 2012, December 2013

Reformatted: April 2015

Edited and Revised: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, June 2018, September 2020