

Substantive Change Compliance Procedure

I. Introduction

The *Substantive Change Compliance Procedure* describes the process Rice University uses to ensure that it identifies, manages, and reports to its accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), all substantive changes as defined in *Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement* and Rice's *Substantive Change Policy*, No. 106. Such approvals or notification are required prior to enrolling students impacted by the change. The process for securing approval could take more than one year depending on circumstances. Early consultation with the SACSCOC liaison is important.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

Rice University maintains compliance through collaboration across the institution and with thorough and timely reporting on areas of substantive change to SACSCOC. Responsibilities are defined below and in the table that follows.

- 1) Rice's President signs and sends to the President of SACSCOC, as appropriate for the particular type of substantive change, either:
 - a) timely notifications summarizing proposed changes, or
 - b) a timely substantive change prospectus or application.
- 2) Rice's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, appointed by the President as required by SACSCOC, is 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 President in accord with the substantive change policies of SACSCOC.
 - c) Ensuring preparation of any required substantive change prospectus or application for the signature of the President in accord with the substantive change policies of SACSCOC.
 - d) Notifying faculty, staff and various committees regarding SACSCOC Substantive Change policies and procedures, particularly when those policies or procedures are revised by the Commission.
 - e) Maintaining a database of substantive change initiatives, action plans and status.
 - f) Informing senior management of active substantive change issues.
 - g) Advising and collaborating with the appropriate responsible administrator(s) in the initiation, planning, and implementation of any initiative that requires substantive change notification or approval.
 - h) Serving as a contact person and communication liaison between SACSCOC staff and the institution regarding substantive change matters.

- 3) Rice's administrators, including but not limited to the President, Provost, Vice Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, Department Chairs, and other unit directors are responsible for the following:
 - a) Learning about and maintaining awareness of current Substantive Change policies.
 - b) Ensuring appropriate training for employees, committees, faculty, and all who have explicit responsibility for Substantive Change as outlined in the following table.
 - c) Initiating communication with SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison when an initiative or curricular change is being considered that may be defined as Substantive Change.
 - d) Managing any approved initiative that requires SACSCOC substantive change notification or approval, and keeping the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison informed of status.

- 4) Faculty Senate reviews changes affecting academic programs and the academic mission of the university. The Senate has two faculty committees to oversee undergraduate and graduate curriculum and academic programs, the University Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC) and the Graduate Council. Both committees have ex officio members from the administration including the SACSCOC Liaison. The Faculty Senate and these committees are responsible for the following:
 - a) Understanding SACSCOC policies and guidelines that directly affect their work with the curriculum and academic programs.
 - b) Ensuring that Faculty Senate policies and guidelines include reference to relevant SACSCOC policies and guidelines (see Related Resources below and on the SACSCOC website).
 - c) Participating as needed to comply with SACSCOC's substantive change procedural requirements found in the SACSCOC policy.

III. Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. The usual situations are the creation, modification, or ending of programs. These situations requiring SACSCOC notification or approval are covered by guidelines of the Rice University Faculty Senate. Other situations are likely to be rare and may require a shared governance approach including participation by the Faculty Senate, senior administrators and, in some cases, the Board of Trustees. Definitions of substantive change and the relevant procedural documentation and timelines that the institution must follow when informing SACSCOC as well as when receiving approval from SACSCOC is documented in the SACSCOC *Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement*. SACSCOC updates this policy regularly, and it is necessary to ensure the most current version is being followed.

The SACSCOC Liaison monitors anticipated changes at the university to identify anything that could be considered a substantive change. The following lists the federal and SACSCOC categories of substantive changes. Required actions and timelines are specified in the *Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement* (version January 2015).

Federal & SACSCOC Categories of Substantive Change:

Any change in the established mission, especially the educational mission, or objectives of the institution

Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution

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 by SACSCOC including certificate courses/programs and online courses/programs (See faculty senate guidelines)

The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level (associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral) different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or reaffirmation (see faculty senate guidelines)

A change from clock hours to credit hours (see faculty senate guidelines)

Altering significantly the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program (e.g., changes the length of the program) (see faculty senate guidelines)

The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program.

The establishment of a branch campus

Closing a program

Initiating, relocating, or closing off-campus site, branch campus or institution

Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution (see faculty senate guidelines)

Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution

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

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

Initiating a direct assessment competency-based program (See faculty senate guidelines)

Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium

IV. Maintenance of the Procedure

Rice's SACSCOC Liaison is responsible for updating this procedure in response to changes occurring to SACSCOC's Substantive Change Policy and guidelines and procedures. The Liaison maintains a website publishing this procedure and related materials needed to implement it.

V. Related Resources

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges: www.sacscoc.org
- *Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement*:
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>
- *Substantive Change Policy, No. 106* - Rice University:
http://professor.rice.edu/Template_UG.aspx?id=2343
- Rice University Faculty Senate Guidelines:
 - Creating, Administering, and Eliminating Majors and Minors*:
http://professor.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Professor/Faculty_Senate/Dec8CreatingMajorsMinors.pdf
 - Guidelines for Undergraduate Certificates*:
https://professor.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Professor/Faculty_Senate/Certificate%20guidelines%20final%2012.10.2013-1.pdf
 - Creating and Changing Graduate-Degree Programs*:
http://professor.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Professor/Faculty_Senate/Creating%20and%20Changing%20Graduate-degrees%20Amended%20March%202012.pdf
 - Creating Graduate Dual-Degree and Joint-Degree Programs*:
http://professor.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Professor/Faculty_Senate/rrGCDual-JointGradDegreePolicyApprovedDraftAug21.pdf
 - Elimination of Graduate Programs Procedures and Best Practices*:
https://professor.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Professor/Faculty_Senate/5.5%20clean%20copy%20Termination%20of%20Graduate%20Programs.pdf
 - Guidelines for Graduate Certificates*:
https://professor.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Professor/Faculty_Senate/Graduate%20Certificate%20guidelines%2011-12-2014.pdf
 - Creation of Online Degree Programs*:
http://professor.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Professor/Faculty_Senate/Motion%20regarding%20online%20degree%20programs.pdf

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