

# Augusta University

## Policy Library

### Substantive Change Policy

**Policy Owner: Office of Institutional Effectiveness**

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Augusta University is responsible for compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Substantive Change Policy as a condition of continued regional accreditation. Substantive change is defined by the SACSCOC as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.”

Per SACSCOC policy, Augusta University is required to have a policy and procedure to “ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the SACSCOC in a timely way.” This policy outlines the types of substantive changes, appropriate actions for applying for the SACSCOC approval of changes, and the roles and responsibilities of the university community in applying this policy.

#### **AFFECTED STAKEHOLDERS**

*Indicate all entities and persons within the Enterprise that are affected by this policy:*

- Alumni       Faculty       Graduate Students       Health Professional Students  
 Staff       Undergraduate Students       Vendors/Contractors       Visitors  
 Other:

#### **DEFINITIONS**

**Accreditation** – the recognition that an institution maintains standards requisite for its graduates to gain admission to other reputable institutions of higher learning or to achieve credentials for professional practice. The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality.

**Accreditation Liaison** – A senior leader at an accredited institution whose role is to ensure ongoing compliance with accreditation requirements and SACSCOC policies through training and communication with faculty, staff, and students as well as to notify SACSCOC staff of substantive changes and program developments in accordance with SACSCOC policy. At Augusta University, the Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness fulfills this role.

**Commission on Colleges** – The regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. The SACSCOC’s mission is the enhancement of educational quality throughout the region and it strives to improve the effectiveness of institutions by ensuring that institutions meet standards established by the higher education community that address the needs of society and students. The SACSCOC is a component of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

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**Office of Compliance and Enterprise Risk Management Use Only**

**Policy No.:** 633

**Policy Sponsor:** Type the title of the Executive Leader of the department.

**Originally Issued:** Not Set

**Last Revision:** 12/19/2016

**Last Review:** 05/03/2018

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools** – One of the six regional accreditation organizations recognized by the United States Department of Education. This agency accredits over 13,000 public and private educational institutions ranging from preschool to college level in the Southern United States.

**Substantive Change** – A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.

### **PROCESS & PROCEDURES**

If a change is substantive, the SACSCOC must be notified by Augusta University in accordance with the procedure for that substantive change. Upon becoming aware or suspecting that a proposed change may be substantive, the respective senior officer (e.g., dean or vice president) should notify the Director of Accreditation. The Director of Accreditation will inform the Accreditation

Liaison (Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness) of the change and provide assistance for notifying the SACSCOC of the change.

The SACSCOC's procedures for handling substantive change can be classified at two levels: changes requiring notification only and changes requiring approval by the SACSCOC President or Board of Trustees. The Director of Accreditation will consult with the unit requesting the substantive change to develop a plan to ensure proper procedures are completed and documented. Triggers for considering whether a change is substantive include:

- Changes requiring Board of Regents approval or request for substantive change
- Changes that necessitate catalog revisions
- Changes that involve instruction at new locations or via new modalities
- Changes that necessitate a contractual agreement or involve other organizations

The full list of substantive change types, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting time lines are listed in the [SACSCOC Policy Statement on Substantive Change](#).

If it is discovered that a substantive change has been implemented without notification or approval from the SACSCOC, the appropriate officer has the responsibility to notify the Director of Accreditation immediately, who will then inform the Accreditation Liaison. It is then the responsibility of the Accreditation Liaison to notify the SACSCOC as provided in the SACSCOC policy.

An accredited institution's failure to notify the SACSCOC of changes could result in (1) the loss of Title IV funding or reimbursement to the US Department of Education for money received for programs related to the unreported substantive change and (2) the imposition of a sanction or loss of accreditation. To mitigate these consequences, all instances of noncompliance with university's substantive change policy will be reported to the Augusta University President, Provost, and other pertinent officer for consideration. Failure to report a substantive change could result in the cancellation or delay of the change being proposed and, and in severe or

repeated instances, cancellation of the program itself.

**REFERENCES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

[SACSCOC Policy Statement on Substantive Change](#)

**RELATED POLICIES**

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**APPROVED BY:**

President, Augusta University and CEO, AU Health System    Date: 05/03/2018