

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION</b> ACAF Academic Affairs		<b>POLICY NUMBER</b> ACAF 2.11
<b>POLICY TITLE</b> Substantive Change – SACSCOC Policy Compliance		
<b>SCOPE OF POLICY</b> USC System	<b>DATE OF REVISION</b> August 17, 2022	
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b> Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE</b> Office of the Provost	

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to describe the process and procedures to be utilized to ensure that the University of South Carolina complies with this SACSCOC policy.

**DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**SACSCOC:** Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

**Substantive Change:** defined by SACSCOC as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive change includes high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of education programs and services” ([SACSCOS Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)).

**POLICY STATEMENT**

SACSCOC accredits an entire institution. Accreditation extends to all programs and services of an institution wherever located and however delivered. SACSCOC does not accredit individual programs, locations, or portions of an institution. However, some new programs, locations, and other institutional changes are subject to notification and/or approval as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

The university recognizes the importance of compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges' *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* (SACSCOC, 2011), which requires accredited campuses to report all substantive changes accurately and in a timely manner to SACSCOC.

**A. Substantive Change: Oversight**

1. No substantive change that requires approval can be implemented until a letter of approval is received from SACSCOC. A Substantive change that requires notification only may be implemented before receiving a response from SACSCOC.
2. Marketing, advertising, and recruitment may start after a prospectus is submitted and before receiving approval provided the following disclaimer statement of pending approval is clearly included in all marking information: “Pending approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.”
3. The university has an obligation to notify SACSCOC when substantive changes are proposed, and some changes require that body’s prior approval. To that end, the proposers

of changes approved for further development must keep the Provost, Dean, Office of Academic Programs, and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison apprised regarding the continuing viability and progress toward implementation of the potential change, so that timely notification of SACSCOC can be given.

#### B. Sanctions

1. If the university fails to follow SACSCOC procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its total accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. For that reason, the sanction for failure to follow this university policy must be sufficient to avoid such failure. If an academic program, unit or officer initiates a substantive change without following the procedures outlined in this policy, the President or Provost may direct the immediate cancellation or cessation of that change, with due regard for the educational welfare of students, when it is discovered. In areas outside of Academic Affairs, the President or relevant Vice President/Executive Director may apply the same sanction.

#### C. Exclusions

1. No exclusions from this University policy will be permitted.

#### D. Interpretation

1. Questions about the interpretation of this policy should be directed to the appropriate institution's SACSCOC accreditation liaison, who in doubtful or unprecedented cases will consult with the appropriate university official and the institution's assigned SACSCOC vice president before rendering an opinion.

### **PROCEDURES**

Detailed procedures regarding all academic program planning and revision processes are found in the policy [ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs](#). Academic units follow the procedures within to obtain faculty governance approval for substantive changes.

- A. If it is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, the university SACSCOC accreditation liaison consults with SACSCOC staff.
- B. The university registrar will record substantive program changes upon receiving the official South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and SACSCOC approval letters.

#### C. Reporting

The specific procedures, including the time frame for contacting SACSCOC and the type of documentation required for each, are included in SACSCOC's policy statement (see [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)).

A separate set of procedures applies for merger/consolidation, acquisition, change or ownership, and change of governance, control, form or legal status (see [SACSCOC Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form or Legal Status](#)).

D. Responsibility for Policy

Responsibility for enforcement of this policy resides with the President and Chancellors. Each dean is responsible for ensuring unit adherence to the procedures set forth in the policies governing academic programs. The chief academic officers are responsible for ensuring that they do so.

E. For USC Columbia and Palmetto College, the Office of Academic Programs monitors the various stages of academic program processes, and meets regularly with the Academic Program Liaison Committee to discuss issues regarding academic programs, to identify upcoming challenges, and to find solutions to potential substantive change problems.

**RELATED POLICIES AND SOURCES**

[ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs](#)

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)

[SACSCOC Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form or Legal Status](#)

**HISTORY OF REVISIONS**

<b>DATE OF REVISION</b>	<b>REASON FOR REVISION</b>
March 20, 2015	New Policy Approval
August 17, 2022	Policy updated to standard template and to reflect updates SACSCOC policy and procedures.