

NORTHWEST VISTA COLLEGE
PROCEDURE

Procedure Number:	A 002
Procedure Title:	Substantive Change

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to establish Northwest Vista College (NVC) procedures for recognizing and approving substantive changes to ensure compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.
- 1.2 No NVC unit may establish practices or changes through methods inconsistent with the current SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.
- 1.3 This procedure applies to all programs, departments, and units at NVC.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC): the Northwest Vista College regional accreditor.
- 2.2 SACSCOC Liaison: NVC President designee responsible for coordinating compliance with SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*, substantive changes, applicable policies and guidance, and SACSCOC reports. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is the SACSCOC point of contact
- 2.3 Substantive change: “A substantive change is 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 educational programs and services..” (see “SACSCOC Policy Statement – Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions”).
- 2.4 Substantive change restriction: Restriction applies if an institution has been placed on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause over the prior three academic years, or if an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs.
 - 2.4.1 An institution placed or continued on Probation or Probation for Good Cause must submit to SACSCOC an institutional contingency teach-out plan within 30 days of the notification of the Board of Trustees action.
- 2.5 Substantive change non-compliance: If an institution is non-compliant with *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* or Standard 14.2 (Substantive change), its accreditation may be in jeopardy. An unreported substantive change may require a review of the institution’s substantive change policy and procedures document by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Non-compliance subjects the institution to monitoring, sanction, or removal from membership. Failure to secure approval, if required, of a substantive change involving programs or locations that qualify for title IV federal funding may place the institution in jeopardy with the U.S. Department of Education, including

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reimbursement of funds received related to an unreported substantive change. For additional information, refer to Appendix A, Standards and Policy Addressing Unreported Substantive Change, in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

- 2.5.1 Possible non-compliance: If the review of a substantive change notification, prospectus, or application suggests material non-compliance with any of the Principles of Accreditation or SACSCOC policies, SACSCOC reserves the right to further review. An institution may be required to submit materials related to the possible non-compliance for review by staff and for possible review and action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Further review may be warranted even if the related prospectus or application is withdrawn or if the substantive change is denied approval.

3. SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

3.1 Substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- Changing the governance of an institution.
- Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.
- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credential).
- 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.
- 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.
- Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program
- Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 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 one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.
- Substantially increase 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.
- Adding competency-based education programs.
- Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.

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- Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which 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.
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.
- Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

3.2 Other substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change.
- An institution is responsible for maintaining compliance at all times with Standard 14.2 (Substantive change) of the *Principles of Accreditation* and with the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* and related policies, viz.,
 - Advertising and Student Recruitment ;
 - Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards ;
 - Credit Hours ;
 - Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs ;
 - Distance and Correspondence Education ;
 - Dual Enrollment ;
 - Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status ;
 - Request for a Period of Noncompliance ; and
 - Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level .

3.2 Specific requirements by type of substantive change are specified in SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

4. SUBMISSION DEADLINES

- 4.1 For a substantive change requiring approval by the full Board of Trustees (which meets biannually), to be implemented after the date of the Board meeting, the submission deadlines are March 15 for review at the Board's biannual meeting in June of the same calendar year, and September 1 for review at the Board's biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year.
- 4.2 For a substantive change requiring approval by the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees (which meets year-round), the submission deadlines are January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year, and July 1 for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.
- 4.3 For a substantive change requiring notification only, it can be submitted any time before implementation. Once the institution has submitted notification, it may

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implement before receiving a response from SACSCOC. If there are deficiencies or additional information needed about the notification, the institutional liaison will be contacted at the time of review for resolution and before action is taken. This applies to notifications only, not to approvals: changes requiring approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

- 4.4 For a substantive change to close a program, site, program at a site, or method of delivery, a teach-out plan should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close (i.e., stop admitting students).

5. SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

- 5.1 Institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION are subject to different or additional requirements for certain types of substantive change. An institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION if it

- has been placed on
 - Warning,
 - Probation, or
 - Probation for Good Cause

over the prior three academic years,

—OR—

- is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs as defined in defined in 34 C.F.R. § 668.13.*
 - *An institution under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs is, in addition to being on Substantive Change Restriction, required to secure SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval of an Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan as described in this policy

- 5.2 Institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION are subject to the following requirements:

Off-campus instructional site changes —

- Approval through the extensive review pathway of all new off-campus instructional sites offering 50% or more of a program; i.e., the limited review pathway is not available (versus two sites approved through the extensive pathway then approval through the limited review pathway thereafter for institutions not on restriction).

Program changes —

- Approval of new programs with 25% or more new content (versus 50% for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval of a change in program length if program credit hours – or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies – increase or decrease by 25% or more (versus the same percentage plus the additional criterion of changing expected time to completion by one term or more for institutions not on restriction),

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- Approval to add a method of delivery to an existing program (versus notification for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval to initiate a program designed for prior learning (versus notification for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval of an agreement with an entity (or entities) not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs to deliver less than 25% of a program's content (versus notification for institutions not on restriction).

6. RESPONSIBILITY AND APPROVAL AUTHORITY FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE SUBMISSION

- 6.1 Substantive changes are typically the result of activities in Academic Success, for which the Vice President for Academic Success has oversight. All curriculum proposals and organizational changes, including substantive changes, must be reviewed by the Vice President for Academic Success, or designee, for review and determination regarding whether a substantive change is required (in coordination with the SACSCOC Liaison). A completed Substantive Change Assessment Form will be submitted to the SACSCOC Liaison before the initiation of substantive change processes.
- 6.2 Substantive change proposals outside the purview of the Vice President for Academic Success will be coordinated through the appropriate Vice President. The appropriate Vice President will review proposed changes and determine whether a substantive change is required (in coordination with the SACSCOC Liaison). A completed Substantive Change Assessment Form will be submitted to the SACSCOC Liaison before the initiation of substantive change processes.
- 6.3 The SACSCOC Liaison will review the Substantive Change Assessment Form and coordinate the substantive change process between the division proposing the change, NVC administration, and SACSCOC. The SACSCOC Liaison will provide requested guidance in the development of the substantive change documentation and ensuring it conforms to SACSCOC standards.
- 6.4 The President, SACSCOC Liaison, and requesting unit are responsible for approving the substantive change documentation packet before submission to SACSCOC. Once approved, the President or the SACSCOC Liaison may submit it to SACSCOC.
- 6.5 While some substantive changes require full approval by SACSCOC, some only require that the Commission be notified. When only a notification is required, the college President or SACSCOC liaison is considered the approving authority with the responsibility for the area undergoing change.
- 6.6 Once a substantive change that requires notification only has been approved by the President or designee, the SACSCOC Liaison will notify SACSCOC about the change in writing.
- 6.7 The change can only be implemented after SACSCOC has responded to notification or approved the substantive change.

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Contact for Interpretation: *Vice President for College Services*

Relevant Board Policy:	E.2.1 (Policy) Accreditation and Substantive Change
Relevant SACSCOC Documents:	SACSCOC Policy Statement: Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions <i>Principles of Accreditation</i> Section 14.2 Transparency and Institutional Representation (<i>Substantive Change</i>)
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