



MEMORANDUM

TO: SACSCOC Membership

FROM: Dr. Belle S. Wheelan, President

DATE: June 21, 2023

SUBJECT: Information from the June SACSCOC Board Meeting

Greetings, Colleagues. I do hope you had a successful spring semester and are now able to get some much-deserved rest. This memo is being sent to share information from the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting that was held earlier this month, as well as some tidbits of information for your use and information. As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

PRINCIPLES REVIEW COMMITTEE

As you know, an *ad hoc* Committee to review the *Principles of Accreditation (Principles)* was established last year. In addition to considering several tweaks to the current *Principles* that were brought to our attention, there are two new areas this Committee was asked to consider: (1) A new standard on shared governance or an expansion of our standard on Academic Governance, and (2) how to encourage institutions to consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of its endeavors.

The Committee circulated its suggested changes to you last fall. The Committee Chair presented the recommended changes to the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. The Executive Council and the Board accepted these recommendations without any changes. The recommendations will be circulated to the membership this fall for your review and comment in preparation for your approval in December 2023. If approved, they will become effective January 1, 2024. Please note that corresponding notes will be made in an updated *Resource Manual*.

BUDGET

SACSCOC will likely end the year with a budget shortfall due in great part to increased medical costs and an increase in food/beverage/transportation at the 2022 Annual Meeting. Our cashflow is adequate to cover the expenses but next year's audit will reflect the shortage.

The Board approved the FY24 budget which includes a 6% dues increase (we haven't increased dues in six years), a 3% cost of living increase for staff, and two new positions, one in Substantive Change and one in the Business Office.

SMALL COLLEGE INITIATIVE

The 2023 Small College Initiative which focused on the use of data in making institutional decisions was a grand success according to the evaluations received. Plans are already underway for the 2024 meeting.

POLICIES

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees approved several policies at the June meeting.

1. **Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions**
 - a. Clarifies that SACSCOC accredits single, degree-granting institutions, codifying our long- held practice.
 - b. Notes that while a few member institutions have ‘system’ in their name, each is still only one, degree-granting institutions with several branches.
2. **Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC**
 - a. Aligns with federal regulations regarding institutional obligations for public disclosure of actions resulting in placement or continuation of Probation, Probation for Good Cause, l or removal from membership.
 - b. Requires institutions to notify constituents as well as post information on the institutional website within seven (7) days of receiving action letter.
 - c. Requires that copies of the institution’s disclosure documents must be included in the SACSCOC Institutional Portal.
 - d. Indicates that institutions may remove the disclosure statement within 30 days of the public notice that the institution has been removed from the sanction.
3. **Litigation: Institutional Obligations**
 - a. Codifies that member institutions that ‘withdraw’ from membership or candidacy while in litigation remain liable for their institutional obligations to SACSCOC per the policy.
 - b. Codifies a long-standing practice at SACSCOC.
4. **Fees, Dues, and Expenses**
 - a. Clarifies and codifies that membership dues are non-refundable.
 - b. Clarifies a long-standing practice at SACSCOC.

Several other statements were provided for information:

1. **Core Requirement 3.1.b: Documenting an Alternative Approach**
 - a. Requires the document to clearly be labeled as a “Request for approval of an alternative approach for Core Requirement 3.1.b.”
 - b. Requires the institution to address each of the requirements identified in the policy.

- c. Notes changes in the procedures section of the policy. This item was for information only.
2. **Good Practice Statement: Student Authentication in Online Learning**
 - a. A review of survey responses following the COVID pandemic from 63% of member institutions.
 - b. Provides a visual summary of the preliminary content analysis of survey responses on the student authentication question in the survey.
 - c. Provides sample direct quotes to illustrate multiple and varied approaches that SACSCOC member institutions developed and implemented to ensure that students are properly authenticated in distance education contexts.
 3. **Position Statement: Committing to the Common Good**
 - a. Joins other institutions of higher education and commitment by institutions to teach and conduct research regarding civic literacy and civic engagement.
 - b. Suggested a variety of approaches relating to civic literacy and civic engagement used by institutions.
 - c. Proffers SACSCOC's commitment to civic literacy and civic engagement.

SACSCOC STAFF RETIREMENTS

This was the last meeting for Drs. Larry Earvin and Linda Thomas-Glover who are retiring at the end of June. Drs. Patricia Parrish and Kelli Randall are already on board to succeed them. Please join me in wishing our retirees much success in their future endeavors and in welcoming their successors to the staff.

Dr. Earvin will return as a contract worker in the next fiscal year to write an addition to the SACSCOC history. It has not been updated since our 100th anniversary and we are now in our 128th year of operation. In addition, Dr. Sandra Jordan will move into the position of Chief of Staff, effective July 1, 2023.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

In order not to slow up the process anymore, please remember that ALL substantive changes are to be submitted to Dr. Kevin Sighter, Director of Substantive Change and NOT to the President's Office. Here are some additional tidbits from the Substantive Change Office:

1. **Institutional Portal:** As of March 2023, substantive changes are submitted through the Institutional Portal by (1) completing a screening form for the type of substantive change you are submitting and then (2) uploading your submission. Please submit all new substantive changes through the portal; do not send a duplicate submission by mail or email. You can find guidance in the User's Guide accessible in the portal. Reminder: substantive changes emailed to the president or to staff are not acceptable submissions.

2. **Prison Education Program (PEP):** The substantive change policy was revised in March 2023 to accommodate the new federal program providing Pell grant access to incarcerated students. Now, institutions may submit a prospectus for PEP Approval via the Institutional Portal. Be prepared to answer substantive change policy-defined PEP questions and criteria in the portal's screening form as the first step in submitting a prospectus.
3. **Some off-campus instructional site (OCIS) substantive changes can be directly made in the Institutional Portal.** You now have the option to make changes directly in the Institutional Portal. If you choose this option, you do not need to prepare and upload a substantive change notification as described in the "Substantive Change Policy and Procedures." In the Institutional Portal, go to the OCIS tab and click the pencil icon next to the OCIS to be updated. The policy will be updated to reflect this alternate method for making more timely updates to your OCISs, but the option is available for your current use. **Note:** This option is available for OCIS name or address changes only; all other OCIS notifications and approvals are still submitted as described in the current substantive change policy.
4. **OCIS's with incarcerated students:** If an off-campus instructional site (OCIS) serves incarcerated students, you are asked to update the OCIS record via the Institutional Portal with this information: look for the "Site has incarcerated students" option when updating an OCIS via the Portal. This data will be useful when planning and staffing OCIS committee visits (at reaffirmation, fifth-year interim reviews, etc.). **Note:** This designation is separate from the PEP approval process and PEP-approved OCISs; adding this designation to an OCIS does not denote the site's approval, if necessary, under the PEP requirements.

Thank you for all of the support you have shown me personally during this past year as I complete year 18 as SACSCOC President. It continues to be my pleasure to serve you. As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. I wish you a happy, restful, and safe summer.