

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is closely monitoring the fast changing and very fluid circumstances surrounding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the various institutional responses to it. We take the health and safety of our staff, as well as the employees and students of our member institutions, very seriously. I know that all of you are having to make decisions about how to handle classes and labs and have chosen to close, temporarily or permanently, or perhaps to move classes to an on-line format. Additionally, several of you have On-Site Committee visits associated with the reaffirmation of your accreditation or Special Committee visits scheduled as well. I am writing with some guidance on these issues.

We are continuing to monitor guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the White House Task Force, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), state mandates, etc. Given the fluidity of the situation, making decisions is challenging. However, SACSCOC has made the following decisions:

MEETINGS

On-site Evaluation Visits:

SACSCOC is postponing all visits scheduled through March 27, 2020. A decision will be made next week as to subsequent visits. Once the decision is made to return to visits on-site, anyone who chooses not to attend in person or for whatever reason cannot participate in person, will still be able to participate via GlobalMeet, our teleconference software. Staff will be working with the institutions to see how they can handle the meetings if their institution is closed and will contact Committee members regarding details of the visit.

Small College Initiative:

SACSCOC has made the decision to reschedule the meeting from April to the fall of this year. Those of you who have already registered need do nothing as your registration will be rolled over to the fall. We are working with the hotel to find a new date and will notify you of that date as soon as we have solidified it. Once the date is chosen, if you find that you are not able to attend, you will be given directions as to how to proceed.

Pre-Applicant Workshops:

SACSCOC has cancelled the April Pre-Applicant Workshops scheduled for April 1-2, 2020. We will automatically move those who have registered to the October 6-7, 2020 workshop. Anyone who is unable to participate in October will have their registration fee refunded. Staff will be communicating with those registered.

Off-Site Meetings and New Trustee Training:

As of now, both of these meetings will occur as scheduled; however, we will continue to monitor the situation and notify those Committee members and Trustees IMMEDIATELY if anything changes.

INSTRUCTION:

Changes to Academic Calendars:

SACSCOC understands that many of you have chosen to extend your spring breaks or even delay upcoming starts of classes. We also understand that you may need to cease instruction temporarily. Please note that any changes to your already published academic calendars should be communicated to me for information.

Temporary Changes to Instructional Modality:

The USDE has issued instructions to institutions that provide flexibility in temporarily moving instruction from on-campus to on-line delivery due to the virus.

If your institution is not approved to offer 50% or more of any approved program by distance learning (i.e., online), you must request an exception to the policy and a notification of temporary emergency relocation of instruction. If you have already sent a request for a waiver, please disregard the information below; a separate response will be sent to your waiver request. If you have not done so, please submit a request for the relocation notice and exception to policy to Dr. Belle Wheelan, SACSCOC President, at bwheelan@sacscoc.org. A brief request is sufficient. (Example: To accommodate the temporary emergency relocation of instruction, we are requesting an exception to policy requiring institutional approval for distance learning. The exception is for the sole purpose of temporarily accommodating displaced students.) Include in your request the original relocation date and the estimated date instruction will return.

If your institution is already approved for distance learning, email a copy of the approval letter to Dr. Kevin Sightler, Director of Substantive Change (ksightler@sacscoc.org), so your institution's record can be updated; once you receive a confirmation response, you do not need to request an exception to the policy.

Academic Integrity of the Degree

If you find that you will not be able to complete the current semester/quarter, it is expected that you will make the necessary adjustments to the academic credit granted for work already completed, e.g. "I" grades, completing the semester's work during summer, etc. All decisions must conform with your institutional policies. Full course credit when the course was not completed would demonstrate non-compliance with Standard 9.2 (Program Length), Standard 10.7 (Credit Hour), and Standard 1.1 (Integrity) of the *Principles of Accreditation*. Please contact your SACSCOC VP for assistance with this issue.

Please continue to stay safe as we navigate our way through this public health crisis and stay tuned for more information as it becomes available. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or the SACSCOC Vice President assigned to work with your institution.

Thank you.

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