



**Commission on Colleges  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**

**DOCUMENTATION FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE COMMITTEE**

*For use with the following types of changes*

- *Initiating off-campus sites (where a student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward a degree program)*
- *Initiating a branch campus*
- *Initiating distance learning programs offered electronically (where a student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward a degree program)*

**Name of the Institution:**

**Nature of the Substantive Change:**

**Date:**

By signing below, we attest to the following:

1. That \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of institution*) has attached a complete and accurate overview of the proposed Substantive Change.
2. That \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of institution*) has provided complete and accurate disclosure of timely information regarding compliance with the selected sections of the *Principles of Accreditation* affected by this Substantive Change.

**Name and signature of the President:**

**Name and signature of the Accreditation Liaison:**

**COC Staff Member assigned to the Institution:**

## Part I. Overview

- A. *Describe the proposed change. Include the location, initial date of implementation, projected number of students, primary target audience, and instructional delivery methods. For new off-campus sites or branch campuses, list the educational programs to be offered and the degrees/certificates/diplomas to be granted. For initiation of electronic distance learning, list all programs for which 50 percent or more of the program's credits will be available via electronic delivery.*
- B. *Discuss the rationale for the change. Provide evidence of the legal authority for the change. List institutional strengths that facilitate implementing the proposed change.*

## Part II. Impact of the proposed expansion on selected requirements in the *Principles of Accreditation*

### A. Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

- 1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. **(Integrity)**  
*Describe the impact of the proposed expansion on institutional integrity.*

### B. Section 2: Core Requirements

*For each of the Core Requirements listed below, describe the impact of the program expansion on that aspect of the institution.*

- 2.4 The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional Mission)**

- 2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

*Include a description of how the institution incorporates the new site(s) or delivery system into the overall institutional effectiveness program.*

- 2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or

professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. **(Program Length)**

**2.7.2** The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. **(Program Content)**

**2.7.3** In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. **(General Education)**

**2.8** The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. **(Faculty)**

*Include a description of the processes in place to ensure that students have structured access to faculty. For graduate programs, include documentation of the scholarship and research capability of faculty. For doctoral programs, include documentation of faculty experience in directing dissertation research.*

**2.9** The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. **(Learning Resources and Services)**

*Describe library and information resources – general as well as specific to the program – and staffing and services that are in place to support the new initiative. If reliant upon other libraries, describe those collections and their relevance to the proposed program(s) and include a copy of formal agreements in the appendix. Relative to electronic resources, describe how students and faculty will access information, how training for faculty and students in the use of online resources will be provided, and what staffing and services will be available to students and faculty.*

**2.10** The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. **(Student Support Services)**

**2.11.1** The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or *Standard Review Report* issued in accordance with *Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services* issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a systemwide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or *Standard Review Report*) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board.

**(Financial Resources)**

*Include a business plan that includes the following:*

- a. a description of financial resources to support the change, including a budget for the first year (for the initiation of a branch campus, submit a three-year budget)*
- b. projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow*
- c. the amount of resources going to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services*
- d. the operational, management, and physical resources available for the change.*

*Include contingency plans if required resources do not materialize.*

*Assess the impact that the proposed expansion will have on the funding available for existing programs and services.*

*If initiating an off-campus site or a branch campus:*

- Include a list of all off-campus sites at which 50 percent or more of a program's credits are can be obtained.*
- Include a list of all off-campus sites at which 25-49 percent of a program's credits can be obtained.*
- Include a copy of the most recent audit*

*Institutions currently on sanction with the Commission for financial reasons must provide a copy of the most recent audit.*

**2.11.2** The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. **(Physical Resources)**

**C. Section 3: Comprehensive Standards**

*For each of the Comprehensive Standards listed below, describe the impact of the proposed program expansion on that aspect of the institution.*

**3.2.8** The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience, competence, and capacity to lead the institution. **(Qualified administrative/academic officers)**

**3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas **(Institutional Effectiveness)**:

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

3.3.1.2 administrative support services

3.3.1.3 educational support services

3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

*Include a description of how the institution will monitor the quality of the proposed new site(s) or delivery system.*

*For electronic instruction or compressed time frames, include a description of the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies are comparable to those required in traditional formats have been achieved.*

**3.4.1** The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. **(Academic program approval)**

*Document that faculty and administration were involved in the review and approval of the new site(s) or delivery system.*

**3.4.3** The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission. **(Admissions policies)**

**3.4.6** The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. **(Practices for awarding credit)**

**3.4.9** The institution provides appropriate academic support services. **(Academic support services)**

- 3.4.12** The institution's use of technology enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs. Students have access to and training in the use of technology. **(Technology use)**
- 3.5.2** At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. In the case of undergraduate degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns 25 percent of the credits required for the degree through instruction offered by the participating institutions. **(Institutional credits for a degree)**
- 3.5.3** The institution defines and publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Undergraduate program requirements)**
- 3.6.1** The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program rigor)**
- 3.6.2** The institution structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. **(Graduate curriculum)**
- 3.6.3** The majority of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. In the case of graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns a majority of credits through instruction offered by the participating institutions. **(Institutional credits for a degree)**
- 3.6.4** The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-graduate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program requirements)**

- 3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline in accordance with the guidelines listed below. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

*Display faculty qualifications on the Commission's "Roster of Instructional Staff." Limit entries to those faculty members assigned to the programs at the new level or to the expanded electronic courses. Include vitae of key faculty.*

- 3.7.2 The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status. **(Faculty evaluation)**

- 3.8.2 The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources. **(Instruction of library use)**

- 3.9.2 The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data. **(Student records).**

- 3.13.1 The institution complies with the policies of the Commission on Colleges. **(Policy compliance)**

- 3.14.1 A member or candidate institution represents its accredited status accurately and publishes the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission in accordance with Commission requirements and federal policy. **(Publication of accreditation status)**

#### D. Section 4: Federal Requirements

- 4.1 The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates. **(Student achievement)**
  
- 4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. **(Publication of policies)**
  
- 4.4 Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs. **(Program length)**
  
- 4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. **(Student complaints)**
  
- 4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. **(Recruitment materials)**
  
- 4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the *1998 Higher Education Amendments*. **(Title IV program responsibilities)**