

## 2.28 Substantive Change

**Last Revised:** February 2025

**Policy:** Piedmont Community College (PCC) complies with Substantive Change policies and procedures of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) as a condition of its continued accreditation.

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### **Purpose/Definitions:**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with SACSCOC substantive change requirements.

#### **Definitions**

**Substantive Change**—defined by SACSCOC policy as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” (Reference Citation 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.
- 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.
- 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 student 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." (Reference Citation 1)

In addition to the federal requirements, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. SACSCOC policies and procedures address substantive changes identified through both Federal regulations and Board approval.

If an institution fails to follow SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse it for money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change. In addition, the institution's case may be referred to SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership." (Reference Citation 1)

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**Approval Authority/Monitoring Authority:** Piedmont Community College's Board of Trustees has approval authority. The President and Accreditation Liaison have monitoring authority for this policy.

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**Procedure:**

Section 1: Leadership responsibility

- 1.1. The President, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors have a fundamental responsibility to take the following steps to ensure compliance with substantive change
  - 1.1.1. Be aware of both PCC and SACSCOC policies on substantive change,
  - 1.1.2. Involve key stakeholders which may include college faculty, staff, students, potential students, and industry partners, as appropriate.
  - 1.1.3. Inform the Executive Council and the College's Accreditation Liaison as soon as possible of actions or proposals that may be considered a substantive change for the College, and
  - 1.1.4. Provide to the Accreditation Liaison all information, data, and/or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy.

Section 2: Accreditation Liaison responsibility

- 2.1. The Accreditation Liaison is required by SACSCOC to notify the Commission "in advance of substantive changes and program developments in accord with the substantive change policies of the Commission." (Reference Citation 2) To fulfill this responsibility, the Accreditation Liaison will
  - 2.1.1. Provide information to the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors about the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy. This includes providing current information concerning substantive change on the PCC website and sending information about substantive change to the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors at least annually;
  - 2.1.2. Work with Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors to determine whether a proposed change is substantive;
  - 2.1.3. Present proposed changes to the College's Curriculum Committee for approval;
    - 2.1.3.1. Determine what action with respect to SACSCOC is needed when a change is substantive;
  - 2.1.4. Assist the President in submitting the appropriate notice or prospectus to SACSCOC;
  - 2.1.5. Coordinate any required follow-up action with SACSCOC and the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors; and

- 2.1.6. Update the Executive Council and Director, Financial Aid (for Title IV Reporting) on the status of Substantive Change submissions to SACSCOC.
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**Reference Citations:**

1. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges. SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE FOR ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON COLLEGES; Policy Statement.  
<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>
  2. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges. THE ACCREDITATION LIAISON.  
<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/accreditation-liaison.pdf>
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