University of Alabama Policy and Procedure

Notification of Substantive Change to the Commission on Colleges (COC) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

Effective Date: October 1, 2011

Purpose of the Policy:
The purpose of this policy and procedure is to assure that the University of Alabama provides timely notification of substantive change to the SACS COC consistent with Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1 of the SACS Principles of Accreditation which states:

*The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes.*

Designated Personnel Responsible for Policy Implementation

- SACS Liaison
- University Registrar
- Department Chairs
- Graduate School Associate Dean
- College of Continuing Studies Associate Dean

Part I: Notification of Substantive Change Associated with Off-Campus Sites

Section I.A Institution offers between 25% and 49% of a degree program at an off-campus site

The following procedures will be followed to ensure that the SACS COC is notified when the institution offers more than 25% but less than 50% of a degree program at an off-campus site:

I.A.1 The UA SACS Liaison will collaborate with the University Registrar to determine what courses are scheduled to be offered at all University of Alabama off-campus sites for the fall, spring and summer semesters. Off-campus course offerings for the summer and fall semesters will be identified on March 1. Off-campus offerings for the spring semester will be identified on November 1. Off-campus offerings for the fall semester will be rechecked on August 1.

I.A.2 At these three designated dates (March 1, November 1 and August 1), if more than 20% of the courses that make up any degree program have been offered within the past three years, this degree program and site location will be identified (flagged) as a Potential Off-site Substantive Change. The SACS Liaison will immediately contact the department chair of the identified degree program to determine if additional courses within the degree program will be scheduled the following semester at the designated off-campus site.

I.A.3 If the SACS Liaison determines that more than 25% but less than 50% of a degree program is scheduled to be offered at a designated off-campus site during the
subsequent semester, the SACS Liaison will initiate a Letter of Notification to be sent to the SACS COC in compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1

Section I.B  Institution offers 50% or more of a degree program at an off-campus site

The following procedures will be followed to ensure that the SACS COC is notified and approval is requested (if required) to offer more than 50% of a degree program at an off-campus site:

I.B.1 The UA SACS Liaison will collaborate with the University Registrar to determine what courses are scheduled to be offered at all University of Alabama off-campus sites for the fall, spring and summer semesters. Off-campus course offerings for the summer and fall semesters will be identified on March 1. Off-campus offerings for the spring semester will be identified on November 1. Off-campus offerings for the fall semester will be rechecked on August 1.

I.B.2 At these three designated dates (March 1, November 1 and August 1), if more than 20% of the courses that make up any degree program have been offered within the past three years, this degree program and site location will be identified (flagged) as a Potential Off-site Substantive Change. The SACS Liaison will immediately contact the department chair of the identified degree program to determine if additional courses within the degree program will be scheduled the following two semesters at the identified off-campus site.

I.B.3 If the SACS Liaison determines that more than 50% of a degree program will be offered at a designated off-campus site during one of the two subsequent semesters, the SACS Liaison will initiate and send a Letter of Notification and a Prospectus (if required) to the SACS COC six months prior to when more than 50% of the degree program is scheduled to be offered.

I.B.4 To ensure that 50% or more of the courses that make up a degree program are not offered within a three year time frame prior to receiving approval from SACS COC, the following safeguard procedures will be enacted:
I.B.4.a When the SACS Liaison determines that more than 50% of a degree program is scheduled to be offered at a designated off-campus site during one of two subsequent semesters, the University Registrar will create a new Registration Restriction on the new courses to be scheduled at the designated site.
I.B.4.b The Registration Restriction will be removed when the University Registrar receives written confirmation from the SACS Liaison that approval to offer 50% or more of the courses associated with the designated degree program at the identified off-campus site has been received from the SACS COC. Students will then be permitted to register in these courses.
Part II: Notification of Substantive Change Associated with **Electronically Delivered Courses**

**Section II.A**  
Institution offers between 25% and 49% of a degree program electronically

The following procedures will be followed to ensure that the SACS COC is notified when the institution offers more than 25% but less than 50% of a degree program electronically:

**II.A.1**  
The UA SACS Liaison will collaborate with the University Registrar to determine what courses are scheduled to be offered electronically for the fall, spring and summer semesters. Electronic course offerings for the summer and fall semesters will be identified on March 1. Electronic course offerings for the spring semester will be identified on November 1. Electronic course offerings for the fall semester will be rechecked on August 1.

**II.A.2**  
The scheduled electronically-delivered courses will be coded and sorted by degree programs. For example, a given electronically delivered graduate course may be coded as a required course or as a potential elective for one or more graduate degree programs.

**II.A.3**  
At these three designated dates (March 1, November 1 and August 1), if more than 20% of the courses that make up any degree program have been offered electronically within the past three years, this degree program will be identified (flagged) as a **Potential Electronic Substantive Change**. The SACS Liaison will immediately contact the department chair of the identified degree program to determine if additional courses within the degree program will be offered electronically the following semester.

**II.A.4**  
If the SACS Liaison determines that more than 25% but less than 50% of a degree program is scheduled to be offered electronically during the subsequent semester, the SACS Liaison will initiate a **Letter of Notification** to be sent to the SACS COC in compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1.

**Section II.B**  
Institution offers 50% or more of a degree program electronically

The procedures below will be followed to ensure that the SACS COC is notified and approval is requested (if required) to offer more than 50% of a degree program electronically:

**II.B.1**  
The UA SACS Liaison will collaborate with the University Registrar to determine what courses within what degree programs are being offered electronically. Electronic course offerings for the summer and fall semesters will be identified on March 1. Electronic course offerings for the spring semester will be identified on November 1. Electronic course offerings for the fall semester will be rechecked on August 1.

**II.B.2**  
At these three designated dates (March 1, November 1 and August 1), if more than 20% of the courses that make up any degree program have been offered electronically within the past three years, this degree program will be identified (flagged) as a **Potential Electronic Substantive Change**. The SACS Liaison will immediately contact the
department chair of the identified degree program to determine if additional courses
within the degree program will be offered electronically the following two semesters.

II.B.3

If the SACS Liaison determines that more than 50% of a degree program will be
offered electronically during a three year timeframe with the addition of electronically
delivered courses during one of the two subsequent semesters, the SACS Liaison will
initiate and send a Letter of Notification and a Prospectus (if required) to the SACS
COC six months prior to when more than 50% of the degree program is scheduled to
be electronically offered.

II.B.4

To ensure that 50% or more of the courses that make up a degree program are not
electronically offered prior to receiving approval from SACS COC, the following
safeguard procedures will be enacted:

II.B.4.a When the SACS Liaison determines that more than 50% of a degree program
is scheduled to be offered electronically during one of two subsequent semesters, the
University Registrar will create a new Registration Restriction on the new courses to
be scheduled.

II.B.4.b The Registration Restriction will be removed when the University Registrar
receives written confirmation from the SACS Liaison that approval to offer 50% or
more of the courses electronically associated with the designated degree program
have been received from the SACS COC. Students will then be permitted to register in
these courses.

Part III: Notification of Other Types of Substantive Change

It will be the responsibility of the UA SACS Liaison to review the various types of other substantive
changes that need to be reported to the SACS COC. Reviews of the following types of substantive
change will take place on a semi-annual basis (January and June) and reported with required
documentation to the COC according to established SACS Substantive Change timelines:

A. Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved
B. Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs)
C. Initiating a branch campus
D. Initiating a certificate program using existing approved courses, at a new off-campus site
   (previously approved program), or that is a significant departure from previously approved
   programs
E. Altering significantly the educational mission of the university
F. Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution
G. Initiating off-campus sites
H. Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites
I. Altering significantly the length of a program
J. Offering distance learning
K. Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium
L. Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs
M. Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution
N. Changing governance, ownership, control or legal status of an institution
O. Relocating a main or branch campus
P. Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)
Q. Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus or institution
R. Acquiring any program or site from another institution
S. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing.

Process for Amending Substantive Change Policy and Procedures

These Substantive Change policies and procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis by the designated personnel responsible for substantive change policy implementation, and the results of that review communicated to the Executive Vice President and Provost for appropriate adjustments and improvements.