



September 4, 2012

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D., President
SACSCOC
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, GA 30033

Dear Dr. Wheelan:

Thank you for your letter of July 11, 2012, requesting a monitoring report and revision of our Substantive Change Procedure.

As a result of your letter, we discussed the issue with our liaison, Dr. Rudy Jackson. We understand your concerns regarding the deficiencies in our previously submitted procedure include:

- 1) Insufficient identification of individuals at the institution who have responsibility for monitoring and reporting substantive changes to SACSCOC.
- 2) The procedure was not comprehensive or inclusive of all types of substantive changes.
- 3) The procedure was unclear regarding the methods to disseminate information through the Texas A&M University-Commerce campus.

In order to address these issues in a serious and comprehensive manner, we undertook a review and modification of the academic curriculum change procedure as well as the substantive change procedure. These two processes are now designed to work in tandem and will ensure not only a comprehensive approach, but also address the issues of strengthened communications and delineation of roles and responsibilities. Both revised procedures are attached to this letter as *Attachment 1 – Substantive Change Procedure* and *Attachment 2 – New Curriculum Change Procedure*.

Each of the deficiencies identified by SACS is addressed in the revised Substantive Change Procedure (Attachment 1).

- (1) Delineating Responsibility for Monitoring & Reporting.** The SACSCOC liaison will have responsibility for monitoring and reporting changes. That role will now be supported by a newly created Substantive Change Committee which will be composed of faculty as well as academic, administrative, and student services staff responsible for implementation and communication with all academic and support units as well as students.

The Substantive Change Procedure has been formally adopted by the Faculty Senate, the Academic Deans' Council, and President's Advisory Council.

Office of the President

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- (2) **Not Comprehensive.** In addition to the changes made to the Substantive Change Procedure to include all types of change, the Curriculum Change Procedure was also reviewed to ensure consistency and address the issue of not being comprehensive.

This was accomplished by a campus-wide committee including members from academic affairs, student services staff, graduate school, and faculty senate leadership. The revised procedure stemming from this group includes all types of curricular modifications as well as substantive changes that need to be communicated to SACSCOC. The scope of the procedure was also extended to include consideration of internal as well as external deadlines for submission and approval processes. This will ensure each of our approving bodies is notified well in advance of proposed program changes while respecting the faculty role in these changes.

The revised New Curriculum Procedure has also been formally adopted by the Faculty Senate, the Academic Deans' Council, and President's Advisory Council.

- (3) **Dissemination & Communication Management Practices.** The offices and officers of the University who are to obtain approvals and are to be notified of changes are more clearly spelled out. Communications will include wider dissemination of requests to, and responses from, SACSCOC. The current SACSCOC website will be enhanced to include these communications and decisions.

In addition, a new software system which will track curriculum changes through each stage of the process will be purchased. This system's strength is in communicating changes to the entire campus at each stage of the approval process. The process flow map included in Attachment 2 clearly shows the approvals required and will serve as the foundation for development of our software system.

The result of these reviews and the changes made to these procedures is a very robust system that will prevent under-reporting issues in the future. They are designed to work together to ensure the University has a comprehensive as well as more closely monitored system in place to track and report changes and for submitting those changes to the A&M System, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and to SACSCOC.

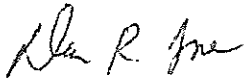
In the process of our comprehensive review of our procedures as outlined, and in preparation for our reaffirmation visit, we have found other instances of underreporting and failures to obtain prior approvals prior to implementation. As discussed with Dr. Jackson, and at his request, we will submit a separate letter to identify these. We are in the process of compiling documentation on these issues and will soon submit a comprehensive report.

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Thank you again for the opportunity to address your concerns. We trust we have addressed each of them to the Commission's satisfaction.

We enclose five copies of this monitoring report as requested. Please direct any further questions or concerns to either me or Dr. Roseann Hogan at 903-886-5926.

Sincerely,



Dan R. Jones, Ph.D.
President

Enclosures

xc: Dr. Gary Peer, Interim Provost
Dr. Roseann Hogan
Dr. Mary Hendrix
Mr. Bob Brown
Dr. Daniel Edelman
Dr. Derald Harp

**03.02.99.R0.03 Programmatic and Administrative
Substantive Changes Approval
Process (SACSCOC)**

Approved April 5, 2012

Approved September 4, 2012

Next Scheduled Review September 4, 2017



Procedure Statement

Texas A&M University-Commerce (A&M-Commerce) is responsible for compliance with the Substantive Change Policy of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) as a condition of its continued accreditation by SACSCOC.

Reason for Procedure

This procedure fulfills the SACSCOC requirement that member institutions have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion. Furthermore, this procedure identifies the process to be followed at this institution for handling substantive changes that may affect the university's accreditation. It identifies how such changes are communicated to the university's accrediting organization.

Texas A&M University-Commerce recognizes the importance of the commission's substantive change policy and understands that reporting in a timely manner is essential to ensure compliance with the policy and with federal regulations. The institution is committed to complying with the policy.

Substantive change is defined by SACSCOC as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. In addition, under federal regulations, substantive change includes:

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution;
- Any change in legal status, form of control, ownership;
- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure either in content or method of delivery from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated.

Proponents of any academic changes are required to follow the procedures outlined in *03.02.99.R0.01 New Program and Curriculum Approval Process*. This procedure identifies the academic and administrative approvals for developing and submitting for approval program changes, new programs and significant program expansions. It includes a timeline and steps required to obtain approvals from the University Faculty Senate and administration, A&M System, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Faculty desiring changes to programs are also required to seek guidance from the Office of the Provost and the SACSCOC liaison, the Associate Provost of Institutional Effectiveness & Planning, to determine if changes must also be reported or considered for approval by SACSCOC.

These processes can be lengthy. Certain program changes require a prospectus to be submitted six or more months prior to expected implementation. A prospectus may take up to four months to create. Further, the SACS approval process may take two to four months, and may require an on-site visit. If the program change is one that requires SACS approval, and approval has not been given, the program will not be implemented until approval is received.

In addition, the time needed for communicating approvals, implementation as well as inclusion in the University's catalog can take substantial time, especially if the annual publishing cycle is missed.

Therefore, since many academic changes may be considered to be substantive change issues by SACSCOC, at least a full year of lead time is recommended.

Procedures and Responsibilities

1. GENERAL

- 1.1 Upon final approval by the university president, it is the responsibility of the Provost's Office to inform the Commission President of substantive changes.
- 1.2 Compliance with this procedure is mandatory for all A&M-Commerce academic units, including off-campus sites.
- 1.3 This procedure will be posted online by the SACS liaison as well as distributed to the university community including all academic deans, department heads, administrative leadership responsible for implementation for programs and communication of changes to students, center directors and the Substantive Change Committee.
- 1.4 The effectiveness of this procedure will be reviewed annually by the university president, vice presidents, Substantive Change Committee, and the accreditation liaison. Modifications to this procedure will be recommended as warranted.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution, as defined in SACSCOC substantive change policy. The types of substantive change and the procedures for addressing them appropriately are to be

found in the Commission's policy on substantive change and its substantive change website: <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>

- 2.2 Notification to the SACSCOC regarding substantive change means that the President of the University shall send a letter to the President of the Commission on Colleges summarizing the proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and other relevant information required by the requested change.
- 2.3 A prospectus is a concisely worded narrative that describes a proposed substantive change according to a format specified by the SACSCOC.
- 2.4 The accreditation liaison is the individual appointed by the President of the University to help ensure the University remains in compliance with SACS accreditation requirements and policies. The Associate Provost of Institutional Effectiveness & Planning is the University's accreditation liaison. (See *Accreditation Liaison*, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1866, Southern Lane, Decatur, GA).
- 2.5 A branch campus is a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature, (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, **and** (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
- 2.6 An off-campus site is a location of an institution that is geographically apart, but not independent, of the main campus. The site may be used in an ongoing manner to deliver programs or courses leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, but it does not have its own faculty, administrative organization or budget.
- 2.7 Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing and other electronic media.
- 2.8 A teach-out agreement is a written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides fifty percent or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation.

2.9 A teach-out plan is a written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides fifty percent or more of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

2.10 A significant departure is when a program is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the mode of delivery in question. To determine whether a new program is a "significant departure," it is helpful to consider the following questions:

- What previously approved programs does the institution offer that is closely related to the program and how are they related?
- Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
- Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
- Will a significant number of new courses be required?
- Will significant additional library/ learning resources be needed?

2.11 Educational program- a coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential (*i.e.*, degree, diploma or certificate).

2.12 An academic degree program or major is a coherent set of courses in a particular discipline, department or program consisting of 30 semester credit hours or more.

2.12.1 A minor consists of at least 15 credits in a coherent set of courses in a particular discipline, department or program. A minor in a department, discipline, or program which also offers a major will normally be constituted by a core set of course from among those required for the major. Creation of a new minor is treated as a program revision.

2.12.2 Concentrations (sometimes also called tracks, options or areas of specializations) may be established within a program, which provide for alternative sets of courses which can be used to fulfill the requirements of a major. Such concentrations within a new program may be entirely separate from one another, or may contain a common set of courses. Such concentrations should be delineated in a proposal for a new major or may be added to an existing major or minor. Creation of a new concentration is treated as a program revision.

2.12.3 A concentration or area of specialization is defined as a coherent set of courses where 50% or more of its required courses are identical to an established program or major. In these cases, the concentration shall be deemed for reporting purposes as one program but identified as a program track or area of specialization.

2.12.4 A certificate program involves specialized areas of study from which a

significant proportion of the requirements must go beyond the requirements of any specific major. Normally certificate programs involve interdisciplinary study, with courses from more than one department. Certificates may also be awarded for specialized studies within a specific department, provided that a significant proportion of the work is in courses which are not required for the major. Certificate programs extend beyond the requirements of any individual major, and usually provide skills or knowledge related to specific professions. A certificate requires at least 15 credits in a coherent set of courses.

2.13 Dual degree – separate program completion credentials each of which bears only the name, seal, and signature of the institution awarding the degree to the student.

2.14 Joint degree – a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the two or more institutions awarding the degree to the student.

3. TYPES OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

3.1 Substantive change is defined by SACSCOC as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” **Some changes require notification only and others require approval prior to implementation.** These two types of changes are called Procedure One and Procedure Two.

3.2 SACSCOC has three procedures for addressing the different types of substantive changes (greater detail for each procedure is found in the Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy Statement):

- Procedure One for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation;
- Procedure Two for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Only Notification prior to Implementation;
- Procedure Three for Closing a Program, Site, Branch Campus or Institution.

3.3 Examples of substantive change may include, but are not limited to:

3.3.1 Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution.

3.3.2 Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution.

3.3.3 The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated.

3.3.4 The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

3.3.5 Closing a program or off-campus site.

3.3.6 Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement such as a dual degree or joint degree program with another institution.

- 3.3.7 Acquiring a program or location of another institution.
- 3.3.8 Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for U.S. Department of Education Title IV funding offers 25 percent or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs.

3.4 The SACSCOC Board of Trustees lists these substantive changes that require **only notification prior to implementation**.

- 3.4.1 Initiating an off-campus site at which a student may earn at least 25 percent but less than 50 percent of credits toward a program.
- 3.4.2 Offering for the first time credit courses via distance learning/technology-based instruction by which students can obtain at least 25 percent but less than 50 percent of their credits toward an educational program.
- 3.4.3 Adding programs that are significantly different from those that were initially approved for the institution or site.
- 3.4.4 Initiating programs/courses delivered through contractual agreement or a consortium.
- 3.4.5 Moving an approved off-campus instructional site within the same geographic area to serve essentially the same pool of students.
- 3.4.6 Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides less than 25 percent of an educational program offered by the accredited institution.
- 3.4.7 Others are defined in the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy*, Procedure Two.

3.5 The SACSCOC Board of Trustees described other substantive changes as **requiring notification and approval prior to implementation**. Examples are:

- 3.5.1 Initiating certificate programs for workforce development.
- 3.5.2 Initiating other certificate programs at a new off-campus site.
- 3.5.3 Initiating an off-campus (additional) site (site-based/classroom group instruction) at which students can earn at least 50 percent of the credits toward an educational program.
- 3.5.4 Initiating degree completion programs.
- 3.5.5 Initiating distance learning or correspondence courses and programs by which students can earn at least 50 percent of a program's credits through delivery in a format other than face-to-face.
- 3.5.6 Initiating a collaborative academic program with another institution not accredited by SACSCOC.
- 3.5.7 Others are defined in the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy*, Procedure One.

(See [*Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges*](#) Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA)

4. PROCEDURES FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES REQUIRING ONLY NOTIFICATION PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 According to the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy*, offering from 25 percent to 49 percent of the coursework for a program on-line is a substantive change that requires only notification, in writing, to SACSCOC prior to implementation.

4.2 Only **after** all required documents/paperwork have been prepared for submission for approval by The Texas A&M University System (system) and subsequently the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) (either via the annual curriculum change process or expedited process), the academic department or college designee will work with the university accreditation liaison to prepare the Substantive Change Letter of Notification and accompanying letter. SACSCOC notification can occur simultaneously as a request is sent to the THECB for notification/approval. However, if sent at this time, the notification should state that the change is pending approval at THECB. Once the university receives the official notification of approval from THECB, a follow-up letter is to be sent to the Commission stating that approval has been granted.

4.3 Implementation cannot begin prior to the university receiving acceptance of notification from SACSCOC. No additional action is needed.

5. PROCEDURES FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE REQUIRING NOTIFICATION AND APPROVAL PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Section 3.5 of this procedure identifies the substantive changes that require SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. All substantive change requests should follow standards of good practice and guidelines established by the system, the THECB, and the SACSCOC. The administration and faculty are responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring of academic programs.

5.2 Only **after** all required documents/paperwork have been prepared for submission for approval by the system, subsequently the THECB (either via the annual curriculum change process or expedited process), the academic department or college designee will work with the university accreditation liaison to prepare the Substantive Change Letter of Notification and accompanying letter, as well as the prospectus, that must be submitted to the Commission.

SACSCOC notification can occur simultaneously as a request is sent to the system for approval. However, if sent at this time, the notification should state that the change is pending approval at system and THECB. Once the university receives the official notification of approval from THECB, a follow-up letter is to be sent to the Commission stating that approval has been granted.

5.3 The accreditation liaison will coordinate the reporting and approval process between the academic unit proposing the substantive change, the university's approval bodies (to

include the Faculty Senate, the Graduate School, Deans Council, faculty in the impacted departments; the Offices of Student Access & Success to include specifically the Offices of the Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, Provost, and President), and the SACSCOC staff.

- 5.4 The accreditation liaison will assist the departmental faculty in preparing the substantive change prospectus, ensuring that it conforms to the requirements stated in the *Substantive Change for Accredited Institution of the Commission on Colleges*.
- 5.5 The university president, or his/her designee, is the approving authority for the request for substantive changes. Once approved by the president, the request and accompanying prospectus (the notification and prospectus), will be submitted by the Provost's Office to the Commission.
- 5.6 The time frame for notifying SACSCOC is:
 - 5.6.1 At least 6 months in advance of proposed change, written notification must be submitted.
 - 5.6.2 At least 3 months prior to the anticipated implementation date, a prospectus must be submitted.
- 5.7 Implementation of the change can only occur after SACSCOC has notified the institution that it has approved the submitted substantive change.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MONITORING AND REPORTING SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

- 6.1 Responsibilities for monitoring and reporting substantive changes lie with the SACSCOC Liaison & Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness & Planning. All substantive changes will be coordinated through the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness & Planning. This office will:
 - 6.1.1 Establish annually and convene at least quarterly, the Substantive Change Committee and provide them with information about the SACSCOC substantive change policy and proposed changes.
 - 6.1.2 Provide the deans and department heads with information about the SACSCOC substantive change policy and the Texas A&M University-Commerce substantive change procedure and changes. This includes, but is not limited, to maintaining a section on the A&M-Commerce SACSCOC website concerning substantive change and sending information about substantive change to the Assistant/Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors at least annually.
 - 6.1.3 Work with deans and department heads to determine whether or not a proposed programmatic or administrative change is substantive.

- 6.1.4 Determine what action is needed with respect to SACSCOC when a change is substantive.
 - 6.1.5 Submit the appropriate notification and/or prospectus to SACSCOC.
 - 6.1.6 Notify SACSCOC when it is discovered that a substantive change has been implemented without Commission notification.
 - 6.1.7 Coordinate with SACSCOC staff and the provost, vice presidents, deans, department heads, and directors about any required follow-up action.
 - 6.1.8 Monitor all policies including the percentage of online courses in any degree offered to ensure institutional compliance with SACS Substantive Change policies.
- 6.2 The SACS liaison will be supported by a Substantive Change Committee. This committee will be responsible for oversight and coordination of the University's compliance with the Substantive Change Policy including ensuring that all approvals are obtained as outlined in *03.02.99.R0.01 New Program and Curriculum Approval Process*. The co-chairs of the committee will be the SACSCOC liaison and the President of the Faculty Senate. The committee meets at least once per semester.

Membership in the Substantive Change Committee will be appointed by the President and will include, in addition to the co-chairs: Chair of the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, the Registrar and members of that office responsible for curriculum records, including the catalog production, Graduate School, the University Compliance Officer, plus selected faculty and staff as deemed appropriate to accomplish the charge of the committee.

- 6.2.1 The Substantive Change Committee will participate in coordinating efforts to identify the need for and creation of notification letters, applications, and prospectus documents.
- 6.2.2 The Substantive Change Committee will utilize the University curriculum review cycle to identify substantive changes related to the addition, deletion, or modification of courses and degree programs.
- 6.2.3 At least once each academic year the Substantive Change Committee will ask the academic deans to identify potential substantive changes relating to distance education/online, off-site campuses, and other college or departmental level actions.
- 6.2.4 At least once each academic year the Substantive Change Committee will work with the Provost, Faculty Senate, and Academic Deans Council to identify potential substantive changes relating to consortiums, branch campuses, mergers and consolidations, governance, mission changes and other University-wide initiatives.
- 6.2.5 All efforts of the Substantive Change Committee must be coordinated to allow ample time to satisfy the timeframes for submission as set by SACS.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROVOST AND ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE PROVOSTS, VICE PRESIDENTS, DEANS AND DIRECTORS

- 7.1 The Provost as well as assistant/associate provosts, vice presidents, deans, and directors have the fundamental responsibility to be generally aware of the substantive change policy, inform the appropriate associate provost at the earliest point possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change for the university, and provide any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACS-COC policy when requested. The Office of the Provost staff will:
 - 7.2 Be thoroughly familiar with the substantive change policy and procedures.
 - 7.3 Be aware that substantive change requests should go through a curriculum review process by the appropriate institutional review bodies, including the Faculty Senate.
 - 7.4 Inform the accreditation liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change, keeping in mind the timeline required by the SACSCOC.
 - 7.5 Provide the accreditation liaison, when requested, with any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy.
 - 7.6 If it is discovered that a program considered a substantive change has been implemented without SACSCOC notification, the university administrator (Provost, dean or department head) is required to notify the university's accreditation liaison who, in turn, will immediately take the required steps for notification and/or approval.

8. PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTING

- 8.1 The accreditation liaison will be responsible for communicating the submissions to and responses from SACSCOC to the university community including maintaining a website of official correspondence and notices.
- 8.2 The Provost Office will be responsible for maintaining an up-to-date, comprehensive inventory showing the status of program and curriculum submissions, changes, approvals at the System and Coordinating Board.
- 8.3 The SACSCOC liaison will coordinate the reporting and approval process between the academic unit proposing the substantive change, the university's approval bodies (to include the Faculty Senate, the Graduate School, Deans Council, faculty in the impacted departments; the Offices of Student Access & Success to include specifically the Offices of the Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, Provost, and President), the Substantive Change Committee, and the SACSCOC staff.

9. MONITORING COMPLIANCE AND PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

- 9.1 If an institution fails to follow the substantive change policy and procedures of the Commission on Colleges, the accreditation of the institution may be placed in jeopardy, the institution's case may be referred to the Commission for the imposition of a sanction, and the institution may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse it for the money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change.
- 9.2 The accreditation liaison will report at least annually to the university president and provost of the status of university compliance with this procedure.
- 9.3 The accreditation liaison will continually monitor compliance with SACSCOC policies, core requirements, and comprehensive standards (see *"The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement,"* Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Decatur, Georgia).
- 9.4 Practices or programs suspected to be out of compliance with this procedure or policies, core requirements, or comprehensive standards set by SACSCOC will be referred to the provost and the president for timely resolution.
- 9.5 Extensive substantive changes by an institution may accelerate the date for the institution's next reaffirmation. Examples of triggers for an accelerated reaffirmation include the following changes: proliferation of off-campus sites, significant increases in enrollments, or rapid proliferation of new educational programs.
- 9.6 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.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) [*The Principles of Accreditation*](#)

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), [*Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges*](#)

Texas Administrative Code, [Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter Q, Rule 4.274](#) (With regard to off-campus programs, “Institutions shall comply with the standards and criteria of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.”)

Texas Administrative Code, [Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter P, Rule 4.259](#) (With regard to distance education, “An Institutional Plan for Distance Education shall conform to Board guidelines and criteria of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges in effect at the time of the Report’s approval.”)

[Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Rules](#)

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [Programmatic Procedures, Requests, and Updates](#)

The Texas A&M University System [Program/Administrative Approval Submission Guidelines](#)

System Regulation [03.02.02 Approval Procedures for Degree Programs, Administrative Changes, Etc.](#)

University Procedure [03.02.99.R0.01 New Program and Curriculum Approval](#)

Contact Office

Associate Provost, Institutional Effectiveness & Planning
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
903-886-5018

Appendix 1 SACSCOC Change Procedures and Time Frame

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Approval Required	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACS COC
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	1	Yes	Yes	12 months
Expanding at current degree level <i>(significant departure from current programs)</i>	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
Initiating programs at a lower degree level	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
Initiating a branch campus	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
Initiating Off-campus sites				
...Student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
...Student can obtain 25-49 Percent of credit	2	No	Yes	Prior to Implementation
...Student can obtain 24 percent or less	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Adding significantly different programs at an approved site (only if programs are currently approved)	2	No	Yes	Prior to Implementation
Initiating distance learning				
...Offering 50 percent or more of program (Subsequent programs do not need reporting unless they are significant departures from initially approved program(s))	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
...Offering 25-49 percent	2	No	Yes	Prior to Implementation
...Offering 24 percent or less	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Initiating program/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	No	Yes	Prior to Implementation
Initiating a merger/consolidation	3	Yes	Yes	6 months
Altering significantly the educational mission or the Institution	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
Relocating a campus	2	No	Yes	Prior to

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Approval Required	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACS COC Implementation
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
Altering significantly the length of a program	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
Initiating degree completion programs	1	Yes	Yes	6 months
Closing an institution/program; initiating (see Commission Policy)	1	Yes	Yes	6 months

**Chart taken from SACS Policy Statement on Substantive Change website as of September 2012.*

03.02.99.R0.01 New Program and Curriculum Approval Process

Approved September 1, 1996

Revised October 2002

Revised October 18, 2011

Revised September 4, 2012

Next Scheduled Review September 4, 2017



Procedure Statement

Texas A&M University-Commerce (A&M-Commerce) maintains approval processes for new program development, program delivery and curricular changes. All actions are to be in accord with approval by the appropriate University bodies, The Texas A&M University System (A&M System), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools of the Commission of Colleges (SACSCOC).

Reason for Procedure

This procedure describes the university's institution-wide processes for programmatic and curricular changes. It establishes the processes that must be followed in order to be within the guidelines and standards set by the university and external accreditation bodies.

This procedure is designed to be consistent with, and work in conjunction with, the University's Substantive Change Procedures. (03.02.99.R0.03 Programmatic and Administrative Substantive Changes Approval Process)

The university maintains an online electronic approval process that will mirror this process. Electronic signatures will be utilized in the system with the exception of the wet signatures and acknowledgements included on page 12 of this procedure.

Procedures and Responsibilities

GENERAL

1. The faculty, with support of the administration, is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of academic programs. In developing academic programs and making changes to the curriculum, the university will follow standards of good practice and the guidelines established by this procedure, the A&M System, THECB and SACSCOC. The

university will avoid the unwarranted proliferation of course offerings and degree programs. The development of new academic programs will be considered only after the university has completed a needs assessment and financial feasibility plan with signatures from the provost, vice president for finance, dean and other appropriate university officials (See Appendix A).

2. The university will proceed with changes only after careful review and approval by the appropriate A&M-Commerce faculty and administrative bodies, as well as approval by applicable external bodies (The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents, the THECB and SACSCOC). Faculty Senate review is required on all new program development and curriculum changes, even those that undergo an expedited process. Graduate Council review and approval are required on all new graduate programs and curriculum changes. Teacher Education Committee review and approval are required of all new programs leading to teacher and/or educational administration certifications. (See Appendix B Programmatic and Curriculum Changes Flow Chart)
3. No new programs or other curriculum changes shall be implemented until notification of all approvals has been received.
4. In all situations, the primary responsibility for the quality of the educational program resides with the faculty.

NEW PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS

5. Types of requests:

5.1 Requests for new degree program approval (substantive and non-substantive) include new bachelor's, master's, specialist, doctoral, cooperative and joint degrees. It also includes the reclassification or modification of existing degrees.

5.1.1 The required paperwork varies, depending upon: the level (undergraduate or graduate); the field (engineering or non-engineering); and the projected costs (whether or not it exceeds two million dollars).

5.1.2 The forms are available on the [A&M System](#) website.

5.2 Request for expansion of authority includes delivery type and Table of Programs (at the doctoral level only).

5.2.1 Request to offer 50% or more of a degree program (distance education).

5.2.1.1 off-campus via face -to-face instruction or

5.2.1.2 technology-based instruction or

5.2.1.3 online delivery

5.2.2 Request for a change in the Table of Programs (needed when the instructional discipline area requested is not approved by the THECB as being within the institution's mission).

6. Process requests for new degree program vary depending upon multiple factors. Because the rules and required forms are changed from time-to-time, the information below is only to assist you in starting the process. After reviewing the A&M System website on programs administrative approval, contact the associate provost for assistance.
 - 6.1 New bachelor's and master's programs and expansion of existing programs (to include delivery by distant education)
 - 6.1.1 A needs and feasibility study is required.
 - 6.1.2 The study must be completed in the college dean's office and is to be submitted, prior to any request going forward from a college executive committee.
 - 6.2 New engineering and doctoral programs proposals (details in section 7 below)
 - 6.2.1 If the subject area is not on the university's Table of Programs, authority must be sought prior to requesting a [new doctoral program](#) (as shown on the Flowchart for New Degree Programs).
 - 6.2.2 Approval of a [Preliminary Authority Request](#) is required.
 - 6.2.3 Preliminary authority proposal approval is required at both the A&M System level and by THECB.
7. Guidelines to request a new doctoral degree and/or expansion of authority (links provided in 5.1.2):
 - 7.1 Any request for a new doctoral degree program shall be initiated at the faculty level of an academic department and be routed through the academic dean.
 - 7.2 Working with the associate provost, the **Preliminary Authority Request** is developed in accordance with The Texas A&M University System Academic Program Guidelines available online.
 - 7.2.1 A request for a new program requires a **Preliminary Authority Request** (concept paper) that shall not exceed four pages.
 - 7.3 A&M-Commerce Administrative Review Process of **Preliminary Authority Request**. Once developed, the four-page **Preliminary Authority Request** will be sent to the provost for review by the Deans Council, who will either approve, request revisions, or deny the request.
 - 7.3.1 If approved, the submission forms required by the A&M System will be prepared by the department, working with the associate provost, and sent through the internal approval process and then begin the external review process.

7.3.1.1 Once approval by the A&M System is received, the provost notifies the academic department that a **Request for New Program** is to be prepared.

7.3.1.2 If revisions are requested, the appropriate dean will contact the department head and explain the requested changes. Once revisions are made, the revised request can be resubmitted according to the steps described in 7.3.1.

7.3.2 If the Preliminary Authority Request is denied, the appropriate dean will notify the department head of the decision and provide the rationale behind the decision.

7.4 Review Process for **Request for New Program Approval**.

7.4.1 Working with the associate provost, the full **Request for New Program** will be developed in accordance with the System Academic Program Guidelines.

7.4.2 The **Request for New Program** will go through the administrative bodies that are required of curriculum change requests as outlined in the flow chart in the appendix.

7.4.3 If approved by all A&M-Commerce administrative bodies, the **Request for New Program** and the required A&M System forms are submitted by the associate provost to the president for approval and submission to the A&M System and other external review/approval accreditation bodies (when appropriate).

CURRICULUM CHANGE APPROVAL PROCESS

8. Types of changes:

- 8.1 Changes in program requirements (including prerequisites);
- 8.2 Addition of new courses to the course inventory;
- 8.3 Changes to existing courses such as course description, prerequisites, value and number;
- 8.4 Course reinstatement;
- 8.5 Cross-listing and
- 8.6 Course deletion.

9. Approval Process. As with new program requests, the curriculum change process for all other requests shall be initiated by the faculty within the academic department.

9.1 All curriculum changes are to be submitted online in early fall according to the instructions provided by the coordinator of schedule, catalog and curriculum (Registrar's Office).

9.1.1 Department

9.1.1.1 Department reviews will begin with a Departmental curriculum committee consisting of a minimum of three faculty members from the department.

9.1.1.2 Departmental curriculum committee will make recommendations to the Department Head.

9.1.1.3 Curriculum submissions that are not approved by the Departmental curriculum committee will not move forward and are not eligible for the Provost's review. (See 9.1.4.4)

9.1.2 College

9.1.2.1 College review will begin with a College curriculum committee composed of a minimum of four faculty members from the college, each from different departments. This committee makes their recommendation to the College Executive Council.

9.1.2.2 College executive council will make recommendations to the Dean, who gives final recommendation to move forward with the submission.

9.1.3 **Simultaneous review by:**

9.1.3.1 Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee — all requests;

9.1.3.2 Ad Hoc Teacher Education Committee — teacher certification requests only and

9.1.3.3 Graduate Council—only graduate requests.

9.1.4 Committees should review submissions for quality of the program, capacity of the department to support the new program or course, and that the submission is consistent with the university, college, and departmental missions.

9.1.4.1 Committees must approve submissions prior to moving forward for further review.

9.1.4.2 Shortcomings identified by any committee should be corrected through direct communication from the committee chair to the submitting department and/or faculty member.

9.1.4.3 Shortcomings that cannot be corrected in a timely fashion will be returned to the department for further review and resubmission. Deficiencies will be noted and corrective measures recommended.

9.1.4.4 The Provost will serve as mediator for submissions, beyond the department level, with committee objections. Objections will be noted, but the Provost's Office retains the ability to supersede committee decisions and move submissions forward. (See 9.1.1.3)

9.1.5 Deans Council reviews all of the curriculum change requests and makes recommendations to the provost.

10. Curriculum changes needing approval by other bodies:

10.1 Curriculum requests requiring approval by the A&M System: forms are forwarded by the Provost's Office to the President's Office for submission and appropriate action.

10.2 Approved curriculum changes not needing action by the A&M System are submitted by the coordinator of schedule, catalog and curriculum to the THECB for action.

SUMMARY OF APPROVALS AND REPORTING

11. Programmatic and curriculum requests requiring only notification to THECB are submitted, in the required format, to the A&M System Board of Regents and, thereafter, to the THECB as appropriate.

12. Any substantive change must be reported to the executive director of the SACSCOC in advance of the admission of students (see SACSCOC document: *Substantive Change Policy for Accredited Institutions*). The report to the executive director is prepared by the SACSCOC Liaison.
13. Following THECB approval, curriculum requests are incorporated into the next academic year's undergraduate catalog and/or graduate catalog and degree audit information.
14. The university's coordinator of schedule, catalog and curriculum shall notify all appropriate administrators and offices of the final resolution of all curriculum changes.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

System Policy [03.02 Policies for the Establishment and Revision of Mission Statements and Tables of Programs](#)

System Regulation [03.02.02 Approval Procedures for Degree Programs, Administrative Changes, Etc.](#)

[System Academic Affairs Program/Administrative Approval](#)

[Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Rules](#)

[Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Policies and Publications](#)

Flow Chart and Timeline (Provost's Office)

Curriculum Change Formats (Registrar's Office)

Substantive Change Procedure [03.02.99.R0.03 Programmatic and Administrative Substantive Changes Approval Process](#)

Definitions

The Academic Affairs and Research Division of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is responsible for the academic integrity of public colleges, universities and health-related institutions in Texas. To accomplish its mission, the department staff reviews certificate, baccalaureate, master's and doctoral programs, as well as administrative change requests from all public higher education and health-related institutions. The department also provides continual assessment of academic programs and statewide policies through independent research and analysis of education trends.

Contact Office

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
903-886-5439

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM REQUEST FOR NEW AND EXPANDED PROGRAMS

Proposed (name of degree/B.S., M.Ed., etc.)
with a major in (include CIP code)

GENERAL INFORMATION AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

College:

Department

Degree program name & proposed CIP code:

Program Description Abstract: Describe the new program or program change, date of implementation, targeted student population, projected life of the program, instructional delivery methods, off or on campus, percent offered online.

Projected headcount & SCH enrollment (Years 1-3):

Delivery mode/site:

Proposed implementation date:

Total Recurring & Non-Recurring budget required (Years 1-3):

JUSTIFICATION & RATIONALE FOR PROGRAM

Provide a clear statement of the nature and purpose of the program or change in the context of the institutional mission and strategic plan goals. Include evidence of participation of relevant faculty and other groups in the program proposal development.

ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL

Before establishing a new academic program, or initiating a substantive change as outlined above, a proposal must be submitted to the Office of the Provost for review and approval of its administrative and financial feasibility. Each proposal must include information regarding each of the following elements with content tailored as necessary depending on the nature of the request:

1.1. Needs Assessment

Describe the program or change, description of primary target audience, and employment opportunities in the service area of A&M-Commerce. Letters of support from the community and business leaders should be attached as supporting documentation.

Employment Opportunities (include data from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) and [Texas Workforce Commission](#)) (state, regional, national, as applicable; include URL references if applicable)

1.1.1 A demonstrated need for the proposed program or change in terms of present and future needs of the component, institution, region and state (depending on the nature of the request);

1.1.2. Description of how the proposed program or change would complement and strengthen existing programs or structures within the component and across the university'

1.1.3 *If* a proposed program for a new degree program represents a duplication of a similar program within the region and state, a rationale for its need; Are there similar programs in the state? How close are they to A&M-Commerce? What are their enrollments, graduates, and experience with placement of graduates? Describe faculty teaching in these programs in terms of numbers and qualifications.

1.1.4 Demonstrated student demand for the proposed new program or change to an existing program (including offering an existing program to a new location or through a new modality) and the likelihood of a sufficient critical mass of qualified applicants; and,

1.1.5 Projected Enrollment & Graduates for years 1-5 (include only new students, not students transferring from an existing program). Please include assumptions used to support numbers.

	Headcount		SCH	Degrees Awarded
	FT	PT		
Year 1				
Year 2				
Year 3				
Year 4				
Year 5				

1.1.6 Critical mass of qualified faculty and staff to be available to support a high quality program. If the request is for a new doctoral program, the following must be addressed as well.

- a. A demonstrated regional, state or national unmet need for doctoral graduates in the field;
- b. Evidence that existing doctoral programs in Texas cannot accommodate additional students, access to existing programs is limited, or that expanding existing programs is not feasible; and
- c. Evidence of self-sustaining and excellence in the university's master's level program in the field and/or programs in related and supporting areas.

1.2 Program Description

What are the student learning goals of the program and how will they be assessed during the initial program implementation and subsequently? Please describe in detail procedures for systematic evaluation of instructional results, including the process to monitor and evaluate programs and

how results are used to improve institutional programs. For online or compressed programs, describe the methods for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies are comparable to those required in traditional formats and on campus have been achieved.

- 1.2.1 educational objectives (student learning outcomes);
- 1.2.2 assessment strategies to be used of student learning outcomes;
- 1.2.3 admission standards;
- 1.2.4 certificate or degree requirements;
- 1.2.5 mode of course delivery and primary location of the faculty and students involved;
- 1.2.6 effect on existing programs in the component; and
- 1.2.7 program administration.

1.3 Governance Information must address how the proposed academic program will fit within the organizational structure of the university, the point of contact and responsibility for oversight and management of the proposed program.

1.4 Resources

1.4.1 Faculty Qualifications & Need

Indicate the faculty coordinator for this program. Include a roster of faculty proposed to teach in the program, and their credentials using the A&M-Commerce faculty credentialing template.

1.4.2 resources needed for the new program start-up or other proposed substantive change (e.g., administrative infrastructure, faculty and staff, facilities, equipment, library and related information technology);

1.4.3 information technologies and classroom support necessary to implement the proposed program or substantive change;

1.4.4 future expectations of financial support; and

1.4.5 plan for self-sufficiency;

1.4.6 A table summarizing the projected five-year costs and potential sources of funds must be included covering the following items:

Faculty. Indicate the number of new faculty who will be needed and include a detailed description of the percent of time existing faculty will be reallocated to this program. Include the number and names where appropriate of core & support faculty, qualifications which will be required, planned additions, etc.

Other Personnel

(clerical, other support staff)

Graduate Assistants

(reference needs if applicable to program)

Supplies, Materials

Library (send request to the director of James Gee Library)

Equipment, Facilities

Clinical/Internship Sites
(include overview or detail as applicable)

Accreditation
(institution's intention)

Educator Certification Program
Rated 'Accredited' by the State Board of Educator Certification

COSTS & FUNDING SOURCES

RECURRING COSTS	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year		REVENUE	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year
	1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5
Full Time HC Faculty (Excluding Benefits) HC/\$							Projected State Revenue					
Adjunct Faculty \$							Other State Funding					
Administrative Support HC							Internal Reallocation* Describe in the narrative					
Administrative Support							Other					
Graduate Assistants												
Supplies & Materials												
Library Resources												
IT Resources												
Facilities (include new space needed, projected rent, etc.)												
Equipment (please describe)												
Total Recurring Costs												
NON- Recurring/ Start Up Costs												
Total Projected Costs							Total Projected Revenues					

PRELIMINARY APPROVAL REQUIRED SIGNATURES

(Approvals to be simultaneous)
(Please Sign, Date, and Return to the Office of the Provost)

Department Head

Date

Academic Dean

Date

Faculty Senate Curriculum Chair

Date

Faculty Senate President

Date

Vice President for Business

Date

Provost Approval (with Deans Council affirmation)

Date

The president of the institution is required to certify that the institution will have funds sufficient to support the proposed program and is committing more than 50 percent of the funds from existing fund sources towards the projected costs over the first five years.

President

Date

**Appendix B
Curriculum Change Approval Process
(Proposed New Process)**

