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# The University of Georgia

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University Council  
Athens, Georgia 30602

March 13, 2009

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE – 2008-2009

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Graduate School - Dr. Malcolm R. Adams

Undergraduate Student Representative – Ms. Jamie Beggerly

Graduate Student Representative – Ms. Amrita Veliyath

Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal for a new Academic Affairs Policy Statement #19, Substantive Change, will be an agenda item for the March 20, 2009, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

David E. Shipley, Chair  
University Curriculum Committee

cc: Dr. Arnett C. Mace, Jr.  
Professor Jere W. Morehead




# The University of Georgia

Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

## MEMORANDUM

To: University Council Curriculum Committee

From: Bob Boehmer   
Associate Provost for Inst. Effectiveness and Extended Campuses

Re: Proposed Academic Affairs Policy Concerning SACS Substantive Change

Date: March 09, 2009

### Proposed Policy

Attached is a proposed policy concerning substantive change. Your consideration of this proposal is greatly appreciated.

This proposal is unanimously recommended by a working group of the SACS Compliance Team, which is chaired by Professor David Shipley. In addition to Professor Shipley and me, the working group includes:

Allan Aycock, Director of Accreditation and Assessment  
Paul Brooks, Associate Dean, Pharmacy  
Fiona Liken, Director of Curriculum Systems  
Welch Suggs, Assistant to the President  
Robin Tricoli, Associate Provost, Institutional Strategic Planning  
Jan Wheeler, Associate Director of Accreditation

### Reason for Proposed Policy

UGA must comply with the SACS Substantive Change policy as a condition of its continued accreditation by the SACS/COC. See SACS *Principles of Accreditation*, Section 3.12 (<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf>). SACS defines substantive change as "...a **significant modification or expansion in the nature**

**and scope of an accredited institution.” See SACS/COC Policy.**

<http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>

Recently, SACS has devoted substantial additional resources to assuring that all institutions comply with this policy. In part, this is due to pressure from the federal Department of Education. Failure to comply with the SACS policy could result in the imposition of sanctions by SACS/COC such as a warning, probation, or revocation of accreditation.

Currently, UGA has no policy in place regarding Substantive Change and no formal process for identifying these changes so they can be reported to SACS. The proposed Academic Affairs Policy is intended to establish a simple mechanism to assure compliance with this SACS requirement. In particular, the policy is based on the following considerations:

- a. As the practical application of this SACS policy is extremely difficult, this policy **seeks to remove the burden from university units of making the difficult decision about what constitutes a “substantive” change;**
- b. Instead, the policy establishes a **mechanism for notifying UGA’s SACS/COC Liaison** when a major proposal is being developed so the Liaison can make a determination and notify SACS as appropriate;
- c. As the SACS policy requires prior notification of as much as 12 months in advance (and in some cases filing of an advance prospectus), the policy **seeks to encourage units to identify potential substantive changes well in advance of implementation.** This will enable the University’s SACS liaison to notify SACS on a timely basis when appropriate; and
- d. Although neither compliance with internal UGA policies and procedures concerning approval of curricular changes nor approval by the Board of Regents satisfies the SACS policy, **this policy seeks to use established approval channels at school, college, and institution levels to streamline the requirement.**

Thank you for considering this proposal.

# SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

## Academic Affairs Policy Statement No. 19

### 1. References

- a. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) *The Principles of Accreditation*, Section 3.12  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf>
- b. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), *Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges*  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>

### 2. Policy

The University of Georgia is responsible to comply with the SACS Substantive Change policy as a condition of its continued accreditation by SACS. Substantive change is defined by SACS as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” Examples of substantive change may include, but are not limited to, establishing a new site at which students can earn 50% or more of the credits toward a UGA degree, or the first offering of a joint program with another institution through which UGA credit may be earned.

### 3. Responsibility

#### Responsibilities of Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors:

Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors have the fundamental responsibility to be generally aware of the substantive change policy, inform the University’s SACS Liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change for the University, and provide the SACS Liaison with any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACS policy when requested.

#### Responsibilities of the SACS Liaison:

The SACS Liaison will:

- provide the Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors with information about the SACS substantive change policy. This includes, but is not limited to, maintaining a section of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness website concerning substantive change and sending information about substantive change to the Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors at least annually;
- provide a list of examples of substantive change on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness website;
- work with Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors to determine whether a proposed change is substantive;
- determine what action with respect to SACS is needed when a change is substantive;
- file the appropriate notice or prospectus with SACS;
- coordinate with SACS and the Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors about any required follow-up action.

#### **4. Procedure**

##### **Notification of SACS Liaison of Proposed Changes**

If a change is substantive, SACS must be notified as much as 12 months in advance of implementing the change. Upon becoming aware of a proposed change that may be substantive, Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors of the unit proposing the change should notify the SACS Liaison. The Vice President for Instruction will provide the SACS Liaison with a copy of the University Curriculum Committee agenda prior to each meeting. The SACS Liaison will then determine if any of the University Curriculum Committee agenda items could be considered a substantive change.

##### **Late Notification of SACS Liaison**

If it is discovered that a program that may be considered a substantive change has been implemented without notification of the SACS Liaison, the appropriate Associate Provost, Vice President, Dean, or Director has responsibility to notify the SACS Liaison immediately. It is then the responsibility of the SACS Liaison to notify SACS as provided in the SACS Policy.

To ensure that proposals that may be considered substantive changes do not go unreported, it is recommended that Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors review annual reports taking into consideration the substantive change policy.

#### **5. Point of Contact**

Every SACS member institution has an Accreditation Liaison whose charge is to ensure compliance with accreditation requirements. The current SACS Liaison for the University of Georgia is:

Robert G. Boehmer  
Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Extended Campus Educational Programs  
203 Administration Building  
706-542-2558  
[bboehmer@uga.edu](mailto:bboehmer@uga.edu)