

SACS-COC

April 6, 2015 Notices/Updates

I am writing to request assistance from our membership regarding several issues relevant to Commission activities.

1. The first issue deals with the **growing demand for more transparency** regarding the accrediting decisions of regional accrediting bodies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. For each accredited/candidate institution, the SACSCOC website currently provides the following information: name of the CEO, address, contact information, degree level, accredited status and whether a sanction has been imposed, date of initial accreditation, date of recent reaffirmation, date of next reaffirmation, governance control, **recent SACSCOC Board action regarding your institution**, and the most recently supplied link to your student achievement data.

If the public clicks onto “Recent Actions” under your institution’s posting on our website, it will provide a one-page summary of the most recent action taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. This posting gives the date of Board review, the action taken by the Board, and the date of your next review and then defines the Commission terms used in the posting. It does not provide the specifics when a monitoring report is requested. (*We are in the process of updating these links from recent Board meeting decisions.*) If an institution has been placed on a sanction, the amount of information regarding that action is more extensive. In either case, the statements are not as descriptive as the individual letters each institution receives after Board action.

In order to respond to the call for more transparency, some regional accrediting commissions are posting committee reports, some are posting the letters sent to CEOs informing them of Board action, and others have designed disclosure statements similar to SACSCOC’s.

In the future, you will receive an email from the Executive Council member from your respective state polling your response to the question regarding SACSCOC transparency of Board action. The results of this survey will be forwarded to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for action in June. This is an extremely important question that requires membership input into the final Board decision. I strongly encourage you to respond to the email from your state’s Executive Council member.

2. We are asking everyone to be more conscientious regarding **the timing of the submission of a prospectus for substantive change that requires approval**. Although the substantive change policy no longer requires an institution to notify the Commission in writing before submission of most prospectuses, in order for the proposed change to be approved, the prospectus and appropriate documentation must arrive in our offices **at least three months in advance** of the intended implementation date. Most institutions want to initiate changes in January and in August. Our staff is inundated with these requests during these periods. To give the Commission staff ample time to review the material and recommend approval to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, we need the prospectus **at least** three months in advance of your intended start-up date. Again, we appreciate your attention to this matter.

3. **HEA** – As I'm sure you are aware, we are heavily involved in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act activities going on in Washington, DC. I had mentioned to you in an earlier email that I would be forwarding to you information related to the issues all of the regional accrediting commissions feel are important to include in the reauthorization. We are in the process of finalizing our feedback to Senator Lamar Alexander's white papers and I will be sending it to you as soon as it is completed. I ask that, as you visit with your Congressional members, you find a way to include some of these points in your discussions. There is a lot about accreditation that is misunderstood and, in some cases, exaggerated and I will need YOUR help in educating the members.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who sent your congratulations and best wishes upon my receiving the 2015 John Hope Franklin Award. Your words of support were greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Belle Wheelan