



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097*

DISCLOSURE OF ACCREDITING DOCUMENTS AND ACTIONS OF SACSCOC

Policy Statement

I. The Compliance Certification, the Quality Enhancement Plan, Monitoring Reports, and Applications for Membership

An institution may release for internal or public distribution the contents of its Compliance Certification, its Quality Enhancement Plan, or its Application for Membership. SACSCOC may also allow Compliance Certifications, Quality Enhancement Plans, and Applications for Membership to be used by educators who are conducting research, the purpose of which is the improvement of the accrediting process. The U. S. Department of Education and the Council of Higher Education Accreditation may be allowed access to these documents, but only in conjunction with the process of recognition of SACSCOC by either of these agencies.

Monitoring reports submitted by institutions will not be released to the public by SACSCOC except as noted under Item V of this document. These reports, however, may be released by the institution after action has been taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

II. Visiting Committee Reports

An institution may release its visiting committee report. Quotation in institutional publications or excerpts from the visiting committee report must also be accompanied by a note stating that a copy of the entire report can be obtained from the institution. If an institution publicly characterizes the findings of a visiting committee report, the institution must also state that a copy of the entire report can be obtained from the institution.

Whether the institution releases the entire report or excerpts, the release must include the title page of the report and the following statement that has been incorporated on the title page:

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees is responsible for making the final determination on accreditation based on the findings contained in this report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of SACSCOC's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the *Principles of Accreditation* and on the accreditation status of the institution rests with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

SACSCOC will not release visiting committee reports to the public, except as noted under Item V of this document. With the approval of the institution, SACSCOC may allow access to a report by those conducting

research, the purpose of which is the improvement of accreditation. For purposes of the recognition process only, visiting committee reports of member and applicant institutions may be examined by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. SACSCOC may also share the visiting committee reports with other accrediting commissions of higher education.

III. Disclosure by SACSCOC of Institutional Accreditation Documents to Third Parties

Requests for disclosure – by other agencies, institutions, or individuals – of any institutional accrediting documents may be granted only upon the receipt of written approval of disclosure by the subject institution or after proper subpoena and/or court order. If disclosure is sought by subpoena and/or court order, the institution whose documents are being requested will be notified of the request immediately to enable the institution opportunity to file any objections with the appropriate court.

IV. Minutes and Correspondence

Minutes of the Executive Council shall be accessible to members of the Council and SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Minutes of the Board of Trustees and the College Delegate Assembly shall be published on the SACSCOC website or in the *Annual Reports of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges*. Minutes of the Committees on Compliance and Reports and ad hoc committees shall be accessible to members of the Executive Council and the Board of Trustees.

An institution which has officially appealed an adverse action of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will have access to those sections of official minutes that pertain to the adverse action.

SACSCOC will not release correspondence with member and applicant institutions except under exceptional circumstances as decided by the President of SACSCOC or the Executive Council or as noted under Item V of this document. SACSCOC may share correspondence between members or applicant institutions with other accrediting commissions of higher education, or with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or the U. S. Department of Education in conjunction with the recognition process.

V. Public Statements by Institutions

In accord with federal regulation 34 CFR 602.23, if an institution elects to disclose its accredited or candidate status granted by SACSCOC's Board of Trustees, the institution must disclose an accurate statement of status, including the specific degree levels covered by that status and the name and contact information for SACSCOC. The institution is required to comply with related statements in the SACSCOC policy [*Institutional Obligations For Public Disclosure*](#).

If an institution uses the public forum to take issue with an official action (relating to that institution) of SACSCOC Board of Trustees or with related activities, or provides incorrect or misleading information about its accredited or candidate status or about the contents of visiting committee reports or about the Board of Trustees accrediting action with regard to the institution, then SACSCOC may consider this action a breach of Integrity (Core Requirement 1.1 of the *Principles of Accreditation*) or evidence of any of the other accrediting standards and take one of the following actions: (1) the President of SACSCOC may make available to the public relevant information, including peer review committee reports and notification letters; (2) the President of SACSCOC may authorize a Special Committee to review institutional compliance with CR 1.1 (*Integrity*) or any other related accreditation standards; or (3) the President of SACSCOC may refer the case to the Board of Trustees for action on the institution's accreditation. This provision does not to apply to the announcement by an institution that it intends to appeal an adverse action.

In accordance with 34 CFR Section 602.26(b), member institutions which have been placed or continued on Probation, Probation for Good Cause, or denied initial accreditation or removed from membership are required to accurately disclose the SACSCOC Board of Trustees' action within seven (7) business days of receipt of the official action letter to all constituencies, including Board members, administrators, faculty, staff, current and prospective students and any other constituencies about the sanction and how to contact SACSCOC for further information. Institutions must disclose this status wherever it refers to its SACSCOC accreditation. SACSCOC will monitor these disclosures to ensure they are accurate and align with the SACSCOC policy. Institutions must submit copies of their disclosure documents to the Institutional Portal, under the Institutional Profile tab, selecting "information about Institutional Disclosure" no later than seven (7) business days following receipt of the action letter. SACSCOC will retain this information as part of the institution's record. Such institutions must also submit an Institutional Contingency Teach-Out Plan to SACSCOC within 30 days of notification of the Board of Trustees' action.

In furtherance of 34 CFR Section 602.26(e), for member institutions that have been placed or continued on Probation, Probation for Good Cause, denied initial accreditation, or removed from membership, SACSCOC will draft a Disclosure Statement to post on its website and provide the institution an opportunity to comment on the statement prior to posting. Official institutional comment will be noted with the Disclosure Statement. Any misleading consumer information or misrepresentation of SACSCOC's accreditation actions will require the institution's immediate corrective action as directed by SACSCOC staff. The institutional comment must be on institutional letterhead, signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, and submitted as a PDF document. Hyperlinks are not permitted to be used. The submission of an optional institutional comment must be provided to SACSCOC within 60 calendar days from the date of the action. For additional information, refer to SACSCOC policy, *Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership*.

VI. Information Required by the U.S. Department of Education, the Appropriate State Licensing or Authorizing Agency, and the Appropriate Accrediting Agencies

In accordance with 34 CFR Section 602.26, SACSCOC provides the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, appropriate State licensing or authorizing agencies, and appropriate accrediting agencies written notice of the following decisions and actions:

- a. decisions on initial or renewed accreditation (notification within 30 days of the Board of Trustees' decisions)
- b. final decisions on probation or warning (public sanctions), or final decisions to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate accreditation or candidacy (notification same time as informing the institution, not to exceed 30 days after the decision)
- c. a brief statement by SACSCOC summarizing reasons for denial, withdrawal, suspension, or termination and the official comments, if any, that the affected institution may wish to make with regard to that decision, or evidence that the affected institution has been offered the opportunity to provide official comment (notification within 60 days of the decision)
- d. decision of an institution's voluntary withdrawal from accreditation or candidacy or an accreditation suspension (notification within 10 days of the decision).

In accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR 602.27, SACSCOC submits, upon request from the U.S. Secretary of Education, information regarding an accredited or candidate institution's compliance with its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities, including its eligibility to participate in Title IV, HEA programs, for the purpose of assisting the Secretary in resolving problems with the institution's participation in these programs. In addition, SACSCOC submits the name of any institution it accredits that SACSCOC has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse and the reason for SACSCOC's concern.

SACSCOC will inform the institution when it submits the institution's name to the Secretary for any of the reasons cited above unless either of the following conditions apply: (1) Commission staff has reviewed the institutional case and the issues presented by the U.S. Department of Education and has concluded that confidentiality is necessary to resolve issues identified by the Department or (2) the Department specifically requests that the contact remain confidential.

In accordance with federal regulation 602.28, SACSCOC, upon request, shares with other appropriate recognized accrediting agencies and recognized State approval agencies information about the accreditation and candidacy status of an institution, and any adverse actions it has taken against an accredited or candidate institution.

The application of SACSCOC for recognition constitutes a grant of authority to the U.S. Secretary of Education to conduct site visits and to gain access to Commission records, personnel, and facilities on an announced or unannounced basis (CFR 602.10(b)).

VII. Information Released to the Public

SACSCOC provides to the public written notice of the following decisions and actions:

- a. decisions on initial or renewed candidacy and accreditation (notification within 30 days of the Board of Trustees decision)
- b. final decisions on probation or warning (public sanctions), or final decisions to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate accreditation or candidacy (notification within 24 hours of informing the institution)
- c. a brief statement summarizing reasons for denial, withdrawal, suspension, or termination and the official comments, if any, that the affected institution makes regarding the action (notification upon request)
- d. decisions of an institution's voluntary withdrawal from accreditation or candidacy or an accreditation suspension (notification upon request).

SACSCOC maintains and makes available to the public the following documents at www.sacscoc.org: *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*; *Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions*; *Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports*; and *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

VIII. Required notices and documents submitted to the U.S. Department of Education

In accordance with 34 CFR 602.27, SACSCOC notifies the U.S. Secretary of Education of any changes to policies, procedures, and standards that affect SACSCOC's scope of recognition with the U.S. Department of Education or its compliance with the criteria for recognition.

In addition, SACSCOC submits the following documents to the U.S. Department of Education: a copy of its Annual Report; a copy of its directory of accredited and candidate institutions, as updated annually; and, upon request by the Secretary, a summary of SACSCOC's major accrediting activities during the previous year.

IX. Information about member or applying institutions made available to the public

SACSCOC will release the following information about member or applying institutions:

- a. For all institutions, the name of the institution, current accreditation status (applicant, candidate, member), address and contact numbers, degree levels offered, approximate enrollment, and type of governance
- b. For a member institution, the date of initial candidacy (if applicable), initial accreditation, recent reaffirmation of accreditation, and next reaffirmation of accreditation
- c. For an applicant or candidate institution, the date of authorization of a Candidacy Committee, date of initial candidacy, date of candidacy renewal, and the date of initial membership
- d. The date and type (candidacy, initial accreditation, reaffirmation, substantive change, special) of an institution's most recent on-site evaluation, subsequent Board of Trustee action, specific areas of the *Principles* identified for continued monitoring (if applicable), and authorization of a Special Committee resulting from Board of Trustee action (if applicable)
- e. Date of submission and type of institution's most recent monitoring report, subsequent SACSCOC Board of Trustees action, specific areas of the *Principles* identified for continued monitoring (if applicable), and authorization of a Special Committee resulting from Board of Trustee action (if applicable)
- f. Due date and type of institution's next monitoring report (if applicable) resulting from previous review of an on-site evaluation or of a monitoring report
- g. The date and nature of any negative action taken by the Board of Trustees (warning, probation, denial of reaffirmation, denial of authorization of a Candidacy Committee, denial of approval of substantive change) and the reasons for the action citing specific areas of the *Principles*
- h. The date and nature of any adverse action taken by the Board of Trustees (the appealable actions of denial of candidacy, removal from candidacy, denial of membership, removal from membership) and the reasons for the action citing specific areas of the *Principles*
- i. For an adverse action, whether the institution has appealed and, if applicable, the date of the appeal
- j. Any action of the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly and the effective date of the decision.

SACSCOC will post on its website formal disclosure statements for the following actions regarding the accreditation status of institutions: (1) institutions placed or continued on Warning or Probation; (2) institutions removed from accreditation or candidacy; (3) institutions denied initial candidacy or accreditation; (4) institutions denied authorization of a Candidacy Committee; and (5) Special Committees authorized separate from another Board of Trustee action. Such a statement will be specific to the institution and disclose the following information: (1) the status of the institution, (2) the definition of the Board of Trustee action taken, (3) the reason for the action, (4) the next step in the institution's review, and (5) any other recent action taken by the Board of Trustees that can be disclosed.

If the Board of Trustees removes an institution from candidacy or membership, SACSCOC may release a statement to the institution's academic community informing faculty, staff, students, and other affected parties of the decision of SACSCOC and reasons for the action.

X. Information made available during the Business Meeting of the College Delegate Assembly

The names of institutions acted upon by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees during its summer and annual meeting will be read during the Business Meeting of the College Delegate Assembly. Those actions are listed below. When announcing appealable actions during the College Delegate Assembly Business Meeting, the reading will be prefaced using the following statement: "Appealable actions do not go into effect until the appeal period of ten days following notification has expired. If the institution appeals within this time period, it maintains the status held prior to the Board of Trustee decision until the appeal has been resolved."

- a. Reaffirmation of accreditation

- b. Denial of reaffirmation, continuation of accreditation, and imposition of Warning or Probation
- c. Awarding of initial membership
- d. Denial of initial membership
- e. Awarding of initial candidacy
- f. Removal from candidacy
- g. Denial of candidacy
- h. Removal from Warning or Probation
- i. Imposition or continuation of Warning or Probation
- j. Removal from membership

XI. Information Published on SACSCOC’s Website

The following Board of Trustee actions will be posted on the SACSCOC’s website:

- a. Reaffirmation of accreditation
- b. Denial of reaffirmation, continuation of accreditation, and imposition of Warning or Probation
- c. Awarding of initial membership
- d. Denial of initial membership
- e. Awarding of initial candidacy
- f. Renewal of candidacy status (within the four-year period)
- g. Removal from candidacy
- h. Denial of candidacy
- i. Authorization of a Candidacy Committee
- j. Denial of authorization to host a Candidacy Committee
- k. Approval of substantive change
- l. Continued accreditation following review of substantive change
- m. Denial of approval of substantive change
- n. Removal from Warning or Probation
- o. Imposition or continuation of Warning or Probation
- p. Removal from accreditation
- q. Authorization of a Special Committee (separate from another Board of Trustee action)
- r. Continued accreditation following review by a Special Committee (separate from another Board of Trustee action)
- s. Monitoring Reports

Where appropriate, written announcements will include those actions which have been appealed by including the following statement: “Subsequent to the official action of SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the institution has appealed the decision. Until the decision of the Appeals Committee is final, the institution maintains the status held prior to SACSCOC’s appealable action.” Formal disclosure statements will be removed from the website within 30 days after the action has been resolved.

Document History

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