

## **Update on Accreditation Status**

**of**

**Paine College, Augusta, Georgia**

**Posted: May 29, 2020**

On June 16, 2016, Paine College, located in Augusta, Georgia, was removed from membership with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). On September 19, 2016, the leadership of SACSCOC agreed to a Consent Order granting Preliminary Injunction that reinstated the accreditation of Paine College with SACSCOC. Paine College continued as a member on Probation pending further Order of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

In an opinion and order signed on October 11, 2018, the Honorable Thomas H. Thrash, Jr., United States District Judge, granted the Motion for Summary Judgment filed by SACSCOC, directed that the judgment be entered in favor of the Commission, and denied the Partial Summary Judgment requested by Paine College. The institution had 30 days to appeal the decision of the District Court. The institution filed a motion for reconsideration with the District Court.

On February 8, 2019, the Court ruled the Clerk erroneously entered final judgment in favor of SACSCOC based on the October 11, 2018, order. The Court ruled that its previous order granted SACSCOC Summary Judgment on all federal claims and did not rule on Paine College's attorneys' fees claim; but, the attorneys' fees claim was dismissed for lack of jurisdiction. The Court further ruled that the Clerk was directed to reenter final judgment in favor of SACSCOC and against Paine College, that Paine College had 30 days from entry of judgment to file a notice of appeal, and that the Preliminary Injunction reinstating the accreditation of Paine College remained in effect for 30 days and, if Paine College filed a timely appeal, for the pendency of the appeal.

On March 8, 2019, Paine College filed an appeal of the District Court's decision. The Preliminary Injunction reinstating the accreditation of Paine College remained in effect for the duration of the appeal.

On April 16, 2020, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit affirmed the District Court's decision granting summary judgment in favor of SACSCOC. Subsequently, Paine College petitioned the Eleventh Circuit to stay the mandate of its affirmation. The Eleventh Circuit denied the stay and issued its mandate to affirm the District Court decision.

Accordingly, on May 29, 2020, the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia determined the preliminary injunction is terminated and of no further force and effect. Therefore, Paine College is removed from membership immediately.

SACSCOC is the institutional accreditor responsible for accrediting degree-granting institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and some international institutions. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees is the representative body of the 793-member College Delegate Assembly and is charged with carrying out the accreditation process. To gain or maintain accreditation, an institution must comply with SACSCOC policies and with all standards contained in the *Principles of Accreditation*.

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