

MEMORANDUM

TO: SACSCOC Membership

FROM: Belle S. Wheelan, President

DATE: August 23, 2021

Update on SACSCOC Matters Related to the Coronavirus Pandemic for the 2021-22 Academic Year: Guidance for Institutions

As institutions begin the 2021-22 academic year and manage the ongoing consequences of the pandemic, SACSCOC is providing the following guidance as it relates to SACSCOC accreditation. Because the pandemic is rapidly changing, this guidance is subject to change when necessary. If our guidance changes, updates will be emailed to institutional CEOs and Accreditation Liaisons and made available on the SACSCOC website's *Coronavirus and the Commission* webpage at <https://sacscoc.org/coronavirus-and-the-commission/>, also accessible by link at the bottom of the SACSCOC homepage.

Temporary Emergency Relocation of Instruction

- If an institution **begins** a term by a method of delivery (e.g., distance education) as a response to the pandemic and intends to return to the customary method of delivery (e.g., face-to-face) when the pandemic subsides, then no action with SACSCOC is required.
- If an institution **changes** the method of delivery **after** a term begins (e.g., starts face-to-face and moves to distance education) as a response to the pandemic, then no action with SACSCOC is required at this time. However, if we later determine there are any actions an institution must take with SACSCOC, we will provide further guidance at that time. Because the situation is fluid, we're trying to avoid creating unnecessary or multiple obligations for an institution.

Waiver of Distance Education Approval

Last year, for institutions not already approved to offer programs by distance education, the U.S. Department of Education allowed SACSCOC to offer temporary approval waivers upon request. As a result of the untimely response of the Department to extend the waiver, institutions not approved for distance education were required to submit a prospectus for distance learning approval if distance education was expected to continue after December 31, 2020. Institutions were informed of their obligation to secure distance education approval; therefore, no additional waivers will be granted.

Academic Calendar Changes

An institution changing its academic calendar as a response to the pandemic is reminded of its obligations, without exception, to the *Principles of Accreditation* and policies. If an institution must change its academic calendar, institutions are asked to inform SACSCOC President Belle Wheelan by email at bwheelan@sacscoc.org. Until and unless individual responses are warranted, receipt will be acknowledged by SACSCOC by email and no other written response will be provided.

