

NEWS RELEASE

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**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges announces new president Stephen L. Pruitt**

**ATLANTA, GA**— Stephen L. Pruitt has been named the next president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Pruitt was unanimously elected by the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees following a multi-month search for the institution's new leader.

"I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity to lead SACSCOC. Higher education in all its forms are the engine of our Southern economy. I am very excited to work with the staff, the institutions, and the higher education community at large to build on our rich history but with an eye toward the future.

Pruitt comes to the role with more than 30 years of professional experience in the field of education. With skills and experience ranging from leading classroom instruction to, most recently, serving as the president of the Southern Regional Education Board, Pruitt's knowledge of all aspects of education makes him highly qualified to lead SACSCOC as it enters this new chapter.

Pruitt has earned degrees from three SACSCOC accredited institutions: a Bachelor of Science in chemistry from University of North Georgia, a Master of Education in secondary science from University of West Georgia, and a Doctor of Philosophy in chemistry education from Auburn University. Throughout his professional career Pruitt has led multiple education governing bodies, including as commissioner of education for the Kentucky Department of Education, and as chief of staff and associate state superintendent for the Georgia Department of Education.

With almost 800 members across the United States and in international institutions, SACSCOC is the second largest institutional accrediting body in the country. As the new president, Pruitt will have the important opportunity to guide the organization through a pivotal time in its history, charting a forward-looking path for SACSCOC that enhances its operational effectiveness, and shaping the future of higher education accreditation.

“For 130 years, SACSCOC has played a vital role in the quality improvement, accountability, and effectiveness, of colleges and universities. This charge is perhaps more vital now than ever before, as the landscape of higher education continues to change,” SACSCOC Board of Trustees Chair Blaine Hansen said. “With his passion for education, and his years of experience in the field, I have no doubt that Dr. Pruitt will be an excellent leader to guide SACSCOC on this path.”

Pruitt will be officially installed as president of SACSCOC on August 1, 2025, following the retirement of Belle S. Wheelan, who served in the role for 20 years.

[Learn more about SACSCOC >>](#)

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The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is an institutional accreditor for quality assurance in higher education. SACSCOC accredits institutions that award associate, baccalaureate, master’s, or doctoral degrees, including those offered via distance and correspondence education, and direct assessment within these institutions. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among its members in the United States and international institutions of higher education approved by the SACSCOC Executive Council, Board of Trustees, and the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly.