

Virginia Highlands Community College SACS Substantive Change Notification Policy

Purpose

Compliance with SACS criterion 3.12.1.

Policy

All substantive changes will be reported to The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in accordance with SACS COC policy on “Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges.”

Responsibility

In accordance with the Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy Statement, the College reviews all forms of substantive change anticipated in the coming year by **February 15** and **October 15** of each year.

In order to ensure all forms of substantive change are captured in each review, responsibility for initiating the reporting of each form of substantive change is designated to specific administrator(s) at the institution (Appendix A). Prior to each review, the SACS Liaison and Vice President of Instruction and Student Services notify the Administrative Team of the upcoming review. Designated administrators conduct the review using data from the Office of Institutional Research and notify the SACS Liaison and Vice President of any anticipated substantive changes. The Liaison and Vice President jointly prepare documentation in accordance with the Commission’s policies, and the President’s office sends the information to the Commission.

Procedures

Closing a Program

The Commission requires *six months prior notification and prior approval* from the Commission before closing a program.

When the college anticipates a program closure, the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services informs the VHCC’s Accreditation Liaison at least seven months in advance of the effective date and jointly prepares a letter of notification to SACS of the closure and provides all relevant information about the date for discontinuation, notification of students, and teach-out procedures. The President’s Office sends the letter of notification to the Commission six months in advance of the program discontinuation date.

Expanding at the current degree level – significant departure from current programs

The Commission requires *six months prior notification and prior approval* from the Commission before implementing programs that are a significant departure from current programs.

When the college anticipates opening a new associate degree, certificate, or career studies certificate that differs significantly from existing programs, the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services informs the VHCC's Accreditation Liaison at least seven months in advance of the effective date and jointly prepares a letter of notification to SACS and a full prospectus. The President's Office sends the letter of Notification to the Commission six months in advance of the program implementation date.

Expanding at the current degree level – *not* a significant departure from current programs

VHCC will continue to notify the Commission of non-substantive changes to program offerings. When the college anticipates opening a new associate degree, certificate, or career studies certificate program that *does not differ significantly* from existing programs, the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services informs VHCC's Accreditation Liaison and jointly prepares an appropriate letter of notification for the Commission. The President's Office sends the letter of notification to the Commission.

Initiating Distance Learning

VHCC has been approved by the Commission for the electronic delivery of 50 percent or more of a program's credits. VHCC will continue to notify the Commission of changes to the list of programs VHCC offers by electronic delivery and the percentage of credits students can earn by electronic delivery in each of the college's programs.

Distance Learning offerings will be regularly monitored in order to identify and notify the Commission in advance of programs in which students will be able to earn 25 to 49 percent of credits, or 50 percent or more credits, by distance learning. By **February 15** and **October 15** of each academic year, the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services and VHCC's Accreditation Liaison will jointly review the college's distance learning offerings using data provided by VHCC's Institutional Research Office, and determine what impact any new or anticipated distance learning offerings will have on programs not previously reported to the Commission. Timely notification involves the Academic Deans notifying the Vice President of distance learning course additions that could impact on program credits offered through distance learning. When it is anticipated that a student can earn a significant number of credits toward a program(s) by distance learning, the Vice President and Accreditation Liaison will prepare a letter of notification. The President's Office will send the notification to the Commission.

Initiating Off-Campus Sites

The Commission requires *six months prior notification and prior approval* from the Commission before initiating off-campus sites at which students can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward a program (or before students can earn more than 50 percent or more credits toward a program at an existing off-campus site). The Commission also requires *notification*

prior to implementation of any off-campus site at which students can obtain 25 – 49 percent of credits toward a program.

New Off-Campus Sites:

When VHCC anticipates offering credit courses at any *new location*, the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services provides to the Accreditation Liaison at least seven months in advance the location, list of anticipated course offerings, and an analysis of all programs for which students will be able to earn 25 – 49 percent and 50 percent or more credits at the new location. The Vice President and Accreditation Liaison prepare a letter of notification and full prospectus for the Commission. The President's Office sends the notification and prospectus to the Commission six months in advance of the program implementation date.

Significantly Different Programs at an Approved Off-Campus Sites:

Anticipated course offerings at approved off-campus sites will be regularly monitored in order to identify and notify the Commission in advance of *significantly different currently approved programs* in which students will be able to earn 25 to 49 percent of credits, or 50 percent or more credits. By **February 15** and **October 15** of each academic year, the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services and VHCC's Accreditation Liaison will jointly review the college's off-campus offerings for the next summer, fall, and spring semesters respectively, using data provided by VHCC's Institutional Research Office, and determine what impact any new or anticipated offerings will have on sites and programs not previously reported to the Commission. Timely notification involves the Academic Deans notifying the Vice President of off-campus course additions that could impact on program credits offered at the sites.

When it is anticipated that a student can earn a significant number of credits toward a program(s) at an off-campus site, the Vice President and Accreditation Liaison will prepare a letter of notification and, when appropriate, a prospectus for the Commission. The President's Office sends the notification to the Commission prior to implementation in accordance with SACS policy.

Initiating Program/Courses Offered Through Contractual Agreement or Consortium

The Commission requires *notification prior to implementation* of programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium.

The Vice President of Instruction and Student Services informs VHCC's Accreditation Liaison of any such agreements, and prior to implementation, jointly prepares a letter of notification for the Commission. The President's Office sends the notification and a copy of the signed agreement to the Commission.

Altering Significantly the Length of a Program

The Commission requires *six months prior notification and prior approval* from the Commission before altering significantly the length of a program.

The Vice President of Instruction and Student Services informs VHCC's Accreditation Liaison of any such change to the length of a program, and not less than six months prior to

implementation, jointly prepares a letter of notification and prospectus for the Commission. The President's Office sends the notification to the Commission.

Other Substantive Changes

The President and Vice President of Instruction and Student Services are responsible for monitoring VHCC's status in regard to all other substantive changes* and coordinating the appropriate notification to the Commission, as specified by Commission policies a) Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges and b) Mergers, Consolidations, Changes of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Changes of Governance Control, Form or Legal Status.

*Other substantive changes specified by SACS-COC policy include: initiating courses or programs at more advanced or lower levels than currently approved, initiating a branch campus, initiating a merger/consolidation, significantly altering the educational mission of the institution, relocating a campus, initiating degree completion programs, and changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status.

Appendix A

Type of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation	VHCC Staff Responsible for Initiation of Process
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	1	Yes	12 months	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: April 15 or October 1	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
Expanding at current degree level (<i>significant departure from current programs</i>) ¹	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
Initiating a branch campus (see definition of "branch campus" on p. 3)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
Initiating a certificate program... at employer's request and on short notice						Division Dean
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	None	
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus	
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs ¹	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus	
Initiating other certificate programs						Division Dean
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	None	
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs ¹	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	

Type of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation	VHCC Staff Responsible for Initiation of Process
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	President
Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution (See "Collaborative Academic Agreements: Policy and Procedures")						Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
Joint programs						
- With another SACSCOC accredited institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Copy of signed agreement and contact information Prospectus	
- With an institution not accredited by SACSCOC	2	Yes	6 months	Yes		
Dual programs	2	Yes	6 months	No	Copy of signed agreement and contact information	
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School programs offered at the high school) ...						Division Dean and Dual Enrollment Coordinator
...Student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	
...Student can obtain 25-49 percent of credit	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification	
...Student can obtain 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	none	
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites						Division Dean and Dual Enrollment Coordinator
...Adding programs that are significantly different from current programs <u>at this site</u>	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification	
...Adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs <u>at this site</u>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	

Type of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation	VHCC Staff Responsible for Initiation of Process
Altering significantly the length of a program	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	President
Initiating distance learning...						
...Offering 50 percent or more of a program <u>for the first time</u> (Adding subsequent programs requires advance notification only for programs that are significant departures from the originally approved programs) ¹	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	Division Dean
...Offering 25-49 percent	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification	
...Offering 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	None	
Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
....if the entity provides 25% or more of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution	2	Yes	6 months	No	Copy of the signed agreement	
...if the entity provides less than 25% of the educational program offered by the accredited institution						
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	See SACSCOC Policy "Mergers, Consolidations, and Change of Ownership"	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or October 1	President

Type of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation	VHCC Staff Responsible for Initiation of Process
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institutions	See SACSCOC Policy "Mergers, Consolidations, and Change of Ownership"	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or October 1	President
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	President
Relocating an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification with new address and starting date	President
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
Altering significantly the length of a program ³	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
Initiating degree completion Programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution						Vice President of Instruction and Student Services
...institution to teach out its own students	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification	
... institution contracts with another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out agreement)	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement detailing terms included with notification	
Acquiring any program or site from another institution	See SACSCOC Policy "Mergers, Consolidations,	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	President

Type of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation	VHCC Staff Responsible for Initiation of Process
Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out from students from another institution that is closing	See SACSCOC Policy "Mergers, Consolidations, and Change of Ownership"	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus	President

¹a significant departure in program is one in which the proposed new program has no closely related counterpart among the previously approved programs in the curriculum. To determine if a new program is a "significant departure", it is helpful to ask if the new program requires

- Numbers of new faculty?
- Many new courses?
- New library or other learning resources?
- New equipment or facilities?
- A new resource base?

²significant changes in mission are those that lead to a fundamental shift in the nature of the institution, such as an institution that had offered only professional programs deciding to add general education offerings, or a technical college transforming itself into a comprehensive community college.

³significant changes in program length are those with noticeable impact on the program's completion time (e.g., increasing a baccalaureate degree from 124 hours to 150 hours).