

## **Vernon College**

### **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY**

#### **Purpose**

Vernon College is obligated to report certain academic and administrative changes to our regional accreditor, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and in many instances must seek approval before initiating the change.

This policy and related procedure is designed to

- ensure SACSCOC notification of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes and
- ensure that all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC in a timely fashion.

#### **Procedure**

The College Effectiveness Committee and the Academic Council for Vernon College will provide oversight for substantive changes as defined by SACSCOC Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy and Procedure. Vernon College deans, directors, coordinators, or administrators must report proposed substantive changes in writing to the appropriate committee or council. Upon review and approval, the chair will forward the information to the Vernon College SACSCOC Liaison who will communicate to the Vernon College President. The President will forward recommended substantive changes to the Vernon College Board of Trustees for approval.

#### **Responsibility for Reporting Changes**

Upon approval of the recommended substantive change by the Board of Trustees, the SACSCOC Liaison will prepare notification to SACSCOC to assure that certain changes are communicated as required by SACSCOC policy and/or federal law. The SACSCOC Liaison will track the subsequent correspondence to its completion, keeping all affected parties informed of the progress.

#### **Lead Time Required**

Following approval by the Board of Trustees, a six month lead time for SACSCOC notification of approvals is required for most changes. In order to conform to the SACSCOC defined timelines, the SACSCOC Liaison must be notified in writing at least 8 months in advance. The Liaison is charged with reviewing SACSCOC policy to determine if a full six months or more will be required for SACSCOC approval; some changes will require only notification to SACSCOC before they are implemented. No substantive change will be implemented prior to SACSCOC notification of approval.

#### **Definitions of Substantive Changes**

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution

- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
- The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or reaffirmation.
- A change from clock hours to credit hours
- A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program.
- The establishment of a branch campus
- Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution
- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
- Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution
- Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. This policy and its procedures address substantive changes identified through Federal regulations and Board approval.

For a complete explanation of the College's required actions, a glossary of terms and the specific requirements for each type of change, see the SASCOC current policy on Substantive Changes at <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>.

### **Publication of this Policy**

This policy is published and made available on the Vernon College website as part of the Vernon College Board Policy Manual, the Employee Handbook, and SACSCOC Accreditation information.

### **Review of the Effectiveness of the Policy and Procedure**

Reports of compliance and the effectiveness of this policy and the related procedures will be made annually by the Vernon College Effectiveness Committee and Academic Council as scheduled on the Vernon College Annual Planning Calendar. Recommendations will be forwarded to the SACSCOC Liaison and President and presented to the Board of Trustees for appropriate action.

### **Responsible Authority**

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness/SACSCOC Liaison is responsible for communicating, publishing and implementing this policy and procedure across the College.

*Officially approved by the Vernon College Board of Trustees on June, 18, 2014*