



Academic Affairs Newsletter

by Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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Preparing for the SACS Visit

The SACS reaffirmation visit for institutional accreditation begins one week from today. For those new to higher education, this visit occurs every ten years. Our regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), conducts the review using a committee. The Visiting Committee is made of faculty and administrators from peer institutions in the SACSCOC region. The process began almost three years ago when President Cale appointed a SACS Leadership Team to direct the effort aimed at gathering the information required to document institutional compliance with the 80+ standards established by SACSCOC.

With the help of faculty, staff, and administrators across campus, those efforts produced a compliance report that was submitted in the fall of 2011. An offsite committee of SACSCOC reviewed that report in November and provided a report outlining areas that needed additional attention. In January, UNA completed two documents and submitted them to SACSCOC and to the Visiting Committee. The first was a document detailing our response to the off campus committee evaluation report. The second was our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) report.

The Visiting Committee is in the process of reviewing all documents that have been submitted by UNA. Their visit next week will address concerns that have arisen from that review, compliance validation required by SACSCOC for certain standards, and an evaluation of our QEP. The visitors will arrive on Monday, February 27 and begin initial deliberations. On Tuesday, February 28, they will complete their review of compliance standards and begin to examine the QEP. The committee will complete the QEP review on Wednesday. An exit conference will be conducted on Thursday, the final day of the visit. The Chair of the Visiting Committee will compile the findings and prepare a report for submission to SACSCOC. The annual meeting of SACSCOC is scheduled for December in Dallas and if all goes well, UNA will have its accreditation reaffirmed at that time.

Membership of the Committee

Dr. Stephen T. Hulbert, President, Nicholls State University (Committee Chair); Dr. Heidi M. Anderson, Interim VP for Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness/Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, University of Kentucky; Dr. Irvin R. Clark, Vice President for Student Affairs, Savannah State University; Dr. Bryan P. Davis, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, Georgia Southwestern State University; Dr. Tristan Denley, Provost and VP for Academic Affairs, Austin Peay State University; Mr. Arthur J. Henderson, Assistant Administrator (Interim) for Land-Grant Affairs, Fort Valley State University; Dr. Beverly M. Moon, Dean of Research, Assessment, and Planning, Delta State University (Lead QEP Evaluator); Dr. Mitchell J. Muehsam, Dean of the College of Business Administration, Sam Houston State University; Dr. Mary E. Sias, President/CEO, Kentucky State University; and Dr. Marcy P. Stoll, Vice President, Commission on Colleges (SACS Staff Representative).

Substantive Change

SACSCOC recently came out with several revisions to their policies on substantive change, some in response to new federal requirements. One requires that institutions have in place policies and procedures for how, and by whom, substantive change is monitored on the campus. At UNA, the Council of Academic Deans, in collaboration with the departments, is charged with such monitoring. However, the process needed to be clarified and stated to meet SACSCOC requirements. The SACS Leadership Team and COAD crafted a document that provides the steps for those efforts. The document is provided as an attachment to this e-mail.

What Can You Do to Help with the Visit?

The QEP is a campus-wide initiative. Please review the website shared earlier by Dr. Keys-Mathews and become familiar with the QEP. If you have questions, please contact her.

Be aware that visitors will be on campus from Monday-Wednesday. Should they visit your office, assist them in whatever is needed and take extra steps to assist them with directions and any information requested.

Should you have a SACSCOC compliance concern, please direct it to Celia Reynolds, our SACS Liaison. She will share it with the Visiting Committee Chair for action.

Faculty, please announce the visit to your classes so students will be aware.

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| <u>Faculty Senate</u> | <u>Staff Senate</u> | <u>Academic Calendar</u> | <u>Academic Departments</u> | <u>Handbook and Policies</u> |
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