

# Lincoln Memorial University

## Substantive Change Reporting Policy and Procedure

### **Purpose of the Policy:**

This policy is designed to ensure compliance with Comprehensive Standards 3.12 and 3.12.1 of *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, and to ensure that the University, and each of its Academic Programs, operates within its mission and consistent with good practice in higher education. LMU's mission specifically includes the statement, "By making educational and research opportunities available to students, Lincoln Memorial University seeks to advance life throughout the Appalachian region and beyond through teaching, research and service." Institutional Goal #12 declares that the University seeks to, "Provide quality educational opportunities through selected degree programs for students who live or work a significant distance from the Lincoln Memorial University main campus, and for whom other options are not as accessible or satisfactory." Each academic unit and program mission statement is aligned with the institutional mission statement.

### **Policy**

It is the policy of Lincoln Memorial University (LMU) to comply with the accreditation requirements for reporting substantive changes. To fulfill its obligation as a SACSCOC member institution, LMU will notify the Commission on Colleges of changes in accordance with the Commission's substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of substantive changes.

This policy was developed in recognition of the requirement for SACSCOC member institutions to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion.

LMU is responsible for complying with the Substantive Change policy as a condition of its continued accreditation by SACSCOC. Substantive change is defined by SACSCOC as "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 percent 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 such as a dual degree program or a joint degree 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. When the University is unsure whether a change is substantive in nature, the University will contact SACSCOC for clarification.

## **Procedures**

### **Responsibilities of Trustees, President, Vice Presidents, Academic School Deans, Program Directors, and Faculty:**

The LMU Board of Trustees reviews and approves substantive changes, on recommendation of the President.

The President reviews proposals for substantive change and recommends proposals determined to be acceptable to the Board of Trustees for their consideration.

Academic Vice Presidents recommend substantive changes to the President, after consulting with the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison (Vice President for Academic Affairs) and attending to the appropriate institutional curriculum approval processes, including Academic Council review.

Academic Council reviews proposed substantive changes and endorses successful proposals.

Academic School Deans approve proposed substantive changes and bring successful proposals to the Academic Council for endorsement and later presentation to the full University faculty. School Deans must approve any substantive changes prior to submission to their respective Vice President.

Vice Presidents, Academic School Deans, Program Directors, and Faculty have responsibility to be generally aware of the substantive change policy, and to inform the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison at the earliest point possible of any proposal that may be considered a substantive change. Vice Presidents, Academic School Deans, Program Directors, and Faculty also have responsibility to provide the SACSCOC Liaison with any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy, when requested. Faculty must approve substantive changes that originate in their Academic School prior to submission of the proposal to Academic Council.

SACS Accreditation Liaison:

- Provides the Vice Presidents, Academic School Deans, and Program Directors with information about the SACSCOC substantive change policy. This includes, but is not limited to, providing information at meetings of the Academic Council, Institutional Effectiveness Committee and University Strategic Planning Retreats.
- Works with other Vice Presidents, Academic School Deans, and Program Directors to determine whether a proposed change is substantive.
- Determines what action is needed with respect to SACSCOC when a change is substantive in nature.
- Files the appropriate notice or prospectus with SACSCOC.
- Coordinates with SACSCOC and the Vice Presidents, Academic School Deans, and Program Directors about any required follow-up action.

### Notification of SACS Liaison of Proposed Changes

If a change is substantive, SACSCOC must be notified as much as 12 months in advance of implementing the change. Upon becoming aware of a proposed change that may be substantive, Vice Presidents, Academic School Deans, and Program Directors of the academic unit proposing the change should notify the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison. The appropriate Vice President and/or Academic School Dean will provide the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison with a copy of the proposed substantive change prior to the Academic Council meeting in which endorsement will be sought. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will then determine if any proposal could be considered a substantive change.

### Late Notification of SACS Liaison

If it is discovered that a substantive change has been implemented without notification of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, the appropriate Vice President, Academic School Dean, or Program Director has responsibility to notify the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison immediately. It is then the responsibility of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to notify SACSCOC as provided in the SACSCOC Policy.

To ensure that proposals that may be considered substantive change do not go unreported, Vice Presidents and Academic School Deans will perform an annual review of curriculum taking into consideration this substantive change policy.

### Regular Review of the Policy and Procedures

A review of all anticipated academic initiatives will be conducted at the Annual Strategic Planning Retreat to monitor potential substantive changes. This policy and procedures will be reviewed at the Annual Strategic Planning Retreat and at the first meeting of the Academic Council each Fall semester (beginning Fall 2014).

Reference: SACSCOC **Comprehensive Standards 3.12 and 3.12.1**

### **Reference documents:**

1. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission of Colleges (SACSCOC) *The Principles of Accreditation*, Section 3.12 and Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1

**Comprehensive Standard 3.12- Responsibility for compliance with the Commission's substantive change procedures and policy**

The Commission on Colleges accredits the entire institution and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. Accreditation, specific to an institution, is based on conditions existing at the time of the most recent evaluation and is not transferable to other institutions or entities.

When an accredited institution significantly modifies or expands its scope, changes the nature of its affiliation or its ownership, or merges with another institution, a substantive change review is required. The Commission is responsible for evaluating all substantive changes to assess the impact of the change on the institution's compliance with defined standards. If an institution fails to follow the Commission's procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its total accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. (*See Commission policy "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions."*) If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact Commission staff for consultation.

An applicant, candidate, or member institution in litigation with the Commission may not undergo substantive change.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1-** The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission's substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes.  
(Substantive change)

Internet access:

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAccreditation.pdf>

2. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), *Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges*

Internet access: <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>

**Implementation Date:**

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**Published:**

LMU Website (Academics)

Posting on Pathway (Internal Portal)

Faculty/Staff Policy Manual (to begin Fall 2014)