

# **Bluegrass Community and Technical College Policy and Procedures on Substantive Change Reporting to Commission on Colleges**

**Responsible Unit:** President's Office, Vice President of Academics, Accreditation Liaison

**Reference:**

Comprehensive Standard 3.12 of the *Principles of Accreditation of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of College and Schools, Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy Statement* (Revised: Board of Trustees, Commission on Colleges, June 2009 located at <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>)

**Date approved:** August 18, 2009

**Date(s) revised:** August 15, 2011

**Policy Statement**

*The Commission on Colleges (COC) Policy Statement* referenced above defines substantive change.

“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 at a degree or credential level above 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”

BCTC is committed to meeting requirements for substantive change notice to and/or approval by the COC and has implemented procedures imbedded in the annual unit planning and assessment process to ensure meeting its obligations under this commission policy. The types of substantive changes and the procedures for addressing them appropriately may be found in the commission's policy referenced above.

The college president, accreditation liaison, and Academics vice president are charged with ensuring notification to and approval by the commission of substantive changes at BCTC. Based on the commission policy, potential substantive changes include:

- Academic offerings:
  - Initiation of program(s) at more advanced level
  - Significant departure from program(s) at current level
  - Initiation of program(s) at lower degree level
  - Adding significantly different program(s), already approved, at an approved site
  - Initiating program(s) or course(s) through contractual agreement
  - Altering significantly the length of a program
  - Initiating degree completion programs
  - Closing a program
- Initiation of a new branch campus
- Initiation at off-campus sites offering:
  - 50% or more credits toward program
  - 25-49% of credits
- Merger/consolidation
- Altering educational mission
- Relocating a campus
- Changing governance or ownership

The accreditation liaison will be familiar with the commission's policies and procedures, ensure that substantive changes are recognized and reported in a timely fashion, and consult with the

institution's COC staff member about any questions. The COC paper, *The Accreditation Liaison*, (<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/accreditation%20liaison.pdf>) lists responsibilities.

For academic or program changes, the vice president of Academics has authority for initiating program-related changes that may trigger a substantive change notice. In addition, the BCTC Faculty Council and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) Senate have a role in curriculum development as defined by the *Rules of the BCTC Faculty* and the *KCTCS Senate Rules*. For all other types of anticipated substantive changes, the president has authority for initiating changes that may trigger a substantive change notice. The president will collect information annually about proposed changes to college programs, instructional delivery methods or locations, branch campuses, governance, or other areas of the college.

### **Procedures for Ensuring Substantive Change Reporting**

In order to ensure the identification of changes requiring notice to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (COC), Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) has implemented appropriate strategies. The college's review for all types of substantive changes is imbedded in the annual planning and assessment review process. The Policy and Procedures on Substantive Change Reporting to Commission on Colleges ([http://www.bluegrass.kctcs.edu/en/Faculty\\_and\\_Staff/Policy\\_and\\_Procedures/Administrative.aspx](http://www.bluegrass.kctcs.edu/en/Faculty_and_Staff/Policy_and_Procedures/Administrative.aspx)) is included in the online BCTC Policies and Procedures Handbook under Administrative Policies to ensure access by all employees.

These strategies include:

1. The college's review for all types of substantive changes is imbedded in the annual planning and assessment review process. Each annual planning unit responds to an analysis question, during the evaluation phase, to help identify reportable substantive changes.
2. The review for COC reportable changes has been included in the Administrative and Planning Annual Calendar.
3. The vice president of Academics maintains a list with courses offered at all "off-campus" sites and reviews annually as course schedules are developed and finalized.
4. The responsibilities of the accreditation liaison are attached to the Performance Planning and Evaluation document of the employee appointed to be liaison and are evaluated annually.
5. An item is included in the Performance Planning and Evaluation planning document for the vice president Academics and in the job description of the president to address the responsibilities for meeting all requirements of accreditation.

## **Use of Analysis Question in Annual Unit Evaluations**

The college's review for all types of substantive changes is imbedded in the annual planning and assessment review process. An analysis question to identify potential reportable substantive changes is included during the evaluation period. Each annual planning unit responds to the question: "Any changes to report to SACS?" This question provides a link to the COC website and the *Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy Statement* (<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>) to allow department heads, division assistant deans, or program coordinators to consider this question.

As part of the evaluation in the *President's Office Annual Plan*, the responses to this question are reviewed, in consultation with the Leadership Executive Team to determine if there are reportable changes, for example, to curriculum, operations, governance, or locations. This review, completed by June annually, provides for a timely determination of any planned substantive changes. This schedule will allow for appropriate notification to the COC of at least six months in advance for approval of substantive changes, if required.

The academic review related to substantive change is part of the annual review process for academic programs. The *Program Health Review* planning and evaluation process is completed by the program coordinators. This process will require program-level changes to be noted and reported on a timely basis. Below are process details that emphasize timely COC notification when required.

### **Program Health Review Purpose**

BCTC's Program Health Review is an annual systematic process to assess the extent to which a program is achieving defined objectives and outcomes of the college in order to show continuous program improvement. The review is a vehicle for proactive development based on the college's accountability standards and those of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, regional and program accrediting agencies, and governmental agencies. It allows faculty and academic leadership to see academic and occupational trends as they evolve, identify program strengths and weaknesses, and develop plans to keep current with constituents' needs.

### **Program Health Review Process**

All instructional programs participate annually in the first level of the Program Health Review. Within this level, each program coordinator is provided trend data specific to his or her program, e.g., program enrollments, student retention rates, student licensure pass rates, job placement rates, student satisfaction rates, and employer satisfaction rates. In consultation with program faculty, the program coordinator comments on each data set and responds to two questions concerning the program's areas of strength and areas requiring attention: "What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you have made on outcomes/objectives?" and "What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?"

Next, the program coordinator responds to the following question: “Any changes to report to SACS?” To assist in thorough consideration of this question, a link is provided to information on the following types of substantive changes that may occur at the program level:

- Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs)
- Initiating or expanding off-campus sites
  - Student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program (including degree, diploma or certificate)
  - Student can obtain 25-49 percent of credit
  - Student can obtain 24 percent or less
- Adding significantly different programs at an approved site (only if programs are currently approved)
- Initiating distance learning
  - Offering 50 percent or more of program
  - Offering 25-49 percent
  - Offering 24 percent or less
- Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium
- Altering significantly the length of a program
- Initiating degree completion programs
- Closing an institution/program; initiating teach-out agreements

### **Program Health Review Timeline**

By the first of December each year, the program coordinator submits his or her review to the program’s assistant dean and academic dean. The academic dean evaluates all Program Health Review materials and submits his or her response to the program coordinator, the program assistant dean, and the academic vice president by the third week of January. The academic vice president reviews this response in light of all Program Health Review materials and submits his response to the program coordinator, the program assistant dean, the academic dean, and the president before the end of January for her review. The president has access to all review materials from all programs.

Through this Program Health Review process, each program coordinator must consider annually program changes that may require COC notification, and the academic dean and academic vice president must review the program’s response to this consideration. Finally, the president reviews these materials annually.

**Addendum to Policy: (Excerpted from the *Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy Statement:***

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>)

**Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change**

The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting time lines are included in the table that follows.

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
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
Expanding at current degree level ( <i>significant departure from current programs</i> ) <sup>1</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a branch campus (see of definition of “branch campus”)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating joint degrees with another institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program... (typically for workforce development) ...using existing approved courses ...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	NA 1	NA Yes	NA Approval required prior to implementation	NA Yes	None Modified prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs <sup>1</sup>	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School programs offered at the high school) ...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 ...Adding programs that are significantly different from current programs	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution <sup>2</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating distance learning ...Offering 50 percent or more of a program (Adding subsequent programs requires advance notification <b>only</b> for programs that are significant departures from the originally approved programs) <sup>1</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
...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
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	3	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or October 1
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Relocating an off-campus instructional site	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the length of a program <sup>3</sup>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating degree completion programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Closing an institution or program: (see Commission policy " <b>Closing a Program or Institution</b> ")					
...closing a program with internal teach-out protocol	2	Yes	Prior to implementation		Description of plan
... closing a program with a teach-out agreement with another institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation		Copy of teach-out agreement
...closing an institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation		Description of plan

<sup>1</sup> a 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?
- 

<sup>2</sup> significant 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.

<sup>3</sup> significant 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).