

## MEMORANDUM

TO: SACSCOC Membership

FROM: Belle S. Wheelan, President

DATE: July 21, 2020

SUBJECT: SACSCOC Updates and Information

Greetings! I hope you continue to stay healthy and that you are able to get a little down time this summer. I am writing this note to update you on the latest happenings at SACSCOC.

### **MEETINGS**

As you already know, we cancelled the Summer Institute scheduled for this month. Due to health concerns in FL, we felt it was in the best interest of everyone to do so.

Additionally, we rescheduled the June meeting of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to August 31<sup>st</sup> through September 3<sup>rd</sup>. That meeting is now going to be a virtual meeting. Details on the meeting will be shared within the next week with Board members and institutional personnel who need to be available for interviews. We had the Off-Site Review Committee meeting and a Special meeting of the SACSCOC Board earlier this spring using our GlobalMeet virtual platform and it worked well.

We are now trying to decide if a virtual Annual Meeting is possible or if we should either reschedule the meeting in the late spring/early summer or just cancel it for this year. STAY TUNED for that decision.

We have also decided to CANCEL the Small College Initiative that was originally scheduled in April and rescheduled to October. Our aim is to host it next April, still focusing on finances, even if it has to be in a virtual format.

The Chair Training Workshop that was moved from August 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> to October 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> will also be offered virtually.

### **VISITS**

I have asked staff to discontinue travel through December. That means that all On-Site visits will be held virtually. We are still required to visit the institutions reviewed for their reaffirmation within a 'reasonable amount of time' to validate the responses to the On-Site report so, we are hopeful that next spring will allow us to conduct those visits. We appreciate everyone for making the shift from in-person visits to virtual visits. Not only does it protect staff and Committee members but it also protects the folks at the institution.

## **NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING**

As you may recall, effective July 1, 2020, the regional accrediting commissions will now be classified as “institutional” accreditors. Of the seven regional accrediting commissions, the WASC Senior College and University Commission and Middle States Commission on Higher Education have both indicated that they will now accept applications for membership from institutions located outside of what has traditionally been their ‘geographic region.’ This was made possible by changes resulting from the US Department of Education during their negotiated rulemaking last spring. While this action became effective on July 1<sup>st</sup>, since the SACSCOC Board of Trustees’ meeting was postponed from June until August/September, the issue has not yet been addressed by the SACSCOC Board. I will notify you of their decision in the email I will send after the Board meeting.

## **TRANSFER OF CREDIT**

For many years, the issue of transfer of credit has been a concern for students as well as for legislators. Earlier this month, I asked you to consider endorsing the CALL TO ACTION produced by a Task Force on which I served called the Interstate Passport that was sponsored by WICHE. It apparently was not clear that I was NOT asking you to ADOPT the Passport but to endorse the concept. I and the Task Force members are aware that faculty at your institution would need to be directly involved in any such strategy but now seems like a good time to visit the idea of how to make transfer easier for students.

Currently, SACSCOC policy appears to make it difficult for institutions to accept ‘blocks’ of credits without unbundling them into courses so, I am also taking a policy revision to the Executive Council and SACSCOC Board for their consideration to make this easier.

## **MUSIC**

If you know me, you know that I truly believe in the adage, “Music soothes the savage beast.” With each change in jobs I have experienced, the first thing I have moved into my new office was my radio/stereo. 😊 I say this because, while I generally don’t share information from vendors, I received information from one vendor that seemed like it might help you and your constituents stay calm during this pandemic.

It is from a gentleman named Dean Baldwin with WCPE (90.7 FM) classical radio station. He noticed that a number of university radio stations had gone silent due to the impacts of COVID-19. They would like to offer the free rebroadcast or relay of their signal to these stations so they will have the opportunity to always be on air. Unfortunately, they have found it difficult to connect with the proper individuals on your campus. He has assured me that what they are offering is free with no commitment or catch of any kind. If you’re interested in this service, please feel free to contact Mr. Baldwin at [dean.baldwin@theclassicstation.org](mailto:dean.baldwin@theclassicstation.org).

## **DISTANCE LEARNING/SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE**

Please remember that September 1, 2020, is the extended deadline for submitting a prospectus for an institution’s first distance learning program to be implemented January through June 2021. This deadline was extended from July 1<sup>st</sup> for this purpose only. Since we have NOT received notification that the US Department of Education will extend the waiver past

December 31<sup>st</sup>, if you intend to offer courses via distance in the spring and are not currently approved by SACSCOC to do so, you will need to submit a prospectus. September 1st is also the deadline for submitting substantive changes requiring review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees in December 2020 (governance change, merger/consolidation, acquisition, institutions on sanction, etc.).

#### **DATA MANAGEMENT (Salesforce)**

I would greatly appreciate it if you would go into the Evaluator Portal of our Data Management System and provide/update the contact information for your Administrative Assistant. When we can't get to you, it is very helpful to be able to contact your Assistant and that's not possible without their phone/email address.

#### **ANNIVERSARY**

This coming Friday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, will be the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my employment as President of SACSCOC!!! I find it difficult to believe that it has been that long but I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey. I truly appreciate all of the support each of you has given me over the years and look forward to continuing the journey with you.

As always, if there is anything I or the Staff can do to be of assistance to you, please feel free to call upon us. We are here to serve you.

HANG IN THERE and STAY SAFE! Thanks.

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