



## MEMORANDUM

TO: SACSCOC Membership  
FROM: Dr. Belle S. Wheelan, President  
DATE: January 18, 2024  
SUBJECT: Update from the December 2023 SACSCOC Annual Meeting/Board Meeting

Happy New Year! I hope you were able to get some much-deserved rest during the holidays and that you and your family stayed healthy and safe. This memo is being sent as a way of sharing information from the SACSCOC Annual Meeting and the SACSCOC Board of Trustees Meeting that were held this past December, as well as some informational tidbits. As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

### PRINCIPLES REVIEW COMMITTEE

As you know, an ad hoc Committee to review the Principles of Accreditation (Principles) was established last year. In addition to considering several tweaks to the current Principles that have been brought to our attention, there were two new areas this Committee was asked to consider: (1) A new standard on shared governance or an expansion of our standard on Academic Governance, and (2) how to encourage institutions to consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in all its endeavors.

The Committee circulated its suggested changes to the membership last fall. Only a handful of responses were received but the Committee reviewed them and submitted a draft to the Executive Council in March 2023. After its review, the draft was circulated to the membership once again and then sent to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees in June for approval. The College Delegate Assembly (the membership) approved the changes in December 2023 at its Business Meeting. The changes became effective January 1, 2024. Corresponding updates to the Resource Manual are being made and both the revised Principles and the Resource Manual will be available electronically from our website ([www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org)) by February 15, 2024.

### BUDGET

SACSCOC had a “clean” audit once again—16 straight years! Thanks to Lisa Robinson and her staff for a job well done. We are in line with spending for the current year, and we managed the budget for the SACSCOC Annual Meeting. We ended the fiscal year in the red due primarily

to health care costs; however, because of revenue in our investment account, we ended the year in the black. Our investment account holdings are \$9.3 million.

## LEGAL ISSUES

Pat McKee, SACSCOC legal counsel, reported that he is currently responding to a subpoena the Commission received from the State of Florida requesting every accreditation document for every institution in that state. The subpoena has been revised and is in response to a suit the state of Florida filed against the U.S. Secretary of Education.

## 2024 SMALL COLLEGE INITIAITVE

The 2024 Small College Initiative will focus on Effective Governance. The meeting is scheduled for April 9, 2024. Information pertaining to the meeting will be sent to the respective institutions soon.

## POLICIES

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees approved revisions to two policies at its December meeting. One was related to Complaints and the other related to Credit Hours.

The Complaints Policy was revised to permit electronic submissions of complaints; including an added menu of the standards for complainants to select for the basis of their complaint; the timeframe was changed from one year to two years within which a complaint may be filed from the time of the incident in question. In addition, language was codified for handling an 'anonymous' complaint, in which the institution would receive a courtesy call from the SACSCOC president, and if warranted, may proceed in accordance with the Commission's Unsolicited Information policy.

The Credit Hours policy added a section regarding 'exclusions' from the policy, namely, "If a program's formal degree requirement includes courses with zero (0) earned hours of academic credit, the institution should have a policy describing the conditions when such a practice is appropriate and a procedure for reviewing and approving such courses."

## SACSCOC STAFF REPORTS

### 2023-2028 Strategic Plan:

The framework for the new 2023-2028 SACSCOC Strategic Plan was presented to the Executive Council. The plan's theme is "Committed to Quality Since 1895." Highlighting six strategic goals of focus including, promoting quality and achievement, leveraging technology, expanding training, communicating successes, supporting pathways to membership, and expanding staff support.

### Report on Applicant and Candidate Institutions:

Currently, 24 membership applications are in the process of being reviewed. Three institutions were awarded membership in December 2022; three were granted Candidacy in December 2022 and were approved for membership at the December 2023 SACSCOC Board Meeting; and three institutions were authorized to receive an Accreditation Committee Visit.

#### Substantive Changes:

In order not to slow up the process anymore, please remember that ALL substantive change requests are submitted to Dr. Kevin Sighter, Director of Substantive Change, and NOT to the President's Office. Since January 1, 2023, 3,907 substantive change requests have been completed. Electronic submissions have significantly decreased response time to substantive change requests.

#### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Nominees to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees were submitted to the membership for their approval. The Board Chair for 2024 is Dr. Blaine J. Hansen, Executive Vice President for Strategic Operations and Public Relations at Lees-McRae College in Brevard, North Carolina, and the 2024 Vice Chair is Dr. Kemba Chambers, President of H. Council Trenholm State Community College in Montgomery, Alabama. Many thanks to Dr. Rebecca Maloney for her two years of service as Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, 2021-2023.

#### LEADERSHIP AWARDS

The James T. Rogers Leadership Award was awarded to Dr. E. Clayton Hess, President of Lincoln Memorial University (TN). Five (5) recipients of the Carol A. Luthman Meritorious Service Award were recognized: Dr. Ivan H. Allen, President, Central Georgia Technical College (GA), Dr. John L. Crain, President (retired), Southeastern Louisiana University (LA), Dr. Sharon B. Enzor, Provost and Vice President, Blue Mountain Christian University (MS), Dr. Ronald L. Rhames, President, Midlands Technical College (SC), and Dr. G. Devin Stephenson, President, Northwest Florida State College (FL). The Demetria N. Gibbs Outstanding Chair Award was awarded to Dr. Jay Stubblefield, Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs at Lincoln Memorial University (TN).

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. I wish you a healthy and safe academic year.

Thank you,

*Belle Wheelan*

---

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.  
President  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane

Jan 2024

Decatur, GA 30033  
(404) 679-4512  
[bwheelan@sacscoc.org](mailto:bwheelan@sacscoc.org)