

**Project South Texas
Academic Administration Working Groups
FINAL Report**

February 14, 2014

Working Group Name	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
Working Group Co-Chairs	Blanca Bauer (UTB), Cynthia Brown (UTPA)
Working Group Members	UTB: Celina Garza, Tomas Guajardo, Aldo Salinas, Marilyn Woods UTPA: Kristin Croyle, Zeke Granado, Mari Fuentes-Martin, S J. Sethi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

The charge of the SACSCOC Working Group is to coordinate the reporting to SACSCOC on the consolidation of UTB and UTPA.

The process to seek accreditation from the Southern Associate of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges begin with a notification letter submitted jointly by President Garcia of UTB and President Nelsen of UTPA six months prior to the Board of Trustees meeting at which the request will be considered. The current plan calls for the notification to be submitted by December 1, 2014 for consideration at the June 2015 Board of Trustees meeting.

To prepare for the Substantive Change Prospectus which is submitted by March 1, 2015, joint UTB-UTPA committees will be formed in September 2014 to address each of the elements in the template (Appendix 1). Committee assignments will be based on the technical expertise needed for the responses. Prior to this, data collection will begin of the evidence that must be submitted to document the consolidation process.

Preparation for the Substantive Change Report (Appendix 2), due 60 days prior to a site visit that occurs within six months of implementation of the change (opening of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley), must also occur concurrently with the preparation of the Substantive Change Prospectus. These joint teams will also be formed beginning in September 2014.

The most difficult information that needs to be provided on both the Prospectus and Change Report will be the faculty rosters. The UTRGV SACS Vice President, Dr. Robin Hoffman, has advised that the Prospectus should submit the rosters for faculty teaching in the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters at each UTB and UTPA. Software to prepare the rosters will be necessary. Digital Measures, in process of implementation at both campuses, can do the reporting if the appropriate data is entered for each faculty. In most cases, only the faculty's terminal degree (i.e., Ph.D. in Biology) is the credential needed to support the teaching assignment. However, there are faculty on each campus that either teach without a terminal degree or have a terminal degree in a discipline that does not align with the teaching assignment. In these cases, more information will need to be provided on the faculty credentials to teach such courses. The Substantive Change Report will include the faculty roster for the Fall 2015 course schedule for UTRGV.

Finally, it is advised to use the services of a SACSCOC consultant during the preparation of both the Prospectus and Substantive Change Report to ensure that the responses clearly address what is requested and include the appropriate documentation of compliance.

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REQUIRED ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION – FALL 2015

1. Letter of notification to SACSCOC from President Garcia and President Nelsen by December 15, 2014.
2. Substantive Change Prospectus due to SACSCOC by March 1, 2015 for consideration at June 2015 Board of Trustees meeting.
3. Site Visit Committee Report due to SACSCOC 60 days prior to site visit, scheduled within 6 months of opening of consolidated university. Site visit should occur by December 2015 with report due 60 days prior.

POSSIBLE CONSULTATIONS

It is recommended to engage a SACSCOC consultant to serve as an external reviewer for both the Prospectus and Site Visit Committee Report. Possible suggestions include Christine Shupala, SACS consultant for Fifth Year Interim Report, or someone from Georgia Regents University who recently worked on their consolidation reports for SACSCOC.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: SACSCOC Compliance Standards to be addressed in Prospectus due 3-1-2015

Appendix 2: SACSCOC Compliance Standards to be addressed in Substantive Change Visit Committee Report due 60 days before the site visit (scheduled within 6 months of implementation date or by January 2016).

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**Appendix 1
SACSCOC Substantive Change Prospectus
Due March 1, 2015**

One copy of a prospectus should be submitted to the SACSCOC President on paper or on CD or DVD (please see “Guidelines for Communicating Information Electronically” for guidance on electronic media) and include all applicable information below regarding the change. **Documents will not be accepted via e-mail.** The document should include a concisely worded narrative with the information specified in this appendix. A prospectus normally does not exceed **25 pages** plus appendices. Please note that SACSCOC reserves the right to make amendments to the requirements outlined below for certain types of changes.

In lieu of a prospectus, SACSCOC will accept documentation submitted for approval to a system office or to a state coordinating or governing board, provided such documentation includes all the information required in a prospectus and includes an index correlating the submitted materials with the corresponding information required in a prospectus. Faculty qualifications, however, must be documented using the [faculty roster form](#). *Curriculum vitae* in lieu of a faculty roster will not be accepted.

Reminder: An institution initiating a level change must complete an [Application for Member Institutions Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) and submit it in quadruplicate *in lieu of completing a prospectus*.

The following guidelines are generic; **each prospectus should be tailored to focus on the specific change being proposed.**

Cover Pages for a Substantive Change Prospectus

- Include name, phone number, and e-mail address of person to be contacted with questions regarding the prospectus
- List degrees that the institution is authorized to grant. As a subset of each degree, list majors available. (*Photocopy from catalog is acceptable*)
- List certificate, diploma and degree programs which are related to the proposed program(s)
- List institutional strengths that facilitate the offering of the proposed program(s)
- List of existing approved off-campus sites and their addresses

1. ABSTRACT (limit to one page or less)

Describe the proposed change; list the initial date of implementation; projected number of students, if applicable; description of primary target audience; projected life of the program (single cohort or ongoing); instructional delivery methods and, if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site, its complete physical address,

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Provide a clear statement of the nature and purpose of the change in the context of the institution’s mission and goals; evidence of the legal authority for the change (if authorization is required by the governing board or the state); and whether the proposed degree program or similar program is offered on the main campus or at other **approved** off-campus sites.

3. ASSESSMENT OF NEED AND PROGRAM PLANNING/APPROVAL

Briefly discuss the rationale for the change, including an assessment of need; evidence of inclusion of the change in the institution’s ongoing planning and evaluation processes; and documentation that faculty and other groups were involved in the review and approval of the new site or program.

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4. DESCRIPTION OF THE CHANGE

Provide a description of the proposed change, including the specific outcomes and learning objectives of the program and a schedule of proposed course offerings. In the case of a change involving the initiation of a branch campus or an off-campus site, indicate the educational program(s) to be offered.

Describe any differences in admission, curriculum, or graduation requirements for students enrolled at new site(s), or any special arrangements for grading, transcripts, or transfer policies. Demonstrate compliance with FR 4.9 (Definition of Credit Hours) of the Principles. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program or services to be offered. .A prospectus for approval of distance learning should describe the infrastructure supporting the delivery method (training of faculty, development of courses for distance delivery, technical support for student and faculty).

5. FACULTY

Provide a complete roster (using the [Faculty Roster form](#)) of those faculty employed to teach in the program(s) referred to in the prospectus, including a description of those faculty members' academic qualifications and other experiences relevant to the courses to be taught in the program in question, course load in the new program, and course work taught in other programs currently offered. Please consult the ["Faculty Roster Instructions"](#) for guidance in completing the Roster for current faculty who will be supporting the change. Provide a narrative with supporting evidence that the number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the program; and describe the impact of the new initiative on faculty workload.

For distance learning programs, describe processes in place to ensure that students have structured access to faculty. For graduate programs, document scholarship and research capability of faculty; for doctoral programs, document faculty experience in directing student research.

6. LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Describe library and information resources—general as well as specific to the program—and staffing and services that are in place to support the initiative. If reliant upon other libraries, describe those collections and their relevance to the proposed program(s) and include a copy of formal agreements in the appendix. Relative to electronic resources, describe how students and faculty will access information, training for faculty and students in the use of online resources, and staffing and services available to students and faculty. If you are citing electronic databases accessed through consortial or statewide groups, please describe the discipline-specific suites of resources and not just the name of the consortium (such as Viva, Tex-Share, Galileo, Louis, etc.). For doctoral programs, document **discipline-specific refereed journals and primary source materials**.

7. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Provide a description of student support programs, services, and activities—general as well as specific to the change—in place to support this initiative.

8. PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Provide a description of physical facilities and equipment to support this initiative. Assess the impact that the proposed change will have on existing programs and services.

9. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The institution must disclose if it is currently on reimbursement for Title IV funding.

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Provide a business plan that includes all of the following:

- a. a description of financial resources to support the change, **including a budget** for the first year of the proposed change (a three-year budget is requested for a new branch campus). The budget must be specific to the proposed change. Do not send a copy of the institutional budget.
- b. projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow
- c. the amount of resources going to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services
- d. the operational, management, and physical resources available for the change.

Provide contingency plans in case required resources do not materialize.

For institutions currently on sanction with SACSCOC for financial reasons, provide a copy of the most recent audit.

10. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Describe how the institution assesses overall institutional effectiveness as well as the means used to monitor and ensure the quality of the degree program(s), off-campus site(s), or other changes. Summarize procedures for systematic evaluation of instructional results, including the process for monitoring and evaluating programs at the new site, as well as using the results of evaluation to improve institutional programs, services, and operations. For compressed time frames describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in traditional formats have been achieved.

11. APPENDICES

Appendices may include items such as copies of library and other cooperative or contractual agreements. All appendices should be referenced in the text.

*June 2009
Edited: February 2013*

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**Appendix 2
Documentation Required for Substantive Change Committee -
Site Visit occurs within 6 Months of Implementation of UTRGV
Report due 60 days prior to Site Visit**

DOCUMENTATION FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE COMMITTEE

For use with the following type of changes:

- **Change of Control/Ownership/Governance**
- **Change of Legal Status**
- **Acquisitions**
- **Mergers and Consolidations**

Statement Regarding All Substantive Change Documentation Forms

Please note that this and all of the SACSCOC Substantive Change Documentation forms contain the minimum information required. Additional standards may be added by SACSCOC staff as needed to provide the visiting team with relevant information necessary to making an informed determination regarding the change.

Name of the Institution:

Nature of the Substantive Change:

Date:

By signing below, we attest to the following:

1. That _____ (*name of institution*) has attached a complete and accurate overview of the proposed Substantive Change.
2. That _____ (*name of institution*) has provided complete and accurate disclosure of timely information regarding compliance with the selected sections of the *Principles of Accreditation* affected by this Substantive Change.

Name and signature of the President:

Name and signature of the Accreditation Liaison:

SACSCOC Staff Member assigned to the Institution:

Form Updated: MAR 2012

Part I. Overview

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- A. *Provide the names, addresses, and current accreditations of the institutions involved in the change. If applicable, provide the proposed name for the new institution.*
- B. *Provide a timeline for the change. Discuss the rationale for the change. Include the dates for state approval and implementation of the change along with supporting documentation. If applicable, briefly outline the process in place to ensure the continuing academic integrity of the institution(s).*

Part II. Impact of the change on selected requirements of the *Principles of Accreditation*

Directions to the Institution for Part II: *For each of the standards or requirements listed below, make the case for compliance and describe the impact of the change on that aspect of the institution. See the Commission policy "Distance and Correspondence Education," if appropriate.*

A. Integrity and Institutional Mission

PR 1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. **(Integrity)**

[No response necessary. This statement will be addressed by the visiting committee, not by the institution.]

CR 2.4 The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional Mission)**

B. Governance and Administration

CR 2.2 The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board on which both the presiding officer and a majority of the other members are neither civilian employees of the military nor active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution's programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting board members

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are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. **(Governing Board)**

CR 2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. **(Chief Executive Officer)**

CS 3.2.1 The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the periodic evaluation of the chief executive officer. **(CEO evaluation/selection)**

CS 3.2.2 The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution's governance structure: **(Governing board control)**

3.2.2.1 the institution's mission;

3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution; and

3.2.2.3 institutional policy

CS 3.2.3 The governing board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members. **(Conflict of interest)**

CS 3.2.4 The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies and protects the institution from such influence. **(External influence)**

CS 3.2.5 The governing board has a policy whereby members can be dismissed only for appropriate reasons and by a fair process. **(Board dismissal)**

CS 3.2.6 There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. **(Board/administration distinction)**

CS 3.2.7 The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. **(Organizational structure)**

CS 3.2.8 The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience and competence to lead the institution. **(Qualified administrative/academic officers)**

CS 3.2.9 The institution publishes policies regarding appointment, employment, and evaluation of all personnel. **(Personnel appointment)**

CS 3.13 The institution complies with the policies of the Commission on Colleges. **Applicable Policy Statement:** If an institution is part of a system or corporate structure, a description of the system operation (or corporate structure) is submitted as part of the Compliance Certification for the decennial review. The description should be designed to help members of the peer review committees understand the mission, governance, and operating procedures of the system and the individual institution's role within that system.

Documentation: The institution should provide a description of the system operation and structure or the corporate structure if this applies.

C. Educational Programs

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CR 2.1 The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. **(Degree-granting Authority)**

CR 2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. **(Program Content)**

CR 2.7.4 The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In both cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. (See Commission policy “Core Requirement 2.7.4: Documenting an Alternate Approach.”) **(Course work for Degrees)**

CS 3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. **(Academic program approval)**

CS 3.4.3 The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission. **(Admissions policies)**

CS 3.4.4 The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, Advanced Placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution’s own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution’s transcript. (See Commission policy “Collaborative Academic Arrangements.”) **(Acceptance of academic credit)**

CS 3.4.5 The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. **(Academic policies)**

CS 3.4.9 The institution provides appropriate academic support services. **(Academic support services)**

CS 3.5.3 The institution defines and publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Undergraduate program requirements)**

CS 3.6.4 The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-graduate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program requirements)**

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FR 4.8 An institution that offers distance or correspondence education documents each of the following: **(Distance and correspondence education)**

4.8.1 demonstrates that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (a) a secure login and pass code, (b) proctored examinations, or (c) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

4.8.2 has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.

4.8.3 has a written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

FR 4.9 The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practice in higher education and Commission policy. (See Commission policy "Credit Hours.")

(Definition of credit hours)

D. Faculty

CR 2.8 The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of each of its academic programs. **(Faculty)**

[Include a discussion of the impact of the change on faculty numbers and workload. If applicable, identify new faculty hired to support the change.]

CS 3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. **(Faculty competence)**

[Display faculty qualifications on the Commission's "Faculty Roster Form."]

CS 3.7.5 The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. **(Faculty role in governance)**

E. Institutional Effectiveness

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CR 2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

[Include a description of how the change will affect overall institutional effectiveness.]

F. Library/Learning Resources

CR 2.9 The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. **(Learning Resources and Services)**

[Describe library and information resources in general as well as those specific to support the change. If reliant upon other libraries, describe those collections and their relevance, and include a copy of formal agreements in the appendix. Relative to electronic resources, describe how students and faculty will access information, how training for faculty and students in the use of online resources will be provided, and what staffing and services will be available to students and faculty.]

G. Student Services

CR 2.10 The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that are intended to promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. **(Student Support Services)**

CS 3.9.2 The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data. **(Student records)**.

FR 4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (See the Commission policy "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions.") **(Student complaints)**

H. Financial and Physical Resources

CR 2.11.1 The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a systemwide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year

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prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or Standard Review Report) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board.

(Financial Resources)

Include a business plan with the following:

- a. a description of financial resources to support the change, including a budget for the first year*
- b. projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow*
- c. the amount of resources going to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services*
- d. the operational, management, and physical resources available for the change.*

Assess the impact that the change is having on the funding available for existing programs and services.]

CR 2.11.2 The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. **(Physical Resources)**

CS 3.10.1 The institution's recent financial history demonstrates financial stability. **(Financial stability)**

CS 3.10.4 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial resources. **(Control of finances)**

CS 3.11.1 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its physical resources. **(Control of physical resources)**

FR 4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent Higher Education Act as amended. (In reviewing the institution's compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission relies on documentation forwarded to it by the U. S. Department of Education.) **(Title IV program responsibilities)**