

# **SACSCOC Accreditation and Texas Governing Boards**

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# Topics

- **Who is SACSCOC?**
- **Why be a member?**
- **Membership/Reaffirmation Process**
- **Principles (especially involving Boards)**
- **What happens if you are Out of Compliance?**
- **Recent actions, especially U of Louisville**
- **Questions?**

# What do you see?



# Who is SACSCOC?

- **Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges**
- **One of six regional higher education accrediting bodies in the US**
- **There are 798 IHEs members in 11 states, 5 in Mexico and 1 in Dubai**

# Why is Membership Important?

- **Voluntary, BUT the IHE cannot offer federal financial aid or transfer its credits without regional accreditation**
- **Annual dues and fees for every change**
- **SACSCOC Board of Trustees made up of experienced IHE leaders who are elected by SACSCOC membership (CEOs)**

# Reaffirmation Process for IHEs

- Ten-Year Reaffirmation Process of the Institution Includes Compliance Certification – Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards and Federal Requirements, e.g. “The institution provides appropriate academic support services.”
- Quality Enhancement Plan – Focuses on Key Issue and Learning Outcomes
- Critical Point: Signatures by CEO and SACSCOC Liaison - **Integrity**

# Reaffirmation Process for IHEs

## 1. Review by the Commission on Colleges

Off-site Review – 8 to 10 out-of-state (peer level) evaluators meet in Atlanta (SACSCOC Headquarters) after reading their assigned sections of the self-study

On-Site Review – Different committee of out-of-state peers investigate off-site reviewers' comments

## 2. IHE receives both reports and responds accordingly.

# Reaffirmation Process for IHEs

- 3. Committees on Compliance and Reports (C & R) reviews all reports and responses and makes a recommendation to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees Executive Council, then they review all reports and responses and recommend action to the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees, who meet twice a year (June and December.)**
- 4. Their decision is final.**



# Five-Year Interim Report – Provides Continuous Monitoring

- Meets U.S. DOE's Requirements
- Abbreviated Compliance Certification (17 Standards and QEP Impact Report)
- Usually only an Off-Site Review by committee of experienced peer evaluators, **BUT** they can recommend an on-site view if something needs more investigation

# Key SACSCOC Principles

- **1.1 Principle of Integrity – *Institution Operates with Integrity in All Matters***
- **Requires Honest Self-Disclosure**
- **Failure: Evidence of Withholding or Providing Inaccurate Information, either intentionally or unintentionally**
- **Possible Action: Sanctions, including Loss of Accreditation**

# Comprehensive Standards 3.2

## Governance and Administration

- **3.2.1 Selection and Evaluation of CEO**
- **3.2.2 Governance Structure – Mission, Financial Stability, Policy**
- **3.2.3 Policy Addressing Conflict of Interest**
- **3.2.4 Undue Influence of Political, Religious or External Bodies**
- **3.2.5 Policy to Dismiss Members**

# Distinction in Policy and Practice between Policy-Making and Implementation

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.”

# What Happens if You are Judged Out of Compliance?

- Sanctions are either Warning or Probation, depending on seriousness, although these may not be sequential
- IHE is given 6 months or 12 months to correct deficiency. Might be extended, but will not exceed 24 months.
- Multiple monitoring reports are required during sanctions.

# Sanctions Continued

- **Denial of reaffirmation of accreditation with the imposition of a sanction**
- **Removal from membership, usually only after persistent or significant noncompliance with monitoring requirements**
- **SACSCOC may revoke membership immediately if IHE files bankruptcy**

# Actions from December 2016

- **17 Warnings reported on the SACSCOC Website (cites IHE and violation)**
- **2 Warnings for failure to comply with Integrity standard**
- **3 Warnings for violation of *3.2.6 Distinction in Policy and Practice between Policy-Making and Implementation***
- **10 for financial compliance issues**
- **1 for failure to maintain a safe campus environment**

# University of Louisville Violations

- 2.2 Board Not Controlled by Minority of Members; Free of Conflict of Interest
- 3.2.1 Selection and Evaluation of CEO
- 3.2.2 Governance Structure – Mission, Financial Stability, Policy
- 3.2.3 Policy Addressing Conflict of Interest
- 3.2.4 Undue Influence of Political, Religious or External Bodies
- 3.2.5 Policy to Dismiss Members



# **Lasting Effects of Negative SACSCOC Actions**

- **Bad publicity**
- **Loss of students**
- **Loss of financial support (federal financial aid, donations, grants)**
- **Loss of top employees**
- **Depending on issues, may affect ability to offer certain scholarships, including athletics. May lead to sanctions by NCAA**

# Final Thoughts

- **Make sure you and your fellow Board members understand the very real power of SACSCOC**
- **Recognize that negative SACSCOC actions can affect the IHE's reputation for years**
- **Encourage transparency in every college action, especially with financial and personnel decisions. Higher the stakes, more transparency needed.**

# Questions and Contact Info

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