



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097*

## **ENROLLMENT GROWTH OF AN INSTITUTION**

### **Policy Statement**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), in accord with federal policy, is required to have processes and procedures for the on-going monitoring of the overall growth of institutions it accredits. This is to ensure that institutions with significant growth continue to maintain the quality of educational programs and services offered and to comply with the Commission's Principles of Accreditation. To this end, federal policy requires the following:

1. The Commission is required to monitor the overall growth of its accredited institutions. At least annually, it is required to collect headcount data from each of its institutions.
2. If an institution that offers distance or correspondence education courses has experienced an increase in headcount enrollment of 50 percent or more within one fiscal year, federal policy requires the Commission to report that information to the Secretary of Education within 30 days of acquiring such data. The Commission will report institutions with an increase in headcount enrollment of 50 percent or more within 30 days of the Commission acquiring and verifying such data. The collection and verification of profile data will not exceed 60 days of the due date of the profile. Institutions will be informed of such notification to the Department of Education.

For purposes of meeting this federal requirement, the following definitions apply:

- **Correspondence education** is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced.
  - **Distance education** is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.
3. If an institution experiences significant enrollment growth as defined below by the Commission, the Commission is obligated to monitor the growth of the institution's programs. Significant enrollment growth is a total full-time equivalent enrollment increase of 40 percent or more within one year as reported on the Institutional Profile for General and Enrollment Information. The Commission's definition of full-time equivalent enrollment is outlined on the profile form.

## Procedures

1. The Commission will collect headcount and full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment data on its annual Institutional Profile for General and Enrollment Information form distributed each year by November 30 and due the next year by January 15.
2. Commission staff will review enrollment data submitted by the institution and verify significant growth in headcount and full-time equivalent enrollment.
3. Institutions experiencing a total full-time equivalent enrollment increase of 40 percent or more within one year will be asked to complete the Institutional Report on FTE Enrollment Increases by Program which requires an institution to delineate FTE by educational program.

Upon receipt of the Institutional Report on FTE Enrollment Increases by Program, Commission staff will review and verify the data submitted. Commission staff may:

- a. Accept the report as information with no additional follow up.
- b. Request additional information from the institution. If there is evidence of non-compliance with the Principles of Accreditation,
  - (1) SACSCOC President may authorize a special committee to review the institution's ongoing compliance.
  - (2) Staff may forward the report to the Commission's Board of Trustees for review and possible action. Upon review, the Board may (1) accelerate the institution's next reaffirmation review, (2) authorize a special committee to visit the institution to ensure on-going compliance with the Principles of Accreditation, or (3) monitor the institution's ongoing compliance.

If a special committee is authorized to review the institution's ongoing compliance, the institution will be asked to complete a document in advance of the visit that focuses on the review of the educational programs experiencing significant growth. The report of the Committee and the institution's response to the findings of the Committee will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for review and action.

If the Board votes to accelerate the institution's reaffirmation date, the institution's reaffirmation cycle immediately following will be ten years, pending any additional reviews on enrollment growth. A reaffirmation cycle cannot be accelerated to a date within three years of Board action on enrollment growth.

### **Document History**

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