

College Operating Procedures (COP)



Procedure Title: Institutional Substantive Change Procedure
Procedure Number: 03-1604
Originating Department: Academic Affairs

Specific Authority:

Board Policy N/A
Florida Statute N/A
Florida Administrative Code N/A

Procedure Actions: Adopted: 02/11/2019; 01/11/2021; 03/25/202; 02/14/2025

Purpose Statement: The purpose is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to the College's institutional accreditor(s) according to policy.

Florida SouthWestern State College (College) is dedicated to the expansion of academic opportunities through the development and offering of programs and courses, in support of the College's mission. The appropriate office in Academic Affairs will be consulted prior to beginning a process that results in a substantive change. On behalf of Academic Affairs, the College's Accreditation Liaison Officer is responsible for reporting any substantive changes to the institutional accreditor(s).

Substantive changes may include but are not limited to:

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- Changing the governance of an institution.
- Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.
- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credential).
- Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
- Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
- Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the Title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs.
- Substantially increase or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs.

- Adding competency-based education programs.
- Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
- Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.

Guidelines

The College's Accreditation Liaison Officer is responsible for ensuring compliance with substantive change requirements and notifying the institutional accreditor in advance of substantive changes and program developments in accordance with the relevant substantive change policies.

Procedure:

1. Departments or divisions of the College proposing a significant modification or expansion of the College or its programs must first consult with the Accreditation Liaison Officer or designee to develop documents required for the institutional accreditor.
2. A substantive change prospectus or notification is prepared by the relevant department(s) according to the substantive change policy and procedure of the institutional accreditor with the assistance of Academic Affairs; this step, for programmatic changes, should occur in concordance with any required curriculum actions.
3. The College's Accreditation Liaison Officer submits the substantive change prospectus or notification to the institutional accreditor.
4. Decisions by the institutional accreditor are to be communicated by the Accreditation Liaison Officer to the Office of Academic Affairs, the Office of the Registrar, Team AASPIRE, and the Office of Collegewide Curriculum and Academic Enhancement. Other interested parties are notified as relevant.
5. The policies and guidelines of the College's institutional accreditor(s) supersede the information above and the most recent guidelines must be reviewed and followed before submitting any substantive change prospectuses or notifications.