
SACS IS COMING! SACS IS COMING! **in September 2000 For a Substantive Change Visit**

Arising from the recommendations of the North Georgia Planning Council, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia in September 1998 approved a change in mission for the College and authorized Dalton College to offer an initial group of two BS degrees and one BAS degree, effective fall 1999. The three baccalaureate programs include the Bachelor of Science in Industrial Operations Management, Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems, and Bachelor of Applied Science in Technology Management. This action brought to life a vision held by the community dating back to the 1970s and fulfilled the Regents ongoing commitment to respond to emerging economic needs throughout Georgia with high quality academic programs.

In November 1998, the Board of Regents met in Dalton for the first time in twenty years, and during that meeting approved a name change from Dalton College to Dalton State College as a reflection of the institution's new mission. Dalton's change to a "State College" established a new institutional category within the University System of Georgia to describe two-year, associate-degree granting institutions that have been authorized by the Board to offer a limited number of four-year baccalaureate degree programs. Dalton State College joins Macon State College in the Regents' new institutional category. The Board also approved a change in the College's mission statement, providing "targeted offerings which meet the work force development needs of the Northwest Georgia region," and authorized an organizational restructuring which enabled the College to create a new division of Business and Technology to house the new programs of study.

For Dalton State College to begin offering these new baccalaureate degree programs, a substantive change application to notify the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is required and must be approved by the Commission *prior to implementation*.

On October 15, 1998 Dalton State College submitted to SACS a substantive change application for a change of mission (Level I to Level II) and for approval of three baccalaureate programs. At its December 1998 meeting, SACS approved the change in mission for the College. After a year of operation of the new degree programs, SACS requires a substantive change visit to the College.

To help prepare the College community for this visit, the following Qs & As have been prepared so that faculty, staff and students know a little more about the substantive change visit. In fact, when the Substantive Change Visiting Committee arrives and makes its rounds across campus, they will be interviewing and talking to a broad spectrum of individuals. This information will help.

What is SACS?

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is one of six regional accrediting associations in the United States. SACS is the accrediting body for 11 Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) and Latin America. You may visit the SACS home page at <http://www.sacs.org/> for more information.

What does SACS do?

SACS accredits educational institutions at all levels from early childhood centers through universities. The Commission on Colleges is the SACS unit that is responsible for the accreditation of universities, senior colleges and two-year colleges.

What does substantive change mean?

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.

Which of SACS' substantive changes requiring notification and prior approval did the College seek?

Initiating programs at a more advanced degree level than degree level currently approved. In the case of Dalton State College, it was seeking accreditation from Level I (Associate's degree) to Level II (Bachelor's degree).

What is the basis for substantive change?

The Commission on Colleges has established a set of standards known as the *Criteria for Accreditation*. All substantive changes must be in complete accord with the "must" and "should" statements in the *Criteria*.

What did the College do to satisfy this criteria ?

SACS requires that a Level I institution planning to initiate a baccalaureate degree or certificate must request from the Executive Director an "Application Form" to complete and return. The application must be sent to the Executive Director no later than *nine* months in advance of the enrollment of students in the new program. The College successfully complied with this requirement. SACS accepted the College's application and granted approval of the substantive change.

Why does SACS require a substantive change visit ?

When a Substantive Change Committee is authorized by either the Executive Director or the Committee on Criteria and Reports, the Committee normally will visit the institution during the initial term that the new program is offered. The purpose of the visit is to evaluate the institution's ongoing compliance with the *Criteria for Accreditation*.

What will the College do to prepare for the visit?

First, DSC will update the "Application Form" it submitted earlier to SACS, including an updated roster of faculty teaching during the first year of the program. Second, to be sure it is in complete compliance with the *Criteria for Accreditation*, the College must conduct a study of its purpose, programs and services. This sort of mini self-study will examine every aspect of the institution, identifying strengths and weaknesses, assessing its institutional effectiveness, and developing plans for improvements.

What will the visiting committee do?

Committee members will interview faculty, administrators, staff and students and will review college documents, particularly related to the new degree programs. Their purpose is to assess the quality of the new degree programs and to determine compliance with the SACS criteria for accreditation. Their report on DSC will be reviewed by the Committee on Criteria and Reports. Action on continued accreditation of DSC's new degree

programs will be considered by the Commission on Colleges. The Commission will take one of the following actions: (1) continue the accreditation of DSC at the new degree level with or without a progress report; (2) continue the accreditation of the institution and place the College on Notice, Warning, or Probation; or (3) remove DSC from membership.

What is the downside for the College?

The College may not initiate any additional degree program at the more advanced degree level until after the Commission has taken positive action on its continued accreditation following a Substantive Change Committee visit.

What is the substantive change visiting committee?

Six persons from other colleges in the South (but not Georgia) will visit DSC to examine the new degree programs and other aspects of the College. A SACS staff member will accompany the committee.

What do we know about who will serve on the visiting committee?

The six-person visiting committee will be chaired by Dr. Phail Wynn, President of Durham Technical Community College, Durham, North Carolina. The other members of the committee are: Dr. Charles Blackledge, Director of Institutional Research & Development, Bishop State Community College, Mobile, Alabama; Mr. Louis Dugas, Dean of Vocational & Technical Instruction, Copiah-Lincoln Community College, Wesson, Mississippi; Dr. Curtis T Liston, Director of Counseling, Texas State Technical College, Waco, Texas; Ms. Catherine Reilender, Director of Library Services, Midway College, Midway, Kentucky; and Dr. Stephen Welsh, Chair and Professor, Department of Computer Information System, Southern University, New Orleans, Louisiana. The SACS staff member to accompany the committee is Dr. W. Donald Crump.

When is the visit to campus?

September 27-29, 2000.

Will the substantive change visit affect the cycle of reaffirmation of accreditation (every ten years)?

No.

Who is involved in getting the College prepared for the upcoming substantive change visit?

The President appointed 14 faculty and administrators to serve on a Substantive Change Steering Committee. They are Ms. Liz Bagley, Dr. John Black, Dr. Charley Bowen, Dr. Henry Codjoe, Dr. Dick Edwards, Mr. Tommy Godbee, Dr. Jim Head, Dr. John Hutcheson, Ms. Jodi Johnson, Ms. Laura Rose, Dr. Tom Sommer, Ms. Trudy Swilling, Ms. Gail Ward, and Dr. Bob Weathersby. The chair of the committee is Dr. Jim Head. Under his leadership, the committee will coordinate campus activities, pulling in additional people as needed to get the work done.

Where will the visiting committee operate from on campus?

The College has assigned the Social Sciences Division Conference Room (236) in the Liberal Arts Building as the headquarters for the visiting committee.

How does DSC respond to the committee's report?

DSC must provide the commission with a written response to all recommendations contained in the committee's report. The response will describe the actions taken by DSC to ensure compliance with the specific criteria.

When will the commission make its decision?

Final action on continuing accreditation for DSC's new degree programs will be communicated to the President most likely following the annual SACS meeting in December.

How can additional information be obtained?

Information on the substantive change committee visit can be obtained from the President's office and from the chair of the College's substantive change steering committee.

Are there any other activities planned?

Yes. The President and Vice President for Academic Affairs will hold two meeting sessions with campus classified staff members on September 1 and 8 to inform them on the substantive change visit and answer any questions the staff may have on the visit.