



July 10, 2013

Dr. John O. Schwenn
President
Dalton State College
650 College Drive
Dalton, GA 30720

Dear Dr. Schwenn:

The following action regarding your institution was taken at the June 2013 meeting of the Board of Trustees of SACS Commission on Colleges:

The Commission on Colleges reaffirmed accreditation. Because of significant deficiencies, however, the institution is strongly advised to take immediate steps to come into compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1 (Institutional effectiveness: educational programs), Comprehensive Standards 3.3.1.2 (Institutional effectiveness: administrative support services), Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.3 (Institutional effectiveness: academic and student support services), Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.5, (Institutional effectiveness: community/public service), and Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1 (General education competencies) of *The Principles of Accreditation*. Failure to do so could result in your institution being placed on a sanction at the time of its next review.

For your institution's next review, the institution is requested to submit a First Monitoring Report due **April 15, 2014**, addressing the visiting committee's recommendations applicable to the following referenced standards of the *Principles*:

CS 3.3.1.1 (Institutional effectiveness: educational programs) Recommendation 1

While the institution has worked diligently to address the deficiencies cited by the On-Site Reaffirmation committee, the improvements are relatively recent; thus, the institution failed to provide sufficient evidence of improvement. Document that the institution is undertaking a consistent process of assessment that includes the identification of authentic outcomes, assessment that produces meaningful data, and an analysis of that data leading to documented improvements in its educational programs. If sampling is used, the institution should provide a representative sample that reflects the full array of educational programs offered, including those programs offered at off-campus locations and via distance education if applicable, and describe the method of selection.

CS 3.3.1.2 (Institutional effectiveness: administrative support services), Recommendation 2

While the institution has made progress toward addressing the deficiencies cited by the On-Site Reaffirmation committee, the improvements are relatively recent; thus, the institution failed to provide sufficient evidence of improvement. Document that the institution is



Dr. John O. Schwenn
July 10, 2013
Page Two

undertaking a consistent process of assessment that includes the identification of authentic outcomes, assessment that produces meaningful data, and an analysis of that data leading to documented improvements in the administrative support services units.

**CS 3.3.1.3 (Institutional effectiveness: academic and student support services),
Recommendation 3**

While the institution has made progress toward addressing the deficiencies cited by the On-Site Reaffirmation committee, the institution failed to provide sufficient evidence of improvement. Demonstrate that the institution is undertaking a consistent process of assessment that includes the determination of authentic outcomes, assessment techniques that produce meaningful data, and institutional analysis of that data leading to documented improvements in the academic and student support services units.

**CS 3.3.1.5 (Institutional effectiveness: community/public service),
Recommendation 4**

While the institution has made progress toward addressing the deficiencies cited by the reaffirmation committee, the institution failed to provide sufficient evidence of improvement. Demonstrate that the institution is undertaking a consistent process of assessment that includes the determination of authentic outcomes, assessment techniques that produce meaningful data, and institutional analysis of that data leading to documented improvements in community/public service programs.

CS 3.5.1 (General education competencies), Recommendation 5

The On-Site Committee noted that the institution had identified general education competencies but raised questions about the institution's definition of competencies and use of appropriate assessment measures. The institution's response focused on process improvements, but it provided neither targets for acceptable attainment of the identified competencies nor evidence of the extent to which students had attained those competencies. Demonstrate that the institution has clearly defined its identified general education competencies (including targets for acceptable attainment), and provide evidence of the extent to which students have attained those identified competencies.

Your institution's next reaffirmation will take place in 2023 unless otherwise notified.

Please submit to your Commission staff member, preferably by email, a **one-page** executive summary of your institution's Quality Enhancement Plan. The summary is due **August 15, 2013**, and should include on the same page the following information: (1) the title of your Quality Enhancement Plan, (2) your institution's name, and (3) the name, title, and email address of an individual who can be contacted regarding its development or implementation. This summary will be posted to the Commission's Web site as a resource for other institutions undergoing the reaffirmation process.



Dr. John O. Schwenn
July 10, 2013
Page Three

All institutions are requested to submit an "Impact Report of the Quality Enhancement Plan on Student Learning" as part of their "Fifth-Year Interim Report" due five years before their next reaffirmation review. Institutions will be notified 11 months in advance by the President of the Commission regarding its specific due date.

Guidelines for the monitoring report are enclosed. Because it is essential that institutions follow these guidelines, **please make certain that those responsible for preparing the report receive the document. If there are any questions about the format, contact the Commission staff member assigned to your institution.** When submitting your report, please send **four copies** to your Commission staff member.

Please note that Federal regulations and Commission policy stipulate that an institution must demonstrate compliance with all requirements and standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* within two years following the Commission's initial action on the institution. At the end of that two-year period, if the institution does not comply with all the standards and requirements of the *Principles*, representatives from the institution may be required to appear before the Commission, or one of its standing committees, to answer questions as to why the institution should not be removed from membership. If the Commission determines good cause at that time, the Commission may extend the period for coming into compliance for a minimum of six months and a maximum of two years and must place the institution on Probation. If the institution has been placed on Probation within the two-year period, extension of accreditation beyond the two-year period for good cause is dependent on the amount of time the institution has already been on Probation. An institution may be on Probation for not more than two years. If the Commission does not determine good cause or if the institution does not come into compliance within two years while on Probation, the institution must be removed from membership. (*See enclosed Commission policy "Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership."*)

We appreciate your continued support of the activities of the Commission on Colleges. If you have questions, please contact the Commission staff member assigned to your institution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW:sf

Enclosures

cc: Dr. Claudette H. Williams

SACS COC

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

SANCTIONS, DENIAL OF REAFFIRMATION, AND REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP

Policy Statement

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires that a member institution be in compliance with *the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* and its Core Requirements, comply with Commission policies and procedures, and provide information requested by the Commission's Board of Trustees in order to maintain membership and accreditation. When an institution fails to comply with these requirements within a maximum two-year monitoring period, the Commission may impose sanctions. Monitoring reports submitted during this period are not sanctions.

If the Commission determines that an institution's progress is insufficient during the two-year monitoring period but not significant enough to impose a sanction, the Commission will advise the institution that if progress or compliance is insufficient at the time of its next formal review by the Commission's Board of Trustees, the institution could be placed on sanction or removed from membership. (Institutions applying for membership with the Commission on Colleges should refer to the Commission policy "Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions" for procedures concerning the denial or removal of candidacy, or the denial of initial membership.)

Failure to make adequate progress toward compliance at any time during the two-year period or failure to comply with the *Principles* at the conclusion of two years may result in Commission action to remove accreditation.

The Commission's requirements, policies, processes, procedures and decisions are predicated on integrity. The Commission on Colleges expects integrity to govern the operation of institutions. Therefore, evidence of withholding information, providing inaccurate information to the public, or failing to provide timely information to the Commission may be construed as an indication of the lack of a full commitment to integrity and may result in the imposition of sanctions or removal of accreditation.

Sanctions

An institution found to be out of compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* must correct the deficiencies or face the possibility of being placed on one of two sanctions: Warning or Probation, in order of degree of seriousness. These sanctions are not necessarily sequential, and the Commission may place an institution on either sanction with or without reviewing a visiting committee's report and with or without having previously requested a monitoring report, depending on the seriousness and extent of noncompliance. In certain circumstances, an institution may be removed from membership without having previously been placed on sanction.

During the two-year monitoring period, institutions may be placed on a sanction for six or twelve months, with a monitoring report required at the end of the period of the sanction. Institutional accreditation cannot be reaffirmed while the institution is on sanction. Denial of reaffirmation of accreditation and invocation of sanctions are not appealable actions. Actions invoking sanctions are publicly announced at the annual meeting of the College Delegate Assembly, posted on the Commission's Web page, and published in the *Annual Report of SACS Commission on Colleges*.

The characteristics of these sanctions include the following:

Warning – The less serious of the two sanctions, Warning is usually, but not necessarily, levied in the earlier stages of institutional review and often, but not necessarily, precedes Probation. It cannot, however, succeed Probation. An institution may be placed on Warning or Probation for noncompliance with any of the Core Requirements or significant noncompliance with the Comprehensive Standards. Additionally, an institution may be placed on Warning for failure to make timely and significant progress toward correcting the deficiencies that led to the finding of noncompliance with any of the *Principles of Accreditation*. An institution may also be placed on Warning for failure to comply with Commission policies and procedures, including failure to provide requested information in a timely manner. The maximum total time during one monitoring period that an institution may be on Warning is two years.

Probation – Failure to correct deficiencies or failure to make satisfactory progress toward compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, whether or not the institution is already on Warning, may result in the institution being placed on Probation. An institution may be placed on Probation for the same reasons as discussed above regarding Warning if the Commission's Board of Trustees deems noncompliance with the *Principles* to be serious enough to merit invoking Probation whether or not the institution is or has been on Warning. Probation is a more serious sanction than Warning and is usually, but not necessarily, invoked as the last step before an institution is removed from membership. Probation may be imposed upon initial institutional review, depending on the judgment of the Board regarding the seriousness of noncompliance or in the case of repeated violations recognized by the Board over a period of time. An institution must be placed on Probation when it is continued in membership for Good Cause beyond the maximum two-year monitoring period (see section on "Good Cause" below). The maximum consecutive time that an institution may be on Probation is two years.

Denial of Reaffirmation of Accreditation with the Imposition of a Sanction

If an institution is judged by the Commission's Board of Trustees to be out of compliance with a Core Requirement, it will be placed on a sanction. For an institution seeking reaffirmation of accreditation, its reaffirmation will be denied, and it will be placed on a sanction. If an institution is judged to be significantly out of compliance with one or more of the Comprehensive Standards, its reaffirmation of accreditation may be denied. The action of denying reaffirmation of accreditation will be accompanied by the imposition of a sanction. The institution's accreditation will not be reaffirmed while it is on Warning or Probation, but its accreditation will be continued. Denial of reaffirmation does not affect the decennial review schedule.

Removal from Membership

An institution may be removed from Commission membership at any time, depending on the Board of Trustee's judgment of the seriousness of noncompliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* or with the Commission's policies and procedures. Removal from membership, however, usually occurs after persistent or significant noncompliance during a monitoring period or any time an institution is being followed for Good Cause. A serious instance of noncompliance or repeated instances of noncompliance may result in removal of membership without a monitoring period.

An institution must be removed from membership if it has not demonstrated compliance with all the *Principles of Accreditation* within the two-year monitoring period and has not demonstrated Good Cause as to why it should not be dropped from membership. If an institution is continued in membership for Good Cause beyond the two-year monitoring period (and then only on Probation), it may be removed from membership at any time but must be removed from membership if it does not demonstrate compliance within the two years beyond the end of the two-year monitoring period (see "Good Cause" below).

When an institution fails to pay its dues by the designated deadline, the Commission will assume from this action that the institution no longer wants to maintain its membership or candidacy with SACS Commission on Colleges. By that action, the institution withdraws from membership or candidacy. The Commission's Board of Trustees will take official action on the termination of accreditation.

In accord with 34 CFR Section 602.24 of the Federal Code, notification of SACSCOC Board of Trustees action to withdraw or terminate membership will be accompanied by a request that the institution submit a teach-out plan to the Commission for approval. (See Commission policy "Substantive Change for Member Institutions" for the specific procedures.) This is applicable if (1) the institution fails to appeal the decision of the Commission's Board of Trustees or (2) the institution appeals the Board's decision and the Appeals Committee rules in favor of the Board.

Procedures for Applying Sanctions and for Terminating Membership

Recommendations for Warning, Probation, and removal of membership are made by one of the Committees on Compliance and Reports to the Executive Council of the Commission. The Council forwards recommendations on Warning, Probation, and removal from membership to the Commission's Board of Trustees, which takes final action subject to any rights of appeal which the institution might have as described in Commission policies. Action placing an institution on Warning or Probation is not appealable.

In the cases of Warning, Probation, or loss of membership, both the chief executive officer and the chair of the institution's governing board will be informed in writing. (For public institutions that are part of a state system, the chief executive officer of the system will also receive a copy of the notification sent to the institution.) The Commission will include in its notification to the institution reasons for the imposition of sanction or for loss of membership.

An action to place an institution on Warning or Probation, to deny reaffirmation, or to remove an institution from membership, along with the reasons for the action, will be read during the annual meeting of the College Delegate Assembly, posted on the Commission's Website, and recorded in the *Annual Report of SACS Commission on Colleges*. Actions which are appealable will be accompanied by a statement that Commission action will not take effect until the time period for filing an appeal has expired or until final action has been taken on the appeal. The Commission policy on disclosure is also applicable to these actions.

Definition and Conditions for Good Cause

If an institution has not remedied deficiencies at the conclusion of its two-year maximum monitoring period, the Commission's Board of Trustees must (1) remove the institution from membership, or (2) continue accreditation for "good cause". If accreditation is extended for "good cause," the institution must also be placed on or continued on Probation.

An institution's accreditation can be extended for "good cause" if

1. the institution has demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing non-compliance (e.g., the institution's cumulative operating deficit has been reduced significantly and its enrollment has increased significantly), and
2. the institution has documented that it has the "potential" to remedy all deficiencies within the extended period as defined by the Committee on Compliance and Reports; that is, that the institution provides evidence which makes it reasonable for the Commission to assume it will remedy all deficiencies within the extended time defined by the Committee on Compliance and Reports, and
3. the institution provides assurance to the Commission that it is not aware of any other reasons, other than those identified by the Commission on Colleges, why the institution could not be continued for "good cause."

The Commission's Board of Trustees may extend accreditation for "good cause" for a maximum of one year. At the conclusion of the period, the institution must appear before the Commission's Board of Trustees at a meeting on the record to provide evidence of good cause as to why its period for remedying deficiencies should be extended again for good cause. (Note: If the institution was placed on Probation during its two-year period following initial

action on deficiencies, the institution must provide evidence for good cause if its accreditation is to be continued with the status of Probation.)

In all cases, the institution bears the burden of proof to provide evidence why the Commission should not remove it from membership.

Document History

*Approved: Commission on Colleges, June 2003
Revised for the Principles of Accreditation, December 2003
Revised: Board of Trustees, July 2005, June 2011'*

SACS COC

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

REPORTS SUBMITTED FOR COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION REVIEW

- Policy Statement -

Institutions accredited by the Commission on Colleges are requested to submit various reports to an evaluation committee or to the Commission's Board of Trustees for review. Those reports include:

Response Report to the Visiting Committee
Monitoring Report or Referral Report

When submitting a report, an institution should follow the directions below, keeping in mind that the report will be reviewed by a number of readers, most of whom will be unfamiliar with the institution.

Information Pertaining to the Preparation of All Reports

Preparation of a Title Page

For any report requested, an institution should prepare a title page that includes the following:

1. Name of the institution
2. Address of the institution
3. Dates of the committee visit (*not applicable for the Referral Report*)
4. The kind of report submitted
5. Name, title, and contact numbers of person(s) preparing the report

Presentation of Reports

For any report requested, an institution should

1. **For print copies**, copy all documents front and back, double-space the copy, and use no less than an 11 point font. If the report requires binding beyond stapling, do not submit the report in a three-ring binder. Ring binders are bulky and must be removed before mailing to the readers.
2. **For electronic copies**, copy the report and all attachments onto an electronic memory device (e.g., external hard-drive, DVD, CD, or flash/thumb drive). Provide the name of the person who can be contacted if the readers have problems accessing the information. Provide **one print copy** of the response without the attachments.

Each electronic memory device smaller than 4" by 4" should be submitted in a paper or plastic envelope not smaller than 4 x 4 inches and the envelope should be labeled with the name of the institution, the title of the report, and the list of document contents. The electronic memory device should be labeled with the name of the institution and the title of the report.

Each electronic memory device larger than 4" by 4" should be in a paper or plastic envelope and clearly labeled with the name of the institution, the title of the report, and the list of document contents. The electronic memory device should be labeled with the name of the institution and the title of the report.

3. Provide a clear, complete, and concise report. If documentation is required, ensure that it is appropriate to demonstrating fulfillment of the requirement. Specify actions that have been taken and, when possible, document their completion.
4. When possible, excerpt passages from text and incorporate the narrative into the report. Provide definitive evidence, not documents that only address the process (e.g., do not include copies of letters or memos with directives).
5. Specify actions that have been taken and provide documentation that such actions have been completed. Avoid vague responses indicating that the institution plans to address a problem in the future. If any actions remain to be accomplished, the institution should present an action plan, a schedule for accomplishing the plan, and evidence of commitment of resources for accomplishing the plan.
6. When possible and appropriate, provide samples of evidence of compliance rather than all documents pertaining to all activities associated with compliance.
7. Reread the report before submission and eliminate all narrative that is not relevant to the focus of the report. If sending electronic copies, ensure that all devices are virus free and have been reviewed for easy access by reviewers external to your institution.

Information Specific for the Response to the Visiting Committee Report

Definition:	A Response Report addresses the findings of a visiting committee. It provides updated or additional documentation regarding the institution's compliance with the <i>Principles of Accreditation</i> .
Audience:	The Response Report, along with the Committee Report and other documents, is reviewed by the Commission on Colleges' Board of Trustees and is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the continuation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.
Report Presentation:	Structure the response so that it addresses committee recommendations in the order that they appear in the report. Tabs should separate each response to a recommendation. For each recommendation, provide the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement and state the recommendation exactly as it appears in the visiting committee report. Describe the committee's concerns that led to the recommendation by either summarizing the concerns or inserting verbatim the complete narrative in the report pertaining to the recommendation. Provide a response with documentation.
Due Date:	The Response Report is due on the day indicated in the transmittal letter from Commission staff accompanying the visiting committee report.
Number of Copies:	See the transmittal letter from Commission staff accompanying the visiting committee report.

Information Specific to the Preparation of a Monitoring Report or a Referral Report

- Definition:** These reports address recommendations and continued concerns of compliance usually identified by the Committee on Compliance and Reports or the Executive Council (or, for a Referral Report, identified by the Committee on Fifth-Year Interim Reports). It usually follows the C & R Committee's review of an institution's response to a visiting committee report.
- Audience:** The Monitoring Report and the Referral Report are reviewed by the Commission on Colleges Board of Trustees and are subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the continuation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.
- Report Presentation:** *For a Monitoring Report*, structure the response so that it addresses committee recommendations in the order that they appeared in the report. Tabs should separate each response to a recommendation.
- For each recommendation, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement, the number of the recommendation, and the recommendation exactly as it appeared in the visiting committee report; (2) provide a brief history of responses to the recommendation if more than a first response (to include an accurate summary of the original concerns of the visiting committee, a summary of each previous institutional response and an explanation of what had been requested by the Commission); (3) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the recommendation (reference notification letter from the President of the Commission); and (4) prepare a response to the recommendation.
- For a Referral Report*, structure the response so that it addresses the concerns described in the letter from the Commission's President in the order that they appeared. Tabs should separate each response to each standard cited.
- For each standard cited, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement exactly as it appeared in the letter; (2) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the standard cited (reference notification letter from the President of the Commission); and (3) prepare a response to the recommendation.
- Due Date:** The Monitoring Report and the Referral Report are due on the date specified in the Commission President's notification letter. Requests for extensions to the date must be made to the President of the Commission two weeks in advance of the original due date. (*See Commission policy "Deadlines for Submitting Reports."*)
- Number of Copies:** See the letter from the President of the Commission requesting the Report.

Document History

*Edited and Revised for the Principles of Accreditation: December 2003
Updated: January 2007, January 2010, May 2010, January 2012*