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

# STANDING RULES: SACSCOC BOARD OF TRUSTEES, EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, AND THE COLLEGE DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

## Policy Statement

### Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees

1. Composition, Selection, Terms of Office

   The Executive Council of the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) shall consist of up to fourteen members: one institutional representative from each U.S. jurisdiction (NOTE: a U.S. jurisdiction or international jurisdiction is comprised of no less than four (4) member institutions from the same state or country) within the SACSCOC membership, one public representative, one at-large member (which may represent an international member), and one from a U.S. jurisdiction within the membership who shall serve as the Chair. All Executive Council members shall be members of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

   Members of the Board's Executive Council shall serve one-year terms after nomination by the Nominating Committee of SACSCOC and election by the Board of Trustees at the annual business session. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the annual business session of the College Delegate Assembly. Members of the Executive Council may serve a maximum of three successive one-year terms so long as they are members of the Board and are duly nominated and elected. A Council member may serve a and/or fifth consecutive one-year term on the Council if duly nominated and elected as Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

2. Duties of the Executive Council

   The Executive Council shall serve as the executive body of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees and shall act for the Board while it is not in session; however, the actions of the Council shall be subject to the revision and approval of the Board of Trustees. The Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall be the chief executive and presiding officer of the Executive Council and shall appoint all *ad hoc* and standing committees of the Board. The Chair is a non-voting member of the Executive Council.

The Executive Council serves as the executive arm of the Board of Trustees; interprets its policies and procedures; develops procedures for and supervises the work of *ad hoc* and standing committees of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees; approves SACSCOC's goals and objectives; reviews and approves SACSCOC's budget; selects, supervises, and annually evaluates the work of its President; initiates new programs, projects, and policy proposals, participates in regular meetings to vote on the approval of substantive changes, and exercises fiduciary oversight of the organization. It receives and acts on reports from all *ad hoc* committees. Recommended actions on accreditation made by the Committees on Compliance and Reports are forwarded to the Council for review and approval. The Council submits its recommendations on these institutions to the Board of Trustees for final action. The Council may also rescind or revise final actions on behalf of the Board of Trustees when the Board is not in session. The Executive Council also is responsible for conducting a regular evaluation of the Board's effectiveness.

At its discretion, the Executive Council may serve as the review body for both the candidacy and accreditation of new types of institutions which may apply. It may develop and approve guidelines for the accreditation of various types of institutions and submit these to the Board of Trustees for approval.

When complaints against institutions are received that are accreditation-related and indicate potential non-compliance with a standard(s) in the *Principles of Accreditation*, the Executive Council may be asked to render a decision as to whether a formal review should be conducted. When complaints against the Board or SACSCOC's staff are received that are of substance and properly documented, a subcommittee of the Executive Council will conduct a formal review and recommend a course of action to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Executive Council members serve as chairs of the Board of Trustee members within their respective U.S. or international jurisdiction, and coordinate the nomination processes of their respective member jurisdiction for electing new members of the Board of Trustees. For more information, refer to *The Handbook for the Executive Council*.

## Officers of the Commission on Colleges Board of Trustees

There shall be two officers of the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees: a Chair and Vice-Chair/Secretary. Each must be a member of the Executive Council.

1. <u>Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees</u>

   The Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall serve as Chair of the Executive Council, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, and the College Delegate Assembly. The Chair shall serve a one-year term after nomination by the Nominating Committee of the Board and election by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. The election of the Chair shall be governed by the same rules which govern the election of Executive Council members.

   Duties: The Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall preside at all meetings of the Executive Council, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, and the College Delegate Assembly. The Chair shall also appoint persons to fill vacancies on the Board of Trustees which occur between its sessions. He or she shall appoint a replacement for any member of the Board who fails to attend two consecutive meetings of the Board of Trustees or of committees of the Board or who resigns due to his/her institution being placed on a sanction. In certain exceptional cases, the Board member may appeal to the Chair and the

Executive Council for reinstatement. (See SACSCOC policy "Ethical Obligations of SACSCOC Board of Trustees.") The Chair shall appoint the Chair of the Appeals Committee and appoint replacements to fill vacancies on the Appeals Committee after all alternates have been used or to secure a quorum.

The Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. For more information, refer to *The Handbook for the Executive Council.*

2. Vice-Chair/Secretary of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees

The Vice-Chair/Secretary of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall serve a one-year term after nomination by the Nominating Committee of the Board and election by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. The election of the Vice-Chair/Secretary shall be governed by the same rules which govern the election of Executive Council members.

Duties: The Vice-Chair/Secretary shall be responsible for the minutes of the Executive Council, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, and the College Delegate Assembly, and for any duties or responsibilities which may be delegated by the Chair or the Executive Council. In the event that the Chair is unable to discharge the duties of that office, the Vice-Chair automatically becomes Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, with all the duties, rights, and privileges of that office including the right to vote as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In the event that the Vice-Chair is unable to discharge the duties of that office or becomes Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, an acting Vice-Chair/Secretary shall be appointed by the Executive Council until such time as a permanent Vice-Chair/Secretary can be elected. For more information, refer to *The Handbook for the Executive Council.*

## The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

1. Nomination to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees

The nomination of new members to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may be submitted by members of the College Delegate Assembly to the Nominating Committee of the Board *vis à vis* the Executive Council members.

a. Membership. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall consist of seventy-seven members as follows:

1. Thirty-three persons connected with or employed by Track B member institutions (Levels III through VI). At least two persons shall be chosen from each U.S. jurisdiction.

2. Twenty-two persons connected with or employed by Track A member institutions (Levels I and II). At least one person shall be chosen from each U.S. jurisdiction.

3. Ten persons at-large who (1) are connected with or employed by any member institution in the geographical territory of SACSCOC, (2) are currently, and primarily, academic personnel, or (3) are a public-representative. The at-large delegation shall be developed to represent appropriately the various types of member institutions and public interest in proportion to the membership and federal requirements.

4. One person at-large representing the international member institutions.

5. Eleven persons representing the public. One shall be chosen from each U.S. jurisdiction. A public representative is defined as a person who is not (1) an employee, member of the governing board or the coordinating board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution that either is accredited by SACSCOC or has applied for accreditation, (2) a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the accrediting agency, or (3) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in (1) or (2) above."

b. Elections.

Members of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall be elected for terms of three years by a majority vote of the members of the College Delegate Assembly present and voting at the Annual Business Session after nomination by the Nominating Committee of SACSCOC.

1. The terms of one-third of the Board representing degree-granting institutions shall expire each year and, after two successive terms, members shall be ineligible to succeed themselves for a period of three years. Not more than one member of the Board of Trustees shall be connected with or employed by the same institution.

2. The terms of public representatives shall expire after two successive terms and the representatives are not eligible to succeed themselves for a period of three years unless by exception of the Chair of the Board.

3. The term of the at-large representative for international institutions shall expire after two successive terms and the representative is not eligible to succeed her or himself for a period of three years.

c. Vacancies.

The nomination of a new member to fill an unexpired term on the SACSCOC Board of Trustees is made by the delegates of the member jurisdiction or international membership where the vacancy occurs. From among the nominees, the Chair shall appoint a person to fill the vacancy on the Board which occurs between sessions. If a Board member is appointed to fill an unexpired term of two or more years, that person shall be eligible for nomination to one additional three-year term. If a Board member is appointed to fill an unexpired term of fewer than two years, that person shall be eligible for nomination to two additional three-year terms. The maximum number of consecutive years which a Trustee can serve is seven.

Members of the Board of Trustees are expected to have had experience in serving as members of SACSCOC review committees or, absent such experience, are expected to serve as members or as official observers on SACSCOC review committees during the first year of service on the Board of Trustees.

2. <u>Duties of the Board of Trustees</u>

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall have the following duties:

a. It shall prepare, subject to the approval of members of the College Delegate Assembly present and voting at the Annual Business Session of the Assembly, a statement of the standards for membership for collegiate institutions. The action of the College Delegate Assembly shall be final. The standards shall provide for diversity of purpose among institutions.

b. It shall authorize such visits and unscheduled reviews as it deems necessary.

c. It shall take final action on the accreditation of applicant, candidate, and member institutions and shall report to the College Delegate Assembly at its Annual Business Session those institutions approved for accreditation and those which have not been approved for accreditation. The final action of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall be based on its determination of an institution's compliance with SACSCOC standards, policies, and procedures. The list of collegiate institutions approved for accreditation shall be published. In the event of an appeal from an adverse action by the Board of Trustees, final action on accreditation may be taken by the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly. The Board meeting agendas may include a consent agenda to promote efficiency and effectiveness. Items may be moved out of the consent agenda section at the request of any member of the Board prior to Board action.

d. It shall give to any member institution, or institution applying for membership, notice of failure to conform to the standards as soon as possible after action has been taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. If adverse action has been taken, such institutions may avail themselves of the appeals procedures of SACSCOC through the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly.

e. It shall nominate to the College Delegate Assembly persons to succeed those members of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees whose terms expire.

f. It shall elect an Executive Council which in general will act for the SACSCOC Board of Trustees while it is not in session; however, the acts of this Council shall be subject to the revision and approval of the Board.

g. It shall appoint special and *ad hoc* study committees as are needed.

h. It shall cause to be published lists of its accredited institutions.

i. It shall prepare and approve policies and procedures consistent with the Bylaws of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

3. <u>Disclosure of Voting Practices</u>

No record shall be kept, in the minutes of the proceedings of SACSCOC and its standing committees, of the names of those who move a motion or those who second a motion; neither shall the number of votes either for or against a motion be recorded; nor shall the names of those be recorded who are for or against a motion. The Board's Vice Chair/Secretary will record the names of those who abstain from vote for reasons of conflict of interest during the Executive Session of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

## College Delegate Assembly

1. Special Studies

Proposals for special studies may be acted on by the College Delegate Assembly only as they bear on the *Principles of Accreditation* or on membership dues and special fees. Proposals relating to a significant change to the formula for membership dues or relating to special fees shall be submitted to the Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees at least 30 days before the June meeting of the Executive Council. If a proposal is approved by the Council, it will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees at its next meeting for action and, if approved, will be voted on by the College Delegate Assembly at its business session.

2. Procedures for Revision to the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*

In order to provide sufficient time for reflection, to promote more effective use of the limited time available at the business session of the College Delegate Assembly, and to fulfill the mandate of the Standing Rules that the SACSCOC Board of Trustees prepare and approve any changes in the standards before they are forwarded to the Assembly, the following rules outline procedures for proposing changes to the *Principles*:

a. Every ten years, the Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will appoint a Committee, representing at least every institutional level, to serve on the *Principles* Review Committee. The Committee will solicit comments from the membership and relevant constituencies regarding the *Principles* and will consider all comments and recommendations received since the last review period. After soliciting reaction to the draft of any proposed changes as distributed in written form or through the SACSCOC website, the Committee will consider comments received regarding the proposal, modify the proposal as is appropriate, and present its final report to the Executive Council and to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Following review and endorsement, the Board will forward the report to the membership for review, comment and response, before a vote during the business session of the College Delegate Assembly.

   If editorial clarifications are needed during the interim five-year period, the Executive Council, in consultation with the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, may review and approve those changes. Following such a change, SACSCOC will formally notify the membership in writing.

   Between scheduled periods of review, the Executive Council, in consultation with the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, may call for a period of study of a specific standard. The period of study provides extended time for solicitation of feedback from the membership and relevant constituencies regarding the standard in preparation for the next *Principles* Review. During this time, institutions will not be responsible for documenting compliance with the standard for any accreditation review occurring during the study period.

b. Following the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and Amendments and the finalization of its attending regulations as conducted approximately every five years by Congress and the U.S. Department of Education, the Chair of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will appoint a Committee, representing each U.S. and international jurisdiction, every institutional level, and representing the public, to serve as the *Principles* Review Committee. The Committee will conduct a comprehensive study of the standards to ascertain whether they are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education or training provided by institutions and relevant to the educational needs of students. In conducting the study, the Committee, or its subcommittees, will examine each of the standards and the standards as a whole, will solicit comments from the membership and other interested parties, and will consider comments and

recommendations received since the last review period. After soliciting reaction to the draft of any proposed changes, the Committee will present its final report to the Executive Council and to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Following review and endorsement, the Board will forward the report to the membership for review, comment and response, before a vote during the business session of the College Delegate Assembly.

For the Commission's purpose, interested parties are those relevant constituencies that include, in part, other institutional and specialized accrediting bodies; affiliated governing and coordinating boards; U.S. Department of Education personnel; representative students; and the public (as far as communication can be extended by means of the internet).

c. Proposals for changes of substance in the *Principles of Accreditation* may be submitted in writing at any time to the President of SACSCOC by the chief executive officer or designated representative of a member institution, by a committee of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, or by any of SACSCOC's constituents or the public. If a proposal is to be considered for action at the December Meeting, it must be submitted at least thirty days prior to the preceding June Meeting of the Executive Council and the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Proposed changes to the *Principles* shall be reviewed by the Board of Trustees or one of its committees and, if approved, shall be forwarded in writing to the membership and posted on the SACSCOC website for SACSCOC constituents at least 30 days prior to the annual business session of the College Delegate Assembly.

d. During vote on the proposed modifications to the *Principles*, the College Delegate Assembly may take only three actions: (1) approve all or part of the proposal; (2) defeat approval of all or part of the proposal; or (3) remand proposals to study or change particular parts or aspects of the *Principles*. Such actions may be made from the floor during the annual business session of the College Delegate Assembly by the chief executive officer of a member institution. Proposals to remand shall be forwarded to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for review at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

   Changes to the proposed modifications to the *Principles of Accreditation* may not be made from the floor of the College Delegate Assembly.

3. <u>Authority of the College Delegate Assembly</u>

In accord with the Bylaws of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and the Standing Rules: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, Executive Council, and the College Delegate Assembly , the College Delegate Assembly has the following responsibilities:

a. Approves standards for accreditation;

b. Provides for appeals procedures and review processes on all matters pertaining to accreditation, with the provision that the decision of the process established by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall be final;

c. Approves new fees and significant changes to the annual dues assessment formula and to special fees which shall be paid by each member and candidate institution;

d. Elects members of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly, the Hearing Officer of the Appeals Committee; and the Roster of Arbitrators; and

e. Elects SACSCOC representatives to the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

## SACSCOC Committees on Compliance and Reports

1. Duties of the Committees on Compliance and Reports

Other than those elected to serve on the Executive Council, all other members of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees shall serve on one of the Committees on Compliance and Reports (C&R Committees) – standing committees of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. The Committees review and recommend action on the accreditation status of applicant, candidate, and member institutions to the Executive Council.

Each of the Committees on Compliance and Reports has the authority to recommend action on the accreditation status of institutions; to recommend the imposition of public sanctions (Warning, Probation, and Probation for Good Cause); to recommend adverse actions of denial or loss of candidacy or accredited status; and to review and take action on all monitoring reports. Nothing stated above shall preclude any of the Committees on Compliance and Reports from meeting in joint session to hear the accreditation cases of institutions as may be appropriate.

Recommended actions on the accreditation status of member institutions from the Committees on Compliance and Reports are forwarded to the Executive Council. The Council receives and acts on the recommendations and submits its recommendations on institutions to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for final action. In accord with SACSCOC policy, *Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC*, actions taken by the Board are reported to the College Delegate Assembly at its Annual Business Session and are posted on the SACSCOC website. In the event of an appeal from an adverse action taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, final action on accreditation may be taken by the Appeals Committee of the College Delegate Assembly.

Committees on Compliance and Reports also review and recommend action on Referral Reports and Monitoring Reports submitted by member institutions. Recommended actions are forwarded to the Executive Council. In accord with the SACSCOC policy on disclosure, requests for Monitoring Reports are posted on the SACSCOC website.

2. Non-Board of Trustee Members appointed to C & R Committees

As many as ten non-Board members may also be appointed to membership on each of the Committees. These non-Board members shall be full voting participants in the review activities of the Compliance and Reports Committees and shall be assigned similar responsibilities to those members of the Committees who are also members of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Non-Board members will be selected because of their special expertise useful to the Committees on Compliance and Reports and their work as members of evaluation committees. Non-Board members are subject to the same conflict of interest provisions as are members of the Board of Trustees.

Non-Board members of the Committees on Compliance and Reports shall not be present at the executive session of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees unless invited to provide information on special cases. If present, they shall not vote.

Non-Board members shall be appointed to the Committees on Compliance and Reports for a one-year term with a maximum of six years' service. Reappointment is automatic unless the President of SACSCOC decides that the service of a non-Board member is no longer needed.

3. Site Visits to Institutions Placed on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause

If a Committee on Compliance and Reports recommends to the Board of Trustees that an institution be placed or continued on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause, and the Board approves the recommendation, then the letter to the institution announcing the decision of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will automatically include one of the following:

a. That an institution placed or continued on Probation for Good Cause for one year must receive a Special Committee visit prior to its next consideration by the Committee on Compliance and Reports. When an institution on Probation for Good Cause is continued on Probation for Good Cause for six months and has had a committee visit within twelve months prior to the SACSCOC Board meeting at which it is continued on Probation for Good Cause for six months, the Committee on Compliance and Reports, in consultation with the staff representative assigned to the institution, must stipulate whether or not a Special Committee visit will be required prior to the next consideration by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. If the Committee on Compliance and Reports stipulates that a Special Committee visit is not required, the institution may request such a visit.

b. That an institution placed or continued on Probation for one year must receive a Special Committee visit prior to its next consideration by the Committee on Compliance and Reports. When an institution on Probation is continued on Probation for six months and has had a committee visit within twelve months prior to the SACSCOC Board meeting at which it is continued on Probation for six months, the Committee on Compliance and Reports, in consultation with the staff representative assigned to the institution, must stipulate whether or not a Special Committee visit will be required prior to the next consideration by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. If the Committee on Compliance and Reports stipulates that a Special Committee visit is not required, the institution may request such a visit.

c. That an institution placed or continued on Warning for six months or for one year will be required to receive a Special Committee visit prior to the next consideration by the Committees on Compliance and Reports only if the Committee on Compliance and Reports stipulates such a requirement.

d. If an institution is placed on Warning or Probation for one year but an interim report is required, the Committee on Compliance and Reports must stipulate whether or not a Special Committee visit will be required during that six-month period. If the Committee on Compliance and Reports stipulates that a Special Committee visit is not required, the institution may request such a visit.

## Staff Relationship to the Board of Trustees and its Committees

1. Policy Statement

Staff members of SACSCOC are expected to advise and inform the SACSCOC Board of Trustees and its committees on matters relative to an institution. They should offer advice or provide information at their own initiative or at the request of the Board or its members. Such advice and information do not supplant the peer review process but rather provide additional insight in reaching an informed judgment.

2. Procedural Guidelines

   a. Staff members provide information and advice as is appropriate when assisting the SACSCOC Board of Trustees with regard to making a decision on the accreditation status of an institution. Since the Board operates through its members and committees, SACSCOC staff members provide the readers of accreditation cases with information and advice. Particularly germane are historical information on similarly situated institutions and procedural and substantive advice on how the policies and accreditation requirements/standards have been interpreted and could be applied to an institution's case, including possible action and follow up. This information is presented in writing to the readers in the form of a memorandum along with other documents to be reviewed by the Board. It may also be presented orally.

      Staff members provide information and advice to the readers (and others) in order to maintain the strength and consistency of the process.

   b. Staff members advise and inform the Committees on Compliance and Reports as well as the readers. The staff role in the deliberations is an active role. Staff members provide information and advice, which may include opinions on institutional patterns, institutional progress, and suggested action.

   c. Staff members provide information and advice during on-site visits to institutions. However, the staff's role in the process should not supplant the peer review and decision process.

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