

SACS COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

Lowman Student Center, Room 321
Meetings of February 15 & 16, 2006, 1:00 p.m.

Members Present: 2/15 - Muehsam (Chair), Cushman, Gilliam, Gray, Green, Holder, Jeffcoat, Morris, Pruitt, Smith, Stevens, and Tayebi

2/16 – Muehsam (Chair), Ashorn, Burleson, Busby (for Ringo), Caso, Donahoo, Eglsaer, Hebert, Mabry, May, Mullings, Nichter, Plugge, Thompson, and Truax

1. Dr. Muehsam welcomed and thanked the committee members for their participation. Each member introduced themselves to the committee.
2. Dr. Muehsam commended the members on their selection to this committee. The selection criteria included:
 - Excellent writing ability
 - Proven capability to meet deadlines
 - Ability to see the big picture
 - Demonstrated ability to work well with others
3. Dr. Muehsam informed the committee of their role in the accreditation process. Specifically, the committee has the responsibility of writing the Self Study. He explained that the workload would ebb and flow over the next several years as the Self Study is drafted, amended, and finalized.
4. Dr. Muehsam distributed the following documents:
 - Two SACS booklets: *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* and the *Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation*. These booklets will serve as resources during the reaffirmation process.
 - A list of universities that recently completed the reaffirmation process with links to some of their SACS websites.
 - A “Principles of Accreditation Preferences Form” to be completed and returned.
 - An itinerary for Dr. John Schmitt’s Presentations on February 22, 2006 (discussed later in the meeting.)
 - A list of Compliance Committee members
5. Dr. Muehsam provided a brief overview of the previous reaffirmation process and how the current process differs.
 - Under the “old” system, there were 435 “Must Statements” that had to be addressed. Under the “new” system, the “Must Statements” have been replaced by a series of approximately 80 standards/requirements that are less specific in content and more broad-based.
 - The “new” system allows for a smaller group, with the appropriate expertise, to create the self study document, as opposed to the larger university-wide effort of the past.
 - The Self Study will now be submitted entirely in an electronic format. All documents must be viewable by the off-site team electronically, as this team will not be able to contact University representatives (with the exception of one technical contact.)
6. Dr. Muehsam discussed the following aspects of the reaffirmation process:
 - Tentative Timeline
 - September/October 2008: Self Study to be submitted to SACS off-site review team

- January/February 2009: Submit a Focus Report, if necessary, addressing concerns identified by the off-site review team within the Self Study
 - April/May/June 2009: SACS on-site review team to visit the University
 - December 2009: SHSU's Accreditation Announcement by SACS
- On-site Review Team Purpose
 - Address any remaining concerns following the Focus Report
 - Investigate SHSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
 - Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
 - The QEP is a plan that, if implemented and successful, will enhance some aspect of "Student Learning."
 - Every member of SHSU (faculty, staff, and students) must be aware of the University's QEP efforts. The QEP will require an institutional wide effort.
 - The QEP cannot have as a primary goal such factors as student retention, graduation, or diversity. However, these goals may be tangential benefits from the improved student learning outcomes of the QEP.
 - The timeline on the formulation of the QEP is under review. There have been various ideas/recommendations of when the QEP is formulated during the process.
 - Upon implementation of the QEP, the University will begin a series of annual reviews to collect data and make any necessary adjustments to the QEP. This process will continue for five consecutive years starting in 2009.
7. Dr. Muehsam discussed Dr. John Schmitt's February 22, visit to the University and encouraged committee members to attend the sessions. Dr. Schmitt is a SACS liaison for the University of Alabama. His presentations will review his university's procedures and processes during their recently completed reaffirmation process. Dr. Schmitt's presentations will also provide a great picture of what the University can expect during the process. Dr. Schmitt will make presentations to: (1) non-academic unit heads, (2) the leadership and compliance committee members, (3) the faculty, and (4) the academic department chairs.
- There will be two small group dinners and a breakfast held during Dr. Schmitt's visit. Members who feel they will benefit with more face-to-face interaction with Dr. Schmitt, should sign up to attend one of the meals.
8. Dr. Muehsam informed the committee that the annual SACS meeting is held each December. Members from this committee will need to attend some of these sessions over the next several years to gain an understanding and further insight into the reaffirmation process.
9. Dr. Muehsam explained the role of the SACS Leadership Committee.
- Formally accepting, reviewing, and finalizing the Compliance Committee's report.
 - Serving as readers for the Self Study from the perspective of an expert of the University and that of an off-site reviewer.
 - Aiding the Compliance Committee in removing any barriers or obstacles they may face in gathering information for the Self Study.
10. Dr. Muehsam informed the committee of his goal for the reaffirmation process.
- This committee should begin work as soon as possible in writing a "skeleton" report. The goal is to complete the "skeleton" report by August 2006. This will allow the committee to become knowledgeable and comfortable with the standards and requirements and to gain a feel for the documentation required, thus allowing for information to be collected and stored only once. As all documents must be in electronic format with navigational links, the "skeleton" report will

allow technicians to determine the appropriate organization structure and formats of the files/documents.

- Starting in Fall 2006, the compliance committee members will start work on the fully formatted Self Study with the goal of completing it by May or June of 2007.
- From summer 2007 through summer 2008, the Self Study will be modified as necessary to stay current and accurate.

This tentative timeline is designed to allow for misjudgments in the time needed to produce a quality report and compile the necessary support documentation.

11. Dr. Muehsam informed the committee that several high quality institutions recently completing their SACS reaffirmation had received either sanctions or a negative action from SACS, such as being placed on Probation or Warning. SHSU will put forth every effort to ensure the reaffirmation process proceeds and is conducted as requested by SACS. Members were asked to look at the list of University's who recently completed the reaffirmation process and to visit the web-addresses provided to get an idea of what other university's have done.
12. The committee was asked to read the booklets provided and fill-out and return the "Principles of Accreditation Preference Form" by February 24, 2006. While reading the standards/requirements, members should consider possible ways to organize the writing effort.

A discussion followed with ideas of arranging members in groups of 2-4 to work on selected standards/requirements. It was pointed out that some standards/requirements would require a significantly less amount of time to address than others. An idea was raised of assigning 1-2 persons as writers and 1-2 persons as editors for each standard/requirement. It was determined that members would rank each standard/requirement into one of three difficulty levels (low, moderate, high) to gain a better understanding of what type of organizational work structure will be required.

Dr. Tayebi suggested that the committee also agree upon details such as writing style and format prior to beginning their work so that the work of multiple writers would be easier to put into "one voice" at the end.

13. Dr. Muehsam informed the committee that a SACS website was being created. The goal is to keep the university community informed and included in the process as much as possible. Items such as committee meeting minutes, newsletters, and useful links will be included. After a "presentable" draft of the Self Study is formulated, it too will be placed on the web for feedback and review by the University community. Throughout the entire process, Dr. Muehsam will also be in contact with our SACS representative informing him of the University's progress and efforts.
14. The committee discussed future meeting times. After considering several times, it was agreed upon that Friday afternoon meeting would accommodate the majority of the committee members. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Friday, March 3, 2006, at 1:00 pm.

Meetings adjourned at 1:45 pm.

Somer Smith