

**Virginia Tech**  
**SACS Reaffirmation Compliance Review Team**  
**November 29, 2007**  
**GLC Room C 8:30 – 10:00 AM**  
**Minutes**

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Present: Dean Richard Sorensen ( Chair), Kris Bush, Lanny Cross, Karen DePauw, Jane Swan (for John Dooley), Dixon Hanna, Kay Heidbreder, Donna Ratcliffe (for Zenobia Hikes), Eileen Hitchingham, Kim O'Rourke, Todd Ogle, Ray Plaza, Donna Pitt, Ray Van Dyke, Dwight Shelton, Loretta Wilburn (for Norrine Bailey Spencer), Jeb Stewart, Tom Inzana (for Bob Walters) Heidi McCoy (for Lisa Wilkes) Tom Wilkinson

Regrets received from Michael Dame, Pat Hyer (forwarded electronic update), Wanda Dean

**1. Welcome:**

Dean Rich Sorensen opened the meeting at 8:35 am and welcomed the members to the SACS Reaffirmation Compliance Review Team and for their availability to attend the meeting. Dean Sorensen reviewed the agenda made a couple of notes about attending previous reviews. The process should involved preparing heavily for the off-site review to cover all the standards as the on-site review committee if they need to follow up on incomplete standards will dig very deep into the supporting documentation. The key will be to making sure documentation is complete and thorough for all standards so there should be no need for an on-site review committee to investigate further. Dixon Hanna who recently went on a review for a substantive change committee noted that the documentation was among the most thorough he had seen and supported the proposed changes very well. This is what VT has to aim for – complete and thorough documentation on the Compliance Certificate

**2. Review of revised timeline:**

Dean Sorensen reviewed the revised timeline for the Compliance Certificate. This report is now due in its final form to SACS in **September 2009**. The new timeline reflects a one year extension granted by SACS after the shootings last April. A deadline was set for **JULY 15, 2008** for completion of the standards and to be submitted to the VT SACS office. This will allow for enough time to revise narratives, verify content and have the submissions go through the multi level approval process. There may be work needed for the Board of Visitors to approve and put in place that pertains to the standards. It was felt that even though the Compliance Certificate itself is not due to SACS until September 2009 there will still be a lot of work in finalizing the report, completing outstanding submissions and preparing reports and CD's for off-site committee members. We are aware that some standards are more complex and will require more up-to-date reports and the group can allow for that but to move forward on a **July 15, 2008** completion date.

**Action: Lanny Cross said that he will send out a memo to the people primarily responsible for completing standards with the deadline and them to respond.**

### **3. Review of pending standards approval:**

Lanny Cross reviewed the voting that will take place at the upcoming SACS Annual Meeting on revising the wording on two standards; 3.3.1 & 3.5.1. These standards were remanded from the Annual Meeting in December 2006 and reworked. The paperwork included in the handout shows the revisions and the final wording that will go before the general membership next week for approval. Lanny indicated that all the internal VT documents on these standards reflect the wording submitted for final approval. He will be attending the Annual Meeting next week and will report back if there are any further changes and when they are approved.

### **4. Review of SACS Compliance Issues Report:**

Lanny Cross reviewed the "Identifying & Exploring Issues of Compliance" report which was included in the handouts. This is a report which the SACS office in Atlanta completed for December 2006 and identifies the standards that most institutions have had the most problems with for compliance. (VT is a LEVEL VI institution). On pages 4 & 5 there are tables that list the most common and incidence of non-compliance for standards. Lanny stated that he has formed a committee which meets fairly regularly which is comprised of the people responsible for completing these most often cited non-compliant standards. The goal is to avoid having problems with those particular standards listed and pay special attention to completing and documenting them thoroughly.

The standard most often cited for non-compliance (88%) is the faculty credentials 3.7.1 standard. Pat Hyer and Wanda Dean have been working on this for over a year and Pat Hyer submitted by e-mail a report which stated that she is working with HR and making good progress on the updating of faculty credentials, collecting transcripts for re-filing in HR and updating the discipline information kept in BANNER.

Lanny Cross also reviewed the updated VT SACS assignments table which was included in the handouts. This reflects up to date changes on standards including those to be submitted for approval in December 2007. This is the table he will be using to contact people primarily responsible for competing standards to track their progress. Dean Karen DePauw felt that the graduate school should be included on the responsibility for completing standards 4.1 to 4.6 in the Federal Requirements section and will be added to that group. Also in student records 3.9.2 since the graduate school stores graduate records they will also submit a narrative for that standard. She also asked to be included on the academic policies portions of 3.4.5; 3.4.6; 3.4.7 & 3.4.9.

**Action: The VT SACS table of assignments will be changed to reflect these additions.**

**5.** Status report on completing narratives for Compliance Report. Various people gave input as to their progress on working on standards.

IR - Kris Bush has completed a test version of 2.5 and submitted it for review. In general IR is moving along with institutional effectiveness, one of the most often cited non-compliant standards. She is working with Dixon Hanna on the non academic units starting with the Provosts office.

Ray Van Dyke - Office of Academic Assessment noted that the WEAVE implementation for

Assessment is going well. They have been conducting a series of workshops this semester which have been well attended and have over 400 people registered for WEAVE input. Some colleges/departments are well ahead of others but due to the one – year extension we should be able to complete a multiyear cycle of assessment input which is critical for a SACS review. He has been working with the graduate school on developing goals as they do not have an accrediting agency which usually will push along an assessment process. Ray also mentioned that he would like some help from top administration in pushing the importance of data input for the WEAVE assessment program.

**Action: Dixon Hanna said that he would get the issue put onto the agenda next Provost 's Council meeting which will be on Tuesday, December 11.**

Tom Wilkinson reminded that committee that reviewers will look at non-academic and therefore all administrative units must be included in the review and with thorough documentation.

Business Office –Dwight Shelton: Dwight Shelton asked what constitutes the most recent reports as required in standard 2.11.2 on financial resources. This is also a problem standard for non-compliance and they will not be able to meet the deadline for the most current fiscal year reports. Dean Sorensen reported that SACS is aware that this is a problem for most public institutions and to go with the previous year's reports and update with the current year when available which will probably not be before the end of November. Something must be submitted for the committee to review.

Donna Ratcliffe of Student Affairs said they are reviewing student handbooks that are published and distributed for confirmation of where policies are published and looking for gaps. She has teams working on the various standards that Student Affairs is responsible for.

SACS office – Christine Haimann said that if any groups require more samples of completed standards from other schools or information to contact the SACS office. Samples are offered merely as a guideline as to how other schools have approached completion of the standard to jumpstart thinking about writing the narrative and are not be used verbatim.

Todd Ogle of IR suggested that they will offer workshops again in the Spring semester similar to the ones offered last spring. Information will be forthcoming once they are set up.

Tom Wilkinson of Distance Learning who must contribute to quite a few standards noted that there must be a consistency throughout the report; this will be taken care of in the Verify & Edit process. He is working on cross referencing standards for his group. Must be aware of overlaps and make sure they are carefully documented.

President's Office: They are working on standards and will start submitting something soon. They will not be using a website for documents but will submit PDF's of their hard copies as they build a document library for their standards.

VetMed: Donna Pitt reported that the VetMed dept has just finished a seven year review cycle for their accreditation and they should have good data for their SACS standards as their accreditation was very student outcome oriented.

Karen DePauw asked where the honors system is in the SACS reporting and it was agreed it would come under the Provosts office reporting.

Dixon Hanna: Noted that it is important to show that the university operates under the premise of continuous improvement and not just cleaning things up for a SACS review. It should show in the narrative that the university is continuously improving its policies, practices and procedures. It is important to show that a policy is implemented and acted upon, and that it is evaluated and adjusted if necessary.

**Action: SACS office to develop some boiler plate text which could be used to imply continuous improvement when replying to standards.**

Lanny Cross will be using this committee and the Steering Committee to review standards as they are received and finalized. This group is a good cross section of the university and is beginning to get more engaged in the process. The Steering Committee will look at a more complete draft of the final compliance report and will hopefully pick up on mission policy submissions.

**Action: Dean Sorensen suggested that the Committee look at scheduling another meeting in March. Information will be distributed as soon as a date is selected.**

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 am

CHRISTINE HAIMANN  
NOVEMBER 29, 2007