**FAYETTEVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY**

**SACS COMPLIANCE AUDIT**



**March 23, 2009**

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**SACS COMPLIANCE AUDIT PURPOSE**

Fayetteville State University (FSU) will assess the current effectiveness of all aspects of the university through a multi-year process of comprehensive analysis for the purpose of enhancing the quality of the total institution. The audit will include a consideration of the programs, personnel, policies, procedures, and physical plant of FSU. The compliance audit will be comprehensive, analytical, and address both critical institutional issues and the *Principles of* *Accreditation* formulated by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It will result from broad-based participation by the university community, offer recommendations for improvements, propose procedures for follow-up, and address institutional effectiveness. The compliance audit will not only be a mechanism for demonstrating compliance with regional accreditation standards and requirements, but also an opportunity for FSU to consider ways it might enhance its educational performance and a resource for future planning efforts. The compliance audit will be an open, honest, and professional inquiry which contains a quality analysis of every phase of operation of the institution. The focus of the compliance audit will be institutional improvement through strategic planning based on an evaluation of the resulting analyses.

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT GOALS**

The FSU audit will be designed to do the following:

* assess the extent to which FSU meets the SACS Principles of Accreditation;
* examine the effectiveness of the university’s planning and evaluation processes;
* aid in strengthening on-going planning efforts;
* utilize comprehensive evaluation to enhance institutional effectiveness;
* identify the strengths and weaknesses of the institution as well as opportunities and threats;
* develop specific recommendations to address issues raised in the audit;
* provide direction for immediate improvements and a blueprint for the next decade, integrating all existing university plans for the future;
* produce a compliance audit report and supporting documents to be used by the off-site and on-site visiting committees during the review of the institution; and
* develop a sense of cohesiveness among all members of the university community.

**LEADERSHIP AND COMPLIANCE AUDIT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

Involvement of the FSU leadership team in the compliance audit is central to the success of the process. The administrators from across the university will serve in ex-officio capacities on all committees. Members of the Board of Trustees will serve on audit committees, also.

**CHANCELLOR**

The Chancellor has the major role of ensuring that the compliance audit process is taken seriously and that there is continuing support for the process.

The Chancellor will:

* play important roles such as apprising the Board of Trustees of matters related to the compliance audit;
* reviewing compliance audit drafts and providing commentary;
* ensuring the implementation of follow-up activities that respond to the recommendations generated by the institutional compliance report, by the off-site and on-site committee reports and by the Commission.

**PROVOST AND VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs has the major responsibility for ensuring a comprehensive review of the institution. The Provost will be responsible for:

* appointing leadership for the compliance audit;
* ensuring the provision of adequate resources to conduct the audit;
* approving of the budget for the audit and providing support and commentary as necessary;
* maintaining communication with the Commission on the election of the Visiting Committee Chair and scheduling the peer review committee visit.

**SACS LIAISON/COMPLIANCE AUDIT COORDINATOR**

The Compliance Audit Coordinator manages the compliance audit process. The Coordinator’s particular responsibilities include the following:

* ensures that institutional leadership is informed of the resources required to conduct the audit, and seeks appropriate support;
* serves on the Steering committee;
* serves as the liaison between the SACS Commission on Colleges staff representative and the institutional leadership;
* oversees the development of the compliance audit plan and manual;
* ensures that the institutional community is informed of the purpose and progress of the audit;
* ensures appropriate institutional review of preliminary working drafts and approval of the final draft of the audit report;
* oversees all arrangements related to the visiting committee;
* ensures that appropriate follow-up activities are in place to consider the recommendations generated by the audit;

**STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR**

The Steering Committee Chairperson presides over and administers the work of the Steering Committee and assists the Compliance Audit Coordinator. The Chair’s particular responsibilities include the following:

* coordinates the work of the audit committees;
* monitors the schedule of the audit and ensures appropriate progress toward the completion of the compliance audit;
* works with the Compliance Audit Coordinator to oversee the development of the compliance audit plan, manual, and guidelines;
* consults with the Editor on the editorial review of committee reports and the initial and final drafts of the compliance audit report;
* works with the Compliance Audit Coordinator on matters related to the visiting committee.

**AUDIT REPORT EDITOR**

The Audit Report Editor has the overall responsibility for editing the final compliance audit report and any supplemental documents to support the audit report. The Editor’s particular responsibilities include the following:

* assists the Compliance Audit Coordinator and Steering Committee Chair in developing the plan, the manual, and other policies and procedures when appropriate;
* serves as a member of the Steering Committee;
* works with the Steering Committee to develop and distribute the editorial guidelines for the audit report;
* assists the Steering Committee in reviewing preliminary drafts of reports;
* edits the final draft of the audit report and other appropriate documents;
* makes appropriate arrangements for publishing the final document.

**THE COMPLIANCE AUDIT STEERING COMMITTEE**

The SACS Steering Committee supervises the development of the compliance audit and includes representatives of the administration, the faculty, and the student body. The Chair of the Steering Committee provides leadership, direction, and assistance to the members of the committee and ensures that the document prepared by the Committee is appropriately analytical, accurate, and objective and contains clear recommendations accompanied by appropriate remedial actions.

The Steering Committee is composed of the Compliance Audit Director, Chair of the Steering Committee, the Chairs of the Standards Committees which are established to study and report on the university’s compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, ex-officio members serving as resource staff, the Editor of the audit document, and one student representative. The faculty and administrators serving on the Steering Committee will be appointed by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The student representative to the Steering Committee will be appointed by the Student Government Association. Steering Committee responsibilities include:

* developing the Compliance Audit Plan and Manual;
* coordinating audits activities;
* monitoring the progress of the Standards Committees and of the audit report;
* disseminating information about the self-study process;
* developing guidelines for committee reports;
* providing guidance and assistance to the Standards committees;
* assisting in the collection and analysis of data and materials;
* providing progress reports to the Commission on Colleges;
* reviewing reports of the Standards Committees and preparing the final Compliance Audit Report;
* developing a mechanism for the review of the draft of the Compliance Audit Report;
* assisting in making arrangements for the Visiting Committee;
* developing a plan for the review and implementation of committee recommendations; and
* mediating jurisdictional questions and conflicting viewpoints.

**THE COMPLIANCE AUDIT STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

There will be twelve Standards Committees, organized around major areas of the SACS Standards and Core Requirements one committee for local arrangements for the SACS Committee visit, one Quality Enhancement Plan Committee, one committee to edit all reports and supporting documents and one committee to advise and implement technological support.

The Standards Committees will identify the parts of the *Principles for Accreditation* which are relevant to their assigned part of the audit and carefully review them. The Standards Committees will analyze the performance of the institution in the areas identified in these statements based upon a careful review and assessment of all relevant data and documentation. Multiple means of documentation will be used. Appropriate recommendations and suggestions for improvements will be included in the report. A draft report of each Committee’s findings will be submitted to the Chair of the Steering Committee and reviewed by the Steering Committee. Each committee will revise its report as recommended by the Chair and the Steering Committee and submit a final draft of the report to the Chair of the Steering Committee. The Standards Committees will be expected to complete any additional tasks in their assigned areas or make any additional revisions to their reports that are required by the SACS off-site and Visiting Committees. The Committees shall be: Institutional Mission (3.1 and 2.4), Governance and Administration (3.2, 2.1, 2.1, and 2.4),

Institutional Effectiveness (3.3, 2.5 and 4.1), All Educational Programs (2.6, 3.4, 4.2, 4.3 and

4.6), Undergraduate Programs (3.5, 2.7.1, 2.7.2, 2.7.3, 2.7.4, 4.2, 4.4), Graduate and Post-

Baccalaureate Professional Programs (3.6, 2.7.1, 2.7.2, 2.7.4, 4.2 and 4.4), Faculty (3.7 and 2.8),

Library and Other Learning Resources (3.8 and 2.9), Student Affairs and Services (3.9, 2.10 and

4.5), Financial Resources (3.10 and 2.11.1), Physical Resources (3.11 and 2.11.2), and

Quality Enhancement Plan (2.12).

**SELECTION OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Faculty and staff committee members will be recommended to the Chancellor for appointments based on positions held, recommendations from the Deans of each School and College and Unit Heads in the areas of Business and Finance and Student Affairs and willingness to serve. Student members of committees will be recommended by the Student Government Association and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Members of the Board of Trustees will be asked to serve on committees consistent with their standing committee assignments. Alumni from the local alumni associations will be contacted to serve on committees based on recommendations from the National Alumni Association President.

Once the recommendations are received from the constituencies listed above, the Compliance Audit Coordinator will form the committees to ensure the broadest possible representation of all university constituencies. These constraints will be considered in the selection process:

* no individual should be appointed to more than one Standards Committee (unless the appointment is based on administrative responsibilities);
* a person with administrative responsibility should be appointed ex-officio to the Standard Committee that is charged with review of that person’s area;
* each Standard Committee should have a proper balance of faculty, students, staff, administrators, alumni, and others;
* individuals should be selected from different areas (departments and units) in order to insure diverse viewpoints on the committees;
* attention should be given to demographic characteristics such as gender and race.

**CHAIR SELECTION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Standards Committee chairs will be appointed by the Chancellor. Chairs will be sought with these characteristics:

* broad knowledge of higher education and of Fayetteville State University;
* analytical and critical thinking skills;
* willingness to serve in a leadership position;
* expertise in the area of the committee’s assignment;
* past experience and a proven track record in meeting deadlines;
* demonstrated commitment to the university;
* special skills such as report writing, data analysis, and research.

The Chairs of the Standards Committees will provide leadership and guidance to the Committees: work with committee members to develop a work plan to accomplish the Committee’s tasks; assign responsibilities to committee members; work with committee members to develop a report which is appropriately analytical and contains clear recommendations for remedial actions; arrange meeting times and places and prepare agendas for the meetings; conduct the meetings of the committees and ensure that minutes of the meetings are taken; submit agendas and minutes of all meetings to the Chair of the Steering Committee and the SACS Office; coordinate the activities of their committee with those of other committees; make regular progress reports to the Chair of the Steering Committee; and ensure that their committee adheres to the deadline in the calendar of activities for the self-study. Chairs are encouraged to use technology (e-mail and distribution lists, Blackboard) as much as possible to facilitate the work of the committees.

The Chairs of the Standards Committees will maintain a file containing a list of committee members; the work plan for the committee; agendas, minutes, and handouts of the committee; data collected and other supporting documentation; progress reports; and the preliminary and final drafts of the committee report. It is the responsibility of the Chairs of the Standards Committees to submit preliminary and final drafts of the reports of the committees to the Chair of the Steering Committee and to make revisions to the documents as needed.

Each Standard Committee chair should schedule orientation and organizational meetings with the Standard Committees. The agenda for those meetings might include:

* review of audit standards, resource manual and past reports;
* review of audit goals and objectives;
* review of specific committee assignments and tasks;
* review of overall compliance audit calendar;
* discussion of editorial/writing guidelines;
* discussion of assignments for individual committee members;
* determination of information needs; and
* appointment of committee secretary.

**Methodologies for Data Collection and Analysis**

Standards Committees will conduct their analysis of the performance of the institution based upon a careful review and assessment of all data pertaining to the area assigned to the Committee. The conclusions contained in the audit reports submitted to the Chair of the Steering Committee will be based on multiple sources of documentation. The Steering Committee will coordinate data gathering and facilitate the collection of institutional data pertinent to the compliance audit. Data gathering occurs during the preliminary planning and organization phase of the compliance audit, and data analysis occurs during the implementation phase of the self-study. Chairs of the Standards Committees should work with the Chair of the Steering Committee and the Director of Institutional Research to locate information or conduct the analysis. Analysis will be based on data which are appropriate to the issues being considered, and it will be conducted in an unbiased manner.

The collection of university-wide data will be a shared responsibility of the compliance audit staff, the Steering Committee, and the Standards committees. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will provide technical support. The Standards committees will have the primary responsibility for obtaining information relevant to their areas of study and evaluation. The compliance audit staff and Steering Committee will assist in identifying sources of information, in the collection of some university-wide data, and in specifying the content of the departmental and unit reports.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will make available the compendium of existing institutional information. This will include general information on the university and data on admissions, enrollment, financial aid, housing, faculty and staff, revenue and expenditures, research programs, the library, physical facilities, the athletic program, and counseling and placement.

Each academic department and each nonacademic unit will be asked to prepare a compliance audit report. The reports will emphasize institutional effectiveness. Departments and units will be asked to identify their goals, to specify their evaluation methods, and to describe the use that has been and is being made of assessment results. Full compliance audit reports that address all parts of the *Principles* will not be required from departments and nonacademic units.

Standards committees will solicit information directly from the appropriate administrative units. Requests for departmental information will be channeled through the SACS Office for better coordination. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee and the Steering Committee will assist the principal committees in identifying sources of information and in gathering specific data, including information from outside agencies. Principal committees may need to conduct surveys of specific university or off-campus groups (in addition to the university-wide surveys of faculty, staff, and students). The compliance audit staff and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee will assist the principal committees in the development and use of survey questionnaires.

Each standards committee will evaluate the data relevant to its area of study. This will include information gathered by the committee and provided by the compliance audit staff, the Steering Committee, and the Institutional Effectiveness Office. Department and unit reports and the results of the university-wide surveys will be available for use by the standards committees.

Departments and units may conduct studies/surveys or direct assessments and provide the results to the standards committees. When these results are available, the standards committees should use them and avoid re-surveying populations that have already been surveyed.

**Editorial/Writing Guidelines**

The editor of the Compliance Audit works closely with the chair of the Steering Committee and with the Steering Committee to create writing and editorial deadlines and to determine writing/editorial guidelines for the format of the self-study report. The editor works with the chair and the Steering Committee to determine methods and timing for the forwarding of drafts to the chair of the Steering Committee and to determine criteria for returning draft reports to committees for revisions. The editor will be instrumental in suggesting revisions to the draft committee reports and for ensuring that the final report is stylistically uniform. The editor will work in conjunction with the chair and the Steering Committee to produce the final report. The editor will edit the report primarily for format, style, grammar, and usage, while the Coordinator will edit the report primarily for content. The editor will play a role in deciding how the final report is to be organized, bound, reproduce, and distributed.

Audit reports should be analytical and evaluative and should reflect the principles of good report writing: clarity, coherence, conciseness, and correctness. Audit reports should:

* assume an audience of intelligent non-specialists and avoid technical jargon;
* strive for clarity and simplicity in sentence structure;
* use concrete nouns and specific verbs and avoid overusing the verb *to be*;
* provide smooth transitions between sections, paragraphs, and sentences;
* support all generalizations with factual evidence;
* avoid vague pronoun references;
* combine short paragraphs about related issues and divide excessively long ones;
* combine short, choppy sentences to eliminate unnecessary words, or deletions and repetition;
* eliminate deadwood expressions **like** *due to the fact that, in a situation in which, or there is a necessity for*;
* avoid there are/it is in sentences when possible;
* use the active voice whenever possible;
* avoid sexist language and references to the names of personnel;
* committee reports should have the tone of an analytical report and should be written in the third person; they should use a semi-formal style characterized by a straightforward, constructive tone, even in the discussion of weakness and problems. Recommendations should be based on a realistic assessment of the subject. Assigning blame for problems or weaknesses should be avoided;
* committee reports should be as uniform stylistically as possible.

Writers are reminded to:

* choose simple, short words and phrases when possible;
* capitalize titles only when they refer to specific individuals;
* place commas and periods inside quotation marks, colons and semi-colons outside;
* avoid the suffix –ize or -wise to create adjectives, adverbs, or verbs;
* use the conservative punctuation form with the comma between all items when listing items in a series; and
* use parallel grammatical structures in graphics and lists.

The language used in the audit should consist primarily of words in general usage and some formal terms and should avoid informal (colloquial) and nonstandard words and expressions. Jargon, trite words and expressions, and most abbreviations should be avoided. Both “the University” and Fayetteville State University (FSU) are permitted uses.

**Formatting Guidelines**

Use the following guidelines to format text and graphics:

* Incorporate as few formatting codes as possible. Formatting will be implemented in the final draft.
* Use Microsoft Word default margins and tabs.
* Use left justification only. Turn the automatic hyphenation off.
* Double space the committee reports. Indent the first lines of paragraphs one-inch from the margin. Leave three blank lines before new headings. Leave two blank lines between the heading and the following text. Skip two spaces between sentences.
* Do not number pages. Page numbers will be incorporated by the Editor when the first draft of the Institutional Self-Study is compiled.
* Do not use headers or footers.
* The final printed report will use Times New Roman 12 point typeface for text and font sizes for title pages and major headings. Drafts of individual reports should use a single font size throughout. All adjustments in font sizes will be made during the final drafting stages. For drafts, use Times New Roman 12 point. Font size should be specified using the Microsoft Word format function. No font change codes should appear in the document itself.
* Whenever possible, numerical data should be expressed in visual form through graphs and tables. Avoid lengthy prose descriptions of data that can be presented more clearly and accessibly in graphic form. Illustrative material such as graphs, charges, diagrams, and maps should be called figures and numbered consecutively throughout the report with Arabic numbers. Tables should be displayed for easy reading and interpretation and numbered consecutively with Arabic numbers, independent of the figures.
* Figures and tables should follow closely upon the first reference to them. Figures and tables are referred to in the text directly.
* Each figure should be labeled with a figure number and title which should appear below the figure.
* References to sources, if necessary, should be given in parenthesis. Do not use footnotes.
* Labels for tables are centered above the table.
* Placing a border around a figure or table is optional.
* A figure or table may need to be positioned sideways on the page (or landscape in the Microsoft Word format function). Always turn such mater to that the bottom is to the right edge of the page. The label for a sideways figure or table should also be printed sideways. Matter positioned sideways should take up the entire page. No other matter should appear on the same page (except for the page number, which is not printed sideways).
* Quotations longer than four lines of text should be indented one inch from the left margin. They should not be indented additionally form the right margin. They are not single-spaced in a double-spaced document. Quotation marks are not used for indented quotations. Do not skip an extra line before or after a long quotation.
* Headings and titles should correspond with those in the *Principles of Accreditation*. Write major headings in full capitals, centered horizontally on the page. Start major topic headings at the left margin. Place subtopic and sub-subtopic headings ½” from the left margin. Place the sub-subtopic heading on the same line as the first sentence of the following text. Begin all other text two spaces below the headings. All headings except sub –subtopics should be typed in bold. All headings except the major headings should be underlined.
* All appended materials will be bound in a second volume. All appended material must be labeled consecutively. The label should appear above any existing titles. Labels should be centered on the page.
* An appendix may include any tables and illustrative figures that support the explanation in the text. Avoid excessive use of tables in the text. However, material that is essential to understanding a section should be presented in the narrative, not the appendix.

Committee members should consult the Editor of the self-study for additional guidance with problems or assistance in unusual cases.

**Operational Guidelines**

Temporary work space to support the self-study project has been established in the Collins Building, Room 213. The Self-Study Library will be housed in this office. The university community will be kept informed of the progress of the self-study primarily through the posting of information on a Web site on the university’s home page. Information related to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and, specifically, a complete version of the *Principles of Accreditation*, can be located at <http://www.sacs.org>.

The following guidelines apply to the submission and evaluation of committee reports:

* All self-study committees should submit drafts of their reports to the Chair of the Steering Committee and the SACS Office.
* Reports should be prepared using Microsoft Word (Version 2007 or 2003) and should be submitted on the O: Drive or e-mailed labeled with the title of the report and the version of Microsoft Word used. A hard copy should accompany the electronic submission. The chair of the committee submitting the report should retain backup copies of all materials submitted to the Chair of the Steering Committee.
* The Chair of the Steering Committee will distribute a copy of the reports to the Editor and will maintain a record of the progress of each report throughout the accreditation process. If the Chair and the Editor detect major deficiencies, the report will be returned to the committee for revision and re-submission to the Chair.
* The Chair will distribute copies of draft committee reports to the members of the Steering Committee for their input.
* The Steering Committee will review individual reports. Meetings of the Steering Committee will be open to the university community. Copies of the committee reports will be placed on reserve in the Chestnutt Library and posted on the SACS Self-Study Website.
* Final committee reports will be due on the dates indicated in the Self-Study Calendar.

Committee reports should meet the following requirements:

* Conform to the editorial/writing guidelines;
* Address all applicable portions of the *Principles of Accreditation* and consider all parts of the university within the committee’s purview;
* Provide adequate evidence or documentation to support the analysis;
* Reflect careful evaluation of data;
* Draw conclusions based on the evidence;
* Identify strengths and weaknesses;
* Make recommendations for remedial action and suggestions for improvements;
* Address the “enhancement” dimension or issues which are not directly related to the *Criteria* but which are important to the institution and which relate to institutional aspirations beyond minimal compliance with requirements for accreditation;
* Be well-written, readable, and understandable to persons who may have no knowledge of the institution.

Reports not meeting the necessary requirements will be returned to the committee for further work before being submitted to the Steering Committee for review.

Committee reports should include the following components:

* Introduction – might include a discussion of the relationship of this section of the self-study to the mission of the university and/or a brief history of the topic describing any significant changes during the past ten years. It should include a description of the current status of the topic covered in the report.
* Methodology – summarizes how data used in the report were collected or produced. This might include a description of what documents were consulted to respond to the MUST statements or of studies done in connection with the accreditation process.
* Body of the Report – covers the topics and sub-topics of the appropriate section(s) of the *standards*. It addresses the relevant MUST and SHOULD statements and discusses the degree to which the university is in compliance with these statements. The analysis should lead to a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the institution in the area under consideration. Merely presenting data will not suffice. Each committee must do serious analytical and evaluative thinking that makes any data or other information meaningful. It will refer to or include specific evidence to substantiate each claim made, but *will not include lengthy excerpts from such materials in the body of the committee report*.
* Conclusion – identifies recommendations, suggestions and institutional concerns (“enhancement” aspects beyond the minimum criteria). It discusses the ways in which the institution can address weaknesses, remedy areas of noncompliance (if any), and improve its operations as well as build on identified strengths. Recommendations are made when the university is not in compliance with any standard. Suggestions are made when issues of importance that do not rise to the priority of a recommendation are addressed.
* References – includes all sources used in developing the report. It is compiled in MLA documentation format.
* Appendix –includes material referenced in the text of the report. It is attached to the committee’s report. This material will be collected in a separate volume when the self-study is complete.

**Project Resources**

A budget for the project will be established by the Office of Academic Affairs and administered by the Chair of the Steering Committee with the assistance of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Requests for expenditures related to the self-study should be submitted to the Compliance Audit Coordinator.

**Follow-Up Plans**

The self-study will describe adequate procedures for the review and follow up of suggestions and recommendations made in the report. In the body of the report, each chapter should include a description of follow-up plans, including offices responsible for follow-up and deadlines. The summary should also discuss the institution’s plan for ensuring that recommendations presented in the self-study are properly addressed. This portion of the summary should indicate administrative responsibility, time frames for addressing and implementing the recommendations, and indicators of success in responding to them. Following the conclusion of the self-study and the receipt of the report of the off-site and on-site visiting committees, the institution is required to provide the Commission with a written response to all recommendations contained in the visiting committee report. The response should assess in a detailed and comprehensive fashion the actions taken by the institution to ensure compliance with specific standards. The institution should also implement a plan to follow-up on all non-standard related recommendations stemming from the self-study process.

**References**

Commission on Colleges, *Principles of Accreditation*. 2008 Edition, Decatur, Georgia: **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2008.**