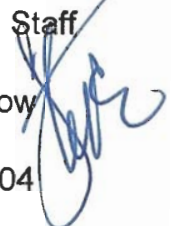




Office of the President

To: Faculty and Staff
From: Steve Kinslow 
Date: April 23, 2004
Subject: THIRD UPDATE ON SACS: FACULTY CREDENTIALS

This is provided as an update to the April 6 and 15 memos distributed earlier and to respond to some general questions which have arisen. I also want to clarify and summarize what has been previously stated in memos and in various meetings:

- ACC will reduce the number of faculty who are categorized as "hired by exception" in preparation for its Fall SACS Special Committee visit; the College has not adopted the position that there will be no exceptions;
- Faculty will have an opportunity to meet with their supervisors to discuss any questioned credentials, to provide additional credentials documentation they may have, or to make their case for being categorized as either meeting SACS criteria or for being retained by exception;
- Some faculty (full-time and adjunct) may remain categorized as exceptions and continue to teach, but will have Action Plans to eventually remove the exception status;
- Full-time faculty are not at risk of losing their jobs at ACC, though some will have required Action Plans to complete compliance with all SACS criteria/principles and may have alternate assignments;
- Some adjunct faculty will not be allowed to teach in the Fall until such time as they have clearly met the existing criteria/principles of SACS;
- There are some programs in which we question the opinion of the SACS consultant regarding faculty credentials and we will work with the department chair of those programs, who will work with the faculty, before finalizing a College position on whether they meet existing criteria or will be treated as exceptions;
- The College will not take the position of defending every past "hiring by exception" decision since this is essentially the position taken in response to the Spring 03 report, and this position was rejected by the Fall 03 visiting committee and by the December 03 SACS Delegate Assembly action .

Every attempt has been made to notify each faculty member about the status of their credentials file in regard to the classes they teach. If you are teaching a class this Spring and have not received your notification, please contact your Department Chair or Dean immediately.

Department Chairs and Deans have been meeting this week, and will continue next week, to visit with faculty whose credential files have been questioned. It is the faculty member's responsibility to request a meeting if one is desired. This is the time when the faculty member and Department Chair and Dean would ensure that all parties understand clearly what is questioned, would indicate if there is current additional information which can be provided to the file and resolve the issue, and would discuss possible solutions which may include the merits of the faculty member being considered for being hired by exception. In order to be considered for "exception", the faculty member's credential file must have official documents showing the person has outstanding professional experience, national recognition in the field, or demonstrated outstanding contributions to the teaching discipline. **If individuals believe they have information that would solve their credential problem, they need to present that information to their Department Chair and Dean by Friday, April 30. If you cannot meet this deadline, then you must have at least contacted your Department Chair by April 30 to make arrangements to meet at the earliest opportunity.**

To assist in these reviews, I've asked some folks who have been closely involved in our SACS activities and are well-acquainted with the criteria and principles to review the requests for exceptions. This group will be led by Cary Sowell and will include David Lydic, Lynn Beaman, Mike Midgley and Donetta Goodall and they will forward their recommendations to me.

In addition we are pursuing options to help as many faculty as possible meet the criteria before Fall 2004. Some of these options include, but are not limited to:

- Work with area universities to assist faculty in registering for one or two graduate level classes this summer if this is part of their Action Plan;
- Work with Texas State University to offer one or two graduate level classes at ACC this summer on teaching methodology or working with under-prepared students in postsecondary education for faculty teaching developmental courses who may need this documentation;
- Appoint a Lead Instructor who meets criteria to teach a large lecture section with other faculty whose credentials do not meet the criteria, serving as lab instructors who are supervised by the lead instructor;
- Appoint an instructor of record for a group of courses (see FAQ);
- Adjuncts who need to complete an associate degree can challenge classes in an ACC program, subject to ACC restrictions (see FAQ);

- Work with St. Ed's New College to determine if faculty can present portfolios of courses or work experience that might be accepted as equating to degree completion;
- Work with the Continuing Education Department to see if some faculty who do not meet the qualifications to teach credit courses would be qualified to teach in CE instead.

Again, in some departments we are questioning the consultant's opinion and will reach decisions regarding affected faculty after more thorough review and discussion with the department chairs and dean. These include Biology, Psychology, Kinesiology, Commercial Music, Jewelry, American Sign Language, Sonography, EMSP, Surgical Technology, Real Estate, Surveying, ESL, and Technical Communication.

In addition, we are looking at course content on individuals' transcripts to see if they would qualify as comparable courses in the subject even when not listed on the transcript with the subject's rubric. Areas where this is occurring are Computer Science, Government, Psychology, Economics and Biology.

We welcome other suggestions you may have for possible solutions. Please share with your department chair or dean.

Keep in mind that this is not the time for ACC to put itself into a position to argue with or resist our accrediting agency's repeated stance on this topic. On three separate occasions, the SACS reports have indicated we have too many people hired by exception, and we must significantly reduce that number. Our previous position of defending previous hiring decisions has not been accepted, and we will make necessary changes prior to the next visit.

We are going to reduce the number of faculty hired by exception, because getting off warning and remaining a strong, vital resource for this community is more important than any single individual. The position that the needs of the institution will come first, and that we will make significant effort to put the institution in best position for a positive review this Fall, remains. The most important activity before the College is reaffirmation of its accreditation.

Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we work through this difficult challenge.

SBK/pws

Attachment

Questions Frequently Asked

EXCEPTIONS

How will “exceptions” be determined? Who will decide which faculty members will be the “exceptions?”

To be considered for “exception,” the faculty member’s credential file must document outstanding professional experience, state or national recognition in the field, and demonstrated outstanding contributions to the teaching discipline. Only well-documented and exceptional cases will be accepted. Final approval of the Executive Vice President is required based upon recommendation of the individuals noted in the memo.

COURSE WORK

What provision is available for faculty to enroll in ACC summer classes early? Some faculty are concerned that the courses they need to take will be filled before they get registered.

Faculty may register early. They should work with their dean to do this. They should also work with their dean in the event a course needed for them to be eligible to teach by fall is full.

Is there a limit on ACC credit by exam? Also, can the 25% residency requirement be waived?

There is a 30 credit hour limit on credit by exam. The 25% residency requirement (that 25% of the degree plan be comprised of courses actually taken at ACC) will not be waived. This is also a SACS requirement.

How will ACC credit-by-exam be administered?

We will follow our normal processes for credit-by-exam. We would, however, remind persons pursuing this strategy that ACC must document that the examinations, and the examination process, was not biased in favor of our faculty members.

What is the process for granting sabbaticals?

Sabbaticals for FY 05 have been awarded earlier. It is not expected that faculty will, in general, be granted a sabbatical to allow them to take required courses. However, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis and documented in the signed Faculty Action Plan.

What provisions are available to allow faculty to enroll in more Semester Credit Hours than the college usually allows?

Faculty attempting to meet SACS credentials guidelines may enroll in more Semester Credit Hours than the college usually allows.

FINANCIAL

What College financial support is available to pay for courses taken at ACC? Will additional vouchers be issued? Will tuition waivers for course and for credit by exam be granted?

ACC will waive tuition and credit-by-exam fees for current ACC instructors needing course credit to be in compliance with SACS guidelines.

What College financial support is available is available to pay for courses taken at other colleges/universities?

In general, ACC will not pay for courses taken at other colleges or universities. In a few circumstances, ACC may contract for a course to be delivered to a group of faculty who need the same course, when this approach is clearly for the good of the institution.

Will faculty continue to receive their current salary if they have a reduced workload in order to take required courses?

Full-time faculty will continue to receive their regular salary. However, it is not expected that faculty will, in general, have a reduced workload to allow them to take required courses. However, this will be determined on a case by case basis and documented in the signed Faculty Action Plan.

Will faculty continue to receive their current salary if they are unable to complete the degree requirements by fall and are given another assignment?

Full-time faculty will continue to receive their regular salary, subject to the expectation that all parties will work together to agree upon a Faculty Action Plan that will specify when the degree requirements must be completed.

ALTERNATIVES/ACTION PLANS

How many “Instructor of Record” situations can we actually have, and how will that work?

We will use Instructors of Record where it makes sense to do so, and there is a shortage of qualified faculty. This will be a formal relationship with very specific standards. These specific requirements will be delineated in the Faculty Action Plan for the affected faculty member.

What is the time line for F/T faculty to complete degree requirements? What is the time line for adjunct faculty to complete degree requirements?

This will be determined on a case by case basis and documented in the signed Faculty Action Plan.

FACULTY

Will faculty receive any kind of written assurance that if they meet the criteria, they will be allowed to maintain their faculty position?

Full time faculty who do not comply with SACS guidelines will document their individual Faculty Action Plan to come into compliance with those guidelines. This document will be agreed to and signed by both the faculty member and by ACC. This will also apply to a limited number of adjunct faculty members. Other adjunct faculty members who do not meet the credentialing guidelines by fall 2004, will be restored to eligibility lists when they do comply with SACS guidelines.

If an IA or CA does not meet SACS credentialing guidelines in the fall, will they be allowed to maintain the non-teaching portion of their job?

Yes, but subject to the expectation that all parties will work together to agree upon a Faculty Action Plan that will specify how and over what time period the IA or CA will come into compliance with SACS guidelines.

Will we use “Emergency Hire” full time faculty in the fall? If so, how many will we use, and how will they be allocated to programs?

ACC’s Board of Trustees will be asked to approve additional full-time positions at its May 3, 2004, meeting. If approved, it is expected that most of these positions would be filled on an “emergency” basis by current adjunct faculty members who meet SACS credentialing guidelines. These faculty members would also be eligible to apply for the permanent positions during the normal posting process next year.