



Compliance Certification: A Team Effort

Reaffirmation of accreditation by the Commission on Colleges (COC) affirms that SFA has articulated definite goals for student learning and has the resources, programs, faculty, and staff to meet those objectives. The reaffirmation process taking place over the next few years will not only require an intense effort, but will also give all programs at the university the opportunity to showcase the exceptional work they are doing. Throughout the process, departments and programs will be asked to rekindle their responsibility for continuous improvement with meaningful assessment of programs and services.

If you have been following the reaffirmation efforts at SFA in these first few months, then you are aware that the process has changed significantly since we were last reaccredited in 2000. The new approach by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is a very positive change that advances the need of all departments to reflect on the correlation between what they do each day and the strategic plan of the university. In 2011, we will be asked to show compliance relative to just over 70 core, comprehensive, and federal regulations. The process is subdivided into two main initiatives culminating in reports to SACS. First, the university Compliance Certification will be completed and submitted to the COC in September 2010. Second, the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), identifying an area for enhanced student learning, will be submitted to the COC in early 2011. The production of both these major documents, recording accomplishments in and future plans for student success, will require a campus-wide team effort.

The overall reaffirmation endeavor described here will be guided by a Leadership Team. This group will have oversight responsibility for coordinating and managing the internal review process for the Compliance Certification and the QEP. This group will be comprised of individuals who are acquainted with the institution's mission, history, culture, policies, and procedures. Their efforts will focus on the extent to which the university is in compliance with the SACS [Principles of Accreditation](#), as well as the collection of documentation supporting compliance. Equally important, the Leadership Teams will ensure that the broader institutional community is engaged in the reaffirmation process and is informed of the progress of the review.

In their oversight role, the Leadership Team will call on individuals and groups to become involved in the Compliance Certification and the QEP. In order to document compliance, those called upon will be asked to verify the university's observance of the specific criteria contained in the *Principles of Accreditation*. The extent of SFA's adherence to the principles may be verified by such material as available records, databases, policy manuals, curriculum documentation, assessment records, committee minutes, and other material satisfying the standard addressed by the individual criteria.

Reporting to SACS for the purpose of documenting compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* and the QEP tends to fall within major topical categories or themes. The Leadership Team will follow these themes when asking groups across campus for evidence of compliance with the criteria and the university's plan for a course of action intended to enhance student learning through the QEP. Some examples of the broader themes in this division of effort would be: Institutional Effectiveness; Educational Programs; Student Affairs and Services; Faculty Credentials; Financial and Physical Resources; and the QEP.

The reaffirmation criteria comprising the *Principles of Accreditation* are predicated on a commitment to integrity and quality enhancement throughout SFA. When you are called upon to participate, either directly or indirectly in this process, please embrace the opportunity. We can all join in the common purpose of working together for a successful SACS reaffirmation as we move forward with this most crucial endeavor.