

Questions and Answers About the Accrediting Agency Decision

Following are questions and answers about the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and UNC-Chapel Hill:

What is accreditation?

SACSCOC describes accreditation as “intended to assure constituents and the public of the quality and integrity of higher education institutions and programs, and to help those institutions and programs improve. These outcomes are achieved through rigorous internal and external review processes during which the institution is evaluated against a common set of standards.” SACSCOC is a regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Accreditation by SACSCOC “is a statement of the institution’s continuing commitment to integrity and its capacity to provide effective programs and services based on agreed-upon accreditation standards.” SACSCOC governs the accreditation status of degree-granting institutions in an 11-state area including North Carolina. For details, refer to

<http://www.sacscoc.org/FAQsanswers.asp#q1>

Why is accreditation important?

In the United States, accreditation traditionally has been based on a system of self-governance. For example, chancellors, presidents, administrators and faculty members serve on the SACS Commission on Colleges. Accreditation is tied to providing students with access to federal financial aid, transfer of credit to other colleges and universities and recognition of their degrees. Faculty members need to work at an accredited institution to secure most types of research funding.

What are the accreditation requirements?

To be accredited with the SACSCOC, an institution must comply with about 90 different accreditation principles, requirements and standards for member institutions. These cover everything from governance structure to mission statement to details about the academic curriculum to faculty qualifications. Institutions are required to have a Quality Enhancement Plan – to enhance educational quality and improve learning for students in a targeted area – and go through a review process once every 10 years. Institutions must demonstrate compliance with core requirements and comprehensive standards to earn reaccreditation. UNC-Chapel Hill was last reaccredited in 2006. For details, refer to <http://www.sacscoc.org/principles.asp> and <http://oira.unc.edu/accreditation/>.

What does submitting an additional monitoring report mean?

This is not a sanction. The University remains fully accredited and in good standing with SACSCOC. The campus will be asked to provide a monitoring report by next June on continued progress with academic procedures in the department. The University does not have details about the SACSCOC decision and specific instructions about next steps.

How does this request for a report affect students and faculty?

The SACSCOC decision does not affect the academic experience of students or the University's ability to administer federal financial aid funds on their behalf. The same is true of faculty seeking federal grant funding to support their research or scholarly activities.

What is a Type 1 course? How many were there?

The outside, independent review conducted by former North Carolina Governor James Martin and Baker Tilly consultants defined a Type 1 lecture course as one in which the faculty member in African and Afro-American studies listed as the instructor of record denied teaching the course section and signing the grade roll, or the chair said that the course section had not been taught.) The University does not believe that credit was awarded for courses in which students did no work or that degrees were awarded to students who did not earn them.

The Martin-Baker Tilly report identified 39 Type 1 courses in African and Afro-American studies between the 1997 fall semester and the 2009 second summer session, representing 1.7 percent of all course sections in the department.

How many students were enrolled in these courses?

The University identified 384 unique students between 1997 and 2009. Those included 304 alumni who already graduated. The other 80 students have not graduated.

Which of the students who have not graduated are affected by the University's response to SACSCOC?

Of the 80 students, 34 students are not affected under the University's plan. Some registered for a Type 1 course, but did not receive any credit. Others have more than 120 hours required for graduation. A handful of students finished their undergraduate degrees at other institutions. In other cases, the course was a prerequisite to a higher-level course that was taught appropriately and completed satisfactorily.

The remaining 46 students – all of whom received passing grades in a Type 1 course – are affected. The University is offering them three options if they wish to pursue graduation. They may provide the past coursework for re-evaluation by a faculty committee; take a challenge examination; or take an additional course. The University will cover tuition, fees and the cost of textbooks or other related or required course materials.

What happens to the other 304 alumni who graduated with a Type 1 course?

The University determined that these students were enrolled in a Type 1 course in African and Afro-American studies between 1997 and 2009. The University will offer

any of those alumni an opportunity to enroll in one supplemental course. The University will cover tuition, fees and the cost of any textbook or required course materials. These students will not receive a grade or additional course credit since transcripts are permanently sealed one year after graduation under University policy. We have verified that the students who took a Type 1 course and graduated in or after May 2012 had earned more than the 120 credits required and did not need that course to graduate.

What should alumni interested in the supplemental class do?

The first step is to contact the University via a phone number and email address established for this purpose: 919-962-9853; courseinquiries@unc.edu. The University will confirm those responding are among the affected alumni and make the arrangements for the supplemental course.

Will the additional class be noted on the transcripts of these alumni?

Students must participate fully in the class by taking all exams, writing all papers and participating in discussions. Participation will be noted on the transcript, but the course will not be for credit. No grade will be awarded. Under University policy, a transcript remains permanently sealed one year after graduation.

Will state taxpayer dollars be used to pay for these additional classes?

No. The University will use non-state funding for this purpose.

How much will it cost?

It depends on how many students or alumni choose to take the classes.

What was the main finding of the Martin-Baker Tilly report?

The University cooperated fully with the comprehensive, independent and objective review conducted by former Governor Martin and Baker Tilly consultants. The irregularities in African and Afro-American studies dated back to 1997. Governor Martin confirmed that there were no problems in other departments in the University, and that only the two individuals previously identified in the department were implicated for unethical and unprofessional actions. Baker Tilly, a management-consulting firm with extensive national experience in academic performance procedures and controls, assisted Governor Martin. In a second report, Baker Tilly reviewed and validated all of the improvements we have put in place to prevent these problems from recurring.

Who are the two former employees who were implicated?

Both internal and outside investigations found that the same former employees were responsible: Professor Julius Nyang'oro, who resigned as the department chair and was forced to retire in July 2012, and former department administrator Deborah Crowder, who retired in 2009.

Were only student-athletes enrolled in these courses?

No. The Martin-Baker Tilly report found that student-athletes were not the primary beneficiaries of the anomalous course sections. All students had the opportunity to enroll in these courses. An addendum to the report traced the proportion of student-athletes and non-athletes in 172 suspect lecture and independent study courses between 2001 and 2012, the period for which student-athlete data were available. Student-athletes comprised 45 percent of these course enrollments. Some courses had no student-athletes while a handful had all student-athletes, but there was no consistent percentage of student-athletes on a course-by-course basis. The analysis showed a natural clustering in course enrollment among various student affiliations, including fraternities and sororities, residence halls and student-athletes.

What was the basis for the findings in the Martin-Baker Tilly report?

The review team spent about four months examining 18 years (1994 to 2012; 68 academic terms) worth of academic data about all undergraduate classes at the University. The team reviewed 172,580 course sections and more than 4.6 million data elements. They interviewed more than 80 faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders and analyzed information previously reported through the internal reviews.

What else has the University done to investigate the irregularities?

In all, the University has completed four internal reviews or reports producing more than 70 recommendations, most of which have been implemented and validated by outside experts as what is required to prevent the irregularities from ever happening again. The four reviews focused on irregularly taught courses in the department, independent study practices throughout the College of Arts and Sciences, a Faculty Executive Committee assessment of the University's response to issues, and an examination of the Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes. In addition, three external reviews have been completed – two commissioned by Chancellor Holden Thorp and the Board of Trustees and one commissioned by UNC President Tom Ross. These reviews were undertaken to ensure that nothing had been overlooked in the four University reviews and to confirm whether the new policies and procedures could ensure that an academic problem of this magnitude could never happen again.

What are examples of specific reforms?

Changes in the **Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes** have included reorganization and hiring a new leader, Michelle Brown, after a national search. The program has moved from the College of Arts and Sciences to the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost. The shift in reporting responsibility addresses the proper separation of academic and athletic responsibilities for student-athletes because the provost is responsible for academic oversight across campus. (For details, refer to <http://www.unc.edu/campus-updates/brown-to-lead-academic-support-program-for-student-athletes/>)

The **Department of Athletics** has completed a comprehensive analysis that led to a new strategic plan. The department also reorganized to strengthen it and hired two new staff members. One serves as a liaison with academic advising and counseling with student-athletes with the clear understanding that academic functions are independent of athletics. (For details, refer to <http://www.unc.edu/campus-updates/tar-heels-strategic-plan/>.)

The **Department of African and Afro-American Studies**, all of the departments in the **College of Arts and Sciences**, and the **Summer School** all have new policies and procedures in place to prevent irregularities going forward:

- The department has new leadership and governance structure, and new policies and procedures for independent studies. The new chair, Eunice Sahle, has a vision for the department that further strengthens the excellent teaching, research and service being done by its current faculty. Stronger and more consistent policies for exams, grading and course syllabi are in place.
- The College is implementing consistent best practices for independent study in all of its academic departments. The College now follows an annual process for reviewing all teaching assignments and enrollments in every academic department and curriculum.
- The Summer School has implemented new policies and monitoring tools.
- ConnectCarolina, the University's new centralized database, enables stronger management, monitoring and tracking of student records and grade forms.

In addition, Chancellor Thorp convened a distinguished panel led by Hunter Rawlings, president of the Association of American Universities. The panel met for the first time in April 2013 to consider the role of athletics in the life of Carolina as part of a forward-looking conversation that could be helpful to other campuses around the country. The panel was a response to the main recommendation in the Faculty Executive Committee report from July 2012. (Refer to <http://rawlingspanel.web.unc.edu/>).

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