

SACS COC
SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

May 1, 2013

MAY 02 2013
1

Dr. Holden Thorp
Chancellor
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
103 South Building
Campus Box 9100
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-9100

Dear Dr. Thorp:

I want to thank you for the hospitality and helpfulness extended to the Committee during its recent visit to your institution. A copy of the report prepared by this committee is enclosed. I hope that the report will be helpful to you and to the institutional community.

The report includes analysis by, and judgments of, the visiting committee and is subject to review by the Commission's Committee on Compliance and Reports. Some parts of the report are directly related to the *Principles of Accreditation*, while others may represent advisory comments offered by the visiting committee in a spirit of helpfulness. A formal recommendation is included when a visiting committee believes there is some problem with the institution's compliance with a part of the *Principles*. All recommendations included in a visiting committee report have been adopted by the total committee.

The Commission on Colleges and its Committees on Compliance and Reports meet officially in June and in December. Final decisions on accreditation will be made at each meeting with public announcements regarding official actions continuing to be made at the Annual Meeting of the Commission. The report of the committee which visited **The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill** will be reviewed at the June 2013 meeting.

For that meeting, if you desire, you should prepare a written statement of your responses to the recommendations contained in the committee's report. **Guidelines for the response are enclosed and it is critical that they be followed when developing your institutional response.** Please submit **five copies** of your written response to my attention at the office of the Commission on Colleges on or before **June 3, 2013**, for consideration at the June 2013 meeting of the Commission.

An institution may release its visiting committee report; however, release of this report in its entirety or in part must be accompanied by the following statement: "The findings of this visiting committee represent a preliminary assessment of the institution at this time; final action on the report rests with the Commission on Colleges." If the institution releases part of its report, that part must contain a note stating that "a copy of the entire report can be obtained from the institution."

Please express my sincere appreciation to all members of your faculty and staff for their cooperation and assistance during the review process. Let me know whenever I can be of any assistance to you.

Sincerely,



Cheryl D. Cardell
Vice President
Commission on Colleges

CDC:ch

Enclosures



**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges**

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Commission on Colleges will make its determination on the accreditation of an institution based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with the Commission on Colleges.

Name of the Institution: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Date of the Review: April 2 – 4, 2013

COC Staff Member: Dr. Cheryl D. Cardell

Chair of the Committee Dr. R. Bowen Loftin, President
Texas A&M University
1246 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1246
(979) 845-2217
(979) 845-5027 - FAX

Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution:

At the December 2012 SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting, the Board took action on the institution's report. Following review of the institution's case, the SACSCOC Committee on Compliance and Reports advised the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) to take immediate steps to come into compliance with the following standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*: Comprehensive Standard 3.4.5 (Academic policies), Comprehensive Standard 3.4.9 (Academic support services), Comprehensive Standard 3.9.2 (Student records), and Federal Requirement 4.9 (Definition of academic credit). These standards expect an institution to provide evidence that it (1) implements academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice, (2) provides appropriate academic support services, (3) protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of student records, and (4) has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses. A further request for information related to the integrity of degrees awarded was included in the Board of Trustees' January 15, 2013 letter to UNC-CH.

Subsequent to the notification to the institution of its out of compliance status with four standards of accreditation along with "Additional Information Requested," a Special Committee was formed to make a site visit and report to SACSCOC on the status of the institution's efforts to come into compliance. **The charge to this Special Committee was to review the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* addressed in the Commission's action letter, dated January 15, 2013 and any other matters that may come to its attention, and report the findings of the Special Committee to the Commission.**

The Special Committee visited the institution on April 2-4, 2013 and conducted extensive interviews with the institution's administration and faculty.

The Special Committee found the accommodations and cooperation provided by the institution to be exceptional. Extensive preparation had been made for the visit, Information Technology personnel were on hand to assist the Special Committee and every effort was made to fully answer the questions posed by the Special Committee. The Special Committee deeply appreciates the hospitality the institution afforded the Special Committee and specifically notes the outstanding support provided by Dr. Lynn E. Williford, Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment and by Chancellor H. Holden Thorp.

Part II. Assessment of Compliance

A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. (Integrity)

Comment:

The institution, in its First Monitoring Report, dated March 8, 2013, provided a detailed response to the January 15, 2013 letter from SACSCOC (in particular, the section of the letter titled "Additional Information Requested"). The Special Committee appreciates the portion of the response (pages 135-163) that addresses academic integrity. The Special Committee also met with the institution's Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education, College of Arts and Sciences; and Vice Chancellor and General Counsel. The Special Committee notes the seriousness with which the institution considered the breaches of academic integrity that occurred and the thoroughness with which the institution, both internally and externally, has investigated certain courses offered by the Department of African and Afro-American Studies . . . and the validity of certain degrees that it awarded."

In its First Monitoring Report the institution states that ". . . it does not believe that credit was awarded for courses for which students did no work, or that degrees were awarded to students who did not earn them." The report goes on to outline provisions that will be made, effective July 1, 2013, to offer an additional course, on a not-for-credit, non-graded basis to any student (current or former) who "feels that, by enrolling in a Type 1 course, they were prevented from having the full Carolina experience."

The documentation provided by the institution states that "[d]egree requirements have been reconstructed for each of the 114 students who needed one or more Type 1 course [sic] to reach the 120 hours required for graduation, and degree-progress worksheets have been updated for the 80 students (20.83%) who have not yet received degrees."

The institution has gone to extraordinary lengths to determine which courses were offered between 1997 and the present that were Type 1. The institution has identified all students that were granted academic credit for these Type 1 courses, including those that are currently enrolled in the university. In response to its questions about these students, the Special Committee was informed by the institution's Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education, College of Arts and Sciences; and Vice Chancellor and General Counsel that the institution will use the credit granted for these Type 1 courses, if necessary, to partially fulfill graduation requirements for currently enrolled students. This decision by the institution calls into question the academic integrity of the degrees that may be awarded to these currently enrolled students.

Recommendation 1:

The Special Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate the integrity of the degrees awarded to currently enrolled students who received academic credit for the Type 1 courses and for which that credit is used to fulfill degree requirements.

B. Assessment of Compliance with Section 2: Core Requirements

Not Applicable

C. Assessment of Compliance with Section 3: Comprehensive Standards

3.4.5 The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. (Academic policies)

Comment:

To address this issue, the committee reviewed the documentation provided by the University on March 8, 2013 and on April 2nd and 3rd met with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Senior Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Global Programs, Arts and Sciences; Chair, Department of African & African-American Studies; Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education; Dean of Summer School; Assistant Provost and University Registrar; Vice Provost, Enrollment & Undergraduate Admission; Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment; and Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost.

In Spring 2013 a University-wide policy initiated by the Faculty Council (Resolution 2012-11) was implemented that required a syllabus be made available for all credit-bearing courses no later than the first day of class. The syllabus makes explicit the alignment between the intended learning objectives of the course, the time and effort expectations for engagement in learning activities and the amount and quality of work required to receive credit for the course. In February 2013 the Provost requested a status report from each Dean on the implementation of the new syllabus policy within their units. This report indicated compliance with the syllabus requirement from all units. This was followed by a random sampling of course syllabi that indicated compliance with the policy for all but a few courses that were identified to fall outside the policy.

To insure the integrity for Independent Study courses, an Independent Study Task Force was charged with reviewing policies related to independent study courses and the Task Force issued its report on April 17, 2012. Based on this report, on November 6, 2012 a policy was instituted in the College of Arts and Sciences requiring the following:

1. The use of uniform learning contracts for independent study/research, directed reading and other such courses;
2. A procedure for reviewing and approving these learning contracts;
3. The creation of individual sections of a course for each faculty member supervising such a course;
4. A restriction on the number of times the same special topics course can be offered to no more than two occurrences; and
5. A decision upon which of two formats for honors thesis work best.

In addition, faculty members are restricted to supervising no more than two students participating in independent study during any given term.

The learning contract, which requires much the same information as a syllabus, must be reviewed and approved by the department chair or the senior associate dean if the chair is the instructor.

The Faculty Council subsequently passed a resolution (Faculty Council Resolution 2012-12) that limited to 12 the number of independent study hours that a student may count toward graduation.

In the Fall 2012 the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost moved to extend the Independent Study course policy to the professional schools that offered undergraduate courses. After discussing the policy with the professional schools, it was determined that two schools, Education and Nursing, had concerns about the impact of the proposed policy on their students. To eliminate the negative impact, the Provost proposed exempting the professional schools offering undergraduate degrees from limits on counting independent study credit toward graduation, and from the limitation on the number of students a faculty member may supervise during a semester or summer session in internships/practica.

On March 8, 2013 the Faculty Council passed unanimously Resolution 2013-06 which implemented the Independent Study policy, with the identified exemptions for the professional schools, to all units that offered undergraduate courses.

3.4.9 The institution provides appropriate academic support services. (Academic support services)

Comment:

To address this issue, the Special Committee reviewed the documentation provided by the University on March 8, 2013 and on April 2nd and 3rd met with the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education, College of Arts and Sciences; Vice Provost, Enrollment and Undergraduate Admission; Assistant Provost and University Registrar; Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment; Faculty Athletics Representative; Incoming Director of the Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes (ASPSA); Interim Director of ASPSA; Athletic Director; Senior Associate Athletic

Director/Compliance/Student Services; and Associate Athletic Director/Risk Management.

The response from the institution to SACSCOC on August 2, 2012 outlined the academic culture on the campus and stated that it was committed to honest and ethical self-governance. The numerous assets and programs used by the institution in delivering appropriate academic support services to students were also well described in this response. The response from the institution to SACSCOC on October 12, 2012 detailed their progress related specifically to the effectiveness of its Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes. The First Monitoring Report dated March 8, 2013 updated the progress made by the institution related to securing new leadership for the ASPSA, changes in the reporting lines for ASPSA, the effectiveness of several strategic initiatives underway in ASPSA, and the implementation of new policies related to the hiring, training, and oversight of academic tutors for student-athletes.

A few of the initiatives related to support for student-athletes were still ongoing at the time of the visit by the Special Committee. Specifically, the transition of this unit from the College of Arts and Sciences to the office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost is scheduled to occur on May 6, 2013 when the new Director of the ASPSA begins her tenure at the institution. However, independent of this forthcoming transition, the Special Committee determined that the newly adopted initiatives and policies, coupled with the competence and experience of the incoming Director of the ASPSA, demonstrates that the institution is committed to providing adequate academic support for their student-athletes. The documentation and assurances gained through interviews during the visit also further demonstrated that the necessary elements of academic support services are present and that the integrity of its support for its students, and especially for its student-athletes, is effective.

- 3.9.2** The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains security measures to protect and back up data. (Student records).

Comment:

To address this issue, the Special Committee reviewed the documentation provided by the University on March 8, 2013 and on April 2nd and 3rd met with the Dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education, College of Arts and Sciences; Dean of the Summer School; Vice Provost, Enrollment and Undergraduate Admission; Senior Partner, Baker Tilly; Assistant Provost and University Registrar; Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment; and Faculty Athletics Representative.

The responses from the institution to SACSCOC on both August 2, 2012 and October 12, 2012 provided a majority of the evidence in support of the committee's findings of compliance with this standard. The additional information related to the implementation of several new procedures provided in the First Monitoring Report dated March 8, 2012, along with evidence gathered and provided to the Special Committee during the April 2-4, 2013 visit, also provides reasonable support.

Demonstrations of newly implemented automated procedures were also provided to the Special Committee during the visit. Specifically, the visiting committee viewed the automated grade change process and the interactive student records dashboard that included enrollment data for independent study courses and grade distributions by course. The committee was also further informed about the process for monitoring the enrollment patterns of student-athletes. The implementation of the demonstrated new technology resources, coupled with new oversight procedures, represent significant accomplishments associated with the monitoring of trends and potential anomalies of student performance and records. These changes also represent new abilities to conduct regular audits to verify the validity and integrity of student records in the future.

D. Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements

- 4.9 The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. **(Definition of credit hours)**

Comment:

To address this issue, the committee reviewed the documentation provided by the University on March 8, 2013 and on April 2nd and 3rd met with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Senior Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Global Programs, Arts and Sciences; Chair, Department of African & African-American Studies; Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education; Dean of Summer School; Assistant Provost and University Registrar; Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment; and Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost.

As stated in University Policy Manual #29 and in accord with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates:

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or;
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

To monitor compliance with credit hour standards, the university revised the Standard Course Numbering System (University Policy Memorandum #4) to highlight those courses that are being taught in a non-traditional manner.

The Office of the University Registrar has also implemented a *Student Records Dashboard Reports* system which enables monitoring compliance with credit hours

policies. This dashboard allows identification of inconsistencies in course credit hour assignments and class schedules.

In Spring 2013 a University-wide policy initiated by the Faculty Council (Resolution 2012-11) was implemented that required a syllabus be made available for all credit-bearing courses no later than the first day of class. The syllabus makes explicit the alignment between the intended learning objectives of the course, the time and effort expectations for engagement in learning activities and the amount and quality of work required to receive credit for the course. In February 2013 the Provost requested a status report from each Dean on the implementation of the new syllabus policy within their units. This report indicated compliance with the syllabus requirement from all units. This was followed by a random sampling of course syllabi that indicated compliance with the policy for all but a few courses that were identified to fall outside the policy.

To insure credit hour integrity for Independent Study courses, a policy was instituted requiring that a formal contract be executed between the faculty member and student in these courses. This contract requires much the same information as a syllabus and can be used to judge the equivalency of the experience for the proposed credit hours to be assigned. These contracts must be reviewed and approved by the department chair or the senior associate dean if the chair is the instructor.

As a final check on credit hour compliance, the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost has implemented a classroom presence audit to be conducted each term. This audit is to confirm that lecture, lab, and recitation classes were meeting as scheduled. The Spring 2013 audits conducted by all academic units on campus indicated compliance with the official course schedule. The review committee was provided with representative samples from the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Law, and the Gillings School of Global Public Health to indicate general compliance with the course schedule.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED

In its January 15, 2013 letter to the institution, SACSCOC stated: "The institution did not provide sufficient evidence that it had addressed the breaches of academic integrity related to degrees that were awarded to students who were given credit for courses determined by the university to be 'aberrant,' beyond discussing the number of student credit hours listed on those transcripts and the inability to reconstruct degree requirement worksheets for those students. The institution should demonstrate its efforts to rectify the academic integrity of those degrees."

The Special Committee, after reviewing all documentation provided by both the institution and SACSCOC determined that the "Additional Information Requested" by SACSCOC was properly addressed within the context of the Principle of Integrity 1.1 above.

Part III. Observations and Comments

None

APPENDIX A

Roster of the Special Committee

Dr. R. Bowen Loftin - CHAIR
President
Texas A&M University
1246 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1246
(979) 845-2217
(979) 845-5027 - FAX
loftin@tamu.edu

Dr. Donald J. Benson
Interim Provost
and Vice President for Research
The University of Alabama
801 University Blvd
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0268
205-348-4892
205-348-9137 - FAX
joe.benson@ua.edu

Dr. Michael Sagas
Professor and Chair
Faculty Athletics Representative
University of Florida
P.O.Box 118208
352-294-1640
352-392-7588 - FAX
msagas@ufl.edu

COC STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Cheryl D. Cardell
Vice President
Commission on Colleges
(404) 679-4501
(800) 248-7701, Ext. 21-4529
(404) 679-4558 - FAX
ccardell@sacscoc.org

APPENDIX B

**Off-Campus Sites or Distance Learning Programs
Evaluated as Part of the Special Committee Review**

Not Applicable

APPENDIX C

List of Recommendations Cited in the Report of the Special Committee

Integrity 1.1, Recommendation 1:

The Special Committee recommends that the institution must demonstrate the integrity of the degrees awarded to currently enrolled students who received academic credit for the Type 1 courses and for which that credit is used to fulfill degree requirements.