

REPORT OF THE SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution

The University of South Florida includes three campus locations, the primary campus in Tampa and branch campuses in St. Petersburg and Sarasota, that were consolidated in July 2020 in response to legislative requirements enacted as part of the Florida Excellence in Higher Education Act of 2018. Prior to consolidation, the three campuses operated as independent institutions—the University of South Florida in Tampa, the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, and the University of South Florida Sarasota. The three institutions were separately accredited by SACSCOC but were affiliated as part of the University of South Florida (USF) System and shared a system-level governing board, a system-level president, and many common regulations and policies. In addition, several administrative functions and services were coordinated centrally by the USF System. Following the 2020 consolidation, the once system-level Board of Trustees and President transitioned to providing institutional-level governance and executive oversight, and many administrative services continue to be provided centrally from the primary campus in Tampa.

Consolidation was initiated to expand access and opportunities for students at all levels and for faculty members while also providing campus leaders the requisite level of autonomy expected of branch campuses in a singly accredited institution. The three campuses are sufficiently close to allow a flow of students and faculty across campuses. The campus locations also allow the institution to serve the communities in which the campuses are located. The counties hosting campuses have different demographics with distinctive workforce and research and development needs that can be met by the institution's consolidated organizational structure.

Shortly after the Florida Excellence in Higher Education Act of 2018 was signed into law, the Board of Trustees approved seven guiding principles for consolidation. These guiding principles laid the foundation for months of planning to address logistical details of consolidation including curricula alignment, faculty governance, student government, among others. A substantive change prospectus for merger consolidations was submitted to SACSCOC in March 2020 and was subsequently approved in June 2020. The institution began operating under a single SACSCOC accreditation in July 2020.

Beginning in October 2020, SACSCOC received unsolicited information regarding the institution's consolidation. SACSCOC subsequently requested that the institution respond to concerns raised by this unsolicited information as part of the documentation submitted to the Committee. As part of its review, the Substantive Change Committee considered the unsolicited information along with the institution's response.

Part II. Assessment of Compliance
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Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

- 1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters.
 (Integrity) [CR]

The Substantive Change Committee found that the institution operated with integrity in all matters reviewed

Section 2: Mission

- 2.1 The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service.
 (Institutional mission) [CR]

The Substantive Change Committee reviewed the institution's mission and goals as described in its documentation and published on the institution's website, and undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The institution has a clearly defined and comprehensive mission that is articulated through a single statement. The mission statement is often accompanied by a set of five goals intended to "align with and expand on the mission statement." The mission statement is appropriate to an institution of higher education in that it addresses teaching, research, and service and addresses the range of educational programs offered by the institution. During committee interviews with members of the institution's administration, discussions were often tied back to the university's mission.

Section 3: Basic Eligibility Standard

- 3.1 An institution seeking to gain or maintain accredited status
- 3.1.a has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies.
 (Degree-granting authority)[CR]

The institution is a constituent public university of the State University System of Florida (SUS). As described in the institution's documentation and supporting evidence, the SUS is governed by a Board of Governors (BOG) which has state constitutional authority to "operate, regulate, and be fully responsible for the management of the whole university system" and statutory authority for "defining

the distinctive mission of ~~ea~~ constituent university” and “implementation and maintenance of high quality education programs.” As a public university, the institution is directly administered by a Board of Trustees (BOT) whose responsibilities and authority are established by the ~~CG~~

The BOT's Operating Procedures establish clear policies for ethics and conflicts of interest and the institution's documentation provided samples of each Board member's required annual financial disclosure form and conflict of interest disclosure form that encompasses contractual, employment, personal, or familial financial interest in the institution.

The BOT is subject to public records and all business must be conducted in noticed open public meetings (State of Florida Sunshine Law). A majority of BOT members must be present to constitute a quorum and the whole body and its subparts act pursuant to a majority vote on all matters. Appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure the BOT not controlled by a minority member or by organizations or institutions separate from it nor was their evidence of actions or plans altered based on pressure external sources

The BOT is not presided over by the institution's President nor is the President a voting member of either the BOT or the BOG.

Committee interviews with the President and a representative of the BOT confirmed all aspects of Core Requirement 1.

4.2 The governing board

- 4.2.b ensures a clear and appropriate distinction between the policy-making function of the board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy.
(Board/administrative distinction)

Documentation and supporting evidence provided by the institution indicated that state law, BOG Regulation, and BOT Operating Procedures clearly defined the distinctive roles of the BOG, the BOT, the CEO (President), and the institution's administrative leaders. These documents also describe organizational structures, explanation of job responsibilities, delegation of authority, and faculty in academic governance. Interviews conducted by the Substantive Change Committee with the President, a representative of the BOT and administrative leaders confirmed the clear and appropriate distinctive roles.

- 4.2.c selects and regularly evaluates the institution's chief executive officer.
(CEO evaluation/selection)

As described in the institution's documentation and supporting evidence, the institution's BOT has primary responsibility for the selection and annual evaluation of the President. The State of Florida Constitution directs the BOG to establish the powers and duties of each university's BOT including the authority and responsibility to select the institution's President subject to confirmation by the BOG. In addition, the BOG delegates responsibility for the annual presidential evaluation to the institutional BOT. Evidence of the presidential annual evaluation process was provided from FY2020 including the President's self-assessment and scheduled full BOT evaluation. The selection and evaluation

of the institution's CEO was also discussed during interviews with a representative of the BOT and the institution's administration

- 4.2.d defines and addresses potential conflict of interest for its members.
(Conflict of interest)

The Substantive Change Committee reviewed the BOT's Operating Procedures which establish clear policies for ethics and conflicts of interest. Further, the institution's documentation and supporting evidence included samples of each Board member's requirement to file an annual financial disclosure form and a conflict-of-interest disclosure form that encompasses contractual, employment, personal, or familial financial interest in the institution. BOT training is provided in an orientation by the institutional General Counsel's office. BOT training was discussed and confirmed during an interview with a representative of the BOT.

- 4.2.e has appropriate and fair processes for the dismissal of a board member.
(Board dismissal)

As described in State University System BOG regulations, institutional BOT members are public officers subject to Florida law governing the suspension or removal of public officers. The Florida Constitution establishes the methods for removal of trustees. The BOT does not have the authority to directly dismiss its members. Though the process to remove a Board member is not vested with the university by Florida Law, the process described in the institution's documentation and supporting evidence indicates a fair process inclusive of a public hearing and entitlement of defense. At the time of the review, no BOT member had ever been removed for cause nor is there any evidence of current proceedings.

- 4.2.f protects the institution from undue influence by external persons or bodies.
(External influence)

As described in the institution's documentation and supporting evidence, the institution is governed by state, BOG and university regulations and policies to ensure the BOT is free from undue influence by external persons or bodies. As a state entity, the institution is subject to public records and all business must be conducted in noticed open public meetings (State of Florida Sunshine Law). A majority of Board members must be present to constitute a quorum and the whole body and its subparts act pursuant to a majority vote on all matters. Appropriate safeguards appear to be in place to ensure the Board is not controlled by a minority member or by organizations or institutions separate from it nor is their evidence of actions or plans altered based on public expressions from Legislators. Interviews with the institution's president and a representative from the USF BOT confirmed that these policies are strictly followed.

- 4.2.g defines and regularly evaluates its responsibilities and expectations.
(Board evaluation)

As described in Core Requirement 4.1, the institution is governed by a ~~level~~ multi structure: the University of South Florida Board of Trustees (BOT) is delegated authority by, and complies with regulations adopted by, the State University

President. The institution's CEO responsibilities are specified in the BOT's Operating Procedures: "The President's primary responsibility is to serve as the CEO of the consolidated institution, responsible to the BOT for the operation and administration of

- 6.1 The institution employs an adequate number of full-time faculty members to support the mission and goals of the institution.
(Full-time faculty)[CR]

The institution made a strong case that consolidation was intentionally designed to not increase or decrease in the number of full-time faculty, percentage of faculty who are full-time, the number of students enrolled and the student to faculty ratio. The Substantive Change Committee reviewed institutional data from before and after the merger that generally supported that assertion. Since 2014, full-time faculty increased from 2334 to 2502 while teaching faculty increased from 1468 to 1578. During the 2018-19 academic year, the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty was 90% for graduate and 73% for undergraduate and the student to faculty ratio was 21:1 which is within the range of their peer institutions. The Committee reviewed the institution's policies, definitions, classifications, etc. for faculty and found them to be appropriate. The Committee also reviewed research data and found that in 2017 the institution had total research expenditures of over \$592M and that the institution had met or exceeded their research goals each year since 2013. Finally, the Committee reviewed examples of faculty engagement in service on each campus. Both Tampa and USF St Petersburg were identified as being Carnegie Community Engaged campuses in 2020.

disciplinary expertise were responsible for maintaining the appropriateness of the structure and content of courses and academic programs. In addition, program is the responsibility of program, department, and curriculum committees as well as the curriculum committees for the Faculty Senate's Graduate or Undergraduate Councils. These same groups also reviewed regular processes for creation of new and modification of existing programs. At the time of preparation of materials for this review, no new programs had been created following consolidation. The Committee interviewed representative Deans and faculty from each campus plus members of the Consolidation Committees (Intercampus Consolidation Committee, General Education Consolidation Committee etc.) and the current Faculty Senate Curriculum Committees (Undergraduate, Graduate and General Education). Those interviews plus review of the materials provided confirm that the institution's educational programs embody a coherent course of study, are compatible with the stated mission and goals of the institution and are based on a field of study appropriate to higher education.

- 9.7 The institution publishes requirements for its undergraduate, graduate and baccalaureate professional programs, as applicable. The requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs.
(Program requirements)

Documentation provided by the institution described the undergraduate general education and commonly accepted standards and practices for undergraduate and graduate students. Supporting evidence related to the general education requirement in the State of Florida's core general education courses, the institution's enhanced general education program, state communication and computation requirements, and graduation requirements.

officers develop and review policies and regulation

In interviews with administrators, faculty, and students, it became clear that everyone embraced the new institution and the enhanced ease with which students could take

academic persistence is provided by such services or programs as subject/course tutoring, writing, career readiness, and undergraduate research. Similarly, pedagogical and instructional design services support the faculty across the institution.

Section 12: Academic and Student Support Services

- 12.1 The institution provides appropriate academic and student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission.
(Student support services [CR])

The Substantive Change Committee reviewed documentation and supporting evidence provided by the institution and interviewed faculty, administrators, staff, and students at each campus location. The documentation identified programs and services for all levels of students from undergraduate through graduate as well support for those who struggle academically to the high achievers. The services provide for holistic development of the student supporting them in the following areas: academic, social, wellness (mental, physical, financial), as well as in their leadership and career development. While there are larger, and more, facilities on the Tampa campus than at St. Petersburg or Sarasota Manatee, all services and programs are offered on each campus and students can access services on each campus regardless of their enrollment location. Interviews with students from each campus confirmed they were able to access facilities, services and programs at any location and appreciated the opportunities this access affords.

liability for post-employment benefits (pension and OPEB) that are expected to be satisfied by the State of Florida since these plans are multi-employer established by State laws and regulations. Following this change, the institution's restricted net assets available for current operations increased from \$409 million in 2015 to \$494 million in 2019.

The institution's budget process starts at the state level with an annual Legislative Budget Request and continues on campus featuring an annual budget, stakeholder input, instructions, and a budget planning calendar. Review and approval the annual budget is performed by the Board of Trustees and Board of Governors.

2(d) Budgets

APPENDIX A

Roster of the Substantive Change Committee

Dr. Ann L. Kenimer- CHAIR
Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

Mr. Rick L. Anderson
Executive VP for Finance & Administration
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Edinburg, T

APPENDIX B

List of Recommendations Cited in the Report of the Substantive Change Committee

The Substantive Change Committee wrote no recommendations.