

# Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools

15935 Forest Road  
Forest, VA 24551

Phone 434-525-9539 - FAX 434-525-9538  
Web Site: [www.tracs.org](http://www.tracs.org) - E-mail: [info@tracs.org](mailto:info@tracs.org)

## **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES**

**ONLY ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS MAY APPLY FOR APPROVAL OF A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE.**

## **INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

Accredited institutions regularly plan for and make changes. TRACS classifies changes as substantive or non-substantive. Substantive changes require TRACS' approval before they are implemented by an institution (Standards 4.8 and 5.5). Non-substantive changes do not require advance approval from TRACS; however, TRACS requires institutions to report these changes. Institutions should report non-substantive changes as soon as they are approved within the institution, but not later than 30 days after institutional approval.

Advance planning for substantive changes is essential since most require approval by the Accreditation Commission and the approval process takes time to review and process.

Requests for approval can be submitted at any time. A request for a substantive change which requires Commission approval will be considered by the Accreditation Commission at its first regularly scheduled meeting (April or November) following TRACS' receipt of an Application, all required documentation, any required team or staff visits, and the opportunity for staff to review all documentation and make a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission. A request for a substantive change which requires the President's approval will be considered as soon as practicable following TRACS' receipt of an Application, all required documentation, any required team or staff visits, and the opportunity for staff to review all documentation.

## **HOW TO APPLY FOR APPROVAL OF A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE**

Step 1: Review the planned change to determine if it is a substantive change. TRACS' definition of a substantive change is in the Substantive Change Policy which is in the Policies and Procedures Manual which can be downloaded from the TRACS website at [www.tracs.org](http://www.tracs.org) under "downloads."

Step 2: If the proposed change is not in the definition of a substantive change, it is a non-substantive change and will normally require written notice to TRACS. The non-substantive changes which must be reported are identified on the Notice of Non-Substantive Academic Changes Form.

Step 3: If the change is substantive, the institution must complete an Application for a Proposed Substantive Change. The institution should always check for the current Application form at [www.tracs.org](http://www.tracs.org).

- A. One Application should be used for each proposed substantive change. If more than one proposal is submitted at one time, each proposed substantive change requires a separate Cover and Signature Page.
- B. The Application must be completed in full. The Cover and Signature Page must reference the number and short description of the proposed substantive change.
- C. A copy of the minutes of the Board meeting where the substantive change was approved must be attached to the Application.
- D. The prospectus which includes all required documentation must be submitted with the Application. If multiple proposed substantive changes are submitted at one time, the prospectus can address all proposed substantive changes as long as each is clearly supported and properly referenced in each proposal.
- E. In addition to a printed copy of the Application and required documentation, the institution must include a copy which can be read in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf file).
- F. The invoice for the fee for processing the proposed substantive change along with all reimbursements for team or staff visits will be included with the approval letter.
- G. Any approved substantive change may not be implemented until all invoices have been paid.

Step 4: The chair of the institution's board and the president must both sign and date the Cover and Signature Page. The date of the Application is the later of these two dates.

## **EFFECTIVE DATE OF AN APPROVED SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE**

A substantive change approved by the Accreditation Commission shall be effective as of the date the Accreditation Commission approved the substantive change. A substantive change approved by TRACS' President shall be effective as of the date of the written notice of approval.

No substantive change will be approved retroactively, except the effective date for a change in ownership will be the date of the change if the Accreditation Commission approves the change no more than 30 days after the change occurs.

**APPLICATION FOR A PROPOSED SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE**

**ONLY ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS MAY APPLY FOR APPROVAL OF A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE.**

COVER AND SIGNATURE PAGE

Name of Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Number of Proposed Substantive Change (e.g., C1) \_\_\_\_\_

Short Description of Proposed Substantive Change \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Proposed Implementation \_\_\_\_\_

Date Proposed Substantive Change Was Approved By Board \_\_\_\_\_

President's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Board Chair's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES REQUIRING COMMISSION APPROVAL**

- C1: A CHANGE IN THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION OR OBJECTIVES (Definition 1)
  - A. The change in the mission or objectives must materially change the mission or objectives. Editorial changes are not substantive.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1, 8-10, 12-14, 24 and 40.
  - C. A change in an institution's mission or objectives requires a complete reevaluation (staff visit, self-study, and team visit) of the institution.
  
- C2: A CHANGE IN THE INSTITUTION'S LEGAL STATUS, FORM OF CONTROL, OR OWNERSHIP (Definition 2)
  - A. Any change in the institution's Articles of Incorporation (or equivalent) or Bylaws which results in a change to the institution's legal status, e.g., the institution's state charter lapses or the IRS revokes the institution's exemption; form of control, e.g., the institution changes from not-for-profit to for-profit or merges with another institution; or ownership, e.g., a for-profit corporation is sold to another corporation, is a substantive change.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20, 24, 28, 33-35, 37-40, 41 and 45.
  - C. If there will be a change in ownership that results in a change in control, a complete reevaluation (staff visit, self-study, and team visit) of the institution will be required.
  - D. If the change does not require a complete reevaluation, a staff visit may be conducted.
  
- C3: A CHANGE IN COURSES OFFERED (Definition 3)
  - A. The change in courses must be significant, e.g., adding courses in a discipline in which they were not previously offered; no longer offering any courses in a discipline; or a change in the method of delivery for courses (a substantive change related to distance education may be needed). Editorial changes are not substantive.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1, 4-44.
  - C. A staff visit may be required.
  
- C4: A CHANGE IN CERTIFICATES OFFERED (Definition 3)
  - A. The change in certificates must be significant, e.g., adding a certificate in a discipline in which it was not previously offered; no longer offering any certificate in a discipline; or changing the requirements to earn a certificate. Editorial changes are not substantive.

- B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1, 4-44.
  - C. A staff visit may be required.
- C5: A CHANGE IN MAJORS OFFERED (Definition 3)
- A. The change in majors must be significant, e.g., adding a major in a discipline in which it was not previously offered; no longer offering any major in a discipline; or changing the requirements to earn a major. Editorial changes are not substantive.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed for majors to be added: 1, 4-44.
  - C. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed for majors to be deleted: 1, 3, 8, 10, 34, 40, 46 and 47.
  - D. A staff visit may be required.
- C6: A CHANGE IN DEGREES OFFERED (Definitions 3 and 4)
- A. Any change in degrees offered is significant.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed for degrees to be added: 1, 4-44.
  - C. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed for degrees to be deleted: 1, 3, 8, 10, 34, 40, 46 and 47.
  - D. A staff visit may be required.
- C7: THE ADDITION OF PROGRAMS OF STUDY AT A DEGREE OR CREDENTIAL LEVEL DIFFERENT FROM THAT WHICH IS INCLUDED IN THE INSTITUTION'S CURRENT ACCREDITATION (Definition 4)
- A. The addition of any programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation is significant.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1-37, 39 and 41-45.
  - C. A new program which is approved must be evaluated upon graduation of the first class of students from that program.
  - D. A staff visit may be required.
- C8: A CHANGE FROM QUARTER-HOURS TO SEMESTER-HOURS (AND VICE VERSA) (Definition 5)
- A. An institutional change from one system of credit hours to another is significant.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 10, 12, 14, 24, 34, 46, 48 and 49.

- C. A staff visit may be required.
- C9: A CHANGE FROM CLOCK HOURS TO CREDIT HOURS (AND VICE VERSA) (Definition 5)
  - A. An institutional change from a system of clock hours to credit hours (or vice versa) is significant.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 10, 12, 14, 24, 34, 46, 48 and 49.
  - C. A staff visit may be required.
- C10: A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CLOCK OR CREDIT HOURS AWARDED FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A PROGRAM (Definition 6)
  - A. An increase of 10% or more in the number of clock or credit hours awarded or required for successful completion of a program is significant.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 10, 12, 14, 24, 34, 46, 48 and 49.
  - C. A staff visit may be required.
- C11: ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT WITH ANOTHER INSTITUTION OR ORGANIZATION (Definition 7)
  - A. Any contract between an accredited institution and any other institution or organization that allows students to earn credit or clock hours is substantive.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1-8, 10, 12-14, and 35. In addition, the institution must document compliance with the Policy on Agreement Between Institutions.
  - C. A staff visit may be required.
- C12: ESTABLISHING A BRANCH CAMPUS (Definition 8a)
  - A. Establishing a branch campus and changing a teaching site to a branch campus are both substantive changes.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 10, 27-34, 41-44, 46, and 50 (Business Plan Template - Appendix A).
  - C. A staff and focus team visit will both be required.
- C13: ACQUIRING ANY OTHER INSTITUTION OR ANY PROGRAM OR LOCATION OF ANOTHER INSTITUTION (Definition 9)

- A. Acquiring any other institution or any program or location of another institution is always a substantive change.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1-8, 12-13, 33-35, 40, 41, and 49.
  - C. A staff visit will be required. A focus team visit may be required.
- C14: ACQUIRING OR ESTABLISHING A PERMANENT SITE FOR A TEACH-OUT FOR STUDENTS AT ANOTHER INSTITUTION
- A. Acquiring or establishing a permanent site for a teach-out for students at another institution is always a substantive change.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 12-14, 20, 21, 27, 28 and 33.
  - C. A staff visit will be required. A focus team visit may be required.
- C15: BEGINNING DISTANCE EDUCATION OR CHANGING THE MANNER IN WHICH DISTANCE EDUCATION IS DELIVERED (Definition 3)
- A. Beginning instruction by distance education or changing the manner in which distance education is delivered are substantive changes.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 21-26. In addition, the institution must demonstrate compliance with the Distance Education section in the *Accreditation Manual*.
  - C. A staff or focus team visit may be required.
- C16: CHANGE IN LOCATION OF CAMPUS (Definition 8c)
- A. A change in the physical location of an institution's main or branch campus is a substantive change.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1, 2, 8, 10, 12, 13, 27, 33, 37, 40, 41, 46, and 49.
  - C. A staff visit is required. A focus team visit may be required.
- C17: NAME CHANGE IF THE CHANGE IS RELATED TO ANY OF THE ABOVE SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES (Definition 2)
- A. A change in an institution's name which relates to a substantive change which requires Commission approval or a change in the institution's mission.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 8, 10, and 12.
  - C. A staff visit is required. A focus team visit may be required.

## **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES REQUIRING PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL**

- P1: TEACHING SITE (Definition 8b)
  - A. Establishing, closing, and moving the physical location of a teaching site are substantive changes.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 12-14, 20, 21, 27, 28 and 33.
  - C. A staff visit may be required at TRACS' Presidents determination.
- P2: A CHANGE IN CERTIFICATES OFFERED (Definition 3)
  - A. Adding a certificate in a discipline in which certificates are already offered must be approved.
  - B. Deleting a certificate in a discipline in which certificates will continue to be offered must be approved.
  - C. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1-5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 20, 23, 27, 28, and 40 plus 47 if certificate is deleted.
  - C. A staff visit may be required.
- P3: ADDITION OF MAJOR (Definition 3)
  - A. The addition of a major which is substantively related to existing majors, must be approved. Editorial changes are not substantive.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed for majors to be added: 1-5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 20, 23, 27, 28, and 40.
  - C. A staff visit may be required.
- P4: CHANGE IN LOCATION OF CAMPUS (UNFORESEEN EMERGENCY) (Definition 8c)
  - A. A change in the location of the physical facilities of a campus which is the result of an unforeseen emergency, and must be approved as soon as practicable after the need arises.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1, 2, 8, 10, 12, 13, 27, 33, 37, 40, 41, 46, and 49.
  - C. A staff visit will be required. A focus team visit may be required.
  - D. A change based on an unforeseen emergency which is implemented prior to approval will normally not be subject to an adverse action.

- P5: NAME CHANGE IF THE CHANGE IS NOT RELATE TO ANY OF THE SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES WHICH REQUIRE COMMISSION APPROVAL (Definition 2)
  - A. A change in an institution's name which does not relate to a substantive change which requires Commission approval or a change in the institution's mission.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 8, 10, and 12.
  - C. A staff visit is required. A focus team visit may be required.
  
- P6: THE ADDITION OF PROGRAMS OF STUDY AT A DEGREE OR CREDENTIAL LEVEL WHICH IS INCLUDED IN THE INSTITUTION'S CURRENT ACCREDITATION
  - A. The addition of any programs of study at a degree or credential level which is included in the institution's current accreditation is not significant.
  - B. Prospectus Checklist items which must be addressed: 1-37, 39 and 41-45.
  - C. A new program which is approved must be evaluated upon graduation of the first class of students from that program.
  - D. A staff visit may be required.

# PROSPECTUS CHECKLIST

## ABSTRACT

1. Describe in some detail the proposed substantive change.
2. Indicate the location of change (if applicable).
3. Date of proposed implementation.
4. Projected number of students involved (if applicable).
5. Describe primary target audience.
6. Projected life of program.
7. Instructional delivery methods.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

8. Provide a statement of nature and purpose of change in relation to institution mission and goals.
9. Include a copy of the institution's Biblical foundations statement that is in harmony with the TRACS Biblical Foundational Statement.
10. Provide evidence of any needed legal authority (including board approval) for the change.
11. Is proposed degree program or a similar program offered on main campus or other off-campus sites; explain as needed.

## ASSESSMENT OF NEED PROGRAM PLANNING APPROVAL

12. Discuss rationale for change, including an assessment of need.
13. Provide evidence of inclusion of the change in institution's ongoing planning and evaluation process.
14. Document that faculty, board and other groups were involved in the review, approval and continuing control (as appropriate) of new (or deleted) program.
15. Include the specific outcomes and learning objectives of courses or programs.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE CHANGE

16. Include a schedule of proposed course offerings needed to complete the program. (Include all general educational requirements for any proposed associate or Bachelors degree programs.)
17. Include copies of the course syllabi.
18. Describe differences in admission, curriculum or graduation requirements.
19. Describe any special arrangements for grading, transcripts, or transfer policies.
20. Describe administrative oversight.

## FACULTY

21. Provide a complete roster (using the attached Instructional Staff Listing [ISL]) of faculty employed to teach in the program.
22. Show faculty course load in the new program as well as course work in other programs currently offered. (Use attached ISL.)
23. Provide evidence that adequate faculty members are assigned to support the program.
24. Discuss the impact of the new initiative on the faculty workload.
25. For distance learning programs, describe processes to ensure that students have access to faculty.
26. For graduate programs, document scholarship and research capability of faculty. (Use attached ISL.)

## **LIBRARY LEARNING RESOURCES**

27. Describe library/information resources needed to support the program.
28. Document the staffing and services in place to support the initiative.
29. If reliant upon other libraries, describe those collections and relevance to proposed program; include any formal agreement documentation in an appendix.
30. Describe availability of online resources.
31. Relative to electronic resources, describe how student/faculty will access information.
32. Describe training for faculty/students in use of online resources.

## **PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

33. Describe the physical facilities and equipment to support initiative/change.
34. Assess impact on existing programs and services.

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

35. Include projected revenues, expenditures, and cash flow for the next five years and in which a budget for the first year of the program is included.
36. Identify the amount of resources needed for contractual or support services.
37. Describe the operational, management, and physical resources available for the change.
38. Provide the most recent institutional audit.
39. Provide contingency plans if required resources do not materialize.
40. Summarize the anticipated financial impact of the change.

## **EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT**

41. Describe briefly how the institution assesses overall institutional effectiveness and student learning.
42. Describe the means to monitor and ensure quality of the degree/major program.
43. Summarize procedures for systematic evaluation of instructional results.
44. Summarize procedures for using results of evaluation to improve institutional programs, services, and operations.
45. For distance learning instruction, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies (student learning) are comparable to requirements of traditional programs.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

46. Provide any changes in the institution's policies and procedures manual that the change will require.
47. Provide a teach-out plan for all students affected by the closing of the major/degree program.
48. Indicate and impact this change will have on students' receipt of financial aid.
49. Identify how the institution intends to minimize any negative impact that this change will have on students.

## **BUSINESS PLAN**

50. Submit a Business Plan - *Appendix A*

## APPENDIX A

Business Plan Template: To be used by institutions submitting a Proposal for a Branch Campus.

Directions: Using this template, provide the data requested **based on your research**. It is expected that institutions will conduct their own research into what constitutes a typical 'business plan,' and therefore it is recommended that additional information be included, as needed, in order to give the TRACS Staff a better understanding of the Proposal. Submit the Business Plan along with your Substantive Change Proposal.

### BUSINESS PLAN TEMPLATE

#### I. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** An Overall Summary of your Branch Campus Business Plan.

- 1.1 Purpose: Describe the purpose of opening the Branch Campus and how it contributes to the fulfillment of your institution's mission.
- 1.2 Objectives: List and explain the unique objectives of the Branch Campus.
- 1.3 Keys to Success: Summarize why you believe, based on your research, your Branch Campus will be a success.

#### II. **INSTITUTIONAL and PROGRAM SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Provide an institutional history and a summary of your current location(s).
- 2.2 Institutional Program Offerings: Describe the academic programs offered at the home campus and at any other current approved Teaching Sites and / or Branch Campuses.
- 2.3 Proposed Branch Campus Location and Program Offerings: Provide the location of the proposed Branch Campus. Describe the academic programs that the institution intends to offer upon TRACS approval. Explain in detail, based on your research, the rationale for offering these programs that the proposed location. (Remember that only programs offered at the home campus can be offered at a Branch Campus.)

#### III. **FEASIBILITY STUDY:** The Need for your Branch Campus and its Reasonable Potential for Success

- 3.1 Discuss how the Institution's long-range planning document addresses the institution's expansion to include the proposed Branch Campus and document that appropriate groups such as the Board, faculty and other interested parties were involved in the decision making process.

- 3.2 SWOT Analysis: Conduct a SWOT Analysis of the Proposal; provide projected advantages of any Strengths and Opportunities and projected solutions and risks to any perceived Weaknesses and Threats.
- 3.3 Market Segmentation: Conduct a demographic analysis of your potential students in the proposed location of the Branch. Describe the typical student, based on your research, who will be attending your Branch Campus over the next 5 years.
- 3.4 Major Competitors: Describe which schools, based on your research, currently operate in the same general location as the proposed Branch Campus. Be sure to take into consideration their local reputation, programs offered, enrollment, type of student population, length of population, costs, etc.
- 3.5 Differentiation: Describe what would make your Branch Campus more appealing for students than another local institution that is similar to yours. What makes your Branch unique? What will make it a success?

#### **IV. STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY**

- 4.1 Marketing Strategy: Describe in detail how you will market and promote the Branch Campus once approval from TRACS is granted. Provide and projected budget, release timeline and promotional material samples.
- 4.2 Pricing Strategy: Based on your research of comparative schools in the same geographical area as the proposed Branch, describe your pricing strategy over a 5 year period.
- 4.3 Competitive Edge: Based on your research, describe the competitive edge(s) that your Branch will have and how it intends to maintain it.
- 4.4 Implementation: Provide a proposed implementation timeline that includes the hiring of appropriate personnel (administration, staff, and faculty), launching of promotional materials and marketing, initiation of classes, etc.

#### **V. STRATEGIC ALLIANCES**

- 5.1 Describe external strategic partners who have aligned with your institution to begin and implement the Branch Campus. Include also other who you plan to include in the future. Provide as much detail as possible, including their role in your business plan. These may include agreements with other educational institutions, libraries, businesses, ministries and churches, preliminary rental agreements for facilities, and preliminary applications with other state and national governmental agencies.

#### **VI. MANAGEMENT and INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF SUMMARY**

- 6.1 Administration and Staff: Describe in detail how the institution will provide sufficient administrative and staffing support, including student services, to the Branch Campus upon its approval from TRACS.

- 6.2 Instructional Staff: Describe how the institution will provide faculty adequate in number and credentials to support the Branch Campus, including academic support to students, upon its approval from TRACS. Include the ISL that demonstrates compliance.

**VII. FINANCIAL PLAN:** A Proposed 5-Year Financial Plan

- 7.1 Break-even Analysis
- 7.2 Projected Profit and Loss Statement
- 7.3 Projected Cash Flow
- 7.4 Projected Balance Sheet
- 7.5 Projected Income Source
- 7.6 Projected Enrollment by Program
- 7.7 Projected 5-year Institutional Budget that includes the Branch Campus with details.

**Appendices:** Use appendices as needed to display such things as consortia agreements, meeting minutes, course syllabi, faculty resumes, etc.

Notice of Non-Substantive Academic Changes

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that the changes below were made in accord with all institutional policies and procedures. If required by our policies, they have been approved by our governing board.

\_\_\_\_\_  
President or Chief Academic Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Courses Added

Courses No Longer Offered

Changes To Existing Courses

Changes To Graduation Requirements

Changes To General Education

Changes To Requirements For A Major

Changes To Requirements For A Minor

Changes To Requirements For A Certificate

New Buildings On Campus

Buildings Which Will No Longer Be Used On Campus