

SACSFACTS

Welcome to SACS FACTS

One of the most important events in the history of Pasco-Hernando Community College is about to occur. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) will determine if the College's accreditation will be reaffirmed. You might be asking yourself the following questions. What is SACS? Why is the reaffirmation of the College's accreditation so important? How does accreditation impact the College's students, faculty and staff? When will the SACS reaffirmation of the College's accreditation occur? What role will students, faculty and staff play in the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process? These questions, and many others, will be addressed in **SACS FACTS**.

SACS FACTS is a newsletter that will provide you with valuable information about the SACS reaffirmation process. **SACS FACTS** will be distributed periodically throughout the College community via the Intranet and hard copy.

What is SACS?

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), founded in 1895, is based near Atlanta, Georgia. It accredits over 800 institutions of higher education in 11 southeast states and Latin American countries as overseen by the Commission on Colleges. In keeping with the democratic principles of this country, the federal government does not accredit universities and community colleges. Instead, the process is decentralized and the federal government relies on SACS through its Commission on Colleges to conduct the accreditation process. SACS' representative body is the College Delegate Assembly composed of one voting representative from each member institution. The College is a voting member of the College Delegate Assembly.

Why is the reaffirmation of the College's accreditation so important?

Accreditation in the United States is voluntary and self-regulatory. It plays a significant role in fostering public confidence in the educational enterprise by protecting the public from fraudulent practices like "diploma mills." Accreditation of a community college or university indicates that the institution complies with basic standards. Accreditation recognizes that a community college or university is committed to ongoing improvement by following an established cycle of planning, assessment and using the results of the assessment for quality enhancement. Perhaps the most paramount aspect of accreditation is that it recognizes the institution's focus on student learning and its effectiveness in supporting and enhancing student learning.

How does accreditation impact the College's students, faculty and staff?

Accreditation significantly impacts the College's students, faculty and staff in many ways. Only accredited institutions are permitted to award federal financial aid to students. In 2005-2006, the College's students received over \$6 million in federal financial aid. If the College's accreditation is not reaffirmed, this amount will drop to zero. Credits from accredited community colleges and universities are transferable to and from other accredited institutions. For example, credits earned by the College's students are accepted by the University of Florida, Florida State University, the University of South Florida, St. Leo University, Hillsborough Community College and other regionally accredited institutions. Without accreditation, other accredited institutions would not accept credits awarded to students by the College. Credits and degrees from the College would significantly lose their value. Without accreditation, the College's reputation would suffer. The public and our counterparts at other community colleges and universities would consider our academic programs, student services, and fiscal operations as being inferior to those at accredited institutions.

When will the SACS reaffirmation of the College's accreditation occur?

SACS accredits community colleges and universities for periods up to ten years. The College initially received SACS accreditation when it was founded in 1972. The College's current accreditation was reaffirmed in 1999. SACS has informed the College that it will conduct its next review of the College's accreditation status in 2009 and determine the College's reaffirmation of accreditation in June, 2010. Although that seems like a long time in the future, preparing for the SACS review of the College's accreditation status is a comprehensive process. The College will begin its SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process in 2007.

What role will students, faculty and staff play in the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process?

Students, faculty and staff will play an active role in the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process. As part of the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process, the College must submit responses to questions and provide documentation to support that it is in compliance with the principles of accreditation, core requirements, comprehensive standards and federal requirements. The College's faculty and staff will be involved in developing institutional responses. The College is also required to submit a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The QEP is a document developed by faculty and staff that describes a course of action for institutional improvement crucial to enhancing educational quality that is directly related to student learning. The QEP is based upon a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of the College in supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the College. A series of focus groups will be held throughout the College involving students, faculty and staff. Feedback from these focus groups will serve as the basis for the development of the College's QEP. One of the primary benefits of the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process is that it provides a great opportunity for the College's students, faculty and staff to comprehensively reexamine and enhance all facets of the College. It is a process of renewal and rededication to our mission.

Upcoming information....

In the next edition of SACS **FACTS**, you will receive more information about the various steps and timelines associated with the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need clarification regarding the information contained in SACS **FACTS**, please contact Dr. Burt Harres at extension 3490 or Dr. Randy Stovall at extension 1301.