

GUIDELINES FOR THE DESIGNATION OF BRANCH CAMPUS STATUS

General Guideline

Establishing a branch campus includes a long-term commitment which should not be entered into lightly. Given the large number of institutions and campuses already offering a variety of educational services in Alabama, branch approval should only be given in rare instances of exceptional need and institutional and community commitment. This need and commitment must be clear and apparent and there should be no doubt that an exceptional case has been made.

Location

1. The location of a branch campus must be in compliance with the "25 mile rule" as outlined in the Commission's Guidelines for Off-Campus Instruction. *(Note: This "rule" is no longer in the Guidelines for Off-Campus Instruction adopted on 8/18/00.)*
2. The institution must have been operating successfully at the proposed branch site for a period of at least five consecutive years.
3. Branch campus approvals are facility specific. Any relocation, regardless of the distance, must first be approved by the Commission. Additionally, expansion of facilities after initial approval must be approved by the Commission.

Need

The institution must demonstrate that branch status will enable it to satisfy clearly documented needs which cannot otherwise be met.

Administration

1. The branch must be responsible to appropriate administrative officers on the main campus. It will not have a separate set of administrators, such as deans or department heads.
2. The institution must employ a full-time director for the branch who will report directly to the appropriate administrator on the main campus.
3. The branch proposal must outline the organizational structure and describe the nature of the relationship of the administrative staff of the branch to the administration on the main campus.

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Student Support

The institution must provide adequate student support services at the branch including on-site registration, tuition and fee payment, textbook purchasing, academic advising, and student counseling. The proposal must provide a detailed description of how these services will be provided. The institution must also explain how branch campus students will have access to main campus events.

Curriculum

1. All off-campus programs to be offered at branch campuses must first be included in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory for the proposing institution. Any program offered exclusively at a branch is still considered a program of the sponsoring institution. Separate program inventories are not maintained for branch campuses.
2. The institution must meet all criteria for off-campus programs as outlined in the Commission's off-campus Guidelines, and a standard Off-Campus Proposal Form must be submitted for each program.
3. Expansion of the curriculum at the branch after initial approval must first be approved by the Commission.

Enrollment and Student Characteristics

1. Documentation must be presented that reveals that the prevailing student characteristics at the proposed branch prevents or seriously hampers their attendance at the main campus. Reasonable access to quality educational offerings, not mere convenience, should be the goal. The proposal must include data on student age, sex, marital status, employment status, full-time/part-time status, and student source (county/city of residence).
2. The institution must demonstrate that enrollments at the site for which branch status is sought have been stable, or preferably increasing, over the past five years.
3. Enrollment projections must be high enough to maintain the critical mass of students necessary for a vigorous academic atmosphere and to operate on a cost effective basis.

Faculty and Staff

The institution must meet all faculty criteria as outlined in the Commission's Guidelines for Off-Campus Instruction. Since at least two full academic programs will be offered, a minimum of 50% of the faculty at the branch must be employed as full-time faculty by the sponsoring institution.

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Facilities and Equipment

1. Facilities must meet all criteria as outlined in the Commission's Off-Campus Guidelines. A branch campus involves at least two full academic programs and a long-term commitment by the institution. Facilities must be adequate in every respect.
2. The proposal must include a detailed description of the facilities, including floor plans.
3. The proposal must include an inventory of instructional equipment available at the site. The equipment must be adequate to support the academic program.

Library Resources

The proposal must include a detailed description of the library resources and services available at the site. Library resources and services will be expected to be significantly superior to those available at most off-campus sites and must support the degree programs at the same level as that available on the main campus.

Budget

The institution must provide projected budgets for the first three years of operation of the proposed branch. The costs of operating the branch must be covered by tuition, fees, and other non-appropriated funds.

Community Support

The proposal must include tangible evidence of significant community support for the branch, including both private and public sector support.

Accreditation

The institution must provide documentation that all requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools have been met for the establishment of a branch campus.

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