

Frequently Asked Questions

University Relations has received requests for information regarding the recent decisions of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The following information is provided to help answer some common questions:

1. What exactly did SACS decide about USF St. Petersburg?

During a recent SACS review, USF St. Petersburg achieved success in 87 of the 89 standards for accreditation.

SAC determined that two areas require more review and further development: assessment of the academic skill of general education students; and tracking student achievement post-graduation. SACS will provide specific details to USFSP in July.

2. How long does USF St. Petersburg have to comply?

USFSP has one year to further develop its documentation for the two standards. SACS will review our progress in Spring 2009.

3. What is the University doing to remedy this problem?

USF St. Petersburg is being proactive in thoroughly re-examining its current processes relative to assessing the academic skill of general education students and tracking student achievement after graduation. The Faculty Committee on General Education as well as a newly established committee to oversee all aspects of institutional assessment are working diligently on these issues. Individuals and offices throughout the campus are participating in this effort.

As always, input from the university community is encouraged and solicited. Updated information will be disseminated on a regular basis throughout the year.

4. Will classes continue as planned?

Classes will continue as planned. There will be no changes to the academic schedule.

Moreover, new curriculum additions, such as the graduate programs in Environmental Science and Policy and English Education and undergraduate courses in Pre-Health, are still on track.

5. Do I need to transfer to another institution because of this problem?

USF St. Petersburg is a fully accredited institution. It remains dedicated to the highest standard of teaching, research and service – in keeping with the core mission of the entire USF System. Students need not be concerned nor should they seek to transfer.

6. What effect will SACS probation have on my current or future degree?

USF St. Petersburg remains a fully accredited institution. Your degree is not in jeopardy.

7. Does this probation status reflect the integrity or academic rigor of USF St. Petersburg?

This decision is no reflection on the academic quality of the educational experience or the credentials of professors. USF St. Petersburg's long-term reputation for providing rigorous, challenging, student-centered academics remains intact. USFSP faculty will continue to provide courses that stimulate learning, emphasize scholarship, and nurture creativity and innovation. Opportunities for undergraduate research and creative activity will continue to prosper.

8. Will the probation period effect graduation in summer, fall or spring?

There is absolutely no impact on graduation.

9. Are the credentials of faculty threatened by this probation period?

No. USFSP faculty bring their outstanding personal academic credentials to the University upon hire. They consistently build on these qualifications through scholarly research, teaching grants, book publications, and the like. Students are the beneficiaries of the faculty's expertise and ongoing quest for knowledge.

10. What will the probation period mean for the community and academic reputation of USF St. Petersburg?

USF St. Petersburg was established in 1965 as a result of the visionary and dedicated efforts of community leaders committed to providing higher education in Pinellas County. As the first regional campus of the State University System, USFSP has traditionally served as the "can-do" incubator for regional education in Florida. As such, USFSP steadily forges new territory, cognizant of the community it serves.

In the upcoming year, USF St. Petersburg will thoroughly examine both its protocols related to assessing the academic skill of general education students and the documentation of those assessments, and will strengthen its tracking of student achievement post-graduation. USFSP will develop better ways of identifying its many graduates, those who contribute to the rich fabric of our community as leaders in education, business, government, law, the arts, and the media.

Further questions and comments? Please contact: sacsq@stpt.usf.edu