Dr. Thomas J. Hynes, Jr.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of West Georgia
1601 Maple Street
Carrollton, GA 30118-4510

June 26, 2009

Dear Dr. Hynes:

Please pardon my delay in responding to two letters, both dated March 23, 2009, regarding change at your institution. The first letter notified the Commission of programs offered at off-campus instructional sites and/or electronically:

- BSEd in Early Childhood Education at the Newnan Center
- MS in Criminology at the Newnan Center
- MEd in Physical Education to be offered 50% or more online
- EdS in Special Education to be offered in Cherokee County
- Post-baccalaureate certificate in Museum Studies to be offered at the Atlanta History Center

**What are the implementation dates?** Since the institution is approved to offer 50% or more of a program’s credits online, we accept the notification for the MEd in Physical Education and require no additional information from you except for the implementation date. Since the Newnan Center is an approved site, we accept the notification for the BSEd in Early Childhood Education and the MS in Criminology and require no additional information from you except for the implementation date. We accept the notification for the EdS in Special Education to be offered in Cherokee County and the Certificate in Museum Studies to be offered at the Atlanta History Center and look forward to receiving the prospectus for those sites. Please include in the prospectus(es), the following information:

1. Street address for each site
2. Implementation date for each program at the site

You asked about a consortium relationship with other University System of Georgia institutions in the offering of the MAT—Mathematics and Science degree program. At present, only Columbus State University is granting the degree, although University of West Georgia is teaching some of the courses. In the future, all the partners in the consortium will grant the degree. In my judgment, you do not need to submit a substantive change proposal to grant the degree; to do so will not require a significant departure from your approved curriculum. You, and the other partner institutions, should review and comply with the Commission policy, *The Transfer or Transcripting of Academic Credit*, available on our website, www.sacscoc.org. We accept the notification for the change in the consortium arrangement.
Your second question dealt with eCore, the University System of Georgia's electronic core curriculum, and your undergraduate programs. The Commission approval for USG distance learning in Georgia, which included eCore, occurred in 2001. With the core curriculum available online, it is very easy for a program to exceed the 50% threshold. [I modify your question to read, "... program reaches the 50% threshold," in order to mirror the language of the Substantive Change Policy.] You ask whether, when one of the undergraduate degree programs reaches the 50% online threshold because of eCore, must you report this as a substantive change? The answer is yes IF the program in question is a significant departure from the array of programs already in the approved cohort for online delivery. And then, only notification is required—no prospectus. If the program is not a significant departure, no notification is required.

Your second letter of March 23, 2009, asked whether a transfer of administrative responsibilities for eCore will trigger the necessity for a substantive change. eCore is moving from a system-administered program to one that will be administered by the University of West Georgia, effective summer term, 2009. There is no change to the curriculum. In our judgment, it is not a substantive change requiring prior approval. We accept the notification and require no additional information from you.

Best regards,

Belle S. Wheelan

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President
Commission on Colleges

BSW/RER:jdw

cc: Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna, President

Dr. Michael S. Johnson
March 23, 2009

Dr. Belle S. Wheelan  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Wheelan:

We are writing to report that we have begun to offer programs at sites outside of our main campus that will likely exceed 50% of degree requirements at those locations. They have also been approved for off-campus delivery by our usual faculty approval means. These programs are: BSED in Early Childhood Education (to be offered at our Newnan Center), MS in Criminology (to be offered at our Newnan Center), MED in Physical Education (to be offered more than 50% online), EDS in Special Education (to be offered to a cohort in Cherokee County), and our Post-Baccalaureate Certificate with a Major in Museum Studies (to be offered at the Atlanta History Center). All of these are programs for which we already have approval to offer at our main campus location. The relevant prospecti will be forthcoming.

According to our records, the following off-campus/online programs have already received your approval: BSN in Nursing (Newnan Center), MED in Early Childhood Education (Newnan Center), MED in Special Education (Newnan Center), MED in Educational Leadership (Newnan Center), EDS in Educational Leadership (Newnan Center), MED in Middle Grades Education (Newnan Center), MBA (Newnan Center), BSN (Georgia Highlands in Rome), BSN (Dalton), MED in Media (online), EDS in Media (online), MSN in Nursing (partially online), eCore (online collaboration), WebMBA (online collaboration), BSED in Early Childhood Education (Georgia Highlands in Rome), and our MED in Early Childhood Education (Georgia Highlands in Rome). These approvals have occurred either individually, or at the time of our 2003 reaffirmation review.

In addition to the above programs, we also have two questions for the Commission regarding substantive change policies, and their interpretation in a couple of atypical cases. The first concerns a consortium relationship with other University System of Georgia Institutions. Our university is part of a consortium that has begun to offer a full online MAT in Teaching - Mathematics and Science. Currently, we are only teaching specific courses in the program while the degree-granting institution is Columbus State University. In the future, it is planned that all the institutions in the consortium will grant degrees in the program – at that point, do we need to do a substantive change application.
or since it already is a consortia program, will we just be grandfathered in under the permission already granted?

Our second question is about the relationship between eCore and our undergraduate programs. eCore is USG’s electronic core curriculum, a program that allows students to complete their undergraduate general education requirements online and was granted SACS approval in 2001. Students enrolled at any USG institution are eligible to take eCore classes, so there is the potential of making almost every undergraduate program offered in the University System of Georgia exceed the 50% online threshold once a department begins to offer a small number of courses online. The bulk of online programming in such cases is not in the control of the program departments. Related to that condition is an entry in the Substantive Change FAQ on your website, where you have the following:

6. We started offering a few online courses several years ago. Now it appears that students can complete a majority of their program online although that was not intended when we started. Do we have to report this?

Yes, when an institution initiates a program leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate in which 50% or more of the credits can be obtained by some form of distance learning, the institution should notify the Commission of this development and submit a prospectus for approval. Subsequent programs in distance education do not need to be reported unless they represent significant departures from previously approved programs or new modes of delivery.

Is this interpreted to mean that since eCore has been approved, when one of our undergraduate degree programs exceeds the 50% online because of eCore we do NOT have to report this as a substantive change? Or, are we guided by the concept that when 50% of the program (non-core) courses go online (or external in some way), then we have to report a substantive change because at that point the “significant departures from previously approved programs or new modes of delivery” threshold referred to in the FAQ is reached?

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful response in these matters.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Hynes Jr.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

cc: Beheruz N. Sethna
Jonathan Anderson
Michael Aldrich