

DATE: December 3, 2024
TO: Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs
FROM: Sara Hamon, Assistant VP for Academic Affairs/Deputy Accreditation Liaison
RE: Specialized Accreditation: Approved Institutional Description & Change in Status Notice

The SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation state that institutions must be accurate in the institutional descriptions in accreditation self-study documents and reports. Standard 14.4 of the SACSCOC policy highlights two essential aspects of this requirement:

The institution (a) represents itself accurately to all U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agencies with which it holds accreditation and (b) informs those agencies of any change of accreditation status, including the imposition of public sanctions. ([See SACSCOC policy Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies.](#)) *(Representation to other agencies)*

Since reporting requirements and formats vary across specialized accrediting agencies, we have assembled the following resources and reminders to ensure that FSU is consistently and accurately represented to accrediting agencies.

1. Use the attached **Approved Institutional Description for Specialized Accreditation Documents** when describing FSU to specialized accreditors in self-study materials or reports.
2. The following links to data, policies, and reports may also be useful:
[FSU Degree Program and Major Inventory](#)
[FSU 2024 Accountability Plan](#)
[The Constitution of Florida State University](#)
[FSU Regulations and Policies Website](#)
[FSU Strategic Plan](#)
[FSU 2024 Compliance Certification Report for SACSCOC](#)
[FSU 2024 Quality Enhancement Plan](#) (Enhancing Doctoral Education)
3. If there is a change in status with a specialized accreditor, including voluntary withdrawal from accreditation, please notify me or Dr. Ruth Storm, Institutional Accreditation Liaison, so that it may be communicated to SACSCOC.

If you have questions as you prepare specialized accreditation documents, please email me at shamon@fsu.edu for assistance.

Cc: James Clark, Provost & Executive VP for Academic Affairs
Ruth Storm, Associate Provost & Associate VP for Academic Affairs

Approved Institutional Description for Specialized Accreditation Documents
Use for 2024-25 Academic Year Only ~ Contact Sara Hamon for Updates or Word Version

Purpose: Florida State University or “FSU” is a public research university with an established international reputation for high-quality educational programs, cutting-edge research, and student success outcomes that are among the best in the nation. In the 2023-24 academic year, FSU enrolled a student population of more than 43,000 representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 125 foreign countries. This figure included 31,933 undergraduate students, 9,383 graduate students, 1,199 professional students, and 1,186 non-degree students. FSU is recognized among the top public universities in the nation, including 10th in the Niche rankings and 23rd in the U.S. News and World Report rankings for 2025. In the 2023 fiscal year, FSU had over \$400 million dollars in research expenditures to support discovery and innovation. FSU Health is advancing a health care ecosystem poised to transform healthcare delivery in North Florida, including new clinical facilities in Tallahassee and Panama City. Additionally, FSU is known for its undergraduate student success as evidenced by its most recent 96% first-year retention rate and 86% six-year graduation rate.

The FSU main campus is in the state capital of Tallahassee located in the Florida Panhandle. FSU’s physical plant includes more than 400 buildings on 1,716 acres, including the downtown Tallahassee main campus of 486 acres. The university has branch campuses in Panama City, Florida, and Panama City, Republic of Panama. The FSU Ringling Center for Cultural Arts in Sarasota, Florida, is recognized as an off-campus instructional site. The university has a strong history of international education and maintains year-round study centers in Florence, Italy; London, England; Panama City, Republic of Panama; and Valencia, Spain.

Florida State University’s mission and vision statements embrace the institution’s legacy and propel it into its future.

Mission: Florida State University preserves, expands, and disseminates knowledge in the sciences, technology, arts, humanities, and professions, while embracing a philosophy of learning strongly rooted in the traditions of the liberal arts. The university is dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, creative endeavors, and service. The university strives to instill the strength, skill, and character essential for lifelong learning, personal responsibility, and sustained achievement within a community that fosters free inquiry and embraces diversity.

Vision: Florida State University will be among the nation’s most entrepreneurial and innovative universities, transforming the lives of our students and shaping the future of our state and society through exceptional teaching, research, creative activity, and service. We will amplify these efforts through our distinctive climate—one that places a premium on interdisciplinary inquiry and draws from the rich intellectual and personal diversity of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. These three forces—entrepreneurship, interdisciplinarity, and diversity—deepen FSU’s impact and result in a powerful return to our students and the people of Florida for their continued support and trust.

Governance: FSU is part of the State University System of Florida, which is governed by a 17-member Board of Governors. The FSU Board of Trustees (BOT) has statutory responsibility for governance of the university. The 13-member BOT develops the university’s strategic plan, submits an annual institutional budget, accounts for expenditures of all funds, and sets policy for the institution. The President of the

university serves as chief executive officer with delegated authority from the BOT in areas such as university budgeting, planning, developing new degree programs, and strategic planning.

Programs: FSU is composed of seventeen colleges that grant undergraduate and graduate/professional degrees. As of November 2023, this included 103 bachelor's degree programs, 106 master's degree programs, 6 specialist degree programs, 64 doctoral degrees, and 4 professional degrees. The complete list of academic programs may be found at: <https://ir.fsu.edu/dpi.aspx>. In the 2023-24 academic year, the university conferred 13,380 degrees, including 9,090 undergraduate degrees and 4,290 graduate and professional degrees.

Degrees: Florida State University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate, baccalaureate, masters, educational specialist, and doctoral degrees. Florida State University also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of Florida State University may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on **SACSCOC's website**: <https://www.sacscoc.org/>.

Diplomas: Upon completion of coursework and clearance by the appropriate university administrators and faculty, the university issues diplomas to students who meet the academic requirements for an educational credential.

Certificates: The University defines a college credit certificate program as "an organized curriculum of college credit courses offered as a distinct area of study that leads to specific educational or occupational goals, and for which the university awards a certificate, diploma, or similar form of recognition upon completion." College credit certificates are noted on a student's transcript as an official credential of the university.

Personnel: The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience, competence, and capacity to lead their respective areas of responsibility within the institution. The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its employees on a regular basis. The institution employs competent faculty members who are qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the university. Faculty members at FSU must be academically and/or professionally qualified to ensure the quality and integrity of FSU's academic programs. Qualifications are documented by academic degrees or substantial work experiences that contribute to and enhance quality program instruction. Appropriate college/school personnel, usually department chairs, verify and justify the competency of each full-time or part-time faculty member and graduate teaching assistant (as instructor of record) at the time of hire. Florida State University had 7,154 full-time employees in fall of 2023, including 2,147 full-time faculty.

Finances: The financial condition of the institution is strong, with key financial measures and operational results consistent with the institution's strategic goals and objectives. The operating budget from 2023-2024 was approximately \$2.6 billion. Roughly 40% was allocated to educational and general expenses, 20% to restricted, 16% to auxiliary, and 13% to capital projects. FSU has regularly maintained a very high bond rating and continues to be a strong investment, according to the most recent credit ratings released by S&P Global, Fitch, and Moody's.

Constituents: FSU, one of the largest and oldest of the twelve public institutions of higher learning in the State University System of Florida, had its beginning as early as 1823 when the Territorial Legislature began to plan a higher education system. The university is one of four public universities designated by the Florida Legislature as a Preeminent State Research University. Today FSU has an alumni base of approximately 443,000 in the U.S. and around the world.