

State University System Academic Learning Compact

What?

The State University System Academic Learning Compact (ALC) is an identification, by academic program, of what it is that students will have learned by the end of the program, and how that learning will be measured above and beyond course grades. The ALC will focus on (1) content knowledge by discipline, (2) communication skills, and (3) critical thinking skills.

Who?

ALCs will be created for each of the baccalaureates in the SUS.

When?

All institutions would submit completed and university-approved ALCs by the end of 2004. Subsequently, ALCs would be reviewed, accepted or returned for revision, reviewed again, and placed on the FACTS website.

Why?

While disciplines are required by the Southern Association of Colleges of Schools (SACS) to identify learning outcomes and measures of those outcomes, there continues to be great variation among programs and institutions in meeting this requirement. The SUS-wide, ALC effort would force improvement.

While SACS requirements identify expectations relative to content knowledge per discipline, they do not necessarily address communication or critical thinking skills.

SACS reporting requirements are not in a concise, user-friendly, accessible format for stakeholders. ALCs would be concise, user-friendly, and accessible.

ALCs, have never been effected by a state system. National experts in the field of postsecondary learning assessment are highly supportive of the concept of ALCs as a state-level effort.

The ALC has the potential to be a real cultural change-agent in the area of postsecondary academic services rendered and accountability.

Where?

ALCs will be linked directly to the FACTS website.

How?

ALCs would receive institutional approval at the provost level, and then, in the course of insertion into the state-level database, reviewed by Department of Education staff. In addition, they would be reviewed cyclically in the context of mandated academic program reviews, and again in the context of SACS accreditation. ALCs could be evaluated by institutions and the Department of Education as exceeding, meeting, or not meeting expectations. This would provide a level of peer pressure that would help to create a continuous improvement environment.