Part I

SACS Audit Report

January 29, 2007

Dr. Ralph Slaughter
President
Southern University System
Baton Rouge, LA 708013

Dear Dr. Slaughter:

We want to share with you some thoughts about our visits to the Baton Rouge campus, the New Orleans campus, and the Shreveport campus, for the purpose of developing “a comprehensive accreditation audit of each campus of the Southern University System.” But first we express our appreciation for all the arrangements that you, Dr. Ralph, and Ms. Henderson made for us. We were very impressed with all of the persons whom we met and the candor and good will expressed toward us and the common tasks we seek to address. Each campus provided us a very substantial set of insights into their accreditation process, their progress and challenges, and the opportunities which lie ahead. We are especially grateful to the SACS liaison on each of the campuses, their task force chairs and chancellors. Your “Eleven A’s: Pillars of Success” served as a useful index as we prepared our final report.

Comments on Final Reports

Our final report is divided into several areas: First, we address each campus’s current status of preparation for SACS reaccreditation; gaps in the process of preparedness; milestones not completed; databases not completed; program reviews not completed; faculty credentials and assignment assessments; surveys, evaluations and assessment needed; and other outstanding tasks and assignments. Second, we offer recommendations, suggestions that the System can use for monitoring the progress of the campuses at various milestones (including interaction and exchanges with SACS). Third, we offer general observations that may be useful for the campuses and system to complete the reaccreditation schedules, procedures and processes.
I. Southern University, Baton Rouge (including the Law Center and Agricultural Research and Extension Center)

A. Current Status of Preparation of SACS Reaffirmation

We commend you for auditing the System’s institutions at this time, because institutions seeking reaffirmation of their SACS accreditation must begin serious preparation well in advance of their reaffirmation visit. The judicious use of time, in this regard, is even more important as most institutions are experiencing their first reaffirmation with SAC’s new Principles of Accreditation. As a member of the Class of 2010, Southern University, Baton Rouge (SUBR) is considered as a Track B institution because it awards degrees at the baccalaureate level and above. To ensure a successful reaffirmation experience, members of the Class of 2010 should have certain plans, processes and structures in place. We have reviewed each of these to assess SUBR’s current status and preparation for SACS reaffirmation. Our findings are described below:

- **The institution should have an action plan or timeline with achievable milestones.** At the request of the System Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, SUBR has prepared a “Schedule of SACS-Action Plan-2003-2009.” This document provides an appropriate roadmap for completing the necessary reaffirmation prerequisites. While the plan has a schedule for completing both the Quality Enhancement Plan and the Compliance Audit, we offer a recommendation for adjusting the schedule for completing the Compliance Audit. Overall, we conclude that the institution does have an appropriate plan for the reaffirmation process.

- **The institution should have a Leadership Team in place that is providing oversight and direction for the reaffirmation process.** A 13-member SACS Leadership Team has been appointed for SUBR. Led by the Chancellor, this team is staffed by senior administrators who will have major roles in SACS reaffirmation. The SACS Accreditation Liaison and the Director of Technology and Network Services are also appropriately included on the Leadership Team. However, the Leadership Team lacks representation from the Law Center and the Agriculture Research and Extension Center. Still, based on our review, we also believe that the Leadership Team understands the SACS reaffirmation process and is providing the necessary leadership and oversight of the process.
• **The institution should have the proper organizational structure in place for completing the Compliance Audit.** SACS gives institutions great latitude in how and who completes the compliance certification report. Unlike the self-study report required under the previous SACS process, the Compliance Audit is purely an administrative function that the Leadership Team and the Chancellor oversee. Wisely, SUBR has developed a series of Task Forces to complete various portions of the Compliance Audit. In this regard, eight Task Forces of eight to fifteen persons each are addressing the Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standard, and the Federal Mandates. The chairs of the Task Forces are providing excellent leadership and are moving with dispatch to complete their assignments. The Task Forces are meeting on a regular schedule and should achieve their objectives.

The Accreditation Liaison is providing oversight and support to all of the Task Forces.

• **The institution should have a functioning QEP Task Force or Committee and a plan for selecting and developing the QEP topic.** The institution has a functioning QEP Team consisting of fourteen (14) members and led by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

The Team has also designated a separate QEP Editing Team. The QEP Team is fully aware of its role in the SACS reaffirmation process. They have developed a plan for selecting a QEP topic based on the recommended SACS protocol. They have an appropriate timeline for completing their work and have developed materials and processes for ensuring broad campus participation in the selection of the QEP topic. The work of the QEP Team is clearly a highlight of the institution’s overall reaffirmation effort.

• **The Institution should have the most qualified persons appointed to major roles in the reaffirmation process.** From the Leadership Team to the Task Forces and support groups, the institution has appointed excellent staff members. Not only is everyone suited for their respective roles, everyone also has a clear understanding of the reaffirmation process and how their roles are interwoven into it. For example, one member of the faculty who has served on a recent SACS on-site committee is chairing a Task Force and using her experience to motivate her colleagues. Overall, we found all of the staff to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the process.
Summary

Based on our review, the SUBR campus is highly engaged in the SACS reaffirmation process. They are on track to have the QEP topic and document developed long before it is due in early 2010. With some adjustments to the Action Plan the Compliance Certification Task Forces should also complete their work in a timely manner.

A. Gaps in the process of preparedness

The two major institutional activities in the process of preparing for SACS reaffirmation are the preparation of the QEP and the development of the Compliance Certification report. The Action Plan that SUBR has prepared allocates sufficient time to complete both the QEP and Compliance Audit. Based on SUBR’s plan, only 50% of the Compliance Audit would be completed by December 31, 2007. An additional year would be used to complete the remaining 50%. Thus, the institution would have from January-August 2009 to make adjustments to ensure 100% compliance with all of the standards. While eight months may be adequate to make routine or minor adjustments, it is our recommendation that the institution allow at least one year to make changes that may be more comprehensive in nature. Thus, we suggest revising the Action Plan to complete the entire Certification process no later than September 10, 2008.

Another area of concern is that of demonstrating institutional financial stability, which is a Core Requirement (CR 2-11) and a Comprehensive Standard (CS3.10.1). While the institution’s audits over the past few years resulted in unqualified opinions, SACS’s definition of financial stability is much more demanding. For example, the impact of reduced enrollment resulting from the application of selective admissions criteria for the admission of new students could significantly change the financial landscape. We recommend that the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration consult with his colleagues from institutions that have completed the SACS reaffirmation process to gain a better understanding of the new SACS financial standards.

Student learning outcomes is another area of concern for SUBR. While some programs (Teacher Education, Engineering, Law, etc.) can provide excellent examples for documenting student learning outcomes, there is not a campus-wide system for such documentation. The Director of PAIR, with the assistance of the Office of Technology and Network Services, is in the process of closing this gap by the implementation of an excellent campus-wide student learning outcome documentation system in 2007. While we are recommending that the institution adjust its schedule for completing the Compliance Audit, focus more on financial stability, and implement a campus-wide student outcomes documentation system, the institution’s reaffirmation Action Plan still serves as an excellent instrument for monitoring the institution’s progress in the reaffirmation process.
B. **Milestones not completed**  
SACS has two early milestones for institutions in the class of 2010. These are the orientation of the Leadership Team on June 8, 2008, and the September 10, 2009, due date for the Compliance Certification report. SUBR has a functioning Leadership Team that will be ready for the 2008 Orientation. Furthermore, progress on the Compliance Certification report is on schedule. A review of SUBR’s Action Plan also indicates that all milestones to date have been completed. Thus, by all indications the institution has no milestones that have not been completed.

C. **Databases not completed**  
The Office of Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research is currently working on the development of two databases that are critical to the reaffirmation process. A campus-wide student learning outcomes database, modeled after the one used successfully by Alabama A & M University, is being adopted for use by SUBR. It provides a comprehensive method for collecting students learning data from all academic programs. It also shows how the data is being used to improve programs (“closing the loop”). A pilot version of this database is scheduled to be up and running by May 31, 2007. This system also has the capability for and should be used to collect assessment data on administrative and educational support services. Successful and timely implementation will ensure several years of data and will demonstrate that the institution does, indeed, have a culture of effective planning and assessment.

The second database in the developmental stages is a Faculty Credential Database. This system will digitize faculty credentials and provide an efficient process for reviewing and updating these important documents. The Office of Technology and Network Services is developing this database with assistance from PAIR. When completed, the institution will have an excellent system for responding to comprehensive standard 3.7.1 (Faculty Credentials). This database is also scheduled to be in place by May 31, 2007.

D. **Program Reviews not Completed**  
Academic program reviews are an important part of SUBR’s continuous quality enhancement process. The main focus of the program review process is the non-accredited degree programs, which include 34 of 71 total programs. The accredited academic programs are not included because they receive rigorous reviews as a part of their program accreditation or reaffirmation process. Each year between six and nine non-accredited academic programs are reviewed. Furthermore, each program is reviewed every four years. For example, in 2006-07 SUBR is reviewing programs in Criminal Justice, Political Science, Psychology, Rehabilitation, Services, Sociology and Social Sciences. In 2007-08 SUBR will review programs
in Theater Arts, Speech Communication, Computer Science, Nursing, Speech Pathology and Audiology, and Science and Math Education. Thus, by 2009, all of SUBR’s academic programs would have been reviewed prior to the SACS site visit if the current schedule of program reviews is maintained.

E. Faculty Credentials and Assignment Assessments
We found no evidence that SUBR was conducting a comprehensive review of faculty credentials and assignments on a regular basis. SUBR is reviewing credentials for new faculty thoroughly at hiring but not reviewing existing faculty files consistently. However, the institution is in the process of developing a digitized faculty credentials database. When completed in 2007, SUBR can update and maintain this database much more frequently.

F. Surveys, Evaluations and Assessments Needed
The two major activities of the reaffirmation process, the QEP and the Compliance Audit, can be strengthened by using surveys, evaluations, and assessments. For example, in the process of selecting a QEP topic, the QEP Team should consider surveying University groups in addition to conducting school-wide forums and departmental meetings. Surveys would demonstrate broader participation in the selection process and provide tangible evidence of such. Surveys related to the QEP could be developed and administered to various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students and alumni.

The Compliance Audit could also benefit from the use of surveys and evaluations. The assessment of the effectiveness of the General Education curriculum by using standardized or institutionally developed instruments could help demonstrate institutional effectiveness (CS3.3.1)

The academic program evaluations that we described earlier are also responsive to this requirement. Surveys and assessment instruments may also be developed to demonstrate the effectiveness of administrative and academic support programs (Library Services, Enrollment Management, Technology and Network Services, etc.). We believe these areas of assessment require additional work.

Finally, documented evidence—including instruments used to evaluate all employees, including senior administrators—demonstrating the evaluation of faculty and staff should be available.

G. Other Outstanding Tasks and Assignments
Currently, SUBR has no outstanding tasks or assignments relative to its SACS reaffirmation. The activities that are ongoing along with its Action Plan should lead to a successful outcome. It is important, however, that the Action Plan be monitored closely by the System Office.
To further strengthen SUBR’s preparedness for SACS reaffirmation, we recommend and suggest the following:

**Recommendations:**
- That the SUBR Reaffirmation Action Plan be modified to ensure completion of the Compliance Audit at least one year prior to submitting the Compliance Certification to SACS.
- That representatives from the Law Center and the Agriculture Research and Extension Center be included on the SACS Leadership Team.
- That SUBR include administrative and educational support services as a part of its overall assessment of institutional effectiveness.
- That the Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration consult with colleagues from institutions that have completed the new SACS reaffirmation process to gain a better understanding of the new SACS financial standards and Core Requirements.

**Suggestions**
- That a graduate or professional programs student be included on Task Force 3B (Educational Programs: Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Professional Programs).
- That the QEP Task Force develop and selectively use survey instruments for obtaining input from campus constituents on the selection of a QEP topic.

**II. SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AT NEW ORLEANS**

**A. Current Status of Preparation for SACS Reaffirmation**

As Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) prepares for its SACS reaffirmation in 2011, it faces many more immediate challenges. Severe damage caused by Hurricane Katrina has rendered its main campus uninhabitable. Consequently, a temporary yet expansive “FEMA trailer” North Campus has been developed and occupied while the main campus is being restored. The resulting loss of students; loss of vital records, files and data; limited financial resources; and mandates from the Louisiana Board of Regents and other external agents have all impacted the institution’s ongoing preparation for SACS reaffirmation. In addition to its SACS reaffirmation efforts, SUNO is also engaged in reaffirmation of accreditation efforts for the School of Education (NCATE) and the School of Social Work (CSWE). Changes in programs have been numerous and include the development of three new
programs (bachelor’s degree in Public Administration; Health Information Management; and Child Development and Family Studies). SUNO is also developing four conversion programs, including changing Computer Information Systems to Management Information Systems and changing Business Administration to Business Entrepreneurship. SUNO also is developing four on-line degree programs (General Studies, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Education and Museum Studies) which will require substantive change approval from SACS. Given this multiplicity of challenges, the Chancellor and his staff are to be commended for their resolve and hard work in the face of such monumental challenges. With this incredible backdrop, we have reviewed SUNO’s current status of preparation for the 2010 SACS reaffirmation. Our findings are described below.

- **The institution should have an action plan or timeline with achievable milestones.** In a memorandum dated June 1, 2006, the SUNO accreditation liaison forwarded to the System Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs the document entitled “SUNO Campus Reaffirmation Time-Task Schedule – Schedule of SACS-Related Activities 2005-2010”. It is on the basis of this document that we make our comments. While this document does meet the requirement of having an action plan, we believe that it is inadequate and will not serve its intended purpose. The document is too general and lacks specific measurable milestones. For example, according to the plan the pre-audit is to be conducted in 2006-07 by all SUNO units.

  On what date should this process be completed? Are there milestones for completing major portions of the audit, i.e., Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, etc.? Has adequate time been allocated for correcting findings from the audit? What can be measured to provide assurance that this important activity is proceeding on schedule? This battery of questions may also be proffered for the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan. The lack of specificity and details to enable effective assessment of progress with the reaffirmation effort renders the plan inadequate. Furthermore, the dates used in the plan are not consistent with the official SACS schedule for 2010 Track B institutions. For example, the SACS Commission of Colleges review does not occur September – October, 2009. For Track B institutions that review occurs December 2-4, 2010. Clearly, not enough thought has gone into the development of the Reaffirmation Action Plan. The Plan should be revised entirely, with emphasis placed on including specific measurable milestones for 2007-2010. If the System Office is to monitor the progress of SUNO’s SACS reaffirmation program, a more detailed action plan is needed.
The institution should have a Leadership Team in place that is providing oversight and direction for the reaffirmation process. A 15-member SACS Steering Committee has been appointed and plans are also in place to expand the committee to 18 members. It is our understanding that the Steering Committee will also function as the Leadership Team. This rather large Leadership Team is actually performing two roles. First, the Team is providing oversight and direction for the self-study process. Secondly, the Team is developing Task Forces to conduct major reaffirmation activities such as the compliance audit and the QEP development. A third Task Force on student learning outcomes assessment also has been established. These Task Forces of five to six persons each are just beginning to comprehend fully the magnitude of their assignments.

Many of the Task Force members also chair or perform major roles in other ongoing programmatic accreditations and reaffirmations (NCATE, AACSB, etc.). We also note that 75% of the members of the Task Forces (12 of 16) are also members of the Steering Committee (Leadership Team). We are concerned that so few persons are assuming so much of the responsibility for the SACS reaffirmation process. The model that SUBR has adopted seems to be more effective and practical. This model utilizes a much smaller Leadership Team and more and larger task forces and committees. However, the relatively small size of the SUNO faculty and the difficulty in recruiting additional professors may be legitimate reasons for choosing to involve fewer persons in the work. However, SACS does expect broad institutional participation in some reaffirmation activities such as the selection of a QEP topic. Overall, the institution does have a Leadership Team that is meeting on a regular basis and assuming oversight of the reaffirmation process.

The institution should have the proper organizational structure in place for completing the Compliance Audit.

A five-member Compliance Task Force with a very competent chair has been appointed. However, it is uncertain how the Task Force will function to complete its work. In its infancy, this Task Force has not established milestones that can be monitored and measured by the System Office. With a Task Force of such small size, there should be a specific action plan for achieving its goals. The timeline should allow for sufficient time to make minor and
major changes to ensure compliance with all of the SACS requirements and standards. Furthermore, the Task Force should consider expanding its membership to lessen the workload on the existing members.

The Compliance Task Force should also be collaborating with institutional support areas such as Information Technology to develop or acquire an appropriate evidence documentation methodology, and an electronic faculty files and credentials program. The impact of the loss of records and files during Hurricane Katrina disaster should be assessed by the Task Force. Given the extraordinary circumstances of the institution, this critical Task Force needs to accelerate its work and develop a clear course of action.

- **The institution should have the most qualified persons appointed to major roles in the reaffirmation process.**

  The institution has assembled some of its most experienced and seasoned faculty and administrators for its SACS Steering Committee/Leadership Team. Although fairly new in his role, the SACS Accreditation Liaison is a very experienced administrator with good leadership skills and enthusiasm. As he becomes more familiar with the accreditation paradigm under the Principles, he should function adequately in his role. The Task Force chairs all have extensive accreditation experience.

  While there is little collective institutional experience with the current SACS standards, the System Office has provided several useful workshops for the benefit of accreditation leaders throughout the System, including representatives from SUNO. The workshops, facilitated by the System Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs and the System Coordinator for Accreditation and Program Review, also included a session conducted by the Director of the SACS Consulting Network. At least five SUNO staff members had plans to attend the SACS Annual Meeting in Orlando Florida which would provide them additional professional development opportunities. The Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance (who should be added to the Steering Committee) and the Director of Information Technology are very competent in their roles but would benefit greatly by consulting with their counterparts at other institutions who have recently completed the SACS reaffirmation process. Overall, the faculty and staff engage in the reaffirmation effort are well suited for their roles and are constantly learning more about the current SACS reaffirmation process.
Summary

The SUNO campus is in the earlier stages of organizing itself for the SACS reaffirmation. The added burden of recovering from the Hurricane Katrina damage has caused its preparation to lag behind that of SUBR which is also a member of the SACS reaffirmation Class of 2010. While we acknowledge the enthusiasm of the SUNO chancellor and his staff, the road ahead is going to be difficult. The preparation for SACS reaffirmation needs to be accelerated, beginning with a revision of the SACS action plan. At the time of our visit, it was our understanding that only one task force had formally met. We believe that the task forces need to begin their work as soon as possible to fully understand the scope and breadth of their responsibilities. Given the institution’s current state of preparation and the uncertainty and challenges that lie ahead, we strongly recommend that SUNO request a one-year extension for its SACS reaffirmation (2011).

B. Gaps in the process of preparedness

SUNO’s most obvious gap in the process of SACS preparedness is its Action Plan. As discussed earlier, the plan lacks specific action items between 2007 and 2010. Once the Plan has been revised to include measurable action items for this time period, the System Office can monitor the progress of the reaffirmation process. The action plans submitted by SUBR and SUSLA may serve as appropriate examples for SUNO in this regard. The integration of technology in the reaffirmation process represents another area of concern. In both the compliance audit and QEP development, technology will be an essential tool for completing these activities. Generally, institutions engage Information Technology early in the process to identify the most practical tools that can be used for electronically documenting compliance, demonstrating student learning outcomes, monitoring and updating faculty credentials, and preparing the QEP document. As soon as possible the Steering Committee should begin to explore these and other areas where there must be an interface between technology and reaffirmation. The IT department is a strength of the institution that should be utilized as much as possible in the reaffirmation process. The assessment of student learning is also an area that the Steering Committee should give more attention. SACS expects all of its institutions to have well developed processes in place for assessing student learning outcomes. There should be years of student assessment data and many examples of how the institution is using the assessment results to improve learning. While this may be occurring in some programs (i.e., Teacher Education), it did not appear to be a
well-defined campus-wide initiative. The addition of students to the three task forces would also improve the work of those groups.

C. **Milestones not completed**

In the absence of having an Action Plan with measurable milestones, it is difficult to identify milestones that have not been completed. However, SACS establishes two early milestones for members of the Classes of 2010. First, these institutions should be prepared for the orientation of the Leadership Team on June 8, 2008. SUNO does have a Leadership Team (Steering Committee) and will be able to meet this milestone. The second early SACS milestone is the submission of the Compliance Certification report on September 10, 2009. It is highly doubtful whether SUNO can restore its campus, records and databases in time enough to meet this deadline. Hence, we have recommended requesting a one-year extension for the SACS reaffirmation.

D. **Databases not Completed**

The Information Technology Department is familiar with the Alabama A & M student learning outcomes database and is monitoring SUBR’s adoption of it. At this stage in the process, SUNO has not begun to seriously consider the databases that will be needed. We encourage the Steering Committee to review databases that have been used successfully by other institutions that have been reaffirmed in the past 3 to 5 years. In addition to the many institutionally-developed programs, there are several commercial products which have recently been developed specifically to document compliance with the SACS standards. As soon as practical, the Steering Committee should clearly identify all of its technology needs and work with the Information Technology Department to develop implementation timelines that would be included in the revised Action Plan.

E. **Program Reviews not Completed**

The Program Review process is important in demonstrating quality enhancement. The addition, revision and elimination of academic programs at SUNO have severely altered the normal program review process. The institution has submitted a revised program review plan that covers 2006 through 2008. This revised plan does not include all of the existing academic programs nor does it account for the new programs under development. The revised plan includes 2006-07 reviews for Criminal Justice (Undergraduate and Masters), General Studies, and Psychology. In 2007-2008, reviews for Sociology, Substance Abuse, and Psychology will be conducted. We believe that it is important for SUNO to be able to demonstrate a full cycle of reviews that include all of its academic programs. The new programs would be a part
of the plan and they would most likely be reviewed after the SACS reaffirmation visit. The plan and the process are most important to SACS.

F. Assessments of Faculty Credentials and Assignments

We noted several issues regarding faculty credentials. The first issue concerns the current status of faculty files and any damage that may have been caused by Hurricane Katrina. If damage is not a primary concern then faculty files and credentials should be reviewed annually to ensure that all documentation is complete. A second issue is whether the institution will adopt an electronic filing system for faculty credentials. If so, then work on this initiative with Information Technology needs to begin as soon as possible. The third issue is faculty assignments based on credentials. While there was no obvious evidence of this, SUNO should be mindful that faculty qualifications continue to be one of the primary cause of SACS sanctions. We strongly urge SUNO to develop policies on the periodic review of faculty files, credentials and assignments.

G. Surveys, Evaluations and Assessments Needed

As the new task forces begin to assess their responsibilities, participants should discuss the types of surveys, evaluations and assessment instruments that are being used at the institution to collect data.

Demonstrating institutional effectiveness (CS3.3) requires the assessment of outcomes for educational programs, administrative and educational support services. SUNO is currently using three external instruments to assess learning outcomes. These include the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, the Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey, and the ACT Student Opinion Survey. The Task Force on Student Outcomes Learning Assessment will review data collected from these instruments as well as other tools being used by the various academic and support departments to determine their effectiveness. The Task Force will also review other assessment measures such as capstone courses, major field examinations, recitals, etc. to determine their effectiveness. It appears that basic assessment measures are in place at SUNO. However, demonstrating the use of assessment results (closing the loop) will be the major challenge for the institution. This Task Force should plan to work very closely with the Center for Planning, Research, and Evaluation in recommending additional evaluation instruments, if needed.

Survey instruments may also be used by the QEP and Compliance Task Forces to collect data from students and faculty. Doing so would engage more of the University’s constituents in the reaffirmation process. Overall, the institution is using an assortment of evaluation tools. Once they are adequately evaluated, the need for additional tools can be determined.
H. Other Outstanding Tasks and Assignments

According to its current Action Plan, SUNO has no outstanding tasks or assignments related to the SACS reaffirmation. All of the preliminary steps in organizing for the reaffirmation process have been completed or are ongoing. However, once the Action Plan is revised to reflect measurable action items, SUNO can monitor its progress more effectively. To strengthen SUNO’s preparedness for SACS reaffirmation further, we recommend and suggest the following:

**Recommendations:**
- That SUNO revise its SACS Action Plan for the period 2007-2010 to include more specific measurable milestones.
- That SUNO seek from SACS an additional year’s extension for completing the reaffirmation process.
- That the membership of the three task forces be expanded to include more faculty and staff. Appropriate student representatives should also be included on each task force.
- That the Vice Chancellor for Administration Finance be added to the SACS Steering Committee (Leadership Team).
- That the Steering Committee begin immediately to explore the information technology needs of the reaffirmation process.
- That the institution revise its Academic Program Review schedule to include all existing and projected academic programs.

**Suggestions:**
- That the Director of Information Technology and the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance consult with their counterparts at other institutions that have recently completed the SACS reaffirmation process.
- That the institution develop policies for the periodic review of faculty files, credentials and assignments.
- That the institution review its assessment of student learning and demonstrate the use of results.

III. Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana (SUSLA)

A. **Current Status of Preparation for SACS Reaffirmation**

In several respects Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana (SUSLA) is unique to the Southern University System. First, it is the only two-year institution (SACS Track A) in the System. Second, SUSLA is a member of the SACS reaffirmation class of 2011, unlike SUBR and SUNO, which are members of the Class of 2010. Third, SUSLA’s Chancellor is the only
member of the Southern University System who serves as a commissioner on
the SACS Commission on Colleges. With respect to the status of preparation
for SACS reaffirmation, these three unique features place SUSLA in a
different posture from the other two campuses (SUBR and SUNO). Although
SUSLA has four years before it is required to submit its first reaffirmation
report, it is moving ahead with the reaffirmation planning process. One would
also expect SUSLA to be at a different place in its preparation than either
SUBR or SUNO. With this in mind, our findings are described below.

The institution should have an action plan or timeline with

At the request of the System Office, SUSLA has prepared a very
detailed SACS Action Plan entitled “SACS Reaffirmation of
Accreditation Timeline: December 2000 through December 2011”. As
one would expect, the most detailed part of the Action Plan focuses on
the years 2006-2011. The Plan addresses all of the major SACS
reaffirmation requirements, including the compliance audit, The
QEP, faculty credentials reviews, institutional effectiveness planning,
and budget planning. In almost all cases, the plan has achievable and
measurable milestones. However, some of the dates included in the Plan
are not consistent with those provided by SACS. For example, the
March 15, 2010, due date for the Institution’s Compliance Certification
Report is not included in the Plan. Also, the May 16-20, 2010, off-site
review of SUSLA’s Compliance Certification report is not a part of the
plan. All of the major SACS dates included in the Plan are based on
2011 Track B institutions (Undergraduate and Graduate Degree or
Graduate degree only). Thus, the SUSLA Action Plan needs to be
revised to reflect dates for 2011 Track A institutions. This change would
mean that the institution’s reaffirmation review would be conducted by
the Commission on Colleges in June 2011 and not December 2011.
While the plan is extremely detailed, it lacks sufficient accuracy.

• The institution should have plans for the appointment of
Leadership Team.

According to SUSLA’s Action Plan, the SACS Leadership Team
should have been appointed between April and May 2006. In his August
8, 2006 memo to the SUSLA Chancellor, the Accreditation Liaison
reports that the Leadership Team has been appointed and has met three
times between April 2006-August 2006. This certainly meets and even
exceeds the expectation of appointing a Leadership Team. However, the
institution should provide an official list of its Leadership Team
members. Also, if the institution is not doing so, it should begin
immediately to write minutes of its Leadership Team meetings (and all
other SACS committee and task force meetings). The Accreditation
Liaison also indicated that consideration was being given to the development of a SACS update linkage to the Planning, Assessment, and Research (PAR) website. We strongly encourage the establishment of a SACS Web page (like SUBR and SUNO) to include links to minutes of committee meetings and other pertinent SACS information.

- **The institution should have preliminary plans and a timeline for completing the Compliance Audit.**

  A review of SUSLA’s SACS Action Plan indicates that from November to December, 2008, the Certificate of Compliance will be prepared. However, what is lacking in this scenario is a sufficient design for conducting a comprehensive compliance audit. Such an audit should be conducted and completed by 2008. The final certification document would then be completed in late 2008 for final submission to SACS by March 15, 2010. The revised action plan should reflect a comparable timeline, allocating sufficient time for ensuring 100% compliance with all standards and requirements. The “snapshot” of current accreditation compliance conducted by the accreditation liaison is a good starting point. However, we strongly recommend that 2007 and 2008 be devoted to conducting a more thorough assessment of SACS compliance.

- **The institution should have the most qualified persons appointed to major roles in the reaffirmation process.**

  One of SUSLA’s greatest strengths is its staffing that will be involved in the SACS reaffirmation process. As a SACS commissioner, the Chancellor not only understands the process but also has access to information and resources that can be useful to the institution. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will play a major role on the Leadership Team and assist with the compliance audit and QEP selection. While fairly new to SUSLA, she brings a wealth of experience from her previous institution, which is in the final stage of the SACS reaffirmation process. The Accreditation Liaison is a very experienced and competent institutional researcher and administrator. He has developed an excellent planning process and conceptual framework for demonstrating institutional effectiveness. His long-term involvement in SAIR and AIR has kept him abreast of the new SACS Principles. His keen attention to detail and thoroughness in documenting evidence for compliance are assets that will be beneficial to the overall process.

  The Information Technology Director also is experienced and is currently reviewing ways in which technology will interface with the reaffirmation process. The Vice Chancellor for Finance and
Administration, also a member of the Leadership Team, brings many years of experience to the process. Because most of his SACS experiences occurred prior to The Principles, we strongly urge him to consult with his System peers to gain a better understanding of the new SACS financial standards. Overall, the SUSLA staff is highly qualified and should provide effective and sustained leadership for the SACS reaffirmation process.

Summary
Although SUSLA has adequate time to conduct its SACS reaffirmation, the institution has put in place an appropriate organizational framework for completing the process. The Action Plan is very detailed but needs to be revised to conform to the published SACS timeline. In this regard, we would also urge the Leadership Team to review its timeline for selecting a QEP topic and writing the plan. Agreeing upon a final QEP topic in the spring of 2007 may be too early for the class of 2011. Additional study and reflection would be beneficial to SUSLA. A tremendous strength for the institution is its competent and knowledgeable staff. In general, we believe that the institution is headed in the right direction with its reaffirmation planning.

B. Gaps in the process of preparedness
As described earlier, SUSLA needs to revise its Action Plan. This includes adding milestones for completing the compliance audit and reassessing the timeline for developing the QEP topic. We also believe that the SUBR Action Plan may be helpful to SUSLA in making these changes.

At this early stage in the planning process SUSLA is building the necessary infrastructure for a successful reaffirmation. Processes and policies need to be reviewed continuously to ensure that they are compliant with the SACS standards. Furthermore, the schedule of academic program reviews and other assessments are sufficient and provide good evidence for demonstrating institutional effectiveness. Finally, the Accreditation Liaison and other crucial staff are also remaining current with the revisions that are being made to The Principles, thus allowing them to make any required changes or corrections.

C. Milestones not completed
There are two early SACS milestones for the members of the reaffirmation class of 2011. The orientation of the Leadership Team on January 30, 2009 is the first milestone which we believe SUSLA will meet. The compliance certification due date of March 15, 2010, is the second milestone that SUSLA is also on track to meet. Furthermore, the
revised action plan that we are recommending will ensure that every institutionally – imposed or SACS-mandated milestone is met by SUSLA.

D. Databases not completed

In the next 12-18 months the Leadership Team should identify all of the technology needs for the reaffirmation process, including programs for documenting compliance certification, electronic faculty files and electronic documentation of student learning outcomes. Commercial products and institutionally developed programs are available for documenting SACS compliance. We encourage SUSLA to examine SUBR’s development of its accreditation-related database.

At this stage of the process SUSLA is not delinquent in the development or adoption of any needed database.

E. Program Reviews not completed

As presented in their Reaffirmation of Accreditation Timeline, all academic programs at SUSLA are reviewed on a continuing basis. As a result of the 2006 academic quality program review, a number of significant changes were made. These included curriculum revisions, policy changes, and brochure changes. Based on our assessment, we found that all academic programs had been reviewed or were on schedule to be reviewed.

F. Faculty Credentials and Assignment Assessments

A review of SACS Institutional Profiles and other SUSLA documents did not provide any evidence for issues regarding faculty credentials and assignments. However, we do encourage the institution to maintain its compliance in this area by reviewing faculty files on a continuous basis. The new Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs is fully aware that this area continues to be a major source for SACS sanctions. We do not expect the institution to have a problem with faculty credentials and assignments.

G. Surveys, Evaluations, and Assessments Needed

As a part of its Paradigm for Accreditation, SUSLA has identified “data driven assessments” in three broad categories: core data systems, enhanced university assessment capability, and outcome assessment. A wide range of surveys and other assessment tools are being used by the institution. Other instruments will be adopted for each of the three categories as the new planning model is implemented. At this stage of
the reaffirmation process, no additional surveys, evaluations or assessments are required.

H. Other outstanding tasks and assignments

SUSLA is on schedule with its SACS reaffirmation efforts. Once the Action Plan is revised, the System Office can monitor the institution’s progress much better. In fact, the institution should be commended for the progress that it has made this early in the process. To further strengthen SUSLA’s preparedness for SACS reaffirmation, we recommend and suggest the following:

Recommendations:

- That the Action Plan (Accreditation Timeline) be revised to reflect the official SACS dates for 2011 Track A institutions.
- That the institution prepare minutes of meetings of the Leadership Team and all other SACS committees and task forces.
- That the institution develop a SACS update link on its homepage.
- That the institution develop a timeline for conducting a comprehensive SACS compliance audit and include such in the revised Action Plan.

Suggestions:

- That the institution provide an official list of its Leadership Team.
- That the institution review its timeline for selecting and completing its QEP.
- That the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration consult with his System peers to learn more about the new SACS financial requirements.

IV. Other Observations

The broad-based nature of regional accreditation, such as SACS, requires continuous involvement and input at all levels of an institution, including its administration and governing board. However, there is a natural tendency to focus the accreditation process solely on issues that relate to students, faculty and staff. While most of the standards, requirements and expectations are
related to these groups, there are other layers of the institution that are equally important to SACS. At Southern University, the institutional leadership (Chancellors), the System Office, and the governing board (Board of Supervisors) all have clear and distinct roles in the SACS reaffirmation process. Although our primary focus was on the status of SACS reaffirmation preparedness at the institutional level, we do have observations related to other layers of the institution(s). We provide those below.

**Chancellors**
- While the chancellors have varying degrees of experience in their respective roles, each has a clear understanding of the current SACS accreditation paradigm.
- The chancellors attend, on a regular basis, meetings, workshops and other professional development activities that increase their understanding of SACS.
- While it is apparent that some collaboration among the chancellors on accreditation matters occurs, increasing the level of collaboration would result in greater benefits to all of them.

**System Office (SO)**
- The SO should ensure that each campus revise its SACS Action Plan (Timeline) based on our recommendations. Once completed, the SO should also realize that these plans are dynamic and can be changed when necessary.
- The SO should encourage inter-institutional collaboration and sharing of best practices.
- The SO should continue to facilitate SACS training and workshop opportunities for institutional staff involved in the reaffirmation process.
- Whenever practical, the SO should require institutions to use similar practices (i.e., data bases, organizational structure, etc.).
- The SO should assume the leadership role in cultivating a climate of mutual respect between staffs at the institutions and the System Office.

**Board of Supervisors (BOS)**
- The BOS should periodically review its compliance with the SACS Core Requirements and Comprehensive Requirement related to governance.
- The BOS should ensure that its meeting minutes demonstrate that the Mission Statements of the institutions and System Office are reviewed periodically.
- The BOS should be able to document that chancellors and System officers are evaluated on a regular basis.
- The BOS should be able to provide evidence that their role (in writing and in practice) is policy-making and not administration.
- The BOS should have a clear understanding of its oversight role in the accreditation process.

We end this report of observations with a strong sense of confidence about the future of the Southern University System; seldom have we seen so many impressive administrators and senior colleagues. The tasks ahead are challenges, not crisis management, opportunities, not getting the cart out of the ditch. Thus we commend you, again, for your prescience in wanting a comprehensive accreditation audit of each campus of the Southern University System.

We look forward to another visit to the Baton Rouge campus to answer any questions prompted by this report. We thank you and the campus officials for your gracious assistance for our efforts.

Sincerely,

Leroy Davis
Former President
South Carolina State University

James A. Hefner
President Emeritus
Tennessee State University
Dear Dr. Slaughter:

We want to share with you some thoughts about our visits to the Baton Rouge campus, the New Orleans campus, and the Shreveport campus, for the purpose of developing “a comprehensive accreditation audit of each campus of the Southern University System.” But first we express our appreciation for all the arrangements that you, Dr. Ralph, and Ms. Henderson made for us. We were very impressed with all of the persons whom we met and the candor and good will expressed toward us and the common tasks we seek to address. Each campus provided us a very substantial set of insights into their accreditation process, their progress and challenges, and the opportunities which lie ahead. We are especially grateful to the SACS liaison on each of the campuses, their task force chairs and chancellors. Your “Eleven A’s: Pillars of Success” served as a useful index as we prepared our final report.

Comments on Final Reports

Our final report is divided into several areas: First, we address each campus’s current status of preparation for SACS reaffirmation; gaps in the process of preparedness; milestones not completed; databases not completed; program reviews not completed; faculty credentials and assignment assessments; surveys, evaluations and assessment needed; and other outstanding tasks and assignments. Second, we offer recommendations, suggestions that the System can use for monitoring the progress of the campuses at various milestones (including interaction and exchanges with SACS). Third, we offer general observations that may be useful for the campuses and system to complete the reaffirmation schedules, procedures and processes.

II. Southern University, Baton Rouge (including the Law Center and Agricultural Research and Extension Center)

A. Current Status of Preparation of SACS Reaffirmation

We commend you for auditing the System’s institutions at this time, because institutions seeking reaffirmation of their SACS accreditation must begin serious preparation well in advance of their reaffirmation visit. The judicious use of time, in this regard, is even more important as most institutions are experiencing their first reaffirmation with SAC’s new Principles of Accreditation. As a member of the Class of 2010, Southern University, Baton Rouge (SUBR) is considered as a Track B institution because it awards degrees at the baccalaureate level and above. To ensure a successful reaffirmation experience, members of the Class of 2010 should have certain plans, processes and structures in place. We have reviewed each of these to assess SUBR’s current status and preparation for SACS reaffirmation. Our findings are described below:
• **The institution should have an action plan or timeline with achievable milestones.** At the request of the System Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, SUBR has prepared a “Schedule of SACS-Action Plan-2003-2009.” This document provides an appropriate roadmap for completing the necessary reaffirmation prerequisites. While the plan has a schedule for completing both the Quality Enhancement Plan and the Compliance Audit, we offer a recommendation for adjusting the schedule for completing the Compliance Audit. Overall, we conclude that the institution does have an appropriate plan for the reaffirmation process.

• **The institution should have a Leadership Team in place that is providing oversight and direction for the reaffirmation process.** A 13-member SACS Leadership Team has been appointed for SUBR. Led by the Chancellor, this team is staffed by senior administrators who will have major roles in SACS reaffirmation. The SACS Accreditation Liaison and the Director of Technology and Network Services are also appropriately included on the Leadership Team. However, the Leadership Team lacks representation from the Law Center and the Agriculture Research and Extension Center. Still, based on our review, we also believe that the Leadership Team understands the SACS reaffirmation process and is providing the necessary leadership and oversight of the process.

• **The institution should have the proper organizational structure in place for completing the Compliance Audit.** SACS gives institutions great latitude in how and who completes the compliance certification report. Unlike the self-study report required under the previous SACS process, the Compliance Audit is purely an administrative function that the Leadership Team and the Chancellor oversee. Wisely, SUBR has developed a series of Task Forces to complete various portions of the Compliance Audit. In this regard, eight Task Forces of eight to fifteen persons each are addressing the Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standard, and the Federal Mandates. The chairs of the Task Forces are providing excellent leadership and are moving with dispatch to complete their assignments. The Task Forces are meeting on a regular schedule and should achieve their objectives.

  The Accreditation Liaison is providing oversight and support to all of the Task Forces.

• **The institution should have a functioning QEP Task Force or Committee and a plan for selecting and developing the QEP topic.** The institution has a functioning QEP Team consisting of fourteen (14) members and led by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.
• The Team has also designated a separate QEP Editing Team. The QEP Team is fully aware of its role in the SACS reaffirmation process. They have developed a plan for selecting a QEP topic based on the recommended SACS protocol. They have an appropriate timeline for completing their work and have developed materials and processes for ensuring broad campus participation in the selection of the QEP topic. The work of the QEP Team is clearly a highlight of the institution’s overall reaffirmation effort.

• The Institution should have the most qualified persons appointed to major roles in the reaffirmation process. From the Leadership Team to the Task Forces and support groups, the institution has appointed excellent staff members. Not only is everyone suited for their respective roles, everyone also has a clear understanding of the reaffirmation process and how their roles are interwoven into it. For example, one member of the faculty who has served on a recent SACS on-site committee is chairing a Task Force and using her experience to motivate her colleagues. Overall, we found all of the staff to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the process.

Summary
Based on our review, the SUBR campus is highly engaged in the SACS reaffirmation process. They are on track to have the QEP topic and document developed long before it is due in early 2010. With some adjustments to the Action Plan the Compliance Certification Task Forces should also complete their work in a timely manner.

A. Gaps in the process of preparedness
The two major institutional activities in the process of preparing for SACS reaffirmation are the preparation of the QEP and the development of the Compliance Certification report. The Action Plan that SUBR has prepared allocates sufficient time to complete both the QEP and Compliance Audit. Based on SUBR’s plan, only 50% of the Compliance Audit would be completed by December 31, 2007. An additional year would be used to complete the remaining 50%. Thus, the institution would have from January-August 2009 to make adjustments to ensure 100% compliance with all of the standards. While eight months may be adequate to make routine or minor adjustments, it is our recommendation that the institution allow at least one year to make changes that may be more comprehensive in nature. Thus, we suggest revising the Action Plan to complete the entire Certification process no later than September 10, 2008. Another area of concern is that of demonstrating institutional financial stability, which is a Core Requirement (CR 2-11) and a Comprehensive Standard (CS3.10.1). While the institution’s audits over the past few years resulted in unqualified opinions, SACS’s definition of financial stability is much more demanding. For example, the impact of reduced enrollment resulting from the
application of selective admissions criteria for the admission of new students could significantly change the financial landscape. We recommend that the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration consult with his colleagues from institutions that have completed the SACS reaffirmation process to gain a better understanding of the new SACS financial standards.

Student learning outcomes is another area of concern for SUBR. While some programs (Teacher Education, Engineering, Law, etc.) can provide excellent examples for documenting student learning outcomes, there is not a campus-wide system for such documentation. The Director of PAIR, with the assistance of the Office of Technology and Network Services, is in the process of closing this gap by the implementation of an excellent campus-wide student learning outcome documentation system in 2007. While we are recommending that the institution adjust its schedule for completing the Compliance Audit, focus more on financial stability, and implement a campus-wide student outcomes documentation system, the institution’s reaffirmation Action Plan still serves as an excellent instrument for monitoring the institution’s progress in the reaffirmation process.

B. Milestones not completed

SACS has two early milestones for institutions in the class of 2010. These are the orientation of the Leadership Team on June 8, 2008, and the September 10, 2009, due date for the Compliance Certification report. SUBR has a functioning Leadership Team that will be ready for the 2008 Orientation. Furthermore, progress on the Compliance Certification report is on schedule. A review of SUBR’s Action Plan also indicates that all milestones to date have been completed. Thus, by all indications the institution has no milestones that have not been completed.

C. Databases not completed

The Office of Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research is currently working on the development of two databases that are critical to the reaffirmation process. A campus-wide student learning outcomes database, modeled after the one used successfully by Alabama A & M University, is being adopted for use by SUBR. It provides a comprehensive method for collecting students learning data from all academic programs. It also shows how the data is being used to improve programs (“closing the loop”). A pilot version of this database is scheduled to be up and running by May 31, 2007. This system also has the capability for and should be used to collect assessment data on administrative and educational support services. Successful and timely implementation will ensure several years of data and will demonstrate that the institution does, indeed, have a culture of effective planning and assessment.

The second database in the developmental stages is a Faculty Credential Database. This system will digitize faculty credentials and provide an efficient process for reviewing and updating these important documents. The Office of Technology and Network Services is developing this database with assistance
from PAIR. When completed, the institution will have an excellent system for responding to comprehensive standard 3.7.1 (Faculty Credentials). This database is also scheduled to be in place by May 31, 2007.

DI. Program Reviews not Completed

Academic program reviews are an important part of SUBR’s continuous quality enhancement process. The main focus of the program review process is the non-accredited degree programs, which include 34 of 71 total programs. The accredited academic programs are not included because they receive rigorous reviews as a part of their program accreditation or reaffirmation process. Each year between six and nine non-accredited academic programs are reviewed. Furthermore, each program is reviewed every four years. For example, in 2006-07 SUBR is reviewing programs in Criminal Justice, Political Science, Psychology, Rehabilitation, Services, Sociology and Social Sciences. In 2007-08 SUBR will review programs in Theater Arts, Speech Communication, Computer Science, Nursing, Speech Pathology and Audiology, and Science and Math Education. Thus, by 2009, all of SUBR’s academic programs would have been reviewed prior to the SACS site visit if the current schedule of program reviews is maintained.

E. Faculty Credentials and Assignment Assessments

We found no evidence that SUBR was conducting a comprehensive review of faculty credentials and assignments on a regular basis. SUBR is reviewing credentials for new faculty thoroughly at hiring but not reviewing existing faculty files consistently. However, the institution is in the process of developing a digitized faculty credentials database. When completed in 2007, SUBR can update and maintain this database much more frequently.

F. Surveys, Evaluations and Assessments Needed

The two major activities of the reaffirmation process, the QEP and the Compliance Audit, can be strengthened by using surveys, evaluations, and assessments. For example, in the process of selecting a QEP topic, the QEP Team should consider surveying University groups in addition to conducting school-wide forums and departmental meetings. Surveys would demonstrate broader participation in the selection process and provide tangible evidence of such. Surveys related to the QEP could be developed and administered to various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students and alumni.

The Compliance Audit could also benefit from the use of surveys and evaluations. The assessment of the effectiveness of the General Education curriculum by using standardized or institutionally developed instruments could help demonstrate institutional effectiveness (CS3.3.1)

The academic program evaluations that we described earlier are also responsive to this requirement. Surveys and assessment instruments may also be developed to demonstrate the effectiveness of administrative and academic support programs
(Library Services, Enrollment Management, Technology and Network Services, etc.). We believe these areas of assessment require additional work.

Finally, documented evidence—including instruments used to evaluate all employees, including senior administrators—demonstrating the evaluation of faculty and staff should be available.

G. Other Outstanding Tasks and Assignments

Currently, SUBR has no outstanding tasks or assignments relative to its SACS reaffirmation. The activities that are ongoing along with its Action Plan should lead to a successful outcome. It is important, however, that the Action Plan be monitored closely by the System Office.

To further strengthen SUBR’s preparedness for SACS reaffirmation, we recommend and suggest the following:

Recommendations:

• That the SUBR Reaffirmation Action Plan be modified to ensure completion of the Compliance Audit at least one year prior to submitting the Compliance Certification to SACS.
• That representatives from the Law Center and the Agriculture Research and Extension Center be included on the SACS Leadership Team.
• That SUBR include administrative and educational support services as a part of its overall assessment of institutional effectiveness.
• That the Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration consult with colleagues from institutions that have completed the new SACS reaffirmation process to gain a better understanding of the new SACS financial standards and Core Requirements.

Suggestions

• That a graduate or professional programs student be included on Task Force 3B (Educational Programs: Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Professional Programs).

• That the QEP Task Force develop and selectively use survey instruments for obtaining input from campus constituents on the selection of a QEP topic.

II. SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AT NEW ORLEANS

B. Current Status of Preparation for SACS Reaffirmation

As Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) prepares for its SACS reaffirmation in 2011, it faces many more immediate challenges. Severe damage caused by Hurricane Katrina has rendered its main campus uninhabitable. Consequently, a
temporary yet expansive “FEMA trailer” North Campus has been developed and occupied while the main campus is being restored. The resulting loss of students; loss of vital records, files and data; limited financial resources; and mandates from the Louisiana Board of Regents and other external agents have all impacted the institution’s ongoing preparation for SACS reaffirmation. In addition to its SACS reaffirmation efforts, SUNO is also engaged in reaffirmation of accreditation efforts for the School of Education (NCATE) and the School of Social Work (CSWE). Changes in programs have been numerous and include the development of three new programs (bachelor’s degree in Public Administration; Health Information Management; and Child Development and Family Studies). SUNO is also developing four conversion programs, including changing Computer Information Systems to Management Information Systems and changing Business Administration to Business Entrepreneurship. SUNO also is developing four on-line degree programs (General Studies, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Education and Museum Studies) which will require substantive change approval from SACS. Given this multiplicity of challenges, the Chancellor and his staff are to be commended for their resolve and hard work in the face of such monumental challenges. With this incredible backdrop, we have reviewed SUNO’s current status of preparation for the 2010 SACS reaffirmation. Our findings are described below.

- **The institution should have an action plan or timeline with achievable milestones.** In a memorandum dated June 1, 2006, the SUNO accreditation liaison forwarded to the System Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs the document entitled “SUNO Campus Reaffirmation Time-Task Schedule – Schedule of SACS-Related Activities 2005-2010”. It is on the basis of this document that we make our comments. While this document does meet the requirement of having an action plan, we believe that it is inadequate and will not serve its intended purpose. The document is too general and lacks specific measurable milestones. For example, according to the plan the pre-audit is to be conducted in 2006-07 by all SUNO units.

  On what date should this process be completed? Are there milestones for completing major portions of the audit, i.e., Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, etc.? Has adequate time been allocated for correcting findings from the audit? What can be measured to provide assurance that this important activity is proceeding on schedule? This battery of questions may also be proffered for the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan. The lack of specificity and details to enable effective assessment of progress with the reaffirmation effort renders the plan inadequate. Furthermore, the dates used in the plan are not consistent with the official SACS schedule for 2010 Track B institutions. For example, the SACS Commission of Colleges review does not occur September – October, 2009. For Track B institutions that review occurs December
2-4, 2010. Clearly, not enough thought has gone into the development of the Reaffirmation Action Plan. The Plan should be revised entirely, with emphasis placed on including specific measurable milestones for 2007-2010. If the System Office is to monitor the progress of SUNO’s SACS reaffirmation program, a more detailed action plan is needed.

- **The institution should have a Leadership Team in place that is providing oversight and direction for the reaffirmation process.**
  A 15-member SACS Steering Committee has been appointed and plans are also in place to expand the committee to 18 members. It is our understanding that the Steering Committee will also function as the Leadership Team. This rather large Leadership Team is actually performing two roles. First, the Team is providing oversight and direction for the self-study process. Secondly, the Team is developing Task Forces to conduct major reaffirmation activities such as the compliance audit and the QEP development. A third Task Force on student learning outcomes assessment also has been established. These Task Forces of five to six persons each are just beginning to comprehend fully the magnitude of their assignments.

  Many of the Task Force members also chair or perform major roles in other ongoing programmatic accreditations and reaffirmations (NCATE, AACSB, etc.) We also note that 75% of the members of the Task Forces (12 of 16) are also members of the Steering Committee (Leadership Team). We are concerned that so few persons are assuming so much of the responsibility for the SACS reaffirmation process. The model that SUBR has adopted seems to be more effective and practical. This model utilizes a much smaller Leadership Team and more and larger task forces and committees. However, the relatively small size of the SUNO faculty and the difficulty in recruiting additional professors may be legitimate reasons for choosing to involve fewer persons in the work. However, SACS does expect broad institutional participation in some reaffirmation activities such as the selection of a QEP topic. Overall, the institution does have a Leadership Team that is meeting on a regular basis and assuming oversight of the reaffirmation process.

- **The institution should have the proper organizational structure in place for completing the Compliance Audit.**
  A five-member Compliance Task Force with a very competent chair has been appointed. However, it is uncertain how the Task Force will function to complete its work. In its infancy, this Task Force has not established milestones that can be monitored and
measured by the System Office. With a Task Force of such small size, there should be a specific action plan for achieving its goals. The timeline should allow for sufficient time to make minor and major changes to ensure compliance with all of the SACS requirements and standards. Furthermore, the Task Force should consider expanding its membership to lessen the workload on the existing members.

The Compliance Task Force should also be collaborating with institutional support areas such as Information Technology to develop or acquire an appropriate evidence documentation methodology, and an electronic faculty files and credentials program. The impact of the loss of records and files during Hurricane Katrina disaster should be assessed by the Task Force. Given the extraordinary circumstances of the institution, this critical Task Force needs to accelerate its work and develop a clear course of action.

- **The institution should have the most qualified persons appointed to major roles in the reaffirmation process.**

  The institution has assembled some of its most experienced and seasoned faculty and administrators for its SACS Steering Committee/Leadership Team. Although fairly new in his role, the SACS Accreditation Liaison is a very experienced administrator with good leadership skills and enthusiasm. As he becomes more familiar with the accreditation paradigm under the Principles, he should function adequately in his role. The Task Force chairs all have extensive accreditation experience.

While there is little collective institutional experience with the current SACS standards, the System Office has provided several useful workshops for the benefit of accreditation leaders throughout the System, including representatives from SUNO. The workshops, facilitated by the System Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs and the System Coordinator for Accreditation and Program Review, also included a session conducted by the Director of the SACS Consulting Network. At least five SUNO staff members had plans to attend the SACS Annual Meeting in Orlando Florida which would provide them additional professional development opportunities. The Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance (who should be added to the Steering Committee) and the Director of Information Technology are very competent in their roles but would benefit greatly by consulting with their counterparts at other institutions who have recently completed the SACS reaffirmation process. Overall, the faculty and staff engage in the reaffirmation
effort are well suited for their roles and are constantly learning more about the current SACS reaffirmation process.

**Summary**

The SUNO campus is in the earlier stages of organizing itself for the SACS reaffirmation. The added burden of recovering from the Hurricane Katrina damage has caused its preparation to lag behind that of SUBR which is also a member of the SACS reaffirmation Class of 2010. While we acknowledge the enthusiasm of the SUNO chancellor and his staff, the road ahead is going to be difficult. The preparation for SACS reaffirmation needs to be accelerated, beginning with a revision of the SACS action plan. At the time of our visit, it was our understanding that only one task force had formally met. We believe that the task forces need to begin their work as soon as possible to fully understand the scope and breadth of their responsibilities. Given the institution’s current state of preparation and the uncertainty and challenges that lie ahead, we strongly recommend that SUNO request a one-year extension for its SACS reaffirmation (2011).

**B. Gaps in the process of preparedness**

SUNO’s most obvious gap in the process of SACS preparedness is its Action Plan. As discussed earlier, the plan lacks specific action items between 2007 and 2010. Once the Plan has been revised to include measurable action items for this time period, the System Office can monitor the progress of the reaffirmation process. The action plans submitted by SUBR and SUSLA may serve as appropriate examples for SUNO in this regard. The integration of technology in the reaffirmation process represents another area of concern. In both the compliance audit and QEP development, technology will be an essential tool for completing these activities. Generally, institutions engage Information Technology early in the process to identify the most practical tools that can be used for electronically documenting compliance, demonstrating student learning outcomes, monitoring and updating faculty credentials, and preparing the QEP document. As soon as possible the Steering Committee should begin to explore these and other areas where there must be an interface between technology and reaffirmation. The IT department is a strength of the institution that should be utilized as much as possible in the reaffirmation process. The assessment of student learning is also an area that the Steering Committee should give more attention. SACS expects all of its institutions to have well developed processes in place for assessing student learning outcomes. There should be years of student assessment data and many examples of how the institution is using the assessment results to improve learning. While this may be occurring
in some programs (i.e., Teacher Education), it did not appear to be a well-defined campus-wide initiative. The addition of students to the three task forces would also improve the work of those groups.

C. Milestones not completed

In the absence of having an Action Plan with measurable milestones, it is difficult to identify milestones that have not been completed. However, SACS establishes two early milestones for members of the Classes of 2010. First, these institutions should be prepared for the orientation of the Leadership Team on June 8, 2008. SUNO does have a Leadership Team (Steering Committee) and will be able to meet this milestone. The second early SACS milestone is the submission of the Compliance Certification report on September 10, 2009. It is highly doubtful whether SUNO can restore its campus, records and databases in time enough to meet this deadline. Hence, we have recommended requesting a one-year extension for the SACS reaffirmation.

D. Databases not Completed

The Information Technology Department is familiar with the Alabama A & M student learning outcomes database and is monitoring SUBR’s adoption of it. At this stage in the process, SUNO has not begun to seriously consider the data bases that will be needed. We encourage the Steering Committee to review databases that have been used successfully by other institutions that have been reaffirmed in the past 3 to 5 years. In addition to the many institutionally-developed programs, there are several commercial products which have recently been developed specifically to document compliance with the SACS standards. As soon as practical, the Steering Committee should clearly identify all of its technology needs and work with the Information Technology Department to develop implementation timelines that would be included in the revised Action Plan.

E. Program Reviews not Completed

The Program Review process is important in demonstrating quality enhancement. The addition, revision and elimination of academic programs at SUNO have severely altered the normal program review process. The institution has submitted a revised program review plan that covers 2006 through 2008. This revised plan does not include all of the existing academic programs nor does it account for the new programs under development. The revised plan includes 2006-07 reviews for Criminal Justice (Undergraduate and Masters), General Studies, and Psychology. In 2007-2008, reviews for Sociology, Substance Abuse, and Psychology will be conducted. We believe that it is important for SUNO to be able to demonstrate a full cycle of reviews that include all of its academic programs. The new programs would be a part
of the plan and they would most likely be reviewed after the SACS reaffirmation visit. The plan and the process are most important to SACS.

**F. Assessments of Faculty Credentials and Assignments**

We noted several issues regarding faculty credentials. The first issue concerns the current status of faculty files and any damage that may have been caused by Hurricane Katrina. If damage is not a primary concern then faculty files and credentials should be reviewed annually to ensure that all documentation is complete. A second issue is whether the institution will adopt an electronic filing system for faculty credentials. If so, then work on this initiative with Information Technology needs to begin as soon as possible. The third issue is faculty assignments based on credentials. While there was no obvious evidence of this, SUNO should be mindful that faculty qualifications continue to be one of the primary cause of SACS sanctions. We strongly urge SUNO to develop policies on the periodic review of faculty files, credentials and assignments.

**G. Surveys, Evaluations and Assessments Needed**

As the new task forces begin to assess their responsibilities, participants should discuss the types of surveys, evaluations and assessment instruments that are being used at the institution to collect data.

Demonstrating institutional effectiveness (CS3.3) requires the assessment of outcomes for educational programs, administrative and educational support services. SUNO is currently using three external instruments to assess learning outcomes. These include the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, the Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey, and the ACT Student Opinion Survey. The Task Force on Student Outcomes Learning Assessment will review data collected from these instruments as well as other tools being used by the various academic and support departments to determine their effectiveness. The Task Force will also review other assessment measures such as capstone courses, major field examinations, recitals, etc. to determine their effectiveness. It appears that basic assessment measures are in place at SUNO. However, demonstrating the use of assessment results (closing the loop) will be the major challenge for the institution. This Task Force should plan to work very closely with the Center for Planning, Research, and Evaluation in recommending additional evaluation instruments, if needed.

Survey instruments may also be used by the QEP and Compliance Task Forces to collect data from students and faculty. Doing so would engage more of the University’s constituents in the reaffirmation process. Overall, the institution is using an assortment of evaluation tools. Once they are adequately evaluated, the need for additional tools can be determined.
H. Other Outstanding Tasks and Assignments

According to its current Action Plan, SUNO has no outstanding tasks or assignments related to the SACS reaffirmation. All of the preliminary steps in organizing for the reaffirmation process have been completed or are ongoing. However, once the Action Plan is revised to reflect measurable action items, SUNO can monitor its progress more effectively. To strengthen SUNO’s preparedness for SACS reaffirmation further, we recommend and suggest the following:

**Recommendations:**
- That SUNO revise its SACS Action Plan for the period 2007-2010 to include more specific measurable milestones.
- That SUNO seek from SACS an additional year’s extension for completing the reaffirmation process.
- That the membership of the three task forces be expanded to include more faculty and staff. Appropriate student representatives should also be included on each task force.
- That the Vice Chancellor for Administration Finance be added to the SACS Steering Committee (Leadership Team).
- That the Steering Committee begin immediately to explore the information technology needs of the reaffirmation process.
- That the institution revise its Academic Program Review schedule to include all existing and projected academic programs.

**Suggestions:**
- That the Director of Information Technology and the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance consult with their counterparts at other institutions that have recently completed the SACS reaffirmation process.
- That the institution develop policies for the periodic review of faculty files, credentials and assignments.
- That the institution review its assessment of student learning and demonstrate the use of results.

III. Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana (SUSLA)

A. Current Status of Preparation for SACS Reaffirmation

In several respects Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana (SUSLA) is unique to the Southern University System. First, it is the only two-year institution (SACS Track A) in the System. Second, SUSLA is a member of the SACS reaffirmation class of 2011, unlike SUBR and SUNO, which are members of the Class of 2010. Third, SUSLA’s Chancellor is the only member of the Southern University System who serves as a commissioner on the SACS Commission on Colleges. With respect to the status of preparation for SACS reaffirmation, these three unique features place SUSLA in a
different posture from the other two campuses (SUBR and SUNO). Although SUSLA has four years before it is required to submit its first reaffirmation report, it is moving ahead with the reaffirmation planning process. One would also expect SUSLA to be at a different place in its preparation than either SUBR or SUNO. With this in mind, our findings are described below.

The institution should have an action plan or timeline with achievable milestones (2006-2011).

At the request of the System Office, SUSLA has prepared a very detailed SACS Action Plan entitled “SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation Timeline: December 2000 through December 2011”. As one would expect, the most detailed part of the Action Plan focuses on the years 2006-2011. The Plan addresses all of the major SACS reaffirmation requirements, including the compliance audit, The QEP, faculty credentials reviews, institutional effectiveness planning, and budget planning. In almost all cases, the plan has achievable and measurable milestones. However, some of the dates included in the Plan are not consistent with those provided by SACS. For example, the March 15, 2010, due date for the Institution’s Compliance Certification Report is not included in the Plan. Also, the May 16-20, 2010, off-site review of SUSLA’s Compliance Certification report is not a part of the plan. All of the major SACS dates included in the Plan are based on 2011 Track B institutions (Undergraduate and Graduate Degree or Graduate degree only). Thus, the SUSLA Action Plan needs to be revised to reflect dates for 2011 Track A institutions. This change would mean that the institution’s reaffirmation review would be conducted by the Commission on Colleges in June 2011 and not December 2011. While the plan is extremely detailed, it lacks sufficient accuracy.

• The institution should have plans for the appointment of Leadership Team.

According to SUSLA’s Action Plan, the SACS Leadership Team should have been appointed between April and May 2006. In his August 8, 2006 memo to the SUSLA Chancellor, the Accreditation Liaison reports that the Leadership Team has been appointed and has met three times between April 2006-August 2006. This certainly meets and even exceeds the expectation of appointing a Leadership Team. However, the institution should provide an official list of its Leadership Team members. Also, if the institution is not doing so, it should begin immediately to write minutes of its Leadership Team meetings (and all other SACS committee and task force meetings). The Accreditation Liaison also indicated that consideration was being given to the development of a SACS update linkage to the Planning, Assessment, and Research (PAR) website. We strongly encourage the establishment
• **The institution should have preliminary plans and a timeline for completing the Compliance Audit.**  
  A review of SUSLA’s SACS Action Plan indicates that from November to December, 2008, the Certificate of Compliance will be prepared. However, what is lacking in this scenario is a sufficient design for conducting a comprehensive compliance audit. Such an audit should be conducted and completed by 2008. The final certification document would then be completed in late 2008 for final submission to SACS by March 15, 2010. The revised action plan should reflect a comparable timeline, allocating sufficient time for ensuring 100% compliance with all standards and requirements. The “snapshot” of current accreditation compliance conducted by the accreditation liaison is a good starting point. However, we strongly recommend that 2007 and 2008 be devoted to conducting a more thorough assessment of SACS compliance.

• **The institution should have the most qualified persons appointed to major roles in the reaffirmation process.**  
  One of SUSLA’s greatest strengths is its staffing that will be involved in the SACS reaffirmation process. As a SACS commissioner, the Chancellor not only understands the process but also has access to information and resources that can be useful to the institution. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will play a major role on the Leadership Team and assist with the compliance audit and QEP selection. While fairly new to SUSLA, she brings a wealth of experience from her previous institution, which is in the final stage of the SACS reaffirmation process. The Accreditation Liaison is a very experienced and competent institutional researcher and administrator. He has developed an excellent planning process and conceptual framework for demonstrating institutional effectiveness. His long-term involvement in SAIR and AIR has kept him abreast of the new SACS Principles. His keen attention to detail and thoroughness in documenting evidence for compliance are assets that will be beneficial to the overall process.

  The Information Technology Director also is experienced and is currently reviewing ways in which technology will interface with the reaffirmation process. The Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, also a member of the Leadership Team, brings many years of experience to the process. Because most of his SACS experiences occurred prior to The Principles, we strongly urge him to consult with his System peers to gain a better understanding of the new SACS financial
standards. Overall, the SUSLA staff is highly qualified and should provide effective and sustained leadership for the SACS reaffirmation process.

Summary
Although SUSLA has adequate time to conduct its SACS reaffirmation, the institution has put in place an appropriate organizational framework for completing the process. The Action Plan is very detailed but needs to be revised to conform to the published SACS timeline. In this regard, we would also urge the Leadership Team to review its timeline for selecting a QEP topic and writing the plan. Agreeing upon a final QEP topic in the spring of 2007 may be too early for the class of 2011. Additional study and reflection would be beneficial to SUSLA. A tremendous strength for the institution is its competent and knowledgeable staff. In general, we believe that the institution is headed in the right direction with its reaffirmation planning.

B. Gaps in the process of preparedness
As described earlier, SUSLA needs to revise its Action Plan. This includes adding milestones for completing the compliance audit and reassessing the timeline for developing the QEP topic. We also believe that the SUBR Action Plan may be helpful to SUSLA in making these changes.

At this early stage in the planning process SUSLA is building the necessary infrastructure for a successful reaffirmation. Processes and policies need to be reviewed continuously to ensure that they are compliant with the SACS standards. Furthermore, the schedule of academic program reviews and other assessments are sufficient and provide good evidence for demonstrating institutional effectiveness. Finally, the Accreditation Liaison and other crucial staff are also remaining current with the revisions that are being made to The Principles, thus allowing them to make any required changes or corrections.

C. Milestones not completed
There are two early SACS milestones for the members of the reaffirmation class of 2011. The orientation of the Leadership Team on January 30, 2009 is the first milestone which we believe SUSLA will meet. The compliance certification due date of March 15, 2010, is the second milestone that SUSLA is also on track to meet. Furthermore, the revised action plan that we are recommending will ensure that every institutionally – imposed or SACS-mandated milestone is met by SUSLA.

D. Databases not completed
In the next 12-18 months the Leadership Team should identify all of the technology needs for the reaffirmation process, including programs for documenting compliance certification, electronic faculty files and electronic documentation of student learning outcomes. Commercial products and institutionally developed programs are available for documenting SACS compliance. We encourage SUSLA to examine SUBR’s development of its accreditation-related database.

At this stage of the process SUSLA is not delinquent in the development or adoption of any needed database.

E. **Program Reviews not completed**

As presented in their Reaffirmation of Accreditation Timeline, all academic programs at SUSLA are reviewed on a continuing basis. As a result of the 2006 academic quality program review, a number of significant changes were made. These included curriculum revisions, policy changes, and brochure changes. Based on our assessment, we found that all academic programs had been reviewed or were on schedule to be reviewed.

F. **Faculty Credentials and Assignment Assessments**

A review of SACS Institutional Profiles and other SUSLA documents did not provide any evidence for issues regarding faculty credentials and assignments. However, we do encourage the institution to maintain its compliance in this area by reviewing faculty files on a continuous basis. The new Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs is fully aware that this area continues to be a major source for SACS sanctions. We do not expect the institution to have a problem with faculty credentials and assignments.

H. **Surveys, Evaluations, and Assessments Needed**

As a part of its Paradigm for Accreditation, SUSLA has identified “data driven assessments” in three broad categories: core data systems, enhanced university assessment capability, and outcome assessment. A wide range of surveys and other assessment tools are being used by the institution. Other instruments will be adopted for each of the three categories as the new planning model is implemented. At this stage of the reaffirmation process, no additional surveys, evaluations or assessments are required.

H. **Other outstanding tasks and assignments**

SUSLA is on schedule with its SACS reaffirmation efforts. Once the Action Plan is revised, the System Office can monitor the institution’s
progress much better. In fact, the institution should be commended for the progress that it has made this early in the process. To further strengthen SUSLA’s preparedness for SACS reaffirmation, we recommend and suggest the following:

**Recommendations:**

- That the Action Plan (Accreditation Timeline) be revised to reflect the official SACS dates for 2011 Track A institutions.
- That the institution prepare minutes of meetings of the Leadership Team and all other SACS committees and task forces.
- That the institution develop a SACS update link on its homepage.
- That the institution develop a timeline for conducting a comprehensive SACS compliance audit and include such in the revised Action Plan.

**Suggestions:**

- That the institution provide an official list of its Leadership Team.
- That the institution review its timeline for selecting and completing its QEP.
- That the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration consult with his System peers to learn more about the new SACS financial requirements.

**IV. Other Observations**

The broad-based nature of regional accreditation, such as SACS, requires continuous involvement and input at all levels of an institution, including its administration and governing board. However, there is a natural tendency to focus the accreditation process solely on issues that relate to students, faculty and staff. While most of the standards, requirements and expectations are related to these groups, there are other layers of the institution that are equally important to SACS. At Southern University, the institutional leadership (Chancellors), the System Office, and the governing board (Board of Supervisors) all have clear and distinct roles in the SACS reaffirmation process. Although our primary focus was on the status of SACS reaffirmation preparedness at the institutional level, we do have observations related to other layers of the institution(s). We provide those below.
Chancellors

- While the chancellors have varying degrees of experience in their respective roles, each has a clear understanding of the current SACS accreditation paradigm.
- The chancellors attend, on a regular basis, meetings, workshops and other professional development activities that increase their understanding of SACS.
- While it is apparent that some collaboration among the chancellors on accreditation matters occurs, increasing the level of collaboration would result in greater benefits to all of them.

System Office (SO)

- The SO should ensure that each campus revise its SACS Action Plan (Timeline) based on our recommendations. Once completed, the SO should also realize that these plans are dynamic and can be changed when necessary.
- The SO should encourage inter-institutional collaboration and sharing of best practices.
- The SO should continue to facilitate SACS training and workshop opportunities for institutional staff involved in the reaffirmation process.
- Whenever practical, the SO should require institutions to use similar practices (i.e., data bases, organizational structure, etc.).
- The SO should assume the leadership role in cultivating a climate of mutual respect between staffs at the institutions and the System Office.

Board of Supervisors (BOS)

- The BOS should periodically review its compliance with the SACS Core Requirements and Comprehensive Requirement related to governance.
- The BOS should ensure that its meeting minutes demonstrate that the Mission Statements of the institutions and System Office are reviewed periodically.
- The BOS should be able to document that chancellors and System officers are evaluated on a regular basis.
• The BOS should be able to provide evidence that their role (in writing and in practice) is policy-making and not administration.
• The BOS should have a clear understanding of its oversight role in the accreditation process.

We end this report of observations with a strong sense of confidence about the future of the Southern University System; seldom have we seen so many impressive administrators and senior colleagues. The tasks ahead are challenges, not crisis management, opportunities, not getting the cart out of the ditch. Thus we commend you, again, for your prescience in wanting a comprehensive accreditation audit of each campus of the Southern University System.

We look forward to another visit to the Baton Rouge campus to answer any questions prompted by this report. We thank you and the campus officials for your gracious assistance for our efforts.

Sincerely,

Leroy Davis
Former President
South Carolina State University

James A. Hefner
President Emeritus
Tennessee State University