



The University Assessment Council

Minutes

September 24, 2024

Attendees: Ginger Bishop, Ross Bryan, Joy Burnham, Chris Coleman, Lucy Curzon, André Denham, Sara Kaylor, Dione King, Deidre Leaver-Dunn, Grace Lee, Wilson Lowrey, Joyce Meyer, Shae Robinson, Tim Salazar, Lance Simpson, Rachel Thompson, Derek Williamson, Akeisha Young

- This UA [website](#) includes working guidance for compliance with recent DEI legislation (e.g., the teaching of divisive concepts). Alabama Act [2024-34](#) (formerly SB219) includes no direct references to assessment, outcomes, or learning. It does include exceptions that seem to provide protection for student outcomes, instruction, and assessment/continuous improvement activities in educational programs (particularly those with specialized accreditation) and support services. The screenshots below, excerpted from the web-published version of 2024-34, highlight selected exemptions (“Nothing in this act”):

118 Section 4. Nothing in this act:

...

134 (3)a. Prohibits a public institution of higher
135 education from providing any instruction or taking any action
136 in furtherance of satisfying any accreditation standard or
137 requirement.

138 b. Prohibits a public institution of higher education
139 from authorizing the teaching or discussion of any divisive
140 concept in an objective manner and without endorsement as part
141 of a larger course of academic instruction, provided the
142 institution and its employees do not compel assent to any
143 divisive concept and otherwise comply with the provisions of
144 this act.

...

149 (5) Prohibits an institution of higher education from
150 performing research, collecting data, engaging in recruiting
151 and outreach programs, offering academic support services,
152 engaging in clinical trials, or providing medical, mental, or
153 any health care or clinical services targeted to support
154 individuals of any specific demographic.

155 (6) Prevents state agencies from promoting racial,
156 cultural, or ethnic diversity or inclusiveness, provided these
157 efforts are consistent with the requirements of this act.

Observations and suggestions from the group:

- myBama login is now required to access published UA syllabi.
- Many specialized accreditors (AACSB, ABA, ABET, ACEJMC, CCNE, CSWE, ...) expect affiliated programs to teach and assess students on DEI-related concepts. As noted above, those activities are not prohibited because they satisfy accreditation standards. Taking the extra step of adding language to course descriptions can make the connection explicit for students and other potential audiences (e.g., “To comply with ABA standards, the learning outcomes for this course include...”).
- More generally, preferred syllabus language related to academic freedom and divisive concepts can be found under Academic Instruction and Support (item 6) on the DEI Guidance web page: <https://deiguideance.ua.edu/#academic>
- Departments have been asked to locate language that might misalign with the guidance presented on the above web page.
- CAEP recently co-hosted a training event with ACHE and the state DOE. Programs designed to meet teacher certification requirements should be covered under the 2024-34 exemptions (e.g., regarding diversity-related SLOs), but what about non-certification programs?
- ABET is piloting language related to the teaching of DEI concepts in accredited programs. Apparently the draft language includes a caveat along the lines of “...within the limitations of the values of the institution”).
- UA Libraries will continue to support the resource/content needs of accredited programs through existing collection development practices.
- The SACSCOC principles related to assessment of student outcomes (student learning, student success) are not prescriptive in terms of what those outcomes should or should not be. SACSCOC has a published position statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion (look [here](#)); however, the organization does not have a formal policy or any dedicated principles (standards) related to DEI.

- Our program assessment reports are not public-facing, and the platforms require login. We do submit reports to SACSCOC as evidence of compliance with assessment standards, but the submission/review procedures are secure and confidential.
- Ginger recently received a SACSCOC Survey on Transfer and Learning Mobility. She asked the group to provide input on two questions related to programmatic accreditation. In short, UAC members from units with specialized/programmatic accreditation did not report any negative impacts of accreditation standards/policies on the institution's ability to award and apply credit for students' previous learning.
- UA's SACSCOC compliance certification report was successfully submitted on September 6th. We'll learn in late November how we did in the off-site review. For the SACSCOC class of 2023 (most recent available data), the mean number of off-site "dings" was 12. Any compliance issues resulting from UA's off-site review can be addressed in a Focused Report due (along with UA's QEP Proposal) by January 13, 2025. That report goes to the on-site review committee, which will be on campus February 24-27.