The SACS Leadership Team, which consists of Drs. Shawnta Friday-Stroud, Vera Harper, Walter Mercer, and Gita Wijesinghe Pitter, proudly announces that Florida A&M University has successfully submitted its Compliance Certification document to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools–Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) on time. The contents of Compliance Certification document demonstrate that FAMU is an institution with high academic standards, effective administrative operations, and competent faculty, staff and students.

But, we are not done yet!!! The Quality Enhancement Plan or QEP is the second component of the SACS Reaffirmation process. The goal of a QEP is to enhance student learning. Based on the analysis of nearly 3 years worth of data and input from all FAMU stakeholders, the FAMU QEP Committee has been working to develop a QEP entitled “Enhancing Performance in Critical Thinking.” The goal of FAMU’s QEP is to enhance and sustain a campus environment that fosters the continuous development and demonstration of our students’ critical thinking skills. The QEP Director, Dr. Maurice Edington, along with the QEP Committee and the SACS Leadership Team, will present to the campus and submit to SACS-COC the plan for enhancing FAMU students’ performance in critical thinking. Over the next few months, we will have many exciting activities to expose and engage the entire University community in the FAMU QEP process in preparation for the SACS-COC On-Site Review Visit in Spring 2009, so be on the lookout for Rattlers “Enhancing Performance in Critical Thinking.”

As you can see, we have been and will continue to be busy over the next few months rolling out the FAMU QEP – “Enhancing Performance in Critical Thinking,” preparing for the On-Site visit, preparing to address any issues raised by the Off-Site and On-Site Committees, and formulating and implementing recommendations to continuously improve processes and opportunities for advancement and expansion identified during the self-study. While we have submitted the Compliance Certification document, the successful completion and submission of the QEP, and our ability to address issues that may be raised by the Off-Site and On-Site Committees are just as vital to FAMU reaffirmation. Please continue to work with us to secure FAMU’s reaffirmation of SACS-COC accreditation.

Sincerely,

Shawnta Friday-Stroud, Ph.D.

Dr. Friday-Stroud is a Professor of Management in the School of Business and Industry

We’re Off Probation! Are We Done Yet?

Shortly before University President James Ammons began his first day on the job back in July 2007, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools–Commission on Colleges placed Florida A&M University on probation, citing several standards that were identified as being non-compliant. Dr. Ammons and his leadership team quickly came together and devised an action plan to address the concerns from SACS. As a result, the University was taken off probation in June 2008.

Florida A&M University’s probationary status was completely separate from the University’s reaffirmation status, which has still yet to be determined. The SACS Commission on Colleges has the authority to reaffirm institutions of higher learning across much of the southern region of the country (see article: What is SACS and Why is it Important?). Universities that report to SACS must submit a decennial-Compliance Certification Document (CCD) for reaffirmation (FAMU’s last reaffirmation was in 1997). Without reaffirmation, FAMU would lose its accreditation from SACS, and without
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(continued from page 1)

accreditation, the University would not be eligible to receive federal dollars that provide funds for financial aid.

For a university like FAMU, losing accreditation would be detrimental since over 80% of FAMU students are on need based aid. Until SACS removed Florida A&M from probation, the University worked vigorously to keep two ships afloat. Working on trying to get the University off probation, while simultaneously laboring on the University’s reaffirmation efforts has been a daunting task.

Our work is still cut out for us, as the University prepares for the SACS On-Site Committee visit in the Spring 2009 semester (see article: Demystifying the SACS On-Site Process). However after everything is said and done, we are confident that Florida A&M University will be reaffirmed by SACS!

Demystifying the SACS On-Site and Off-Site Review Process

Now that the Compliance Certification Document (CCD) has been submitted to SACS, you may be asking yourself what’s next? Well that’s an excellent question to ask!

The next steps in obtaining reaffirmation for the University entail a process called “Review by Peers.” There are two committees that conduct this review.

The first committee is the “Off-Site Peer Review” committee. This committee’s charge is to determine whether an institution is in compliance with all Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards and Federal Requirements (85 total standards). At the conclusion of the review, the Off-Site Peer Review Committee will prepare a separate report for the institution being reviewed. This report will then be forwarded to the second committee, the On-Site Review Committee.

The On-Site Review Committee makes the final determination on compliance. Following the review by the Off-Site Review Committee, an On-Site Review Committee of peers will conduct a focused evaluation on the campus of Florida A&M University to finalize issues of compliance with the 85 standards of accreditation. They will also provide consultation regarding the issues addressed in the QEP and will evaluate its acceptability (see article: Quality Enhancement Plan and the University Community).

At the conclusion of the On-Site Review Committees visit, the Report of Reaffirmation will be finalized. The Report of Reaffirmation, along with the University’s response to areas of non-compliance, will be forwarded to the Commission on Colleges for review and action on reaffirmation in December 2009.

Florida A&M University’s reaffirmation ultimately lies in the hands of the SACS Commission on Colleges. The Commission makes the final decision on reaffirmation and any follow-up activities that it requires of the University.

The information in this article was taken from the SACS Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement.
What is SACS and Why is it Important?

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is the recognized regional accrediting body in the eleven U.S. Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) and in Latin America for those institutions of higher education that award associate, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degrees.

The Commission on Colleges applies the requirements of its Principles to all applicant, candidate, and member institutions, regardless of type of institution (public, private for-profit, private not-for-profit).

The Principles of Accreditation provides consistent guidelines for peer review, representing the collective judgment of the membership on standards appropriate for the assurance of quality in higher education.

The information in this article was taken from the SACS-COC webpage. Visit http://www.sacs-coc.org for more details.

FAMU Prepares to Submit Quality Enhancement Plan

SACS requires the development of a QEP as part of the University’s reaffirmation effort. The QEP is a focused five-year plan designed to enhance student learning.

Florida A&M University has developed a QEP entitled “Enhancing Performance in Critical Thinking” that will improve and sustain the campus-learning environment such that the University consistently produces graduates who are competent critical thinkers and lifelong learners, who are prepared to make significant contributions to a global society.

A set of interrelated initiatives will be implemented to improve: a) student learning experiences both in and out of the classroom; b) methods of assessing student learning in the area of critical thinking; c) instructional methods used by faculty and staff to develop and enhance student critical thinking skills; and d) the availability of instructional tools and professional development opportunities for faculty, staff and students. To this end, the following QEP goals have been developed:

QEP Goal #1: To identify and apply instructional strategies that enhance students’ critical thinking skills.

QEP Goal #2: To implement a professional development program that enhances faculty members’ pedagogy with respect to teaching critical thinking.

QEP Goal #3: Communication and curriculum enhancement: To promote the use of best practices for teaching and assessing critical thinking skills across the University curriculum.

The FAMU QEP will be submitted to SACS for review in January 2009, and it is scheduled to be implemented beginning in the Fall 2009 term.

Please contact Dr. Maurice Edington, QEP Director, for additional information at (850) 599-8494 or maurice.edington@famu.edu

QEP Logo Winner Announced

We are pleased to announce the winner of our QEP Student Logo Competition! Congratulations goes to Ms. Taylar Barrington, a junior graphic communications-photography student from Stone Mountain, Georgia. As the student QEP logo winner, Taylor has received a reserved parking space on campus for an entire year! This is great exposure for Taylor, as her design will be featured on all University correspondence related to the QEP.

Congrats Taylar!

Logo Winner, Taylar Barrington
The SACS Leadership Team would like to thank President James Ammons and Provost Cynthia (Cindy) Hughes Harris for their leadership and support. We’d also like to sincerely thank all of the SACS committee members, the SACS office staff, reviewers and University staff members!

A very special thank you goes to our SACS consultant, Dr. Carl Backman. Dr. Backman is currently the Assistant to the Provost at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, Florida. His tireless efforts are inextricably linked to the successful completion and submission of the Compliance Certification document. Special thanks goes out to Mrs. Beverly Barrington, Director of University Planning and

Special recognition also goes to Mr. Charles Reid and Mr. Jerrold Gibson for their important work! These gentlemen went the extra mile as they worked on the Faculty Credentials Database and Rosters. Their assistance proved to be a crucial part of this process.

Through committee meetings, boot camps, long days and nights, and several weekends, the spirit of true Rattlers was evidenced during the seven months in which we tackled this monumental task. Without everyone’s dedication and hard work, we simply could not have achieved this part of our goal! Thanks again!