



Alcorn

State University

DA: November 7, 2016
TO: Deans
FR: Donzell Lee, Ph.D., Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs *DL*
RE: **ASSURING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY | EXCESSIVE SUBSTITUTIONS**

All students are expected to meet all curricular requirements as outlined in the program of study as condition precedent to graduation and participation in commencement. Student transcripts (completed work) must be compared with Alcorn Catalog requirements, i.e. IHL core curriculum, university core, major, and/or concentrations.

As penultimate approver in go.alcorn.edu's substitution chain, I have reviewed nearly one thousand substitutions deans have approved and submitted for my approval. It is clear to me that we are not upholding the integrity of faculty-approved degree requirements and the Catalog. This Provost Communication reminds academic leaders to minimize deviations from the Catalog by rejecting disapproved substitutions which slip into your queue.

Students must

Disapproved Substitutions:

- Developmental, remedial, or intermediate courses must NOT be used as substitutions.
- Substituting 100- or 200-level courses for 400-level course requirements is disallowed. (See Residency Requirements). Alcorn confers senior-college baccalaureate degrees, not junior-college associate degrees.
- Physical education (PE or activity) classes may not be substituted for knowledge-based (non-activity) courses.
- *Non-restricted* electives in lieu of *restricted* electives.
- Zero (0)-credit based courses may not be used for credit-based substitutions.
- Technical/Vocational courses may not be used as substitutions (limited exception by MOU is Advanced Technology).
- Substitutions should meet accreditation standards, government regulations, NCAA guidelines, degree outcome requirements, etc.
- Course waivers/exemptions are disallowed. No student is allowed to graduate with 120 hours who is not under the 2016-18 Catalog.
- Advanced/additional degrees do not necessarily fulfill baccalaureate degree requirements.
- Students may not use original major courses to fulfill requirements for a second major.
- Alcorn graduate courses may only be substituted for undergraduate courses with prior permission from Graduate Studies.
- Credit-by-exam should be used in rare situations, and only after prior Provost-approval.

- Caveat: ACE credits are unacceptable as the liberal time to complete coursework (e.g., months/years) does not necessarily align with Alcorn's fixed time-frame (5-8-15-weeks) to complete coursework requirements.
- Note: Courses may not transfer for several reasons: repeat of work already taken, low grades, technical or vocational courses, remedial courses, etc.

Substitution Guidelines

Only under unavoidable and exceptional circumstances will substitution from the prescribed curricula be permitted. Thus, substitutions should be the exception, not the rule. The guiding principle in considering requests for any substitution is fidelity to the academic standards of the curriculum as ratified by department faculty and stated in the catalog. Please adhere to the following:

- The substitution process does not supersede residency requirements for senior-level and major courses.
- Electives should sandbox where students enroll in courses customized to career goals, not the faculty-prescribed required or restricted courses. To make substitutions for required courses defeats the purpose and is counter to the benefits of a defined roadmap to graduation.
- Deans should seek prior, written approval from Academic Affairs before approving exceptional substitution requests in go.alcorn.edu (e.g., unrestricted course substitutions for restricted).
- Substitution in lieu of taking a curricular courses is not a right, but an exception predicated on approved grant of a compelling petition.
- In all cases, students who substitute courses must have adequate opportunity (through said substitutes) to achieve academic program learning outcomes consistent with the department's institutional effectiveness plan.
- Please craft your language carefully when communicating to advisees about the status of substitutions to prevent unnecessary reliance that a "submitted" substitution is an "approved" substitution. Remind students that the substitution arrows turn "green" after proceeding through the review/approval chain in go.alcorn.edu.

Special Caution

Deans, be cautious--not casual--with substitutions. Do not unwittingly embroil yourself and Alcorn in an NCAA Infraction (See *Bylaw 14.3- Waivers Involving Misadvisement and/or Misapplication of Initial-Eligibility Rules*). For instance, if your advisor recommends a deviant substitution upon which a student-athlete (SA) relies and you approve the same, the SA may lose eligibility if the SA foregoes a required course needed to meet freshmen, sophomore, junior, or senior progress-towards-degree targets. This may give rise to a potential 14.3 claim which requires naming "advisors," noting go.alcorn.edu substitutions, and notifying the President to sign a waiver. Hew to the line.

In addition Alcorn must prepare for its next NCAA Data Review (Recall recent sanctions and penalties). In this audit space, our most defensible path is to ensure a match-up between required courses vis-a-vis completed course. The recent NCAA Data Review revealed problems in our advising processes and resulted in penalties. We deployed go.alcorn.edu to correct problems; and, the next NCAA Data Review must be problem-free. Let us head-off potential problems now by arresting problematic substitutions.

Finally, as we prepare for the SACS-5th Year Review please ensure the integrity of your curricular programs. I expect you as academic leaders to be vanguards who uphold the integrity of the undergraduate curriculum and ensure that your students progress through faculty-approved programs of study. Do not approve substitutions that deviate from the catalog and contradict this communication. Do not submit them to my approval queue in go.alcorn.edu. I am holding you accountable for enforcing these standards. You will reduce proliferation of aberrant substitutions; ensure alignment with institutional effectiveness; streamline degree audits; maintain catalog compliance; prepare Alcorn for third-party reviews/audits; reduce related student complaints; and cultivate a culture of Catalog compliance.

Deans are to meet with chairs and advisors immediately upon receipt of this memo to ensure follow-through. Please re-submit denied substitutions in conformance with this memorandum. Deans may meet with the Provost for exceptionally compelling issues.