



April 11, 2025

Dr. Donde Ashmos Plowman
Chancellor
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
800 Andy Holt Tower
1331 Circle Park Drive
Knoxville, TN 37996-0180

Dear Dr. Plowman:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

New Program-Approval

Undergraduate Certificate in American Civics

Submission date:

11/22/2024

Intended Implementation date:

1/21/2025

Case ID:

SC029103

SACSCOC requested additional information via email on December 5, 2024. The institution's response on March 14, 2025, was added to the record and is reflected in the narrative below.

The institution proposes the implementation of the Undergraduate Certificate in American Civics in the Baker School of Public Policy and Public Affairs on January 21, 2025. The target audience will be undergraduate students, including Baker School majors and students affiliated with Baker School co-curricular programs such as Tocqueville Scholars. The Certificate will be available as a stand-alone credential for those who have already completed a bachelor's degree or as an add-on credential for those already enrolled in a degree at the institution. The program is expected to be ongoing with an initial enrollment of 10-15 students each year. The program will be offered through face-to-face method of delivery on the main campus (Knoxville).

The strengths of the institution include a history of offering programs in the Baker School in governance studies, energy and environment, and global security; qualified faculty with strong expertise in American Civics; and the inclusion of the Institute of American Civics in the Baker School. The rationale for the Certificate is to equip students for future leadership roles in politics, society, and the economy, which require a solid understanding of our constitutional and governmental system.

The program was described in the context of the institution's mission and appears to be consistent. A small group of faculty of the Baker School were involved in developing and refining the curriculum for the certificate. Faculty of the Baker School approved the courses and certificate requirements, followed by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Undergraduate Council, and the Faculty Senate. The institution received institutional approval



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for the change from Faculty Senate. Documentation was provided. Undergraduate certificate programs do not require the approval of an institutional governing board. Approval by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is not required for certificate programs.

The twelve-credit hour program can be completed in three terms. The curriculum, projected course schedule, and course descriptions were provided and appears to be appropriate. The curriculum consists of one required course and three courses to be selected from fifteen possible courses. The program goal and nine student learning outcomes were provided. Student learning outcomes will be assessed through a rubric scored final exam short essay explaining the rights and duties of citizenship and an essay explaining different perspectives on core American ideals and values.

The admission and graduation requirements for the program were noted and are appropriate for an undergraduate certificate. The undergraduate certificate is not currently accepting students. There is a placeholder line in the 2024-2025 Academic Catalog, but no information is available for the listing when clicked. This inactive placeholder was added due to the anticipated start date of Spring 2025. However, with the program awaiting SACSCOC approval, the anticipated start date has been deferred. The institution's policies for awarding credit were described and appeared to be appropriate and consistent with common academic practice and the federal definition of a credit hour. Administrative oversight of the certificate will be provided by the Associate Director of the Institute of American Civics, who will meet periodically with the faculty. The Associate Director will work with the Director of Undergraduate Studies, who is responsible for program development and curriculum management, and with the Director of Student Success, who is responsible for relevant data collection. The three administrators all report to the Interim Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, who will ensure that the Dean of the Baker School is kept informed and updated on the certificate.

A faculty roster was provided detailing the credentials of seven current full-time faculty, three to-be-hired full-time faculty, and one current part-time faculty. Faculty members appear to have adequate qualifications for the assigned undergraduate certificate. Should the qualifications listed on the roster for the to-be-hired positions be adhered to in the hiring process, the faculty members would appear to be qualified to teach the courses to which they are assigned. A primary faculty member assigned for each course in the certificate demonstrates that every course is assigned to qualified faculty. Once all positions are hired, the number of existing full-time faculty appears to be adequate for the projected number of students. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications and faculty adequacy is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.

The coursework will not be offered in a compressed timeframe.

The library and learning/information resources supporting the proposed program were provided and appear to be adequate. Discipline-specific resources are listed in the *Government Information: Federal, State, & Local Research Guide* (233 journals), including *The American Magazine of Civics*, *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change*, *Journal of*



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Civic Information, and National Civic Review. Students can access all discipline-specific learning resources online through the website or the Canvas learning management system. Students will be informed of the available resources and learn to access and use them through course syllabi and individual course orientation, where hands-on training on the use of resources is provided. In addition to the guide available, students have access to a specialized librarian who can guide them on accessing materials and information sources. Assistance from librarians is available through *AskUsNow*, phone, email, text, in-person, and by appointment. Library resources are expanded through Resource Sharing.

Student and academic support services were described and appear to be sufficient. Services include academic advising; travel programs; local government, state legislative, and Congressional internship programs; the Institute of American Civics' undergraduate fellow program; Baker Scholars Program; and the Baker School Student Association, which holds professional networking events and hosts relevant speakers. IT support services are provided via phone, chat, by ticket, in person, and through the HelpDesk Knowledge Base. Support for the Canvas LMS is available by phone or ticket or through the *Canvas Student Guide* and the *Getting Started with Canvas* links.

The program's face-to-face courses will be located in the Baker School with more than 52,000 sq.ft. that include classrooms, auditorium, state-of-the-art archives and research areas, and necessary administrative spaces. The building also houses the Institute of American Civics and two research centers: the Center for Energy, Transportation, and Environmental Policy and the Center for National Security and Foreign Affairs. Classrooms equipped with smartboards, projectors, video players, and interfaces for instructor laptops will be utilized for instruction. No specialized equipment will be necessary for the program. All faculty members have a private office space and will utilize Canvas. Faculty will receive training and guidance from the Digital Learning office. The addition of the program will not impact current programs.

The institution appears to have adequate resources to support the program. A budget for the first year was provided. All the courses in the certificate will also be offered as part of the Public Affairs major. Current support and contractual services are already in place through other related programs. The program will be funded by tuition; expenditures include pro-rated faculty salaries, marketing, recruiting, advising, and academic administration. Revenues are projected to exceed expenditures the first year. No budget resources will be directed to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services. A contingency plan was provided should the required resources not materialize. Assessment will be accomplished at the end of the third year to determine the benefit of continuing to support the program.

The institutional assessment process was described and appeared to be adequate. SLO assessment data are collected annually and analyzed by faculty and reported formally every three years. The annual program assessment process is coordinated through the Department of Institutional Effectiveness, which conducts a meta-assessment review and prepares a summary report. The Department works with program faculty to develop appropriate outcomes, assessment methods, and to interpret results for continuous improvement. Students assess all academic courses and instructors through the use of end of course evaluations.



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Note: Approval is effective as of the date of the Board of Trustees action (which is the date of this letter). In this case, the approval date is after the institution's stated intended implementation date. Note that this does not constitute retroactive approval: the institution's substantive change described herein is approved as of the date of Board's action, not as of the earlier intended implementation date.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Undergraduate Certificate in American Civics. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of accreditation.

An invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus is enclosed with the liaison's copy of this letter.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. J. Matthew Melton at (404) 994-6553 or via email at mmelton@sacscoc.org.

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW/TBB:lp

Enclosure (invoice with liaison's copy only)

cc: Dr. Heather G. Hartman, Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, The
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Dr. J. Matthew Melton, Vice President, SACSCOC