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REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation *and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.*

Name of the Institution: **University of South Carolina - Columbia**

Date of the Review: **March 22 – 25, 2021**

SACSCOC Staff Member: **Dr. Linda Thomas-Glover**

Chair of the Committee: **Dr. Laurie Casteen**
Associate Dean of Students
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Charlottesville, VA

effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission.
(Institutional planning) **[CR]**

In 2019, after the appointment of the president, the institution reviewed the existing Focus Carolina plan, the Advance Carolina implementation guide, and the Blueprint for Academic and Service Excellence-the structured method for annual planning, evaluation, and assessment for each academic and service unit at the institution. After the review by the senior leadership team, it was decided to expand on the tenants of the Focus Carolina plan. Additionally, the administration desired to combine academic and administrative units into a single, aligned planning, budgeting, and evaluation system during this review process. The president hosted a multi-day offsite retreat with nearly eighty academic and administrative leaders to develop eight new strategic priorities for the institution to better reflect its academic, research, and community mission. The institution provided a crosswalk to ensure continuation of the critical components of the Focus Carolina plan during the transition to the new and broader plan.

The institution stated that South Carolina Code of Laws, Sections 1-1-810 and 1-1-820 requires all state agencies to submit an Agency Accountability Report (AAR). The institution provided a link to the law, but this was not able to be confirmed with evidence with the link provided.

The institution provided AARs for the institution and the regional campuses for 2017, 2018, and 2019. The evaluation of the Focus Carolina 2023 plan is included in the AAR. These reports demonstrate that the institution does have an ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation process. The plan focused on institution quality and effectiveness and incorporated a systematic review of institutional goals that are consistent with the institutional mission. The institution evaluated the eight priorities identified in the Focus Carolina 2023 plan. In 2017 and 2018, the institution and the regional campuses evaluated the Focus Carolina plan.

7.2   The institution has a QEP that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement.
(Quality Enhancement Plan)

The institution addressed all components of this standard in a satisfactory manner. See Part III for additional information.

7.3   The institution identifies expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved.
(Administrative effectiveness)

It is not clear to the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee how the institution identified administrative units based on its organizational structure. The institution directed the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee to a live website that presented blueprints for some administrative units. The institution provided some examples in the document itself for two years, however these documents were insufficient to support the institution's case for

compliance. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee could not determine that the institution identifies expected outcomes and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved because the documentation lacked evidence of a consistent, meaningful effectiveness system. For instance, the institution provided the 2019-20 Finance Blueprint as evidence. It was not clear what were the goals of this administrative unit and what was achieved based on these goals.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a sample of assessment reports from various administrative units. Within the reports, there was evidence that the units consistently identify and measure outcomes. During discussions with the Assistant Director and Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation, the Director of the University Advising Center, the Associate Director of the Center for Integrative and Experiential Learning, the Director of the On Your Time Initiatives, and the Research Program Manager of the Office of Research, these unit leaders outlined how outcomes were developed and provided several examples of how outcomes were assessed and changes made based on needed improvements. Furthermore, evidence of how units were selected to complete assessment reports was provided. University leadership, with guidance from the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics, select units that align with the mission and strategic plan of the institution. Once identified, unit leaders develop outcomes that align with the strategic plan and general operations of the university. These documents and discussions demonstrated that the institution identifies outcomes and outcome achievement in its administrative support units.

Section 8: Student Achievement

8.1 **The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success.**
(Student achievement) **[CR; Off-Site/On-Site Review]**

The institution uses graduation rates, program reviews, retention, licensing exam success to demonstrate student success at the main campus. The institution also provided retention data for its regional campuses. However, the institution provided embedded tables as screenshots that were unreadable and directed the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee to the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics (OIRAA) website, and the Committee was unable to locate the specific information the institution expected the Committee to review. The institution used the six-year graduation rate as its measure of student success, but the source of this graduation rate is not specified. The institution stated that it supports at risk students by monitoring underrepresented minority students, Pell eligible students, first-generation students, and transfer students. The institution provided as an example the disaggregated data of underrepresented minority students but did not provide disaggregated data for the other populations mentioned by the institution that are monitored.