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SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

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
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA

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.

The institution provided the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee student achievement information (goals and outcomes) in the aggregate, as well as disaggregated, by populations, relevant to the institutional mission. The information was published online and accessible to the general public. Information about how the institution uses the data, especially when thresholds were not met, was provided. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee met with the Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics, the Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support, the Assistant Vice President for Student Success, the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, the Assistant Dean of Enrollment Management (Palmetto College) and a Senior Fellow/Instructor from Palmetto College.

8.2   The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

8.2.a   Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.
        (Student outcomes: educational programs) **[Off-Site/On-Site Review]**

        The institution has a policy, Assessment of Student Learning ACAF 3.00, that defines and outlines the assessment of student learning process for its main campus and its branch campuses. The institution documents that its programs identify student learning outcomes through the implementation of its S.M.A.R.T. Learning Outcomes Model (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound). In 2016, the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics (OIRAA), in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences, formalized the use of its S.M.A.R.T. Learning Outcomes Model in the review of program learning outcomes for the institution's approximately three hundred educational programs. The institution expects that each academic program at all campuses engage in the institution's assessment process on an annual basis. In 2017, OIRAA staff audited approximately three hundred reports and found that many of the educational programs had difficulty managing and responding to assessment results and using the results for continuous improvement. In spring 2020, the institution formed an ad-hoc committee to address the way the institution reports how assessment results are used to improve student learning. This new process involves a survey of assessment report writers to be launched in fall 2020. The institution admits that using evidence to seek improvement remains challenging for some programs.

        The institution reveals in its narrative that it has approximately 300 programs in the assessment cycle and provided access to the assessment reports for all its programs through Assessment Composer (a live link accessed via a username and password provided in the narrative). The assessment reports are substantial and provide outcomes, measures and criteria, methods, results, and use of results. The use of results sections, however, do not consistently provide evidence of seeking improvement. In its narrative, the institution provided a table that presented one outcome from each of five programs as evidence of seeking improvement. The institution refers to these as "only a few examples among many at our university,

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