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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

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,

where assessment results have fostered improvements to educational programs." The sample outcomes data include (a) the name of the college, (b) the program, (c) the learning outcome, (d) the results that prompted change, and (e) the program change. The evidence provided does not appear to meet its ACAF 3.00 assessment policy requirements because the assessment measures are not provided (although the reports in Assessment Composer do). The institution did not provide a rationale to support this sample as representative of the entire corpus of program assessment reports' evidence of seeking improvement. Additionally, the examples are not complete assessment reports. The institution directed the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee to the OIRAA live website to find evidence of documentation of improvements and searching and finding the reports challenged the Committee members. Furthermore, some links were broken, e.g., the link to "templates and other assessment resources" at the end of paragraph 6.

The institution provided the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee with assessment reports for all academic programs. The reports demonstrated that the institution is following its ACAF 3.0 policy and established that programs are identifying and measuring student learning outcomes. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed multiple complete assessment reports which showed evidence of improvement actions (i.e., use of results) and faculty provided several examples of how they were using the data to make changes to improve student learning.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee met with the Vice Provost and Dean of Faculty; faculty from Sociology, German, Secondary Education-Social Studies, Electrical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Journalism and Mass Communications, Nursing, Pharmacy, and the School of Medicine, Greenville; Assistant Director of Assessment in the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics; Palmetto College Assessment Coordinator and Professor of Political Science at USC Union; Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics, and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation/SACSCOC Liaison in affirming the institution's case for compliance.

8.2.b   Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.
(Student outcomes: general education)

A review of the student outcomes assessment, process, and procedure for general education demonstrated alignment with the institution's mission and goals. The General Education Committee (GEC) was formed in early 2008 and develops recommendations for the institutional general education core curriculum. In April 2009, the new general education requirements were renamed the Carolina Core, and a website for communicating the new requirements for general education was designed in 2012. Assessment of the new Carolina Core learning outcomes started in fall 2013. The institution formally instituted a comprehensive outcomes assessment plan for its general education curriculum that requires all general education courses to undergo ongoing outcomes assessment. The narrative