EXCERPT FROM THE PRELIMINARY 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: **November 3-4, 2020**

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

Chair of the Committee: **Dr. Timothy S. Brophy**
Director, Institutional Assessment
and Professor, Music Education
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32606

8.2.a
Student Outcomes: Educational Programs

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]**

           Non-Compliance

           The institution's response is in violation of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policy, "Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review," by including live links in its response and electronic documentation that is not consistently bookmarked, indexed, and searchable.

           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.