

14.3

Comprehensive Institutional Review

The institution applies all appropriate standards and policies to its distance learning programs, branch campuses, and off-campus instructional sites.

Judgment

Compliant Non-Compliant Not Applicable

Narrative

The university integrated information related to its regional Palmetto College campuses and off-campus sites, as well as information related to its distance learning (also referred to as "distributed learning" or "online") programs and courses within each standard. All standards describe processes by which the university provides the same quality and integrity to the courses and programs offered at the regional Palmetto College campuses, off-campus sites, or via distance education as on-campus courses and programs. In instances where the procedures at the regional Palmetto College campuses require an additional level of detail or differ from those employed at the Columbia campus, a separate narrative has been provided.

Policies and procedures in place at the university apply to all students regardless of how they access their courses; the University of South Carolina Columbia and the regional Palmetto College campuses apply all appropriate standards and policies to off-campus sites and distance education programs and courses, regardless of the modality.

Principle Topic		Response
<i>Section 2: Mission</i>		
2.1	Institutional Mission	The University of South Carolina Columbia mission statement addresses teaching, research, service, the role of distance education in instruction, degree levels offered, and the impact of campus on higher education in South Carolina. The primary mission of the University of South Carolina Columbia is the education of the state's citizens through teaching, research, creative activity, and community engagement. Each of the regional Palmetto College campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, Union) also provide comprehensive, clear, and published mission statements that support the broader mission of Columbia. The primary mission of the regional campuses is to provide higher education and intellectual leadership to their service areas. The impact of each campus on higher education in South Carolina is specified by the region of the State served by each campus.
<i>Section 3: Basic Eligibility Standards</i>		
3.1a	Degree-granting Authority	The University of South Carolina Columbia demonstrates compliance as an accredited institution by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and has degree-granting authority from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (SC CHE) and South Carolina Code of Laws. SC CHE recognizes the University of South Carolina Columbia as a research institution, and the Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, and Union campuses as two-year regional branch campuses of the University of South Carolina Columbia. The University of South Carolina Columbia and the regional Palmetto College campuses have the appropriate state authorization for out-of-state students as required by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (SC CHE).
<i>Section 4. Governing Board</i>		
4.3	Multilevel Governance	The University of South Carolina Columbia is the flagship campus in the University of South Carolina (USC) system, which includes the research university in Columbia, three comprehensive universities (Aiken, Beaufort, and Upstate; each separately accredited by SACSCOC); and four regional Palmetto College campuses, (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter and Union) each branch campuses of the University of South Carolina and accredited with the University of South Carolina Columbia. The Board of Trustees bylaws state, "Each Comprehensive University campus with the exception of the Columbia campus shall be administered by a Chancellor who shall report directly to the President. The position of the President of the University System shall also encompass the office and duties of Chancellor of the Columbia campus. Each regional Palmetto College campus shall be administered by a Campus Dean who shall report to the Chancellor of Palmetto College who in turn reports to the President."
<i>Section 6: Faculty</i>		

6.2a	Faculty Qualifications	The university applies the same policies and procedures, teaching qualification requirements, and record keeping standards to all instructors of record, regardless of the mode of delivery or location of the courses taught. Instructors of record for courses offered on the regional Palmetto College campuses, off-campus sites, and through distance education are held to the same standards as instructors-of-record teaching courses on the Columbia campus. The qualifications for all faculty are provided in the Faculty Roster.
6.2c	Program Coordination	The coordination of all degree programs, including online programs and programs offered at the regional Palmetto College campuses or off-campus sites, is the responsibility of academically qualified, full-time faculty members who hold terminal degree or other appropriate qualifications. Styled as "program coordinators," these individuals are responsible for program coordination, curriculum development and curriculum review.
6.3	Faculty Appointment and Evaluation	In support of its mission, the University of South Carolina is committed to recruiting, retaining, and promoting an outstanding faculty who demonstrate excellence in teaching, research, service, and outreach. Faculty appointment and faculty evaluation is held to the same standard and governed by the same university policies regardless of mode of delivery (i.e., distance education) or location of the program/courses with which the faculty member is affiliated. The regional Palmetto College campuses may employ policies and procedures outlined in their individual Faculty Manual, but these manuals are superseded by university-level policies to whom all campuses and locations must adhere.
6.5	Faculty Development	The primary mission of the University of South Carolina Columbia is the education of the state's citizens through teaching, research, creative activity, and community engagement. Development opportunities for faculty teaching at all campuses (Columbia campus, the regional Palmetto College campuses, and off-campus sites) and via all modes of delivery support this mission. The Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School provides leadership in matters of faculty recruitment and retention, professional development and academic leadership development. The university continually creates and promotes programs to develop and retain a strong faculty, both on the Columbia and regional Palmetto College campuses.

Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

7.1	Institutional Planning	In August 2019 upon the hiring of President Bob Caslen as the 29th President of the University of South Carolina, the President initiated a new and even broader approach to systematic, integrated, and system-wide planning and evaluation. The first phase of this comprehensive process involved an on-boarding review of the existing strategic plan and the structured method for annual planning, evaluation and assessment for each academic and service unit at the university system, including the Columbia campus and the regional Palmetto College campuses. As entities of the University of South Carolina system, accredited sites of University of South Carolina Columbia, and state agencies, as well as integral entities of their respective communities and service areas, the regional Palmetto College campuses actively participate in multiple, ongoing, integrated planning and evaluation efforts. The new strategic plan broadened the areas of important planning and evaluation for the entire university, including all locations and modes of delivery of courses/programs.
7.2	Quality Enhancement Plan	The QEP for this accreditation cycle has its overarching goal to ensure that all of students, regardless of location or mode of delivery of their courses/programs, engage beyond the classroom and reflect upon the learning resulting from that engagement. Student engagement has been shown to improve student success; from our own institutional data, the university has identified groups of students who engage at lower-than-expected rates and have lower graduate and retention rates. The focus of the QEP will be engaging students who fall into these groups, both on the Columbia campus, the regional Palmetto College campuses, and off-campus sites, regardless of modes of delivery.

Section 8. Student Achievement

8.1	Student Achievement	While the University of South Carolina Columbia and the regional Palmetto College campuses share an overarching mission, they have individual missions that specifically address the role of each institution in serving its target populations. Student achievement is identified, evaluations, and measured in ways specific to these individual missions. Student achievement data for each campus, including Columbia and the regional Palmetto Colleges and off-campus sites, includes all students, regardless of mode of delivery of the program or courses in which the students are enrolled.
8.2a	Student Outcomes: Educational Programs	Regardless of the mode of delivery (face-to-face, hybrid, or online) or location (Columbia, the regional Palmetto College campuses, or off-campus sites) all academic programs are included in the program assessment process. The university was approved by SACSCOC to offer fully online degree programs on 12/5/2003.

8.2b	Student Outcomes: General Education	Regardless of the mode of delivery (face-to-face, hybrid, or online) or location (Columbia campus, the regional Palmetto College campuses, or off-campus sites) all general education courses are included in the general education assessment process.
8.2c	Student Outcomes: Academic and Student Services	All academic and student services programs and units are assessed, regardless of the delivery type or location of the service. Assessment includes services offered for all students, regardless of location (Columbia campus, regional Palmetto College campuses, or off-campus sites) or delivery methods of the programs or courses in which students are enrolled.

Section 10: Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices

10.1	Academic Policies	All academic policies for programs offered at the Columbia campus, regional Palmetto College campuses, and off-campus sites, or via distance education, face-to-face instruction, and dual enrollment are the same.
10.2	Public Information	The university bulletins of the Columbia (Undergraduate, Graduate, School of Medicine, College of Pharmacy) and the regional Palmetto College campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, Union) are the primary sources of official information for all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students for academic calendars, grading policies, cost of attendance, and refund policies. This information is available to all students across all delivery locations and modes of instruction of the courses/programs in which they are enrolled.
10.4	Academic Governance	The primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum rests with the faculty of the academic departments within which the course or program is housed, regardless of delivery method (face to face or online) or location (Columbia campus, the regional Palmetto College campuses, or off-campus sites).
10.6a	Distance and Correspondence Education	The university has established procedures for validating that the student who registers for an online/distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the course credit. These procedures apply to students enrolling in programs and courses offered through the Columbia and the regional Palmetto College campuses.
10.6b		The university has established policies and procedures governing the protection of student privacy for students who are enrolled in online/distance education courses through both the Columbia campus and the regional Palmetto College campuses.
10.6c		All students, regardless of location, are notified of additional charges associated with online/distance education courses and programs.
10.7	Policies for Awarding Credit	The University of South Carolina has policies and procedures for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for its courses. ACAF 2.03 <i>Creation and Revision of Academic Courses</i> governs the process and defines a credit hour as "a unit of measure representing the equivalent of an hour (50 minutes) of instruction per week over the entire term." ACAF 2.03 outlines procedures apply to all courses and programs, regardless of location (Columbia, regional Palmetto College campus, or off-campus site), format, or mode of delivery.
10.9	Cooperative Academic Arrangements	The University of South Carolina maintains formal agreements between the parties involved in consortial agreements, regardless of location of the program (Columbia, regional Palmetto College campus, or off-campus site) or the mode of delivery of the program/courses. The institution regularly evaluates such agreements. All consortial academic contracts and agreements are subject to the authority of the Board of Trustees.

Section 11: Library and Learning/Information Resources

11.1	Library and Learning/Information Resources	The university provides library and learning/information resources to all students, regardless of location (Columbia campus, the regional Palmetto College campuses, or off-campus sites) or mode of delivery of the courses or programs in which they are enrolled.
11.2	Library and Learning/Information Staff	The university hires qualified library and learning/information faculty and staff to serve all students, regardless of location (Columbia campus, the regional Palmetto College campuses, or off-campus sites) mode of delivery of the courses or programs in which they are enrolled.
11.3	Library and Learning/Information Access	Library resources, including online/electronic databases and journals, catalog, book-a-librarian service, subject guides, and tutorials, are available to online to all students, regardless of location or mode of delivery, through Columbia Thomas Cooper Library via the use of a proxy server. Student enrolled in programs and courses through the Columbia campus, including distance education students and students learning from an off-campus site associated with Columbia, receive instruction from Columbia campus librarians. Each regional Palmetto College campus provides additional resources and instruction to students enrolled in programs on-campus, via distance education, through dual enrollment, or at off-campus sites affiliated with those campuses.

Section 12: Academic and Student Support Services

- 12.1 Academic and Student Support Services
 12.2 Student Support Services Staff
 12.4 Student Complaints
- Students are provided with academic and student support services at both the Columbia campus, regional Palmetto College campuses, and off-campus sites, regardless of the mode of delivery of the courses/program in which they are enrolled. While some services are available universally to all students, other services have been developed to service the specific student populations at their locations, including distance education and dual enrollment students. Students enrolled in distance education programs/courses or at off-campus sites through both the Columbia and regional Palmetto College campuses have the same level of access to offices that offer support services as other students. Students can contact offices directly, typically by phone or email, to receive immediate assistance.
- The university hires qualified student support services staff to serve all students, regardless of location (Columbia campus, the regional Palmetto College campuses, or off-campus sites) mode of delivery of the courses or programs in which they are enrolled.
- Policies and procedures have been established and are adhered to in support of the efficient resolution and documentation of student complaints. Students at all regional Palmetto College campuses and off-campus sites are provided equal opportunity protections via the same university policies enforced on the Columbia campus. Students participating in distance education, as well as dual enrollment programs, are strongly encouraged to utilize the complaint processes in place on their respective campuses.

Section 13. Financial and Physical Resources

- 13.7 Physical Resources
 13.8 Institutional Environment
- The university appropriately operates and maintains its physical facilities that are appropriate to achieve the mission of the university and meet the needs of its students. The facilities utilized are adequate for students who reside and learn on both the Columbia campus, regional Palmetto College campuses, and off-campus sites; for students enrolled in programs offered fully online; and for the scope of all its programs and services.
- The University of South Carolina supports a comprehensive effort to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community, regardless of location (Columbia campus, regional Palmetto College campuses, or off-campus sites) or mode of delivery of its courses or programs. This is accomplished through a nationally-recognized campus health, safety, and law enforcement organization that serves the entire Carolina Community.

Section 14. Transparency and Institutional Representation

- 14.1 Publication of Accreditation Status
 14.2 Substantive Change
- The University of South Carolina Columbia undergraduate, graduate, and professional school bulletins and the regional Palmetto College campus bulletins are the primary sources of official information for all students regarding the publication of accreditation. This information is available to all students, including students taking online courses and dual enrollment students, across all delivery locations and modes of instruction.
- The Columbia and regional Palmetto College campuses are subject to the same process governing the reporting of substantive change. This process is outlined in ACAF 2.11 *Substantive Change*.