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Post and Courier (Editorial): Heed CHE on risky CCU play

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160821/160829901/heed-che-on-risky-ccu-play>

Coastal Carolina University wants to move up to a higher athletic conference, and wants to more than double the capacity of its football stadium to do so. But the S.C. Commission on Higher Education has said no four times this year, citing the inadequacy of dedicated funding for the project. So faced with fourth down and 10, CCU officials went to a tried-and-true play to keep the project alive. They passed the ball to the Legislature. And state lawmakers came through with two last-minute budget provisos that allowed the university to circumvent the CHE and advance its stadium plans to the state's Joint Bond Review Committee, and next to the Fiscal Accountability Board. On Tuesday, the project faces a vote of the Fiscal Accountability Board (formerly the Budget and Control Board) that would effectively remove further impediments to the stadium plan, despite the repeated opposition of the CHE. For the sake of fiscal accountability and a rational system for higher ed governance, the Fiscal Accountability Board should send the university's proposal back to the CHE. The commission ought to have the confidence of state leaders as it brings a higher level of scrutiny to higher education projects.

NOTE: Gov. Nikki Haley vetoed the budget provisos for the Coastal Carolina stadium project, but the vetoes were overridden by the Legislature.

The State: Coastal Carolina's football stadium plan OK'd amid outcry from Gov. Haley

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article97354587.html>

Jamie Self

Coastal Carolina University can move forward with a \$32 million plan to expand its football stadium after a state budget panel approved the project Tuesday, ignoring a higher education panel's veto of the proposal as too expensive. The S.C. Fiscal Accountability Authority approved the project by a 3-2 vote Tuesday. Coastal wants to add 11,486 seats to its stadium, which now has 9,214 seats. The school also plans to add restrooms, a hospitality suite and concession [space](#). Gov. Nikki Haley and S. C. Treasurer Curtis Loftis opposed the project, noting the S.C. Commission on Higher Education had rejected proposals to expand the stadium four times. "If you override CHE today, then why have it?" Haley asked, adding the move would set a precedent for other universities and colleges to move forward on building projects without the commission's support. Approving the stadium project – a proposal that comes as Coastal moves into the Sun Belt Conference – would send a message to schools that they can lobby lawmakers directly for projects and ignore the commission's decisions, giving "every university the ability to say the CHE doesn't matter," she said.

NOTE: Haley vetoed that bill, but lawmakers overrode her veto. Haley said the commission recently had shifted its focus to provide more of a watchdog role over college and university spending. That role would be undercut if lawmakers approved the project despite the commission's veto, she added.

Post and Courier: \$31.8 million Coastal Carolina stadium project approved

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160823/160829756/318-million-coastal-carolina-stadium-project-approved>

Gavin Jackson

By a slim margin, the State Fiscal Accountability Authority approved a \$31.8 million expansion of Coastal Carolina University's Brooks Stadium for Chanticleer football but over the objection of Gov. Nikki Haley. Tuesday's contentious 3-2 vote cleared the way for the university to go forward even after the state Commission on Higher Education repeatedly rejected the costly expansion, citing the potential increases to student fees. Legislators earlier this year circumvented the commission's decision by adding two budget items related to the expansion. It was done to legally secure funding through the authority. Those budget provisos survived Haley's veto pen in June and her criticism Tuesday that the body was setting a bad precedent. "You have just given every university the ability to say 'CHE doesn't matter' and 'We'll just circumvent it, we'll get our lobbyist to it, the Legislature will approve it' and then it will happen," said Haley, who also heads the authority.

NOTE: State Treasurer Curtis Loftis joined Haley in voting against the plan, while the state's ranking budget writers, Sen. Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, and Rep. Brian White, R-Anderson, voted for it. The plan includes a \$22.9 million bond offering to fund the project, with the remainder coming from other university funds and private dollars.

NOTE: "One thing we need to bear in mind is we're not talking about an unfunded liability, those are actual liabilities we have to settle," Eckstrom said in opposition to Haley's stance. "We can speculate that this will turn into one."

WBTW: \$22.9M in bonds approved for CCU stadium expansion project

<http://wbtw.com/2016/08/23/22-9m-in-bonds-approved-for-ccu-stadium-expansion-project/>

Meghan Miller

Coastal Carolina University is moving forward with the multi-million dollar expansion of Brooks Stadium, following a State Fiscal Accountability Authority meeting on Tuesday. SFAA spokesman Delbert Singleton told News13 the SFAA board voted to approve \$22.9 million in bonds for Coastal Carolina University to use on its expansion and renovation of Brooks Stadium. Singleton says Gov. Nikki Haley was the only person to not vote in favor of the move. The expansion of Brooks Stadium at Coastal Carolina University is needed to comply with an agreement between the university and the Sun Belt Conference. Coastal Carolina University Athletic Director Matt Hogue says the project, in all, will cost \$31.8 million, up from a previous \$29.9 million. Approximately \$22.9 million comes from bonds approved by the SFAA Tuesday and the rest from a "combination of private sources and debt service allocation previously approved by the Coastal Carolina University Board of Trustees." Hogue says the expansion would put Brooks Stadium at 20,700 capacity. Approximately 1,100 seats previously cut from the project – totaling nearly \$2 million – have been re-added. Hogue says the school had the ability to re-add the seats if funding for them was privately sourced. University officials say they will immediately work with engineers and architects to put together plans for the bidding process. Those plans must first be approved by the state engineer in order to be put out to bid.

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