



SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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To: Dalton Floyd, Chair, Committee on Planning and Assessment

From: Alan S. Krech, Sr. Exec. Asst. for Policy & Administration *AK*

Re: Mission Statement Evaluation

On September 30, 1997, the Committee on Planning and Assessment approved mission statements for two senior institutions and nine technical colleges. Since that time, the staff has received requests to recommend approval for two additional mission statements for senior institutions and four additional mission statements for technical colleges. Staff recommendations for these additional institutions are found below:

1. USC-Spartanburg - The staff committee that originally reviewed mission statements pointed out that the USC-Spartanburg mission statement included specific reference to an associate degree in nursing when Act 359 states that the mission of four-year colleges and universities is "(a) college-level baccalaureate education and selected master's degrees which lead to employment or continued education, or both, except for doctoral degrees currently being offered." Following extensive discussions with the chancellor and his representatives, the staff has agreed that it is appropriate to "grandfather" the associate degree in nursing at USC-Spartanburg, a degree that is consistent with the founding mission of the institution and is considered essential by the institution's community. The staff committee also commented on the need for more specificity regarding the major schools and/or programs at this institution. That description is now considered adequate.

Recommendation: Approval

2. Winthrop University - The staff committee pointed out that Winthrop University did not delineate specific levels of undergraduate and graduate degrees in its "Vision of Distinction" and did not state that it is a public institution. The staff was also of the opinion that the statement needed to be significantly shortened and put in the present tense, rather than focusing as a "vision statement" on what the institution "will become." In an effort to respond expeditiously, Winthrop has made changes and additions to the introduction to its former mission statement, while preparing a new, shorter mission statement in the present tense for Board approval in June. The revised introduction states that Winthrop is a public institution and appropriately addresses the specific degree levels.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends approval of the revised vision statement pending Board approval and submission of the new mission statement that is currently under preparation.

3. **Aiken Technical College** - The date and indication of approval were missing from the statement originally submitted. These are included on the new statement.

Recommendation: Approval

4. **Denmark Technical College** - The staff committee recommended more specificity stating that Denmark Technical College is the State's only historically black technical college and its only residential technical college. Both additions have been made.

Recommendation: Approval

5. **Florence/Darlington Technical College** - The staff committee cited the need for more specificity regarding the types of students served by this technical college. Also, the date and indication of approval were missing from the statement originally submitted. Both matters have been addressed in the new statement.

Recommendation: Approval

6. **Greenville Technical College** - The date and indication of approval were missing from the statement originally submitted. These are included with the new statement.

Recommendation: Approval

Guidelines and Process for Staff Analysis of Proposed Institutional Benchmarks, Year Two of Performance Funding

Institutions submitted proposed institutional benchmarks for year two indicators on December 17, 1997. The Commission on Higher Education staff analyzed these benchmarks in relation to the institution's trend data, the targets the institution suggested for the next two years, and the relative progress of the institution in comparison to that of other institutions in the sector.

In the staff analysis, the following five questions were asked about each proposed benchmark:

1. Does it meet or exceed the sector benchmark?
2. If not, does it show progress toward the sector benchmark?
3. Is the movement reflected in the benchmark comparable to that in the trend data?
4. Is the movement comparable to that in the proposed targets for the next two years?
5. Is the movement comparable to or better than that of other institutions in the sector?

These questions are reflected in the attached flow chart showing the initial screening process used by the staff. In applying these questions, the staff used a range of 5% in order to allow for normal fluctuations in data on an annual basis. As the flow chart indicates, proposed benchmarks receiving a "yes" on the first question or on each of the subsequent questions were identified for a staff recommendation of approval.

As a result of applying these questions, the majority of proposed benchmarks were identified for staff approval. For the remaining benchmarks, the staff examined the written justifications provided by the institution, as well as their trend data and targets. Based on this examination, the staff recommended approval when the institution was able to justify an exception for a proposed benchmark or when the institution was attempting to reverse a negative trend by proposing a benchmark consistent with the previous year's performance, with improvement projected in the following years.

In cases where approval was not recommended, the staff contacted the institutions, discussed the problem with the benchmark as it was proposed, and provided an opportunity for a revised benchmark to be submitted. In the majority of cases, institutions elected to submit revised benchmarks. The staff then identified on the "report cards" included in the mailing for the Committee meeting on January 20, 1998, those remaining benchmarks which did not receive a staff recommendation for approval. Staff recommendations were reviewed both by the performance funding staff and again by the directors and the executive director.

It should be noted that this year, just as last year, the implementation schedule has meant that institutions in many cases knew their actual data at the time they submitted proposed benchmarks. In some cases institutions proposed benchmarks that were lower than their trend data because they knew their actual performance for the year was lower. The staff, in fairness to all the institutions, evaluated proposed benchmarks consistently, as described above, without regard to an institutions's actual performance. Staff did not compare proposed benchmarks with actual performance.

In future years, this problem will be minimized since institutions will, for the first time, propose benchmarks in the spring before they know their actual performance for the following year. For this same reason, in future years there will be less likelihood the ratings will be artificially high.

The staff analysis revealed the need for additional guidelines for three of the measures to insure consistency and fairness in evaluating the proposed benchmarks. These are described below:

- 2B Performance review system for faculty
The staff recommended favorably for proposed benchmarks of 80% or more, representing a reasonable level of implementation for the second year of this multi-part measure.

- 3B Average Number of Hours Taught By Faculty
Because of wide variations in proposed benchmarks from one institution to another, staff recommended approval of proposed benchmarks that were within 5% of the of the previous year's performance.

- 7A Graduation Rate
Because of the impact on graduation rates of the favorable job market, especially on students in the technical colleges, the staff recommended approval of proposed technical college benchmarks if they were within 3 percentage points of the institution's average for the previous three years or within 3 percentage points of the average for the sector for the previous year, provided the gradation rate was at least 10%.

For one indicator, 6A SAT Scores of Student Body, the Commission staff is running data again due to some discrepancies in the computing the results for this year compared to last year. The results of that run will be available at the Committee's meeting on January 20, 1998.

**Process for Development of
Staff Recommendations
on Proposed Institutional Benchmarks**

