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From The State

Haley: decision sends "message to universities that they can lobby lawmakers directly for support of projects and ignore the commission's decisions, giving 'every university the ability to say the CHE doesn't matter'"

*Coastal Carolina's football stadium plan OK'd amid outcry from Gov. Haley
Jamie Self
August 23, 2016*

"A state budget board approved Coastal Carolina University's \$32 million plan to expand their football stadium, ignoring a higher education panel's rejection of the project as too expensive.

"The S.C. Fiscal Accountability Authority approved the project in a 3-2 vote Tuesday with support from the state's chief budget writers in the House and Senate and the state's top accountant.

"Gov. Nikki Haley and S.C. Treasurer Curtis Loftis opposed the project, saying the S.C. Commission on Higher Education had rejected proposals for the stadium four times.

"If you override CHE (the Commission on Higher Education) today, then why have it?' Haley asked, adding that the move would set a dangerous precedent for other universities and colleges looking to move forward on building projects without the commission's support.

"Approving the stadium project – a proposal that comes as the university moves to the Sun Belt Conference – would send a message to colleges and universities that they can lobby lawmakers directly for support of projects and ignore the commission's decisions, giving 'every university the ability to say the CHE doesn't matter,' she said.

"How you will ever be able to say that you're conservative, accountable in any way setting standards for higher education?"

"Earlier this year, state lawmakers approved Coastal's stadium project in the state budget and also exempted the Conway university from getting required approval from the S.C. Commission on Higher Education.

"Haley vetoed the bill, but lawmakers overrode it.

"Haley said the commission had recently 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 having rejected it."

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