

**From:** Pitts, Ted <TedPitts@gov.sc.gov>  
**To:** Soura, Christian <ChristianSoura@gov.sc.gov>  
**Date:** 3/17/2014 2:35:59 PM  
**Subject:** FW: EDITORIAL--Bring Commission on Higher Education into merger talks – The Post and Courier

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From: Ken B. Wingate [mailto:KBW@swblaw.com]  
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2014 1:31 PM  
To: Pitts, Ted  
Subject: Fwd: EDITORIAL--Bring Commission on Higher Education into merger talks – The Post and Courier

Ted:

The Commission on Higher Education should be delegated the task of analyzing the merger.

Ken

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "DiGiorgio, Anthony J" <digorgioa@winthrop.edu>  
**Date:** March 16, 2014 at 11:06:32 AM EDT  
**To:** "Ken B. Wingate" <KBW@swblaw.com>  
**Subject:** FW: EDITORIAL--Bring Commission on Higher Education into merger talks – The Post and Courier

Ken---well deserved praise for the article---best---Tony

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20140315/PC1002/140319502/1021/get-objective-view-of-merger>

## Bring Commission on Higher Education into merger talks

So far the debate over merging the College of Charleston and the Medical University of South Carolina has largely taken place in the political arena. Local Reps. Jim Merrill and Leon Stavrinakis have introduced a bill to that end, and a legislative committee has been formed to review the idea.

Persuasive arguments have been made on each side of the issue, though perhaps none as comprehensive as that made by three former chairmen of the state Commission on Higher Education, on our Commentary page today.

<iframe id="4fa801fed8344" name="4fa801fed8344" src="http://ox-d.cordillera.tv/w/1.0/afr?aid=PC1002&cb=INSERT\_RANDOM\_NUMBER\_HERE" frameborder="0" scrolling="no" width="180" height="150"><a href="http://ox-d.cordillera.tv/w/1.0/rc?

cs=4fa801fed8344&cb=INSERT\_RANDOM\_NUMBER\_HERE"></a></iframe>

Which naturally raises the question, where is the current commission on the issue?

Nobody knows, because so far it has not been engaged in the process.

"We weren't consulted," said Julie Carullo, deputy director for the CHE. "Our advice hasn't been sought on that particular piece of legislation."

Ms. Carullo said staff is monitoring the proposal. But the CHE shouldn't be on the outside looking in. It should be the clearinghouse for proposals recommending major higher education changes.

Unfortunately, it's not the first time that the commission has been cold-shouldered on an important higher ed initiative.

That happened three years ago, with the creation of the state's third medical school in Greenville.

By describing it as an expansion of the medical school in Columbia, its proponents avoided a CHE review with the aid of a legal opinion from the state attorney general.

As long as the commission and its staff continue to be marginalized, the process will be guided by politics, not by objective analysis.

Higher education lacks adequate funding in South Carolina, mainly because the Legislature hasn't provided it. But part of the problem is that legislators have been involved in expanding university missions and programs, parochially viewing them in terms of local opportunity and economic development.

There are other issues that need to be considered. Does it make sense academically and practically?

Adherents of the idea will say yes. And political supporters like Reps. Stavrinakis and Merrill, and Charleston Mayor Joe Riley, have answered some of the questions, at least from their points of view.

But the former chairmen of the CHE make telling arguments against rushing into a merger, absent a comprehensive review.

Don't expect the Legislature to support that idea. The legislative merger committee will likely view its role as to determine how to accomplish the goal, not whether it should have been advanced in the first place.

South Carolina needs a strong central authority to determine how and where its higher ed assets are used.

But the Commission on Higher Education is comparatively weak, and absent legislative support it will never be able to approach the role assumed by the Board of Governors in North Carolina, for example.

Indeed, significant decisions apparently can be made almost unilaterally by local politicians and the leaders of individual universities. Witness the proposal to open a satellite campus by Francis Marion University in Mount Pleasant, which so far has moved forward via discussions between town officials and FMU.

There are forces arrayed on both sides of the merger issue, and attaining an objective view will be impossible in such a climate. There is strong political support for the proposal, and the business community, represented by the Chamber of Commerce, endorses the idea.

But most academics associated with each school appear to oppose the notion, as do James B. Edwards, formerly governor and MUSC president, and former senator Ernest F. Hollings, who is actively involved in raising funds for the MUSC cancer center that bears his name. The MUSC Board of Trustees has voted against it. Outgoing College of Charleston President George Benson, in contrast, backs the plan.

The issue should be sorted out while considering the full effects on the two local universities and generally on higher education in South Carolina.

The Legislature isn't the place to do it. It's past time to send the proposal to the Commission on Higher Education for its review and recommendation.

Indeed, the commission should have been engaged in the process from the start.

Sent from my iPad