

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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Interim President and Executive Director

April 9, 2018

The Honorable Harvey S. Peeler, Jr.
Acting Chairman, Senate Education Committee
S.C. Senate
213 Gressette Building
Columbia, S.C. 29201

The Honorable Merita A. "Rita" Allison
Chairman, House Education and Public Works Committee
S.C. House of Representatives
429 Blatt Building
Columbia, S.C. 29201

Dear Senator Peeler and Representative Allison:

House bill 4931 (S.1072) proposes to enable technical colleges to offer an applied baccalaureate degree in Manufacturing. While the Commission discussed the bill at its meeting on March 1, 2018, there was general agreement at the time that more information was needed before the agency could make a recommendation, as requested by the House Education and Public Works Committee. Since our March 1st meeting, Commissioners and staff have worked closely with Greenville Technical College representatives (including President Keith Miller and his administration), staff at the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and S.C. Technical College System administrators. The purposes for engagement include the following:

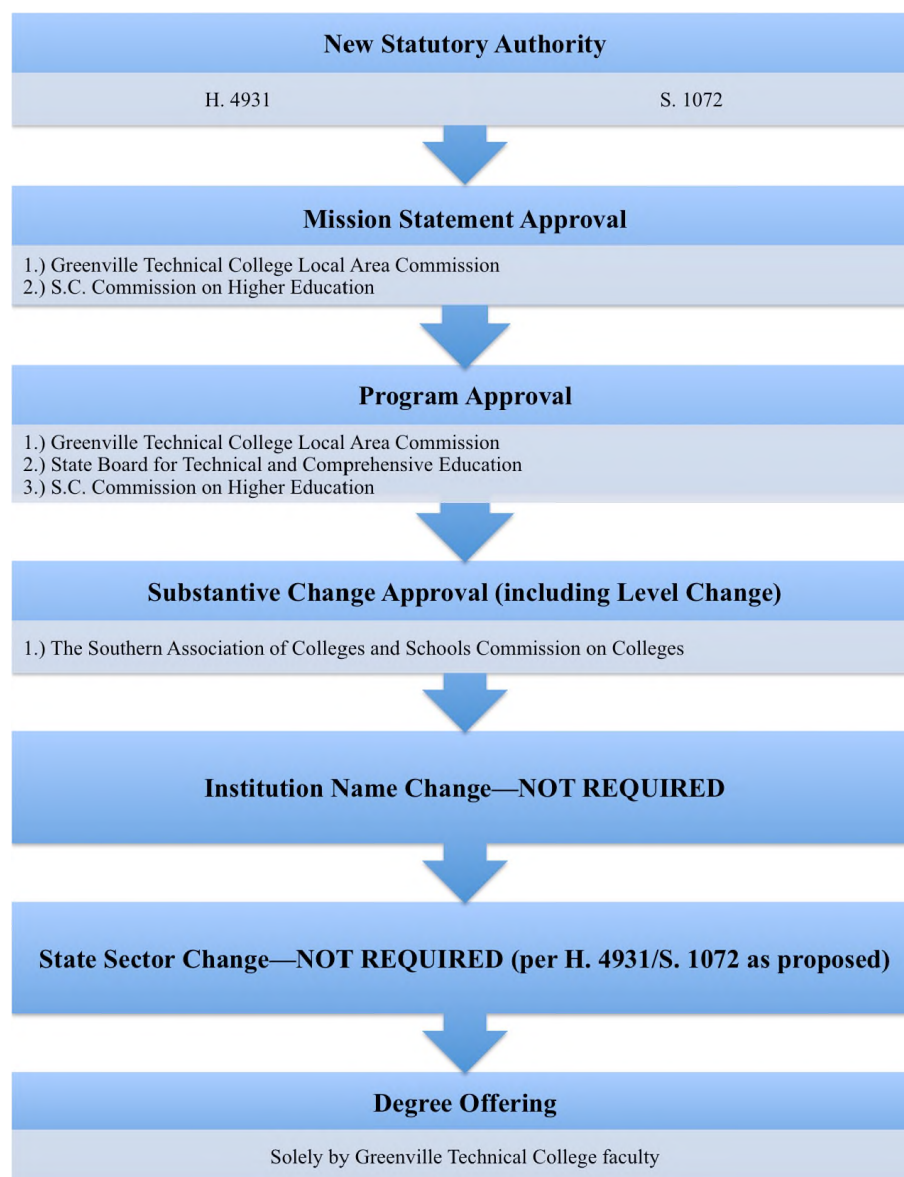
- 1) To best determine statewide need for applied baccalaureate degrees;
- 2) To determine the impact of the proposed bill on the state's higher education institutional sectors as defined in SC Code of Laws 1976, as amended, 59-103-15;
- 3) To verify the state's approval process and sector outcomes for the proposed changes; and
- 4) To verify SACSCOC's approval process and institutional designation outcomes.

Since the question has been raised about the precedent and advantages of offering applied baccalaureate degrees at technical colleges or four-year institutions, we also invited representatives from the University of South Carolina System (USC) and the University of South Carolina Upstate (USC Upstate) to participate in discussion. USC Upstate implemented an applied baccalaureate degree program last year (2017), the first in the state at a four-year institution. Unfortunately, USC representatives informed us they were unable to participate. On March 8, 2018, I sent a letter to President Pastides seeking clarity on USC's position on the proposed legislation and whether or not an applied baccalaureate degree in Manufacturing would duplicate the program at USC-Upstate. I never received a response from President Pastides or his staff.

Upon review of CHE policies and deliberations with the stakeholders noted, Greenville Technical College may apply to its local area commission, the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education (the S.C. Technical College System), the S.C. Commission on Higher Education (CHE), and then to SACSCOC, in this sequence, to offer an applied baccalaureate degree in Manufacturing. All of this,

however, is pending passage of the enabling legislation (H.4931 and S.1072). The pathway for Greenville Technical College to offer the degree entails receiving necessary statutory authority, a mission statement change with its local area commission and with the CHE, and the bachelor's degree program proposal approval by its local area commission, by the S.C. Technical College System, and by the CHE. If the mission and the degree program are favorably considered, these would be included as evidence of the state approvals Greenville Technical College would submit to SACSCOC for continued accreditation approval while offering an applied baccalaureate degree. A table of this process is provided.

Table 1: Applied Baccalaureate Implementation Stages and Notes



For SACSCOC, approval of Greenville Technical College's plan includes mission approval, program approval and SACSCOC's Level Change approval. These constitute a substantive change that the institution submits to SACSCOC as a prospectus. Again, while South Carolina defines public institutions by four *sectors* (SC Code 59-103-15)—research, comprehensive, USC two-year, and technical colleges—SACSCOC, on the other hand designates institutes by one of six *levels*. If successful, Greenville Technical College would transition from a Level One institution (limited to associate degrees as the highest level offered) to a Level Two institution (with the bachelor's degree as the highest level offered). Much of the work the Commission has engaged with stakeholders has been to determine how the bill's

proposed amendment to South Carolina's sectors would impact SACSCOC's level designations, and vice versa. Table 2 summarizes SACSCOC's levels compared to South Carolina's sectors. As proposed, Greenville Technical College would be able to offer the proposed applied baccalaureate degree and remain a technical college in mission and name. A change to a Level Two status does *not* change the sector of the institution as SACSCOC has communicated to us. The CHE is supportive of H.4931 and S.1072 as a first step enabling our technical sector to offer an applied baccalaureate degree in Manufacturing in order to service our state's workforce needs while remaining in the technical educational sector. SACSCOC has assured us that an applied baccalaureate program offered at our Technical institutions, while moving those offering this degree to a Level Two, will not endanger their technical college status and will allow them to remain in our technical college sector of higher educational institutions.

Table 2: South Carolina Sectors and SACSCOC Level Designations
SC Sector Per 59-103-15

SACSCOC Level Designation	
Level I	<i>Offers associate degree as highest degree</i>
Level II*	<i>Offers the baccalaureate degree as the highest degree</i> <small>*Greenville Technical College would move here if program is added</small>
Level III	<i>Offers the master's degree as the highest degree</i>
Level IV	<i>Offers the master's and specialist degrees as the highest degrees</i>
Level V	<i>Offers three or fewer doctorate degrees as highest degrees</i>
Level VI	<i>Offers four or more doctorate degrees</i>

Greenville Technical College representatives state that demand from a breadth of industries in South Carolina for a more highly trained manufacturing workforce has been the impetus for the proposed changes, and that because of its current faculty, facilities, and curriculum development, the institution is uniquely positioned to respond to demand.

We continue to work with stakeholders, and are pleased to provide additional information as requested.

Sincerely,



Jeff Schilz
 Interim President and Executive Director