



**Commission on
Higher Education**

Dr. Conrad D. Festa
Executive Director

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Dr. Vermelle J. Johnson, Chairman, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Consideration of Report on Program Productivity for
S.C. State University, Fall 1998-Fall 2003**

Background

In 2002 the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) adopted a new policy on program productivity, which provides for the review of enrollment and degrees awarded in all degree programs on a biennial basis. This policy can be found on the CHE website (www.che.sc.gov) under Academic Affairs. The Commission has implemented new criteria and procedures that are applied in this report. The attached report provides a list of academic degree programs that have been identified as noncompliant with program productivity standards based on enrollment and the number of degrees awarded. Campuses were asked to review identified programs, determine their continued viability, and report back to staff their intent with respect to the noncompliant programs. This report includes a summary of the findings from the program data for S.C. State University, institutional response from the University, as well as staff recommendations for the continuation or termination of the identified programs.

Evaluation Policy and Procedures

The policy and procedures for academic degree program productivity review require programs offered at public four-year institutions in the state to be evaluated in terms of average enrollment and degrees awarded. The following criteria apply:

1. Each Baccalaureate program must produce an average of at least five degrees awarded and a headcount enrollment of twelve and a half students in the program over the most recent five-year period.
2. Each Master's program must produce an average of at least three degrees awarded and a headcount enrollment of at least six students in the program over the most recent five-year period.
3. Each Doctoral program must produce an average of at least two degrees awarded and a headcount enrollment of at least four and half students in the program over the most recent five-year period.

Each degree program at each senior institution is reviewed on a biennial basis. As data sources, staff use the Commission on Higher Education Management Information System (CHEMIS) and the Commission's *Academic Degree Program Inventory*. Academic degree programs that meet at least one of the two productivity standards automatically receive continuing approval status from the Commission. Programs which fail to meet the above criteria are either terminated, placed on probation (i.e., provisional approval status), or exempted from program productivity standards.

Degree programs are placed on probationary status for up to a four-year period, during which time institutions will be expected to enhance degree program enrollment and degrees awarded. Institutions will have 60 days from the date of Commission action on initial probationary status to provide the Commission with a plan for enhancing the program to meet the degree program productivity policy within the four-year probationary period. At the end of the probationary period, the Commission will recommend continuing approval status for programs meeting program productivity standards and termination of programs that again fail to meet the standards. However, the Commission may remove probationary status from such programs as early as the next biennial degree program productivity review, if warranted.

On a program-by-program basis, the Commission will entertain exemptions to the academic program productivity standards, if appropriate justification can be provided. In most cases, programs approved for exemption will be considered essential to the basic mission of the American university (i.e., the arts and sciences) or deemed so unique in their subject matter and value to the higher education community in South Carolina as to make them essential to be offered, even if they typically do not meet the productivity standards.

Exemption requests must be made in writing to the Commission staff (see, Procedure C.2 in the Policy) and must be approved by the chief academic officer

and president of the institution. In most cases, the Commission will award exemptions for the lifetime of a degree program, unless an institution decides to terminate a program. Institutions may select noncompliant degree programs from any degree level for possible exemption. Institutions must re-petition for exempt status for programs that undergo curricular changes requiring Commission degree program modification approval as outlined in the *Guidelines for the Approval of New Academic Degree Programs*.

Summary of Process

The *Program Productivity Report for S.C. State University 1998-2003* is the first report using the policies and procedures adopted by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) in 2002 to evaluate the productivity of programs at S.C. State University. This report provides a list of academic degree programs that have been identified as not meeting program productivity standards based on enrollment and number of degrees awarded. The programs were identified by CHE staff and forwarded to the University for response. S.C. State was asked to review the identified programs to determine the continued viability of these programs, and report back to the Commission. Based on CHE's Program Productivity Policy guidelines, institutions in the state may elect to consolidate or terminate existing programs not meeting current program productivity standards. An institution may also request exemption from the required productivity standards to maintain a program if sufficient justification can be provided. An institution may also make appropriate changes to a program to encourage student enrollment.

In November 2003, all institutions received a list of the noncompliant academic programs identified by the staff review for the 1997 to 2002 academic years. Institutions were asked to review the list of programs and to submit any corrections to the data as well as inform staff as to whether each of the programs should be maintained in their current form, altered, terminated, or exempted. Once corrections were made to the data by CHE staff, the data was run again to include data for enrollment and completions for Fall 2003. Therefore, the list of programs in this report derives from data for the 1998 to 2003 academic years.

For the current period, several decision guidelines for the program productivity review process were implemented. For instance, any program's average score that was no more than 0.2 points away from meeting standard enrollment or degrees awarded scores (as defined by the Commission) was rounded up to match the standard score and given full approval status. Exemption status was granted to Master's programs that are used primarily as "stop out" degree programs for students who are initially enrolled in doctoral degree programs but decide not to

complete the doctorate. Typically, students who select such options take the same courses that are required for students in the doctoral program of the major. In addition, pre-professional programs were given exemption status from the review process. These programs are not degree programs per se but are instead used as mechanisms for allowing students to leave the institution a year early for professional work. Students in these programs then transfer back credits to the program to complete the degree, after completing the first year of professional work (e.g., Pre-Dentistry and Pre-Medicine programs). However, this option is rarely used by students.

Exemption status was granted to programs considered as "unique programs." These programs are considered unique in that they are the only one of their kind being offered by institutions within the state, with subject matters that are of such value as to deem them essential to the higher education community in South Carolina. Without their existence, there would be a void in these areas of study for students who are interested in pursuing degrees and careers in these fields.

Finally, staff considered degree programs considered as "critical needs" programs, that is, programs where there is a shortage of teachers (e.g., Health Teacher Education). According to the S.C. Department of Education, "a subject is considered critical if the school districts report that a significantly high percentage of the teaching positions are still vacant in that subject area or are staffed with educators who are teaching on an out-of-field permit, teaching on a waiver, or teaching as substitutes" (S.C. Department of Education 2003, 107)¹. Although exemption status was granted for programs considered as "unique" in the state, critical needs programs should not automatically be granted exemption from program productivity standards. Instead, institutions should be held accountable to develop and encourage growth in these programs. Institutions should work together with faculty to find ways to encourage as well as increase enrollment and graduation numbers in these fields of study. Thus, as a recommendation, degree programs considered as "critical needs programs" were given provisional approval status.

Summary of Results for S.C. State University, Fall 1998-Fall 2003

In 1993, CHE staff identified five (8.6 percent) programs at S.C. State University as being noncompliant with program productivity standards then in effect. The Commission's current minimum standards for program productivity (enrollment and degrees awarded) were applied to programs that have been implemented for more than five years, to determine which programs failed to meet the established productivity standards. By comparison with the 1993 study, the

¹ S.C. Department of Education (September 2003). *Teacher Certification Manual*.

current study finds that of the 54 programs offered at S.C. State University, six programs (11.1 percent) were not in compliance with current program productivity standards.

On July 8, 2004, the Commission on Higher Education met to consider the recommendations presented by the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing concerning the *Report on Program Productivity, Fall 1998-Fall 2003*. At the request of S.C. State University, the members of the Commission voted to defer action on S.C. State's programs until the University's major internal reorganization was complete. In addition, the University was to notify CHE staff by September 30, 2004, as to its program recommendations with any related new or modified program proposals to be submitted shortly thereafter and preferably by December 2004.

**S.C. State University
Noncompliant Programs**

| Degree | Program | CIP | Enroll. Average | Compl. Average | Institutional Request | Staff Recommendation |
|---------------|--------------------------|------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bachelor | Art Teacher Education | 131302 | 6.2 | 0.2 | Provisional Approval | Provisional Approval |
| Bachelor | Health Teacher Education | 131307 | 4.8 | 0.6 | Provisional Approval | Provisional Approval |
| Bachelor | Spanish Language & Lit. | 160905 | 1.4 | 0.8 | Provisional Approval | Provisional Approval |
| Bachelor | Physics, General | 400801 | 5.2 | 1.4 | Provisional Approval | Provisional Approval |
| Bachelor | Music Performance | 500903 | 9 | 1.2 | Provisional Approval | Provisional Approval |
| Bachelor | French Language & Lit. | 500903 | 0.4 | 0.2 | Provisional Approval | Provisional Approval |

Total Programs: 54
Noncompliant Programs: 6
Percent: 11.1

Discussion:

S.C. State University is currently restructuring its academic programs and has not yet completed the hiring process for a new provost and all new deans. The President of the University has requested that S.C. State be given additional time to complete these hirings so the new provost and deans can participate in deliberations concerning the future of the non-compliant programs listed above.

The initial extension was granted from July to September, 2004, but in effect has been extended from July to February, with no intervening action taken on the programs. The President has requested additional time to consider whether any programs should be terminated or restructured so that a new provost and deans can participate in deciding what to do with respect to these programs. He has agreed to a provisional approval status until the end of this academic year by which time he expects to complete the hiring of his staff.

Recommendation:

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission grant provisional approval status for all of the programs at S.C. State University that are not in compliance with program productivity standards as listed above until the University's major internal reorganization and the hiring of a new provost is completed in May 2005, with the University to notify CHE staff by June 15, 2005, as to its plans for corrective action to enhance, consolidate or terminate any programs.