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Interim Executive Director

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MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Layton R. McCurdy, Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Chair, and Members, Committee Academic Affairs and Licensing *BRH*

Report on Compliance Rates for First-Time Entering Freshmen Meeting All the High School Course Prerequisites (The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, Lander, South Carolina State, USC-Aiken, USC-Beaufort, USC-Upstate, and Winthrop)
FY 2005-06

Act 629 of 1988, *The Cutting Edge*, requires that with respect to admission standards at the public colleges and universities:

- In consultation and coordination with the public institutions of higher learning in this state, the State Commission on Higher Education shall ensure that minimal admissions standards are maintained by the institutions.
- The Commission, with the institutions, shall monitor the effect of compliance with admission prerequisites that are effective in fall, 1988 (Section 59-104-10(A)).

In April 1988, the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs adopted a procedure that requires each institution annually to report on applications, acceptances, and enrollment, and to specify the minimum approximate SAT score (combined math and verbal) that is required of most applicants for admission as freshmen.

In Act 359 of 1996, the General Assembly reiterated the importance of reporting admissions standards. Section 59-103-45(3) again directs the Commission to review minimum undergraduate admission standards.

Extent to Which 2004 Freshmen Met the High School Course Prerequisites

Since Fall 1988, public senior colleges and universities in South Carolina have required that applicants for freshmen admission (who graduated from high school in 1988 or subsequent years) must have completed certain high school courses before being admitted. Since 2003's revised list was adopted, the required twenty units of coursework include:

- 1. Four units of English:** At least two units must have strong grammar and composition components, at least one must be in English literature, and at least one must be in American literature. Completion of College Preparatory English I, II, III, and IV will meet this criterion.
- 2. Three units of Mathematics:** These include Algebra I (for which Applied Mathematics I and II may count together as a substitute if a student successfully completes Algebra II), Algebra II, and Geometry. A fourth higher-level mathematics course is strongly recommended. The fourth course should be selected from among algebra III/trigonometry, pre-calculus, calculus, statistics, or discrete mathematics.
- 3. Three units of Laboratory Science:** Two units must be taken in two different fields and selected from among biology, chemistry, or physics. The third unit may be from the same field as one of the first two units (biology, chemistry, or physics) or from any laboratory science for which biology and/or chemistry is a prerequisite. Courses in earth science, general physical science, or introductory or general environmental science for which biology and/or chemistry is not a prerequisite will not meet this requirement. It is strongly recommended that students take physical science (taught as a laboratory science) as a prerequisite to the three required units of laboratory science outlined in the section.
- 4. Two units of the same foreign language.**
- 5. Three units of social science:** One unit of U.S. History is required; a half unit of Economics and a half unit in Government are strongly recommended.
- 6. Four units of electives:** Four college preparatory units must be taken from at least three different fields selected from among Computer Science, English, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages, Humanities, Laboratory Science (excluding earth science, general physical science, general environmental science or other introductory science courses for which biology and/or chemistry is not a prerequisite), Mathematics above the level of Algebra II, and Social Sciences. It is suggested that one unit be in Computer Science which includes programming (i.e., not just keyboarding) and one unit in Fine Arts (appreciation of, history, or performance).
- 7. One unit of physical education or ROTC.**

NOTE: Each institution may make exceptions in admitting 1) students who do not meet all of the prerequisites, limited to those individual cases in which the failure to meet one or more prerequisites is due to circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the student or 2) students who have taken the Tech Prep (Applied Academics) courses rather than the required college preparatory curriculum described above and who meet all other institutional admissions criteria.

TABLE 1						
Percent of Applicable¹ First-Time Freshmen Meeting High School Course Prerequisites						
	2003 Applicable Freshmen	2003 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2004 Applicable Freshmen	2004 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2005 Applicable Freshmen	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites
Research Institutions						
Clemson	2,767	99.8%	3,018	99.7%	2,903	97.7%
USC-Columbia	3,429	97.5%	3,337	96.1%	3,659	96.5%
Sub Total	6,196	98.5%	6,355	97.8%	6,562	97.0%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities						
The Citadel	553	100.0%	569	100.0%	585	87.9%
Coastal Carolina	1,238	91.2%	1,304	90.0%	1,494	86.1%
College of Charleston	1,860	97.2%	1,940	97.6%	1,984	97.4%
Francis Marion	768	93.0%	746	94.6%	803	94.6%
Lander	547	90.3%	652	92.8%	577	82.5%
SC State	810	100.0%	960	100.0%	1,013	87.7%
USC-Aiken	549	83.2%	599	80.0%	594	84.0%
USC-Beaufort	42	97.6%	140	57.9%	212	68.9%
USC-Upstate	667	89.7%	636	88.5%	709	87.3%
Winthrop	1,059	92.3%	990	94.4%	999	91.0%
Sub Total	8,093	93.7%	8,536	93.3%	8,970	89.5%
Total Sr. Institutions	14,289	95.8%	14,891	95.2%	15,532	92.7%
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC						
USC-Lancaster ²	63	100.0%	66	93.9%	74	90.5%
USC-Salkehatchie ²	12	100.0%	9	100.0%	1	100.0%
USC-Sumter ²	61	100.0%	60	100.0%	58	100.0%
USC-Union ²	18	100.0%	14	92.9%	15	66.7%
Sub Total USC Two-Year	154	100.0%	149	96.6%	148	91.9%
Grand Total	14,443	95.8%	15,040	95.3%	15,680	92.7%

¹Not applicable to foreign students, GED students, and students who graduated prior to 1988.

²At the USC two-year campuses, the prerequisites are applicable only to those students classified by the institution as baccalaureate-ready and accepted as such.

As shown on Table 1, the percentage of all applicable first-time freshmen meeting all of the prerequisites decreased from 95.26 percent in 2004 to 92.7 percent in 2005. The 2005 percentage of students meeting all of the prerequisites is also below the 1999 average of 98.15 percent. This decrease is attributable in large measure to several institutions as follows:

Institution	2004	2005	Percentage Change
The Citadel	100.0%	87.9%	-12.10%
Coastal Carolina	90.0%	86.1%	-3.90%
Lander	92.8%	82.5%	-10.30%
South Carolina State	100.0%	87.7%	-12.30%
USC-Aiken	80.0%	84.0%	+4.0%
USC-Beaufort	57.9%	68.9%	+11.04%
USC-Upstate	88.5%	87.3%	-1.2%
Winthrop	94.4%	91.0%	-3.40%

In 2001-02 the implementation of a third science course prerequisite occurred. From the data and communication with university officials, this increase and requirement of an additional science course appears to be a primary reason for the percentage of students not meeting the prerequisites for the last three years. The 2005 data indicate also that the elective requirements are an area where course prerequisites are not being met. Students apparently take electives that are of interest to them, rather than the recommended electives. This pattern is related, presumably, both to high school academic counseling practices and communications between college admissions officers and students.

Of particular note are those South Carolina institutions whose compliance falls below 90%, since the intent of the prerequisites is to enhance the preparation of students to do well in college. The recent report issued by the United States Department of Education, *The Toolbox Revisited*, indicates that the academic intensity of students' high school curricula still counts more than anything else in precollegiate history in providing momentum toward completing a bachelor's degree (US DOE, February 2006).

As the recently released report for ACT (2006) shows, students who take the core set of courses are more likely to have higher ACT Composite scores than students who take less than the core set of courses. Reports from ACT emphasize the need for all students to develop college and work ready skills, regardless of postsecondary aspirations. The ACT High School Profile Report for the Graduating Class of 2006, South Carolina (released August 16, 2006) showed that a small percentage of students were taking the right kinds of courses. While college readiness improved in all four subject areas in the past year, the majority of the test-takers still lacked college-ready skills in math and science. Data from the 2006 ACT report shows that "ACT score results point to the importance of taking a challenging program of courses in high school and suggest that far too few students are doing so."

ACT 2006 Report South Carolina		
High School Courses Taken by South Carolina ACT Cohort	Percent of Cohort Taking Courses	College Readiness Percentage
Less than 3 years of mathematics	10%	18%
Minimum Core (Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry)	11%	9%
Beyond Minimum Core	NA	36%
Less than 3 years of Natural Science	12%	12%
At Least 3 years of Natural Science	NA	17%

ACT further reports that "one reason why such a large number of college-hopeful students fail to take the core curriculum is that many state graduation requirements have been less demanding than the recommended core [by ACT.]"

Reports of several of the institutions which have in this current year fallen below the state average have indicated that a prime reason for that phenomenon has been a decreasing percentage of out-of-state students meeting the prerequisites, a fact the institutions cannot easily influence. Institutions reported that reasons for lower compliance were due to out-of-state students being admitted from states that did not have the same high school course prerequisites as South Carolina does. The staff analyzed data for first-time freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites by "In State" and "Out-of-State" (Table 2) to determine if out-of-state students were responsible for a decrease in the percentage of first-time freshmen meeting the high school course prerequisites.

	IN-STATE		OUT-OF-STATE	
	2005 Applicable Freshmen	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2005 Applicable Freshmen	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites
Research Institutions				
Clemson	1,888	98.1%	1,015	97.0%
USC-Columbia	2,464	98.3%	1,195	92.9%
Sub Total	4,352	98.2%	2,210	94.8%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities				
The Citadel	244	96.7%	341	81.5%
Coastal Carolina	726	89.4%	768	83.1%
College of Charleston	1,092	98.4%	892	96.2%

	IN-STATE		OUT-OF-STATE	
	2005 Applicable Freshmen	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2005 Applicable Freshmen	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites
Francis Marion	764	95.3%	39	82.1%
Lander	554	82.9%	17	70.6%
SC State	809	86.8%	204	91.2%
USC-Aiken	541	85.2%	53	71.7%
USC-Beaufort	194	69.6%	18	61.1%
USC-Upstate	669	87.6%	40	82.5%
Winthrop	844	94.1%	155	74.2%
Sub Total	6,437	90.5%	2,527	87.1%
Total Sr. Institutions	10,789	93.6%	4,737	90.7%

¹Not applicable to foreign students, GED students, and students who graduated prior to 1988.

As Table 2 shows, out-of-state students did contribute to the declining percentages of students meeting Commission standards. The percentage of first-time, out-of-state freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites is lower than the percentage of in-state students meeting the prerequisites at every four-year institution except for South Carolina State University. With the exception of the College of Charleston, all four-year comprehensive institutions fall below the 93% state average for the percentage of out-of-state students meeting the course prerequisites.

However, the data show that decreases in in-state compliance have also occurred. Six of the ten comprehensive institutions fall below 83% compliance for in-state students meeting the course prerequisites. *These data suggest that all the institutions which have experienced less than 93% compliance with the prerequisites—and especially those which have a large minority of, or an actual majority of, out-of-state freshmen—should explore proactive strategies to inform their traditional pools of potential out-of-state students early and on a continuing basis in these students' high school careers about South Carolina's high school course prerequisite requirements.*

In accord with the Commission's responsibility under Act 359 to "ensure minimal admission standards are maintained by the institutions," monitoring the freshmen compliance rates is an agency obligation important for public understanding. With a decrease in applicable first-time freshmen meeting all the high school course prerequisites for public college admissions at several institutions, the senior institutions whose compliance rate fall below the state average of 93% were asked by the Commission to provide by June 1, 2006, to the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing a report on reasons for declining compliance and a plan of action to increase compliance. These institutions include (The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, Lander, South Carolina State, USC-Aiken, USC-Beaufort, USC-Upstate, and Winthrop).

Table 3.

Institution	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Reasons for Decline	Plan of Action
The Citadel	87.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81.5% of the out-of-state first-time, full-time freshmen met all requirements • Waivers were approved for 6 students in language, 2 in social studies, 13 in electives, and 54 in science • Efforts to recruit students from bordering states such as North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia contribute to the high science waivers (Physical Science is accepted as a science requirement in these states) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform out-of-state students on how SC prerequisite requirements differ from their own states. • When students present a strong record in all other admission requirements, the Citadel has felt comfortable making a limited number of exceptions. The Citadel will be exercising these exceptions more sparingly in the future.
Coastal Carolina	86.1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>English</u>. 3 freshmen did not meet the four-unit English requirement when CHEMIS data file was submitted in October 2005. Final transcripts were received after the submission date, and these students did meet the English requirement. • <u>Mathematics</u>. 11 freshmen did not meet the mathematics requirement when CHEMIS data was submitted. Final transcripts indicate that 6 of the 11 now meet the requirement. Two students were adult learners and should have been coded non-applicable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions Office will monitor the final transcript process in order to ensure that transcripts are received by the October submission date. • The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will monitor coding of students to ensure they are reported in the appropriate category. • The Office of Assessment is currently reviewing the high school prerequisites files of the first-time freshmen who have enrolled for fall 2006.

Responses from the institutions are summarized in Table 3. Several of these reports lack an operational plan to address the decreasing rate of high school students meeting the pre-college curriculum requirements.

Without such a plan, achieving statewide compliance on the high school course prerequisites becomes highly unlikely. Thus, an operational plan from each institution should exist and be followed to meet this need.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission require **The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, Lander, South Carolina State, USC-Aiken, USC-Beaufort, USC-Upstate, and Winthrop** to submit plans of action to increase the rates of compliance with the pre-college curriculum requirements for entering freshman classes of Fall 2007, Fall 2008, and Fall 2009, said plans of action to be both approved and monitored for implementation and effectiveness by Commission staff.

Enclosed: Institutional Responses (n=8)

Institution	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Reasons for Decline	Plan of Action
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science. 100 freshmen did not meet the science requirement. Final transcripts show that 8 completed the requirement, 14 completed Physical and Earth Science but without a lab, 1 student was an adult learner, and 75 students were from out-of-state. 	
Lander University	82.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lander has historically made admission decisions based upon a number of criteria including high school performance, SAT scores and class rank. • Current exception policy allows admission of students who are missing two CHE required courses, provided the two courses are not in the same subject. • A number of SC high schools are enabling students to graduate without meeting the CHE prerequisite courses for admittance to the State's four-year institutions. • Records indicate that students applying to Lander have good high school records, albeit deficient in the CHE required courses. • Most notable areas of noncompliance were laboratory science and electives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lander University will implement a plan which included revision to the university's high school prerequisite exception policy. Plan will be effective for students applying for admittance in fall, 2007. • Lander stated that implementation of such a plan will have a negative impact on EEDA and other legislation requiring four-year institutions to be highly accessible to the citizens of South Carolina.

Institution	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Reasons for Decline	Plan of Action
South Carolina State University	87.7%	<p>8.7% did not meet the science requirement and most took a general physical science course. 8.5% did not meet the elective requirement and most took electives of personal interest rather than college preparation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% of the provisional students were missing the foreign language requirement. Many students did not successfully complete a second year of foreign language. Only 1 year of foreign language is required for HS graduation in South Carolina. • 39% were missing the mathematics requirement. Some students were taking all Math Tech courses or a combination. • 21% were missing the lab science requirement. Many students were taking physical science, earth science and general science. These courses count for HS graduation, but not as a lab science. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of Admissions sent letters in December 2005 to the Fall 2006 applicants missing high school course prerequisites advising applicants to register for the missing course(s) during the spring and/or summer semester at their high school or a technical college. • The SCSU Application was updated to include a High School Course Requirement Sheet. • The SCSU webpage was updated to list the High School Course Requirements. • SCSU Admission Recruiters will be required to ensure that the course requirement sheet is reviewed and copies are provided to guidance counselors during high school visits.
USC-Aiken	84%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USC-Aiken policy allows admission of a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Director of Admissions has been

Institution	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Reasons for Decline	Plan of Action
		<p>student who is missing one prerequisite provided that the missing course is not in English or mathematics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion from admission staff about allowable exceptions for tech prep courses and instances, where students were admitted who did meet prerequisites in English or mathematics. 	<p>charged with making an annual report of all prerequisite exceptions to the faculty Scholastic Standing and Petitions Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of an internal policy of making limited exceptions on an individual basis for students who lack one non-English or math prerequisite. • The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will issue an annual report on the success and retention of students for whom such exceptions have been made. • Admissions standards will be studied by the Freshman Admissions Action Committee of the Enrollment Planning Team. USCA predicts that there will be a tightening of admissions standards.
USC-Beaufort	68.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When USCB was a two-year regional campus, students did not have to meet the requirements. High schools in the area have not, until recently, begun to talk with eighth graders about the importance of taking college prep courses. The fact that USCB is such a new four year campus is the primary reason. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept no student who scores below 750 on the SAT or equivalent on the ACT. • Require that each student who does not meet elective requirements be reviewed by the Admissions and Petitions Committee. • Work with Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, and Hampton County Assistant

Institution	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Reasons for Decline	Plan of Action
USC-Upstate	87.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a review of the 2005 admissions, USC-Upstate stated that their percentage of students meeting all requirements only decreased by 1.2% from the fall 2004 semester. 	<p>Superintendents of Curriculum and their private school counterparts to ensure that appropriate curriculum are offered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with all high school counselors and eighth grade homeroom teachers in the USC Beaufort service area to discuss the CHE admission standards. • Work to reach at the earliest possible date the recommended CHE compliance percentage. • USC-Upstate reviews the entire student record including high school courses, GPA and SAT/ACT scores.
Winthrop University	91%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winthrop University supports the HS prerequisite requirements; however, they reserve the right to make exceptions to the policy. • Exceptions have been made for students that have acceptable SAT scores, above average HS GPA, and justification for not obtaining all the prerequisites. • The vast majority of the freshmen that did not fulfill all HS prerequisites attended out-of-state high schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No plan of action was provided.