

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE TO REVIEW AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ACCESS AND EQUITY PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Commission on Higher Education, the Chairperson of the Committee on Access and Equity and Student Services, along with the Executive Director of the Commission asked that a select group of attendees at the 1998 Access and Equity Conference review and make recommendations on the Program.

A Task Force was formed and focus group discussions were held at the conference. The Task Force also reviewed Access and Equity program goals and data. The group found that despite the highest overall college participation and achievement rates in history for African American students in South Carolina, the rates still remain disproportionately low. In addition, the number of African American faculty is still drastically low. The following recommendations are offered:

1. Broaden the scope of the Access and Equity program to include a wider range of underrepresented groups (i.e., first generation college and economically disadvantaged students, as well as underrepresented racial minorities).
2. Appoint an ad hoc statewide access and equity advisory group that includes representatives from the business community, governor's office, general assembly, civic and community groups, Commission on Higher Education, State Department of Education, and college and university faculty organizations. The committee should exist no longer than nine months and present a written report to the Commission at the end of its tenure (see appendix for specific issues to be addressed). The group should give special attention to (A) clarification of the role of the Access and Equity program as it relates to statewide planning priorities for higher education and (B) the current use of the Scholastic Aptitude Test in admissions and financial aid decisions.
3. Authorize a comprehensive study of Access and Equity program goals, implementation strategies, and outcomes. The study should be completed in six to nine months.
4. Program modifications, including staffing and resource requirements, should be made based on the report of the ad hoc advisory group and findings of the comprehensive study.

The Task Force indicated that current Access and Equity planning and implementation strategies should continue through June 1999. Thereafter, program modifications should be based on findings and conclusions of the ad hoc committee and the results from the comprehensive study.