



REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Name of the Institution: **University of South Carolina - Columbia**

Date of the Review: **March 22 – 25, 2021**

SACSCOC Staff Member: **Dr. Linda Thomas-Glover**

Chair of the Committee: **Dr. Laurie Casteen**
Associate Dean of Students
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA

Programs, Professor of Chemical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering; Associate Dean of Academics Affairs, College of Nursing; Executive Associate Dean for Faculty & Academic Affairs, College of Education; Associate Dean for Instruction, Community Engagement and Research, College of Arts & Sciences and examined policies governing the creation and revision of academic programs/courses in support of the institution's assertion that each academic program contains essential curricular components, has appropriate content and pedagogy, and maintains discipline currency. While the term "academic program coordinator" includes various positions and titles (e.g., undergraduate director, program coordinator, director, graduate director), the institution laid out the qualifications and duties of program coordinators, as well as how Academic Program Liaisons serve as a supplemental level of program quality control. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee supports the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- 6.3 The institution publishes and implements policies regarding the appointment, employment, and regular evaluation of faculty members, regardless of contract or tenure status.
(Faculty appointment and evaluation)

The institution has provided sufficient evidence and explanation to conclude that it has established, published, and implemented comprehensive policies regarding the appointment, employment, and regular evaluation of faculty members, regardless of contract or tenure status. All faculty have an annual performance review that includes a "written review that provides specific evaluative information and an administrative assessment of the faculty member's performance in the categories of teaching, research/creative activities, and service. The review should be sufficiently detailed to aid the faculty member in professional growth and development," per the institution's (main campus and regional colleges) faculty manual. Each college, school, or academic unit develops a written set of criteria complying with the general faculty manual, "all pertinent state and federal laws, and all requirements of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE)." In addition to general faculty employment policies and procedures, specific written descriptions of collateral duties are provided by department chairs. The regional Palmetto College campuses have evaluation and promotion and tenure policies comparable to those of the institution's main campus, but with additional elements appropriate to the teaching and librarianship dimensions of the college's mission. A lengthy and wide-ranging set of examples of the effective implementation of these policies and procedures is provided, including grievance policies.

- 6.4 The institution publishes and implements appropriate policies and procedures for preserving and protecting academic freedom.
(Academic freedom)

The institution publishes and implements appropriate policies and procedures for preserving and protecting academic freedom at an acceptable level. The institution adheres in principle to the American Association of University Professors' "Statement of Academic Freedom." The privilege of academic freedom is protected through the grievance process and extends beyond those with tenure. Publication is via the Faculty Manual, which articulate the Faculty Grievance Policy and Due Process Rights. The Office of the University Ombudsman was established to serve as a neutral and confidential resource for faculty concerns and conflicts and the Faculty Civility Advocate

mediates conflicts between faculty. These are consistent with prevailing common practices. All faculty regardless of tenure status are guaranteed protection in their pursuit of excellence in research, teaching, and service, as outlined in the Faculty Manual. An illustrative example of related policy use and implementation could not be found, nor was there provided a valid explanation for this.

The institution asserts in its Focused Report that there have been no cases of academic freedom violations presented in the past ten years. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee examined minutes from the past ten years of the Faculty Grievance Committee, the oversight body for academic freedom complaints, for the past ten years, and found no evidence of cases of academic freedom violations presented.

- 6.5 The institution provides ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty members as teachers, scholars, and practitioners, consistent with the institutional mission. *(Faculty development)*

The institution rests its faculty development in standards for faculty assessment, measured through unit criteria for tenure and for faculty promotion. Sabbatical leave processes are clearly outlined, allowing extended professional development time. Professional leave without pay is also allowable, on a case-by-case basis.

The institution's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) supports appropriate programming for faculty across the ranks, as demonstrated in the narrative. Its success is measured by the increasing number of faculty participating in said programming. The Center is adequately staffed, and its services range from one-on-one meetings to group presentations. Certificate of Completion programs allow faculty to complete a series of programs through CTE. Initiatives cover the traditional and emerging areas of instructional inquiry, including instructional design, flipped classroom development, integrative learning, and pedagogy. Orientation for new faculty along with targeted programs throughout the year ensure professional development activities are readily available. The Division of Information Technology supports faculty development through training, seminars, and workshops to ensure that Blackboard and other platforms are accessible to faculty. Support is available to faculty both at the main and Palmetto College campuses.

Support for faculty scholarship ranges from internal competitive grant processes and matches for external grants to ASPIRE program funding, allowing innovation to take place in concert with colleagues. The Office of the Vice President for Research provides an array of programs supporting mentorship for minority students, support for sponsored awards management, and compliance.

The institution has support in place for those seeking to advance as academy leaders through a variety of programs, primarily housed in the Office of the Provost. This signifies strong institutional support for these programs.

Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

- 7.1 **The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and**