



May 23, 2025

Dr. Michael Amiridis
President
University of South Carolina - Columbia
206 Osborne Administration Bldg.
Columbia, SC 29208

Dear Dr. Amiridis:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

**New Program-Approval
Certificate in Artificial Intelligence in Business**

Submission date:

12/17/2024

Intended Implementation date:

8/1/2025

Case ID:

SC029490

SACSCOC requested additional information via email on January 13, 2025. The institution's response on May 8, 2025, was added to the record and is reflected in the narrative below.

The institution proposes the implementation of the Certificate in Artificial Intelligence in Business (AIB) housed in the Darla Moore School of Business (DMSB) on August 1, 2025. The target audience for the 12-semester credit hour (SCH) certificate will be working professionals and graduate students interested in the fundamentals of AI applications as well as the impact of AI on business functions, organizational structures, and strategies. The program is expected to be ongoing, with an initial enrollment of 40 students and increasing to 80 students in year five. The program will be offered through distance learning method of delivery. Face-to-face courses will also be delivered on the main campus (Columbia). Those classes will be broadcast in real-time to regional sites through two-way video conferencing. All of the courses in the certificate will also be offered online. The institution was approved by SACSCOC for distance education on December 5, 2003.

The strengths of the institution to offer the AIB certificate include faculty expertise in business analytics and the application of technologies in marketing, finance, management science, and international business as well as the flexible course delivery options and access to the data lab of the DMSB. The rationale for the addition of the program is that it provides graduates who will help businesses and other institutions implement AI applications in the state and beyond. The institution conducted a benchmark analysis of peer and aspirant institutions that focused on number of AI courses and programs offered, financial support, and relevant initiatives in the area. One faculty and two student surveys on AI training were also conducted. Finally, input was solicited from industry leaders in regional organizations and through industry events. That information indicated that



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businesses are shifting from experimentation with AI tools including generative AI to implementing practical use cases.

The program was described in the context of the institution's mission and appears to be consistent. Faculty were involved in approving the curriculum for the certificate through the DMSB Master's Program Faculty Committee, the DMSB Certificate Electives Approval Committee, the Graduate Council in Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, and Related Professional Programs Committee, and finally, the Graduate Council. The institution received institutional approval for the change from University of South Carolina Board of Trustees. Documentation was provided. The institution received state approval for the change from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. Documentation was provided.

The four-course, twelve SCH program can be completed in one year (three semesters). The curriculum, projected course schedule, and course descriptions were provided and appear to be appropriate for a graduate certificate program. The curriculum consists of two core content courses and two electives. Ten program/student learning outcomes were provided. Student learning outcomes will be assessed through exams, projects, and case studies.

The admission and graduation requirements for the program were noted and are appropriate for a graduate certificate. The institution's policies for awarding credit were described and appear to be appropriate and consistent with common academic practice and the federal definition of a credit hour. Oversight of the program will be provided at various levels through the DMSB and the Graduate School. At the program level, the program coordinator will oversee recruitment, enrollment, and academic advising. The AI in Business Evaluation committee will oversee assessment and evaluation for AI related courses. Curriculum development will be overseen by program directors in the DMSB MBA programs.

A faculty roster was provided detailing the credentials of six current full-time faculty. Faculty members appeared to have adequate qualifications for the assigned certificate courses. A primary faculty member assigned for each course in the certificate demonstrates that every course is assigned to qualified faculty. The number of current full-time faculty appears to be adequate for the projected number of students. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications and faculty adequacy is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.

The coursework will not be offered in a compressed timeframe.

The institution's library and learning/information resources appear to be adequate to support the new site. The institution's library resources, including databases, journals, e-books, and streaming media, are easily accessible through the webpage to off-site and distance learners. The institution provided a list of fourteen key journals for the certificate. Students also have access to library collections, databases, and resources through the Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries (PASCAL) and through interlibrary loans. Students are made aware of library and learning/information resources available to them during orientation sessions, through course syllabi, and through individual course orientation. Links to resources and library services are available through



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the library homepage and include subject library guides, citation and special topic guides, tutorials, and FAQs. Access to a library subject liaison for research consultation and support is available to program students by appointment. General point of need assistance is available through Chat Live Online, Ask-A-Librarian, by email, or in-person.

Student and academic support services appear to be adequate to support the students in the program. Services include the Graduate Student Resource Hub, Graduate School Ombuds, Opportunities Bulletin Board, Professional Development, Scholarly Initiatives, Travel Grants, and general services such as international student services, veteran's services, and disability services. The institution's Information Technology Service Desk is available by phone, email, walk-in, or by submitting a ticket. The Knowledge Base includes answers to FAQs on general topics and the Blackboard learning management system (LMS).

The proposed physical resources of the DMSB appear to be adequate to support the program. A description of physical spaces was provided. Most courses within this program are Professional MBA courses, which are delivered from the DMSB in Columbia. The courses are broadcast real-time to regional classrooms using two-way video conferencing technology. Each physical classroom is equipped with a Polycom video conferencing codec, a Crestron processor, a camera, ceiling microphones, and two large monitors (one dedicated to displaying participants and the other for presenting content). Other smart devices allow faculty to host secure course sessions through Blackboard Zoom. No program-specific equipment is required for the certificate. However, the program utilizes KNIME, a free no-code analytic platform compatible with all major operating systems. Offering the program at the site will not impact existing programs or services at the institution.

Financial resources appear to be adequate to support the program. The institution provided a projected budget for the first three years of operation. Revenue included tuition funding and program specific fees. Expenditures included program administration, faculty and staff salaries, and an institutional participation tax of 17% of tuition revenue. No budgetary resources will be allocated to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services related to the change. As the certificate is a part of the Professional MBA program, the institution's contingency plan addresses potential enrollment shortfalls. However, should enrollment in a course fall below sustainable levels, the course will be canceled for that semester and offered later.

The institution's planning and assessment processes appear adequate. The program assessment process occurs on a two-year schedule in which programs report on their assessment data as means to analyze student performance, evaluate program efficiency, and utilize results to influence program revisions. In addition to this process, the graduate program director will document employment and other professional involvement in the field after students graduate via regular submission of information.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Certificate in Artificial



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Intelligence in Business. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of accreditation.

An invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus is enclosed with the liaison's copy of this letter.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. Kelli V. Randall at 404-994-6545 or via email at krandall@sacscoc.org.

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW:/BB:lp

Enclosure (invoice with liaison's copy only)

cc: Mr. Donald Miles, Executive Director Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics,
University of South Carolina - Columbia
Dr. Kelli V. Randall, Vice President, SACSCOC