



July 4, 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
Bachelor of Arts in Communications
Submission date:
12/28/2024
Intended Implementation date:
8/1/2025
Case ID:
SC029844

SACSCOC requested additional information via email on March 21, 2025 and June 1, 2025. The institution's responses on May 30, 2025, and June 6, 2025, were added to the record and are reflected in the narrative below.

The institution proposes the implementation of the Bachelor of Arts in Communications (BAC) located in the College of Information and Communications (CIC) with a launch date of August 1, 2025. The primary target audience was identified as students interested in a communications degree. The projected number of students is 20 in the first year and increases to 56 in year three. The 125-semester credit hour (SCH) program will be ongoing, and students should complete the program in four years (eight semesters). The program will be offered through face-to-face method of delivery at the main campus. Students will utilize the Blackboard LMS for course activities and support. The institution was approved for distance learning December 5, 2003.

The strengths of the institution to offer the program include an experienced faculty with expertise across a range of communication disciplines. In addition, the CIC features research labs specializing in social media analytics and use experience research as well as two fully-equipped media production facilities. Most communication programs are specific, such as those offered in advertising, broadcast journalism, mass communications, and public relations. The rationale for the new program is that the broader approach of the BAC curriculum will allow students more flexibility in post-graduate career options. In the National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook Survey, employers identified the ability to verbally communicate with others inside and outside the organization and the ability to create and/or edit written documents as among the top ten skills they seek when hiring new college graduates. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports media and communications occupations are growing at a rate of 6%.



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The program was described in the context of the institution's mission and appears to be consistent. The institution's faculty develop new academic programs. The Director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications (SJMC), SJMC faculty senators, and Communications faculty participated in the initial discussion for the program. The program was approved by full SJMC faculty vote. The institution received institutional approval for the change from the 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 125 SCH curriculum, a schedule for eight semester (four years), and four student learning outcomes (SLOs) were provided. Assessment measures for the SLOs include group projects designing and executing a survey study, performing data analysis, presentations, and a final report. The final assignment in the capstone course will also be used for assessment. Course descriptions for all program courses were provided and appear to be appropriate for an undergraduate program.

Requirements for admission into and graduation from the program were provided and are consistent with higher education practices. The institution stated that the program will follow existing institutional policies and procedures to grant credit for the courses in the program. The IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) definition of a credit hour is used by the institution.

Overall administrative oversight of the program will be provided by the CIC Dean, SJMC Director, and the School of Information Science Director. The SJMC Director will also serve as the program administrator and will provide strategic leadership and oversight of the program's operations, including managing the program's budget, overseeing curriculum development, leading program-level assessment, supporting faculty appointments, and coordinating interdisciplinary collaboration. The program administrator will be assisted by the teaching assistant professor and a staff member.

The courses in the program will be offered in a traditional timeframe.

The institution provided a faculty roster that listed six full-time faculty members, three part-time faculty members, and one to-be-hired full-time faculty member. The faculty members currently employed appear to be qualified to teach the courses to which they are assigned. Should qualifications listed on the roster be adhered to in the hiring process, the to-be-hired faculty would appear to be qualified to teach the courses they are assigned. The number of faculty appears to be adequate to teach the program. 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 library and learning/information resources supporting the new program were provided and appear to be adequate. Resources include journal collections, media collections, and research databases. The library identified available resources significant to communications students, including twenty-six databases that provide journals, books, conference proceedings, and full-text newspapers and magazines. A sample of peer-reviewed journals were provided. Interlibrary loans are available, and the library participates in the Partnership Among South Carolina Academic



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Libraries (PASCAL) for shared licensing of electronic resources, as well as to request and receive print resources from participating institutions. Electronic resources are accessible via the library's website at all hours. Students are made aware of library and learning/information resources during orientation sessions, course syllabi, individual course orientation, and through class-tailored sessions focused on the need of the subject area or course. Library instruction, research consultations, and general information can be done in-person, via email or phone, Ask a Librarian online chat, and Book a Librarian service. Videos and tutorials are available regarding citation management, database basics, and research.

Student and academic support services provided at the institution are appropriate. Services include advising, tutoring, peer writing support, supplemental instruction, scholarly initiatives, travel grants, disability services, veterans services, career prep, University 101 first-year seminar, and information technology services. The Division of Information Technology offers Help Desk services to assist students and is available in-person, via phone, chat or a ticket through the IT Service Portal. The Division of IT also has a knowledge base for frequently asked questions. Support and training in the use of the Blackboard learning management system will be provided through course syllabi and ongoing instructor support.

The BAC will be housed on the institution's main campus. The CIC space has over 13,000 sq. ft. of classrooms (13) and computer labs (7). Also included in the college space are research laboratories specializing in social media analytics, generative artificial intelligence, and two media production facilities. Students will have access to cameras, computers, audio recording devices, and other various multimedia creation materials. The addition of the program will have little to no impact on the physical facilities.

The institution appears to have a sound financial base and stability. The institution provided a budget for the first five years of the program's operation. The primary source of revenue for the new program is tuition/fees. The budget expenses include pro-rated faculty salaries/benefits, program administrative stipend, pro-rated advising and marketing staff salary, and operating expenses (equipment, supplies, and materials). Allocated support costs include sequence funds for student support and programming, marketing expenses, and the participation tax (17% of tuition revenue). No budget resources for contractual or support services will be needed. The budget demonstrates that revenues will exceed expenses. A contingency plan was provided that should needed revenues not materialize. Should expected revenue not materialize, courses that do not meet minimum enrollment standards will not be offered.

The institutional planning and assessment process was described and appears to be adequate. Program assessment occurs on a two-year schedule in which programs report their assessment data as a means to analyze student performance, evaluate program efficiency, and utilize results to influence program revisions. Assessment data will be reviewed each year by the program administrator, program faculty, and department chair to determine if changes need to be made. The Bachelor of Arts in Communications will follow the institutional assessment process.



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The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Bachelor of Arts in Communications. 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/TBB: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