



June 20, 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 Public Safety Executive Leadership**

Submission date:

12/18/2024

Intended Implementation date:

8/1/2025

Case ID:

SC029560

The University of South Carolina at Columbia proposes to offer a Graduate Certificate in Public Safety Executive Leadership. The prospectus was deferred for the following additional information on January 25, 2025:

1. Provide evidence of the legal authority for the new program, including whether approval is required by the governing board or the state.
2. Provide a narrative with supporting evidence to demonstrate that the number of full-time faculty members will be adequate to support the proposed program.
3. Describe the equipment available for the new program.

The response to the deferral was received on May 30, 2025.

The University anticipates an initial enrollment of three students in the Graduate Certificate in Public Safety Executive Leadership. The new program will be offered in a hybrid format. The University was approved for distance learning on December 5, 2003. In-person instruction will be at the Joseph F. Rice School of Law on Columbia's main campus. The target audience consists of current and prospective command staff police officers in the state. The new program will be ongoing.

In 2022, the University of South Carolina School of Law received \$10 million in funding from the South Carolina General Assembly to develop leadership training for command staff police officers within the state. The proposed Public Safety Executive Leadership program will fulfill this legislative directive.



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The Graduate Certificate in Public Safety Executive Leadership program is designed to provide current and prospective command police officers with current legal, policy, and leadership training. The program will incorporate concepts of evidence-based policing, civil rights, communication skills, crisis management, and community engagement for better public safety outcomes.

The University is well-prepared to offer the graduate certificate program. As the state's only public law school, the School of Law has worked closely with the Criminology and Criminal Justice Department. It is uniquely qualified to provide the state's leadership training for the law enforcement community. The School of Law and Criminology and Criminal Justice Department piloted the proposed curriculum with 32 South Carolina police officers. The officers provided valuable feedback that is reflected in the proposed curriculum.

The South Carolina General Assembly recognized the need to develop law enforcement leaders throughout the state by modernizing training to incorporate concepts such as evidence-based policing, civil rights, communication skills, crisis management, and community engagement for better public safety outcomes.

The Graduate Certificate in Public Safety Executive Leadership will provide rigorous, practical, evidence-based leadership training for law enforcement and other public safety executives in South Carolina. The proposal aligns with the University's mission to educate students, providing research, scholarship, and service that drives community and economic impact for the benefit of the state.

Faculty from the School of Law and the Criminal Justice Department took the lead on curriculum development. Faculty will provide most of the instruction. The Dean of the School of Law and the Department Chair of the Criminal Justice Department approved the program. The program was endorsed by an advisory board of state law enforcement executives that guided program development, including making curriculum recommendations.

The new program was approved by the University's Provost and the Graduate Council. The letters of approval are included in the proposal. The University's Board of Trustees approved the program on March 17, 2025. The approval letter is included in the proposal. The legal authority is the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, which approved the program on May 5, 2025. The approval letter is included in the plan.

The certificate program consists of 18 semester credit hours. The University identified eight student learning outcomes. Assessment methods include examinations of ethical theories, case studies, and real-world scenarios.

Requirements for admissions include an undergraduate degree from an accredited institution, two letters of recommendation (for current law enforcement officers, one letter should be from



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the chief of police or equivalent leader supporting the applicant's candidacy while employed), and an interview. Admissions preference will be given to South Carolina law enforcement officers. To graduate from the certificate program, candidates must complete the required 18 semester credit hours with a grade of C or better.

The University demonstrates compliance with Standard 10.7 of the *Principles of Accreditation*. The University adheres to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition of a credit hour as a unit of measure representing the equivalent of an hour (50 minutes) of instruction for 12 weeks. Each course credit requires a minimum of 700 minutes of continuous and ongoing instructional time. A minimum of one calendar week of instruction with a cumulative total of at least 700 minutes is required for each credit offered. Three-credit-hour courses will have a minimum of 2100 instructional minutes. All courses offered at the University are recorded in terms of semester hours.

Administrative oversight will be the responsibility of the Advisory Board, the School of Law, and the Graduate School. First, the School of Law's Director of Graduate Programs and Program Manager will oversee the day-to-day operations of the program. The University's Graduate School, working with the School of Law, will oversee admissions, registration, and graduation. The Advisory Board will assist with curriculum recommendations to ensure the program continues to address the current issues of law enforcement executives.

The University provided the program of study, course descriptions, and a projected schedule of course offerings. It also provided the qualifications for two full-time and four part-time faculty. The roster also includes four to-be-hired part-time faculty. Academic qualifications and work experience appear adequate for teaching courses in the new program. Additionally, for this graduate program, the university included faculty members' histories of scholarship and research projects, including publications in many journals and books on the subject. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications is the responsibility of the peer review team, which will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC reaffirmation review.

The number of faculty teaching in the new program appears adequate to support the 18 semester credit hours of training. The new certificate program will be supported by two dedicated full-time faculty members with professional experience in public safety and legal practice. Additional faculty from the School of Law and the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice will contribute to course delivery, without adversely affecting their existing university responsibilities. Given the small cohort size, the two primary full-time faculty members are sufficient to support the program.

Library and learning information resources appear adequate to support the new program. The library provides access to physical and digital resources in the program's discipline, including



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databases and journals. Journals include *Police Quarterly*, *Policing and Society*, and the *Journal of Evidence-Based Policing*.

Faculty and instructional support include dedicated subject-specific librarians. Syllabi may use links in Blackboard for articles, streaming videos, book chapters, eBooks, and Open Educational Resources.

New students attend an online orientation session to be introduced to faculty, staff, and program expectations. This introduction will be followed by an associated Blackboard module, containing links to important university support services and learning resources embedded within each course. Students can access online databases and other library catalogs off campus using their username and password.

Student support resources appear adequate to support the new program. Resources include career guidance and a graduate student resource hub.

Physical resources appear adequate to support the hybrid program. In-person courses will be held in the Joseph F. Rice School of Law on the Columbia Campus, a state-of-the-art building that opened in 2017. Some courses may be held in the newly renovated Taylor House, which opened in October 2024. The Taylor House has two dedicated classroom spaces that hold approximately 18 students. No equipment will be necessary for this program.

Financial resources appear adequate to support the new program. The University of South Carolina School of Law received \$10 million in funding from the South Carolina General Assembly to develop leadership training for law enforcement within the state. The goal is to deliver ongoing training and be self-sustaining through tuition revenue once the general assembly's startup funding is expended.

The University provided a three-year budget plan that shows revenues exceeding expenditures by the second year. Net losses will be covered by the \$8,100,000 remaining balance from the original \$10,000,000 General Assembly appropriation. Should anticipated enrollment or costs exceed expectations, the University will utilize the same funds as a contingency plan.

The University has an assessment protocol for all programs within academic units. The program assessment process occurs on a two-year schedule in which programs report their assessment data to analyze student performance, evaluate program efficiency, and use the results to inform program and/or assessment revisions.

The program will be added to the university's assessment schedule. The standard assessment software system will be used to report results on all program goals and objectives. Assessment data will be reviewed annually by the program director, program faculty, and department chair to



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determine if adjustments are needed to individual courses and/or the program, ensuring continuous improvement.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Graduate Certificate in Public Safety Executive Leadership. 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/DDG: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

