



October 24, 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:

**OCIS Approval Limited Review
McLeod Health Florence Campus
555 East Cheves Street
Florence, SC 29506**

Submission date:

7/1/2025

Intended Implementation date:

1/1/2026

Case ID:

SC032545

SACSCOC requested additional information via email on September 1, 2025. The institution's response on October 7, 2025, was added to the record and is reflected in the narrative below.

The University of South Carolina Columbia (USCC) requested approval to offer 50% or more of the Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) at the McLeod Health Florence (Florence) off-campus instructional site (OCIS). The DNAP is a currently existing program that has been offered on the main campus in Columbia for about 30 years. It is also currently offered at the Greenville OCIS. The proposed Florence site is not a branch campus and is located in the same state as the institution's main campus. The target audience consists of registered nurses who hold a minimum of a Bachelor's degree and are interested in becoming clinical practitioners as Certified Register Nurse Anesthetists. Projected enrollment for the program at the proposed site is 4 students per cohort annually. The program is 36 months long, so three cohorts will be enrolled beginning in year three. The methods of delivery of the program will include distance learning (online) with some required face-to-face sessions and will be ongoing. The didactic/classroom learning is delivered via a synchronous two-way learning system. All lectures are recorded by a separate independent *ECHO* recording system. While the didactic courses are delivered through synchronous online means, clinical practice, conferencing, or case-based projects, and on-campus immersions will be held face-to-face. Online course instruction and/or support will be available through the Blackboard Learn Learning Management System (LMS). The institution was approved for distance learning December 5, 2003. The regional DNAP cohort at the OCIS will be under the direction of the main campus in Columbia.



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The institution is well-positioned to undertake this change with a highly successful DNAP program that has received maximum accreditation status (ten years) for the past 40 cycles. The program graduate data includes 100% of all graduates obtaining employment within six months of graduation, and a 95% first time national certification pass rate on the National Certification Exam administered by The National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA). The program prepares graduates to take the National Certification Exam. Recently the institution was approved by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) to increase the program's cohorts to 50 students per cohort. The need to offer the DNAP program at the proposed OCIS was based on the recognized CRNA service gap in the region, which is disproportionately rural with underserved populations. The Florence cohort will bridge critical gaps in care and strengthen ties with local healthcare providers.

The change was described in the context of the institution's mission and Strategic Plan and appears to be consistent. The institution's faculty do not vote on the approval of OCISs; however, they are informed of program expansions into new OCISs through regular channels. Faculty have opportunities to engage in open dialogue at the faculty meetings. Documentation of three meetings was provided. The formal institutional support process for the change followed through support indicated by the USCC Campus Dean, the Palmetto College Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, and the Associate Provost. 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.

Overall administrative oversight of the program is provided by the School of Medicine's Assistant Dean for Clinical Graduate Programs. Day-to-day oversight of the program is provided by the DNAP Program Director with assistance from two Assistant Program Directors. A Clinical Assistant Professor (full-time faculty member) will be located onsite at the Florence Campus and will be responsible for the day-to-day operations on that campus. Duties and responsibilities of the Clinical Assistant Professors will include all areas of didactic and clinical learning, including the environment. This faculty member will report directly to the DNAP Program Director.

The 114-semester credit hour curriculum and a full schedule (9 semesters/3 years) were provided. Four program learning outcomes were provided. Methods of assessment include exams, projects, papers, evaluations by clinical preceptors, and discussion-based formats that allow students to answer an instructor proposed question scenario. Rubrics are utilized to assess the papers, projects, and discussions. Course descriptions for the courses to be offered were provided and are appropriate for graduate courses.

The DNAP Program does not offer a program or courses in compressed time frames.



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Requirements for admission into and graduation from the program were provided and are consistent with higher education practices in a graduate healthcare field. The institution will follow existing institutional policies and procedures to grant credit for the courses in the program. Documentation was provided. The federal definition of a credit hour was given by the institution.

The College provided a faculty roster that included ten current full-time faculty, two current part-time faculty members, and one full-time to-be-hired faculty. Nine of the full-time faculty hold professional track rank. All faculty appear to be qualified to teach the courses in the curriculum. Should the qualifications be adhered to in the hiring process for the to-be-hired faculty member, they would appear to be qualified to teach courses assigned. Evidence of faculty scholarship and research capability as well as experience in directing student research was provided for several faculty members. The number of faculty appears to be appropriate for the projected enrollment. Faculty workload will not be affected by the change. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC reaffirmation.

The institution's library and learning information resources appear to be adequate to support the new site. Program students have access to the School of Medicine (SOM) Library and the Thomas Cooper Library (located on the main campus). The library's collections and electronic resources are accessible to distance/off-site learners 24/7. Discipline-specific databases include *Access Medicine*, *ClinicalKey*, *DynaMedex*, *Embase*, *MEDLINE*, *Ovid*, *PubMed*, and *Scopus*. Fifteen examples of discipline-specific books and manuals were provided. The library has interlibrary loan services through which graduate students may have up to 50 active requests. A majority of the major texts used by the DNAP program are available online via the SOM library 24/7. Access to learning resources is provided for DNAP students via the Blackboard LMS and the SOM and Thomas Cooper online library services. Program students are made aware of library and learning/information resources through the program orientation session, where students are provided an overview of library services, academic resources, and methods of access and can be offered in-person or through digital materials. Students are also provided information about resources via links on a Blackboard course created for each cohort and through *How To* links on the library websites or during library instruction sessions. To ensure that instruction in the use of resources is available regardless of location, the library provides how-to tutorials and research guides on the libraries' homepages. A research guide for Nurse Anesthesia is available. Point of need assistance as well as research assistance from a librarian is available via phone, email, chat, *Ask A Librarian*, and by appointment.

Academic and student support resources appear to be adequate to support the program at the site. Services include the Graduate Student Resource Hub, the Graduate School Ombuds, an Opportunities Bulletin Board (announcements and learning opportunities), professional development, scholarly initiatives, travel grants, international student services, veteran services, and disability services. Students have access to general instructional technologies support



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through the IT Service Desk by phone, chat, ticket, or Knowledge Base. Support for the Blackboard LMS is available 24/7 by phone or ticket.

The physical resources of the Florence OCIS appear to be adequate to support the program. The proposed site has been assigned a dedicated classroom that will allow up to 6 students. The classroom will be equipped with robust multimedia equipment and will include two-way synchronous AV communication. Students are required to have a computer upon program entry. There will be minimal to no impact on current physical facilities and equipment as a result of offering the program at the site.

The institution provided evidence of financial planning and budgeting to support the proposed change. The institution provided a budget for the first three years. The primary source of revenue is tuition. Expenditures include pro-rated program administration and faculty/staff salaries, facilities, equipment, supplies, materials, and library resources. Revenue exceeds expenses beginning the second year. No resources directed to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services will be needed. As a contingency should enrollment numbers decline, the institution can scale back the number of course sections offered at the site.

The institution's planning and assessment processes appear adequate. Program assessment occurs on a two-year schedule in which programs report their assessment data as means to analyze student performance, evaluate program efficiency, and use results to influence program and/or assessment revisions. Assessment data will be reviewed each year by the program director, program faculty, and department chair to determine if changes need to be made. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the site will include student evaluations, classroom environments, and clinical sites and services. The DNAP program at the Florence site will participate in the assessment process.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the McLeod Health Florence Campus off-campus instructional site (OCIS). It was the decision of the Board to approve the site 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. Mckeone at (404) 994-6545 or via email at kmckeone@sacscoc.org.



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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen L. Pruitt".

Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D.
President

SLP/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. Mckeone, Vice President, SACSCOC