



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

PALMETTO COLLEGE

Palmetto College Faculty Senate

Microsoft Teams

Friday, February 20, 2026

Morning Session 9:30 - 10:45 AM

Welcome, Dr. Steve Lownes

Report, Dr. Craig Wilson

Report, Dr. Walt Collins

Report, Dr. Pat Lawrence on CPHE

(The Campus Deans and the Associate Provost will Submit Written Reports.)

Standing Committees 10:45 - 12:00 PM

I. Rights and Responsibilities

II. Welfare

III. System Affairs

Executive Committee 10:45 - 12:00 PM

Deans Meeting 10:45 - 12:00 PM

Break 12:00 - 12:30 PM

Afternoon Session..... 12:30 - 3:00 PM

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order at 12:30pm
- II. Attendance
- III. Correction/Approval of Minutes: [November 14, 2025](#)
Microsoft Teams
- IV. Reports from Standing Committees
 - A. Rights and Responsibilities – Professor Andrew Kettler
 - B. Welfare – Professor Sahar Aghasafari
 - C. System Affairs – Professors Tekla Johnson & R. Mac Jones
- V. Executive Committee
 - A. Chair - Professor Steve Lownes
 - B. *Palmetto College Faculty Manual* Liaison Officer – Professor Kajal Ghoshroy
- VI. Reports from Special Committees
 - A. Committee on Libraries – Professor Andrew Kettler
 - B. Committee on Curricula and Courses – Professor Allen Kanapala
 - C. Committee on Faculty Welfare – Professor Gale Ashmore
 - D. System Faculty Leadership Council– Professor Steve Lownes
 - E. Palmetto College AOE Council – Dean Ron Cox
 - F. Palmetto College Research and Productive Scholarship Committee – Professor Matt Rashotte
 - G. Palmetto College Policy Advisory Committee – Professor Steve Lownes
 - H. Columbia Faculty Steering Committee – Professor Carmela Gottesman
 - I. Other Committees
- VII. Unfinished Business
 - A. Motion on Senior and Principal Instructor Descriptions-Update
 - B. Motions on Grievance-Update
 - C. Motion on PC Representation on Columbia Committees-Vote
 - D. Motion to Update PCPAC Membership-Update
- VIII. New Business
 - A. Motion on Criteria for Senior and Principal Instructor
 - B. Motion on Faculty Manual Liaison-Bylaws Change
 - C. Motion on Faculty Evaluation Updates in Terminology
 - D. Motion on Senior and Principal Promotional Procedures
- IX. Announcements
- X. Adjournment

Palmetto College Faculty Senate

AM Session
February 20, 2026

1. Executive Summary (AM Session):

- The meeting began with a report from Chancellor Wilson, delivered by Dr. Walter Collins, focusing on a five-year analysis of dual enrollment in South Carolina.
- Discussion followed on pending state legislation, including a bill to add more governing structure to dual enrollment, the “Student Physical Privacy Act” (bathroom bill), and the “Merit and Equal Opportunity in Higher Education Act” (anti-DEI).
- The main part of the meeting was a detailed update on the Council for Public Higher Education (CPHE), the new accrediting body. Pat Lawrence provided a comprehensive overview of the standards, the evidentiary guidelines currently open for public comment, and key areas of concern, particularly around Standard 13 on “intellectual diversity” and the need for faculty feedback.

2. Detailed Breakdown by Topic:

Topic 1: Chancellor’s Report & Legislative Update

Dr. Craig Wilson’s Report presented by Walter Collins:

- **Summary of discussion points:**
 - In the Chancellor’s absence, Walter Collins presented a five-year analysis of dual enrollment participation across South Carolina. The review was prompted by renewed legislative interest in reimbursement rates, governance, reporting requirements, and the use of Lottery Tuition Assistance funds.
 - A proposed House bill would expand reporting requirements for two-year institutions using Lottery funds and four-year institutions enrolling dual credit students, though it currently provides no state funding to four-year institutions for dual enrollment instruction. At present, the legislation shows limited traction.
 - Two additional legislative bills were discussed:
 - **H4756 (Student Physical Privacy Act):** This “bathroom bill” extends K-12 rules to public higher education institutions, mandating single-user restrooms and imposing a 25% state funding cut for non-compliance. It passed the House overwhelmingly but now sits in the Senate Education Committee, a similar fate to last session’s anti-DEI bill.

- **H4604 (Merit and Equal Opportunity in Higher Education Act):** This bill proposes eliminating DEI structures and race-conscious considerations in admissions, hiring, promotion, and retention, emphasizing merit-based systems. It remains on committee with no movement reported.
- A USC lobbyist noted that only about 5% of proposed legislation passes, and much of it is “signaling” for political purposes, especially in an election year. Budgeting will likely be the legislature’s main focus for the remainder of the term.

Topic 2: Council for Public Higher Education (CPHE)

Update Presented by: Pat Lawrence and Walter Collins

- **Summary of discussion points:**

- The evidentiary guidelines for the CPHE standards are currently open for a public feedback period. This is a critical and likely final opportunity for comment.
- The feedback submission process uses AI to synthesize comments, so it is strategic for multiple people to raise the same substantive concerns to give them more weight.
- **Key changes in the current draft:** References to specific executive orders were removed, making the document less tied to transient policies. The academic freedom guidelines are now considered quite robust, protecting faculty’s primary role in curriculum and teaching.
- **Areas of ongoing concern:**
 - **Standard 13 (Intellectual Diversity):** This remains a “political lightning rod.” While language has improved (e.g., removing “political diversity” and stipulating it’s not about counting faculty’s personal politics), new language around “civil discourse” raises concern it could be potentially misused or politicized.
 - **Conflict of Interest:** The conflict-of-interest standards are vague and not well-developed. They lack guidance on what constitutes a good policy.
 - **Academic Excellence:** The guidelines for this core area are underdeveloped.
 - **Institutional Independence:** There is a desire for stronger protection for institutions against external influence from politicians and donors.
- The CPHE aims to begin accrediting activity by Fall 2027, with UNC Charlotte being one of the first ten institutions.
- The public comment period for its Evidentiary Guidelines closes March 4, 2026, and faculty were strongly encouraged to submit

feedback. AI will synthesize comments, making consistent themes especially influential.

- Since the standards are “stripped down,” the judgment of the on-site accrediting teams will be paramount. Pat Lawrence encouraged faculty concerned about the process to volunteer for these teams.

Palmetto College Faculty Senate

PM Session

February 20, 2026

Palmetto College Faculty Senate Meetings - Combined Summary

Attendees:

- PC Columbia: R. Mac Jones, Matt Roshotte
- Lancaster: Claudia Heinemann-Priest, Brittany Taylor-Driggers, Jerrod Yarosh, Suzanne Penuel, Dana Lawrence, Sahar Agusafari, Peter Seipel
- Salkehatchie: David Dangerfield, Justin Mogilski, Carley Robertson
- Sumter: Tania Hazra, Andrew Kunka, Dip Acharyya, Kajal Ghoshroy, Blane DaSilva, Sher Chhetri
- Union: Tekla Johnson, Ashley Rabanal, David Mitra

Approval of Minutes:

- Minutes from November 14, 2025 were approved by acclamation. No corrections.

Executive Summary (PM Session):

- **Rights & Responsibilities:** No additions to student evaluation questions; reinforce 30-page T&P dossier guideline; Campuses using a “committee of the whole” for T&P must clarify eligibility rules.
- **Welfare:** Equitable use of endowed funds for teaching awards across campuses; reserve funds for student hardship; set award timeline (nominations open Mar 1, campus nominations due Apr 20; fall reviews; spring announcements after provost confirmation).
- **System Affairs:** Motions to update grievance process (including non-T&P), add Dance as a BLS major area, and approve streamlined BLS course substitutions advanced and approved for forwarding to Columbia Courses & Curriculum.
- **Executive Committee:** Raised the need for guidance on expectations for teaching professional AI usage; no decision yet.
- **Faculty Manual:** Multiple updates prepared and one motion passed via poll (Feb 20) to add Columbia committees, remove obsolete references, and update reporting language; additional motions (PCPAC composition, liaison bylaws, evaluation terminology, professional track criteria) to be posted for April vote.
- **Grievance Policy:** Systems Committee integrated administrative edits (email as official channel, business days timelines, direct petition option, inclusion of professional-track promotion grievances); corrected minor typo prior to posting.
- **Professional Track Promotions:** Procedures for Senior/Principal Instructor presented; to be posted as motions for April; criteria clarified

(teaching and service focus; documentation standards; service clause aligned with Columbia Manual).

- **Tenure/Promotion language:** Motion approved (via poll) to send back to committee for wordsmithing to explicitly state criteria and applicability by faculty category.
 - **BLS Curriculum:** Senate suspended rules and approved adding Dance as a major area and streamlined course substitutions; both forwarded to Columbia C&C.
 - **Research Promotion:** Plan to showcase PC faculty research at Spring Social (Russell House patio) with book table; explore communication training and brief research presentations in Senate.
 - **AOE/Accessibility:** Push for web/online accessibility compliance ahead of April 24, 2026; noted DEI policy environment updates; campus AOE updates requested before March 27.
 - **Faculty Leadership Council:** 9-month pay over 12 months not supported by current payroll system; recommend multiple direct deposits; campuses to gauge interest and inform Controller's Office.
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2. Detailed Breakdown by Topic:

Reports from Standing Committees

Rights & Responsibilities Committee Report: Speaker: Andrew Kunka

- **Motions:**
 - Three motions will appear under New and Unfinished Business
- **Explorance Blue Student Evaluation Survey**
 - R&R committee considered adding department-level questions.
 - Based on faculty feedback, no new questions will be added at this time.
- **Tenure & Promotion (T&P) File Length**
 - Faculty are encouraged to adhere to the 30-page limit outlined in the Faculty Manual.
 - The limit is advisory, not mandatory, but should be emphasized in T&P workshops.
- **Faculty Manual Revisions**
 - On page 8 of the T&P section: Service is not explicitly listed among criteria for Associate Professor and Professor in the descriptive section. Committee will consider revisions for clarity.
- **Committee of the Whole (T&P) Clarification**
 - Campuses using a "committee of the whole" for T&P must clarify eligibility rules.
 - These rules should be included in the appendix of campus documents.
 - Sumter and Salkehatchie were identified as relevant campuses.

Welfare Committee Report: Speaker: Sahar Aghasafari

- **Mitchell Endowed Fund Allocation Proposal**
 - Committee reviewed the equity in teaching award funding across Palmetto campuses.
 - Proposal: \$750 will be allocated to USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, and PC Columbia to better align funding with USC Sumter and USC Union.
 - Approximately, \$600 of the remaining annual fund yield would be reserved to support the Student Hardship Initiative, consistent with the fund's intended purpose.
 - Implementation is projected to begin in July 2026, pending confirmation of the annual fund yield.
- **Faculty Award Nomination & Review Timeline**
 - Nominations open: March 1
 - Campus nominations due: April 20
 - Committee review: Fall semester.
 - Award announcement: Spring semester, following Provost approval.
- **Tenure & Promotion Workshop Feedback**
 - Feedback from the 2026 T&P Promotion Workshop was highly positive, with participants noting its clarity and usefulness.
 - Recommendations received will inform future planning
 - Committee emphasized maintaining the established timeline for future T&P workshops.
 - Endorsed allocation approach; confirmed award timeline.

System Affairs Committee Report: Speaker: R. Mac Jones

- Three motions forthcoming
 - Updated Grievance Process: A proposal to revise the grievance process to include non-T&P related grievances.
 - Dance as a Major Field: A motion to add Dance as a major field within the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) program.
 - Core Substitutions: A set of core curriculum substitution requests previously reviewed by the campus Faculty Organization. The group worked extensively to streamline the list, separating proposals without concerns (to move forward) from those requiring further discussion. Items with unresolved issues will likely return as separate motions at a later time.

Executive Committee: Speakers: Steve Lownes

- Executive Committee has discussed the upcoming motions.
- Significant discussion occurred about:
 - The committee held a preliminary discussion about concerns related to AI, including whether faculty should be responsible for teaching professional AI usage within their courses or whether

that responsibility falls outside of their individual course curricula.

Palmetto College Faculty Manual Liaison Officer: Speaker: Kajal Ghoshroy

- No new motions
- Manual revisions will be compiled and presented to upper administration after the next meeting.

Reports from Special Committees

Committee on Libraries:

- No report.

Committee on Curricula and Courses

- No report.

Committee on Faculty Welfare

- No report.

System Faculty Leadership Council: Speaker: Steve Lownes

- **9 Month Pay Over 12 Months**
 - Council discussed whether nine-month faculty could be paid over twelve months.
 - Payroll explained that this was previously done outside the official system and was not compliant with policy.
 - The new payroll system does not support a 12-month pay option, and it is not currently a priority to change systems.
 - Instead, faculty can split their paycheck into multiple direct deposit accounts to save for summer months.
 - Faculty organizations are encouraged to discuss whether they want the 12-month option in the future so that interest can be shared with the Controller's Office.
- **Legislative Update**
 - Most proposed bills (about 95%) do not pass.
 - Some recent proposals, such as a post-tenure review bill, reflect misunderstandings since post-tenure review already exists.
 - No major legislative concerns were identified at this time.

Palmetto College AOE Council: Speaker: Dean Ron Cox

- The Academic Inclusive Excellence Officers (AIEO) have met twice since the last senate meeting.
- A major focus is updating web pages and online materials to meet federal deadline of April 24.

- Dean Cox mentioned discussions about the impact of a federal bill and responses to the Modern Think survey connected to the President's Imagine Carolina initiative.
- He shared some teaching resources:
 - Thomas Cooper Library civil rights materials: Thomas Cooper Library is partnering with the Center for Civil Rights History. It includes a digital display that can be used with current teaching materials.
 - A presentation was given at Rosa Parks America because we are at the 70th anniversary of the Montgomery Boycott. As part of it, the Nickelodeon Theater in Columbia will be screening the Film "Boycott: next Tuesday at 6:00 PM.
 - Accessibility compliance push ahead of April 24, 2026 federal deadline for institutions of USC's size; campus notices (e.g., Bob Dyer) sent.
 - Events/resources: Rosa Parks 70th anniversary programming; Nickelodeon Theater "Boycott" screening on February 24 at 6 p.m.; USC Press Black History Month sale; Thomas Cooper Library partnerships with Civil Rights History Center.
 - An event on Sunday afternoon about South Carolina's role in the Civil Rights Movement. USC Press will have a Black History Month sale.
- **Policy environment:** Dean Cox noted that the U.S. Department of Education appears to have stepped back from earlier guidance (known as the "Dear Colleague Letter") that limited DEI-related discussions, though it is unclear what this change will mean in practice.
 - ACLU reports U.S. Department of Education may be retreating from prior anti-DEI enforcement posture.
 - Practical impact remains unclear.
- **Legislative Monitoring:**
 - H 4756 (Student Physical Privacy Act)
 - H 4604 (Merit and Equal Opportunity Act)
- AOE Council meets again March 27.

**Palmetto College Research and Productive Scholarship Committee:
Speaker: Matt Rashotte**

- Committee is focused on three main areas: faculty governance of research, research funding and promoting funding research.
 - Governance: Faculty have governance over their research according to the faculty manual
 - Funding: Research funding largely comes from the federal government.
 - Promoting funding research: The committee discussed ways to support research and explore new funding opportunities.
- To promote faculty research, the committee suggested several ideas:
 - Hosting a USC faculty research conference

- Short five-minute research presentations during Faculty Senate meetings
- Training faculty on how to communicate their research to the public.
- Spring Social:
 - The committee plans to promote faculty research at the spring social event in Columbia at the end of the semester. They hope to include a book table featuring books written by Palmetto College faculty and encouraged faculty authors to participate.

Palmetto College Policy Advisory Committee: Speaker: Steve Lownes

- The Palmetto College Policy Advisory Committee (PCPAC) has a meeting scheduled for next Monday to review several draft policies.
 - Topics to be discussed at the meeting are: policies related to faculty buy-in, freedom of expression, progressive discipline, and incivility.
 - None of the policies have moved beyond the committee yet.
 - They are still in the development and drafting phase and have not been sent out for an open faculty comment period.
 - Once the committee approves drafts, they will be shared with faculty for feedback.
- Progressive Discipline and Incivility Policy Discussion:
 - There was discussion clarifying that the progressive discipline and incivility policies are still drafts and not finalized.
 - Members emphasized that these policies are important because they affect faculty employment and relationships with the university, and faculty are encouraged to review them and provide input when available.
- Membership Changes:
 - The committee is also considering changes to its membership, possibly adding one or two staff members from the Faculty Staff Senate, though concerns were raised about the committee already being quite large.

Columbia Faculty Steering Committee: Speaker Professor Carmela Gottesman

- All committees for the next year have been selected. The committee asked for replacement names but agreed to wait until faculty elections in April due to procedural differences.
- Key discussion points included:
 - **Accessibility compliance:** challenges with making course materials (like annotated documents) accessible for professors using tools like Microsoft Word.
 - **Accreditation and open comment period:** faculty are encouraged to submit comments.
 - **Intellectual diversity:** discussion on its meaning and interpretation.

- **Committee vacancies and replacements needed:**
 - **Libraries:** Andrew Kettler is filling Mac Jones's place; a decision is needed to re-elect him or select a new member.
 - **Carolina Core:** Tekla Johnson's term is expiring; a replacement is needed as she steps down.
 - **Research committee:** No separate election needed, as the representative is the head of the Research & Scholarship Committee.
- Other ongoing terms (no action needed until 2028):
 - David Mitra on Indev
 - Allen Kanapala on Courses and Curriculum
 - Gail Ashmore on Welfare

Unfinished Business

Motion on Senior and Principal Instructor Descriptions Update: Speakers Andrew Kunka and Steve Lownes

- Newly formalized procedures for promotion to Senior Instructor and Principal Instructor were reviewed.
 - These procedures parallel T&P processes but they apply specifically to professional track faculty.
- The revisions along with introductory language for both professional and track and tenure-track faculty were based on recommendations drawn directly from ACAF Policy 1.06.
 - The updates align the new titles with existing policy language.
- Under the current policy, librarians are listed only at the instructor level, with not senior or principal librarian designation.
 - It was commented that the term "librarian" may be outdated, and it was suggested that the title should be changed to better reflect modern roles (e.g. information specialists).
- The committee will not vote on the motion at this meeting. The revised version will be posted on the website under motions for further review.

Motions on Grievance-Update: Speakers: Tekla Johnson and Steve Lownes

- Background:
 - The committee received the charge to update the grievance policy in Fall 2024 from Chancellor Wilson.
 - The committee worked on revisions through fall and spring, shared drafts with faculty, and submitted proof to the provost's office.
 - The Provost Office returned minor edits (e.g. punctuation changes, replacing signature confirmation with email confirmation, and aligning language with Columbia campus terminology).

- The committee has approved those revisions and plans to move forward for a vote this year.
- Key Changes:
 - Expanding the grievance committee's authority to hear grievances related to professional track promotions.
 - Adding professional track promotion to the list of actions subject to appeal.
 - Creating a third grievance category specifically for denial of professional track promotion (in addition to general grievances and denial of tenure/promotion).
 - Clarifying that grievances related to professional track promotion may be remanded to the appropriate local committee (e.g., the professional track promotion committee).
 - Stating that the university president has 20 days to respond to a grievance decision, and that the president's decision is final within the university.
- At the Provost Office's recommendation, procedural updates were made:
 - Replacing certified or signed mail requirements with verified university email communication (with read/receipt confirmation).
 - Revising language so that if a required party fails to act in a timely manner, the faculty member may proceed directly to petition the Palmetto College Grievance Committee rather than simply advancing to the next step.
- The revised motion will be posted on the website for further consideration.

Motion on PC Representation on Columbia Committees-Vote: Speaker: Steve Lownes

- This motion had previously been presented and was eligible for vote.
- Updates included:
 - Added:
 - Committee on Curriculum and Courses; Committee was missing from the Columbia listing but present in the faculty manual.
 - Committee on Carolina Core: New committee
 - Committee on Instructional Development: Formally included PC representation on this committee.
 - Faculty Committee on Research: Updated to specify representation will be the Chair of the Palmetto College Research and Productive Scholarship Committee (or designee).
 - Senate Steering Committee: Updated to specify the Chair for the Palmetto College Faculty Senate (or designee).
 - Removed:
 - Academic Affairs and Faculty Liaison Committee (no longer exists)
 - Senator-at-Large representative (no longer functioning in that format).

- Committee on Conflict of Interest (not formally active): Removing representation on certain USC Columbia special advisory committees, since these are no longer standing committees, but instead operate through volunteer requests.
- Vote:
 - 24 responses
 - Motion passed (Majority vote)

Motion to Update PCPAC Membership-Update: Speaker: Steve Lownes,

- A proposed update to PCPAC membership, specifically whether to add one or two member from the Palmetto College Staff Senate Executive Committee. No vote was taken; the purpose was to gather feedback.
- Currently, the PCPAC has no formal staff representative. Steve Lownes has been informally inviting one to participate.
- Even though most policies reviewed so far have focused on faculty and academic affairs, staff input is important.
- PCPAC appears to function as a Senate committee – this means membership changes would likely be directed by the Senate.
- It was emphasized that PCPAC should remain primarily a faculty committee, though broad representation is valuable. With nine faculty members on a 17-person committee, faculty would remain the majority.
- Adding one staff representative was favored.
- The proposal along with a previously passed update will be posted for consideration.

New Business

Motion on Criteria for Senior and Principal Instructor: Speaker: Steve Lownes

- Creation of Separate Professional Track Criteria
 - Added distinct categories and guidelines for professional track promotions.
 - Included the formal titles of the new ranks.
 - Established documentation standards for promotion files.
- Teaching and Documentation Requirements
 - Clarified that sections on effective and highly effective teaching apply to professional track faculty.
 - Specified that senior instructor candidates must provide sufficient documentation to demonstrate qualifications to the local promotion committee.
 - Confirmed that pay-related language applies to professional track faculty as well.
- Service Requirement Clarification
 - Added language stating that if a faculty member's original contract did not include a service requirement, the absence of

service cannot be used to exclude them from promotion consideration.

- This language was adapted from the Columbia Faculty Manual.
- Discussion on Scholarship and Service Language
 - A question was raised regarding existing language stating that scholarship and service “increase in importance as they are considered together.”
 - The meaning of this phrasing was unclear.
 - It was suggested that the language may refer to overlap between scholarship and service activities.
 - The committee agreed this issue falls outside the scope of the current motion and may be addressed at a later time.
- Post-Promotion Review Question
 - A question was raised about whether senior instructors undergo a post-tenure review equivalent.
 - Clarification was provided that while there is no formal post-tenure review for professional track faculty, all faculty (tenure and professional track) undergo peer review every three years in addition to annual evaluations.
- The revised criteria will be posted as a motion on the website for consideration and will be brought forward for a vote at a future meeting (anticipated in April).

Motion on Faculty Manual Liaison-Bylaws Change: Speaker: Steve Lownes

- The Executive Committee proposed revisions to the bylaws concerning the role of the Faculty Manual Liaison to resolve inconsistencies and clarify responsibilities.
- Background:
 - It was noted that the bylaws contained conflicting language:
 - One section stated that the Manual Liaison did not have to be a serving senator.
 - Another section required the liaison to be a senator and caucus with the Rights and Responsibilities (R&R) Committee.
- Additionally, in practice, the Manual Liaison regularly works with the Executive Committee, creating complications when the liaison is also a senator. This has resulted in one campus (Sumter) effectively losing a voting senator due to the dual role.
- Proposed Changes:
 - Clarify that the Faculty Manual Liaison shall not be a currently serving senator.
 - Designate the liaison as a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.
 - Maintain the liaison’s responsibility to:

- Oversee and maintain the Faculty Manual.
 - Meet primarily with the Rights and Responsibilities Committee, as well as other Senate committees as needed.
 - Report to the full Senate.
- Rationale: The proposed revision ensures:
 - Consistency within the bylaws.
 - Clear separation of roles.
 - Preservation of each campus voting representation in the Senate
- Next Steps:
 - The motion will be posted on the website for further consideration and future action.

Motion on Faculty Evaluation Updates in Terminology: Speaker: Steve Lownes

- Background:
 - Updates stemmed from a meeting with the Provost's Office and focused primarily on terminology revisions and structural reorganization within the Faculty Manual.
- Terminology Update:
 - "Third-Year Review" has been officially renamed "**Tenure Progress Review.**"
 - The change reflects that reviews do not always occur strictly in the third year, even though that is typical practice.
 - All relevant references were updated accordingly.
- Reorganization of Peer Evaluation Language
 - The requirement that *all faculty* undergo peer evaluation at least once every three years was moved from the Post-Tenure Review section to the broader Faculty Evaluation section.
 - This clarifies that the three-year peer review applies to:
 - Tenure-track faculty
 - Tenured faculty
 - Professional track faculty
 - No substantive change was made to the requirement itself; only its placement.
- Post-Tenure Review Clarifications
 - Language was adjusted to prevent confusion between "tenured/untentured" and "tenure-track."
 - The six-year post-tenure review timeline was clarified.
 - Revisions corrected redundancy and grammatical inconsistencies (e.g., replacing "when" with "if" in unsatisfactory evaluation language).
- Highly Effective Evaluations

- Previously approved language defining “highly effective” as sustained effectiveness over time remains included, pending final processing.
- Tenure Progress Review and Peer Review Interaction
 - Discussion addressed whether a Tenure Progress Review satisfies the three-year peer review requirement.
 - Clarification: A tenure progress review counts as the required peer review and resets the three-year clock.
 - If a faculty member undergoes promotion or tenure review, that evaluation satisfies the peer review requirement.
 - Administrative promotions would not automatically count.
- Language Refinements
 - Grammatical improvements were suggested to clarify that “in most cases” modifies the timing of review rather than the population affected.
 - Additional wording was proposed to clarify that evaluation criteria apply appropriately to tenure-track and professional track faculty categories.
- Action Taken:
 - Motion made and seconded to return the document to committee for further clarification and wordsmithing.
 - Vote held; motion to return passed (Majority approval).
 - Item referred back for additional revision before resubmission.

Motion on Senior and Principal Promotional Procedures: Speaker: Steve Lownes

- Overview:
 - Revised procedures were presented outlining formal processes for promotion within the professional track.
- Highlights:
 - Requires:
 - Personal statement (teaching philosophy, accomplishments, growth, service if applicable)
 - Teaching history table
 - Narrative of instructional development and student learning impact
 - Review Process:
 - Evaluation by local professional track promotion committee
 - Dean review (with Associate Dean or Division Chair as applicable)
 - Chancellor approval
 - Criteria emphasize:
 - Teaching effectiveness (primary)
 - Service (where contractually applicable)

- Promotion procedures parallel tenure and promotion (T&P) processes but are handled by a separate professional track committee.
- Clarified that compensation decisions remain at the Dean's discretion.
- Procedures were developed in consultation with the Provost's Office.
- Next Step:
 - Motion to be posted for formal consideration

**Motion for the Addition of Dance as a Major Area Within the BLS Degree:
Speakers: R. Mac Jones and Tekla Johnson**

- Proposal:
 - Add Dance as a major area within the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS).
- Rationale:
 - Strong interest from professional dance partners, including ballet companies.
 - Supports dancers who often defer higher education due to career timing.
 - Aligns with accessibility and non-traditional student initiatives.
 - Offers interdisciplinary flexibility beneficial for post-performance careers.
- Process:
 - Motion to suspend rules
 - Suspension passed (2/3 Majority)
 - Full debate held
 - Vote taken; Motion passed
 - Proposal will advance to Columbia's Courses and Curriculum Committee

Motion for Core Course Substitutions for BLS and BOL: Speakers: R. Mac Jones and Tekla Johnson

- Purpose:
 - Address financial aid compliance by ensuring substitutions align with official programs of study.
- Rationale:
 - Financial aid regulations require courses to align with students' declared program.
 - Approved substitutions prevent students from jeopardizing aid eligibility.
 - Non-contentious substitutions were included; debated items deferred.

- Process:
 - Motion to suspend rules passed.
 - Motion to approve substitutions passed
 - Changes will move forward in curriculum approval process.

Announcements

- **AI Workshop (Spring Break)**
 - Workshop on AI use in writing instruction and prompt design.
 - Open to all skill levels.
 - Will be recorded and posted to a forthcoming faculty resource page.
- **Faculty Social**
 - No event scheduled yet.
 - Faculty encouraged to express interest via email.

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn made and accepted.
- Meeting adjourned.



Dr. Walter Collins
Executive Vice Chancellor/Associate Provost

Report to the Palmetto College Campuses Faculty Senate
February 20, 2026

The following are items that occupy my time:

- **Regular attendance or representation at standing and special called meetings**—OIRAA, Provost, EMT, Academic Programs, SC CHE, and USC and PC Policy Advisory Council.
- **Academic Blueprint:** Campus point people have begun composing each respective campus's Academic Blueprint document which is to be submitted to the Office of the Provost by early March 2026.
- **REACH Act syllabi collection**—We have collected and submitted all associated syllabi for Spring 2026. Thanks for your assistance with compliance for this requirement.
- **Reminder about teaching resources:**
 - The **Center for Teaching Excellence** offers resources for Palmetto College faculty and staff. Find out more about what is happening there at this link: https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/
 - I continue to work with PCCFS leaders to address concerns about a faculty ombudsman resource. More to come as we continue to problem-solve related to this issue.
- **Commission for Public Higher Education** – Standards and Procedures Working Group – Dr. Michael Sonntag and I are participating in this group, as well as Dr. Patrick Lawrence, USC Lancaster, who was chosen by the PCCFS Executive Committee to represent the faculty. Twenty-one standards have been developed through input shared from far and wide, including those sent by our Palmetto College Faculty Organizations. We now have a draft of the evidentiary

documentation in support of the 21 standards, and a meeting was held on Wednesday, January 28 to discuss further. There is currently [a period for public comment](#) related to the Draft Evidentiary Guidance through March 4, 2026. More will be shared as it becomes available. Please see accompanying PowerPoint slides prepared by the USC OIRRA, detailing the activities of the group and timeline as well as the PowerPoint and draft pdf document related to the evidentiary standards as of the end of January.

- The **PC Tenure and Promotion committee** has recently completed its work, and the candidates' files are now under review by the PC Chancellor.
- The University is preparing to launch **a new math placement test** using the McGraw Hill platform ALEKS-PPL. More information will be available soon from your campus leadership.
- **Academic Program Review** – The BOL/BLS degrees, as well as the AA and AS degrees, will undergo Academic Program Review in accordance with policy [ACAF 2.20](#) in CY 2026. We will need several Palmetto College faculty members to participate on the review teams. The BLS will be reviewed this semester with off-site review taking place during the month of March and on-site review occurring April 1-3, 2026. Dr. Chris Nesmith will represent the PC faculty and Dr. Christy Friend will represent the Columbia faculty. Dr. Deborah Marinski and Dr. Paul Abraham, both of the regional campuses of Ohio University, will join us as external reviewers.
- **Explorance Blue** – Instructors can access a recorded training session on Explorance Blue, available at the following link on the Office of the Provost's Student Course Experience Surveys webpage:
https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/provost/faculty/support_for_teaching_excellence/course-experience-surveys/

COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC
HIGHER EDUCATION



ROUGH DRAFT CPHE EVIDENTIARY GUIDANCE

Consultations with Faculty for Responsible Education and Accreditation (FREAA) on Monday, January 26 at 12:00 p.m. EST and 2:30 p.m. EST

Consultation with CPHE Standards and Procedures Working Group at 9:00 a.m. EST on Wednesday, January 28

ROUGH DRAFT CPHE EVIDENTIARY GUIDANCE

Agenda

- Introductions
- Updates
- Goals for Consultations
- Discussion of Rough Draft CPHE Evidentiary Guidance
- Forecasted Next Steps
- Other Topics and Discussion

INTRODUCTIONS

- Name
- Institution
- Department / Discipline
- Faculty Assembly / Senate Role (in applicable)

UPDATES

- October 1, 2025: CPHE Board of Directors adopts accreditation standards.
- October 22, 2025: CPHE issues call for nominations and applications for members and Chairs of CPHE Peer Review Teams.
- November 14, 2025: CPHE announces the 10 colleges and universities in the first cohort to be accredited by CPHE.

UPDATES

- December 31, 2025: U.S. Department of Education awards \$1M FIPSE grant to CPHE.
- February 17, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. EST: *Chronicle of Higher Education* to host a webinar regarding accreditation featuring CPHE Board Chair Mark Becker, Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent, and SACSCOC President Stephen Pruitt. Other participants TBA.

UPDATES

- CPHE Board of Directors considering option to name other “public” (i.e., not “representative”) members of the Board.
- Compositions of CPHE Accreditation Advisory Committee and CPHE Peer Visiting Teams developing.
- Interest among public institutions and systems in joining CPHE continues.
- CPHE plans to file for recognition from the U.S. Department of Education during 2027.

UPDATES

- Refreshed logo
- Refreshed website
- Email newsletters for stakeholders

GOALS FOR CONSULTATIONS

1. Conduct robust discussion regarding the current state of CPHE evidentiary guidance.
2. Arrive at consensus regarding primary matters at issue within rough draft of CPHE evidentiary guidance.
3. Position CPHE to revise evidentiary guidance accordingly.

DISCUSSION

- What are the top three to five matters within the rough draft evidentiary guidance that must be resolved before a revised draft is issued for public comment?
- What is the general state of the rough draft evidentiary guidance?

Detailed feedback welcome via email to lchowell@cphe.org by 12:00 p.m. EST on Friday, January 30.

FORECASTED NEXT STEPS

- Week of January 26: Consultations and revisions
- Week of February 2: Draft evidentiary guidance to be issued for public comment over a four-week period
- Week of March 2: Consultations with FREA and CPHE Standards and Procedures Working Group
- Timeline TBD: Revisions
- TBD: Further consultations
- TBD: Adoption of evidentiary guidance by CPHE

OTHER TOPICS AND DISCUSSION

- Trends in the accreditation marketplace
- Department request for feedback regarding Accreditation Handbook (through January 26, 2026)
- Forthcoming: negotiated rulemaking



Cameron Howell

lchowell@cphe.org | 803-724-8011

CPHE UPDATES



PUBLIC Feedback and Comments

CPHE received 117 comment submittals totaling 457 pages (408 pages, once duplicates were removed). The 117 submittals do not represent just 117 individuals; many submittals contain the opinions of multiple people.



CPHE Evidentiary Guidance (Draft in-process)

Work continues drafting the evidentiary documentation that will supplement the CPHE standards. The goal of the evidentiary documentation is to provide guidance and clarity while also maintaining flexibility for institutions to document compliance.

Goals for CPHE Evidentiary Guidance Document

- **Provide guidance and clarity while maintaining flexibility by mission**
- **Provide introduction regarding operating assumptions and definitions**
- **First edition is for guidance of first cohort of 10 institutions, and guidance will be updated in 2026 for second cohort.**

CPHE Board of Directors adopt set of accreditation standards

The CPHE Board of Directors adopted a set of accreditation standards, and those standards have been [posted to the CPHE website](#).

Integrity, Transparency, and Compliance

1. The institution demonstrates integrity across its organization and its activities.
2. The institution is transparent in, publishes accurate information regarding, and complies with its own policies and practices.
3. The institution documents its compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act, as required by federal regulations.
4. The institution employs conflict-of-interest policies and requires regular declarations regarding conflicts of interest from appropriate personnel.

Continuous Improvement

5. The institution enacts processes for continuous improvement across its organization and activities, assessing outcomes versus goals, applying lessons learned to the improvement of policies and actions, and then repeating this cycle at appropriate intervals.

Governance and Leadership

6. The institution's governance structures and practices demonstrate sound fiduciary oversight and sound executive management.
7. Institutional decision-making is characterized by shared governance in appropriate processes and as documented in appropriate policies.

CPHE Board of Directors adopt set of accreditation standards

Mission, Public Purpose, and Academic Excellence

8. The institution fulfills an appropriate mission.
9. The institution, as a state entity, furthers the public good.
10. The institution strives for and demonstrates its pursuit of academic excellence

Faculty

11. The institution employs faculty of appropriate number and qualifications to support academic programs.

Academic Freedom and Intellectual Diversity

12. The institution's policies and practices support the academic freedom of the institution and its faculty.
13. The institution's policies and practices support the intellectual diversity of its faculty and students in academic and co-curricular life.

Curricula

14. Institutional curricula are appropriate to mission and designed with rigor appropriate to degree level and/or credentialing requirements.

Measures of Program Length

15. Institutional program lengths are appropriate to degree level and/or credentialing requirements.

CPHE Board of Directors adopt set of accreditation standards

Student Learning, Student Success, and Student Support Services

16. The institution employs best practices to measure and improve both student learning and student success as assessed by varied methods.

17. The institution provides student support services of appropriate variety and scope, for both academic and co-curricular purposes.

Fiscal and Administrative Capacity

18. The institution maintains fiscal and administrative capacity sufficient to fulfill its mission.

Facilities and Other Resources

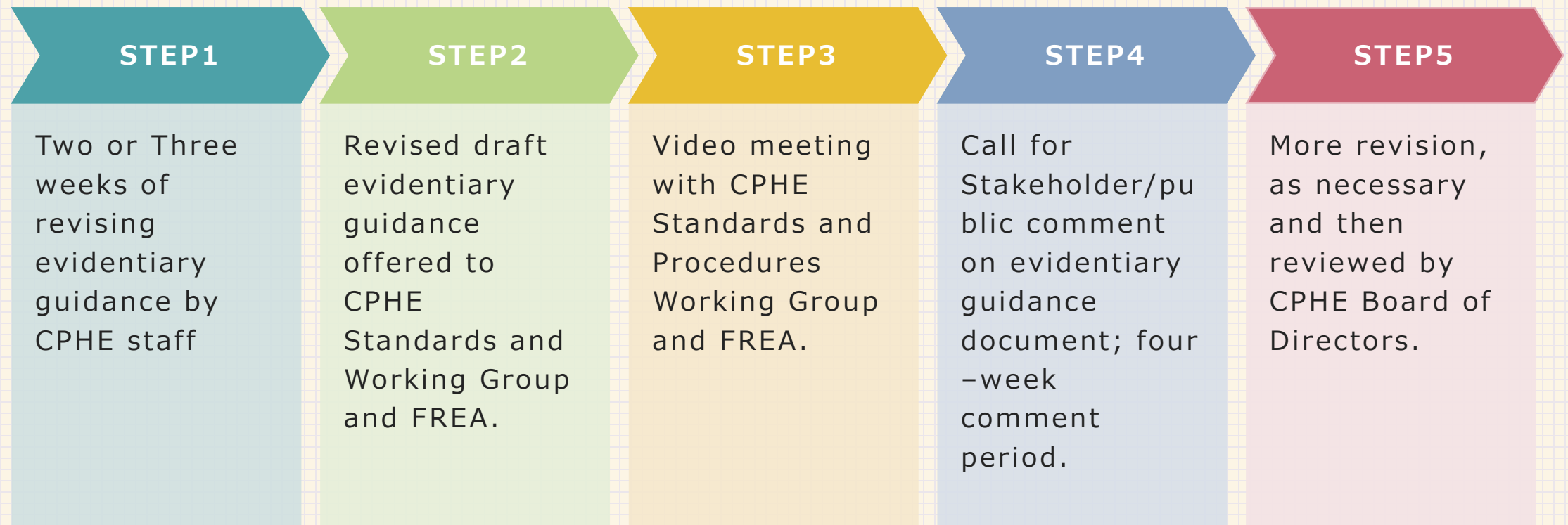
19. The institution maintains facilities, equipment, supplies, and infrastructure sufficient to fulfill its mission.

20. The institution maintains access to scholarly collections, materials, and tools sufficient to fulfill its mission.

Records of Student Complaints

21. Upon the Commission for Public Higher Education's request, the institution will supply records of student complaints—as required by U.S. Department of Education regulations—and will demonstrate adherence to regulations, policies, and practices for management of student complaints.

Timeline





COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION
ROUGH DRAFT EVIDENTIARY GUIDANCE FOR ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The Commission for Public Higher Education (CPHE) adopted accreditation standards on October 1, 2025, after careful consideration of comments and suggestions submitted by stakeholders and members of the public regarding draft standards that were issued on August 19, 2025. Many of the comments and suggestions regarding the draft standards informed evidentiary guidance, which is offered here in the form of a rough draft.

*CPHE welcomes comments and inquiries regarding this draft evidentiary guidance through **INSERT DATE**. Please email CPHE at contact@cphe.org. Constructive advice and suggestions for edits, ideally, will answer some or all of the following questions:*

- 1. What portions of the evidentiary guidance would benefit from clarification? How might revisions lend themselves to greater clarity?*
- 2. What concepts are not addressed within the evidentiary guidance that an institution might expect to see within the evidentiary guidance?*
- 3. What forms of evidence are not addressed within the guidance that should be added?*
- 4. Given CPHE's explicit goal to enable institutions to leverage existing data and reports in answer to CPHE accreditation standards, what forms of existing data or reports might be cited within the evidentiary guidance as appropriate for institutions to supply as evidence?*

After suitable revisions to this draft document, evidentiary guidance will be deployed in support of the first cohort of 10 colleges and universities that have entered into accrediting activity with CPHE. CPHE then plans to revise accreditation standards and evidentiary guidance again, later in 2026, after accrediting decisions have been issued for each institution in the initial cohort of institutions, before work with a second cohort begins.

The following introductory context applies to all CPHE accreditation standards or may be useful generally as an institution assembles evidence that demonstrates fulfillment of CPHE accreditation standards and submits an institutional self-study:

Commission for Public Higher Education

January 20, 2026 Rough Draft

Motivating Assumptions

1. The unit of analysis—the thing being evaluated—for the purpose of accreditation is the institution. Although some references to governance at the level of any university system may be relevant for context, the system is not being accredited by CPHE. Likewise, data regarding an institution's disciplines and programs may illustrate institutional behavior, but disciplines and programs are not being accredited by CPHE; for this reason, CPHE will not request comprehensive data at the level of disciplines and programs, etc. More regarding expectations for comprehensiveness is addressed later in this document.
2. CPHE strives to streamline the accreditation process. For this reason, CPHE encourages institutions to repurpose existing data and existing reports as evidence in answer to CPHE accreditation standards. CPHE will refrain, whenever possible, from creating requirements for new data, new data definitions, or new reporting.

Similarly, CPHE assumes that work products authored for due-diligence processes required of public colleges and universities by their respective states will often suffice for purposes of evidence. Therefore, CPHE will minimize requests to duplicate or to repeat with new requirements for detail any matters that have been inspected already at the levels of units, colleges/schools, institutional executive teams, institutional governing boards, system governing boards, state legislatures, and state advisory or governing boards.

Definitions of Terms and Phrases

1. The phrase “across its organization and [its] activities” appears in CPHE Accreditation Standards 1 and 5. This phrase should be operationalized as describing an institution comprehensively. At issue are all aspects of an institution and all aspects of its behavior. Likewise at issue are all associated organizations that operate in support of an institution or with authority delegated by an institution (e.g., 501[c] 3 foundations, online program managers, etc.).
2. Adjectives recurring across CPHE accreditation standards include “appropriate,” which should be interpreted in most cases within the standards as guided (if not dictated) by law, by mission, by Carnegie type, and by institutional size. Although CPHE strives to treat institutions equitably, differences in governance and mission and size/scope should logically yield some latitude in requirements, expectations, and even evidence.

An institution's focus on mission will be integral to the institution's interpretation of CPHE accreditation standards and how fulfillment should be documented with evidence in an institutional self-study.

3. Definitions of other terms and phrases contained within the CPHE standards appear within this evidentiary guidance, typically beginning with a broad definition before focusing on an operational definition specific to CPHE accreditation.

Data and Evidence

1. CPHE's interests and authority apply to all aspects of an institution and its behavior; however, CPHE neither expects nor requires comprehensive evidence unless expressly noted in evidentiary guidance (often signaled by use of the word "all").
2. Evidence required for submittal within an institutional self-study relative to any standard will be outlined within evidentiary guidance in sections labelled "Required evidence." Furthermore, required evidence will be signaled by use of the verb "shall" within the evidentiary guidance.

Evidence suggested but not required for submittal within an institutional self-study will be outlined in sections labelled "Suggested evidence." Any list of suggested evidence is not comprehensive. Institutions are welcome and encouraged to supply forms of relevant evidence other than those listed, in response to standards.

3. CPHE encourages institutions to supply data at the level of the institution. Other, more detailed data regarding units and departments will be relevant in many circumstances, however. Any samples of evidence should illustrate compliance at levels more specific than the institution in a logical fashion. To the degree that purposeful sampling is useful and repeated across evidence submitted to CPHE by an institution, recurring patterns of purposeful sampling may be sufficient and may be instructive for peer evaluators/readers. For example, supply of evidence regarding academic matters may include some but not all evidence from each of an institution's colleges and schools. To the degree that evidence might illustrate variation within an institution, such evidence may be useful as well.
4. CPHE suggests that longitudinal data may benefit from reasonable time horizons. Data and evidence from the previous three academic years will generally suffice. If,

however, a longer time horizon lends itself to illustrating important or pronounced changes, a longer time horizon is of course useful and welcome.

5. Some guidance in the following pages will cite an [April 23, 2025 Executive Order](#) that directs the U.S. Secretary of Education to “take appropriate steps,” many of which have not been enacted as of this writing. Among these “appropriate steps” is the anticipated requirement that institutions should “use data on program-level student outcomes to improve such outcomes, without reference to race, ethnicity, or sex.” CPHE suggests that an institution should supply data to CPHE as if this anticipated Department of Education requirement is already enforced.
6. Data, evidence, and cell sizes should be supplied in accordance with industry and legal standards that protect individuals’ identities. An institution should protect anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy. Appropriate redactions are encouraged.

Matters Not Addressed in CPHE Accreditation Standards

1. Some standards that appeared in the August 19 draft CPHE accreditation standards document have been combined with one another or deleted on the basis of advice from experts and stakeholders.

Among the standards that have been deleted are the following, with some explanation as to rationale and as to alternate plans:

- CPHE deleted a draft standard regarding federal and state regulations (“The institution complies with federal and state regulations. [In the event that the Commission’s standards conflict with state law, all parties shall understand state law to take precedence.]”). The notion of rectifying any conflict between CPHE standards and law will be addressed instead in CPHE policies and procedures. Also, see text under the heading “Primacy of State Law in Questions of Authority Regarding Public Colleges and Universities” in the following pages.
 - CPHE deleted a draft standard regarding institutional self-reporting of non-compliance with CPHE standards (“The institution reports incidents of non-compliance with these standards to the Commission for Public Higher Education, upon receipt of reasonable evidence of such non-compliance.”). This matter will be addressed in CPHE policies and procedures.
2. Feedback regarding the August 19 draft CPHE accreditation standards sometimes noted concepts that did not appear explicitly within the draft standards. In many

but not all cases, these concepts are addressed within the draft evidentiary guidance for applicable standards.

In other cases, however, concepts that do not appear explicitly within CPHE accreditation standards or evidentiary guidance are intended for description in CPHE policies and procedures. Among these, for example, is the concept of “substantive change.”

Lapses in Compliance

CPHE encourages institutions, when supplying evidence in response to accreditation standards, to acknowledge and describe past challenges, lapses, and insufficiencies. The concept of compliance and self-study embraced by CPHE focuses on the present—not the past. Resolution of past lapses therefore will not suggest current non-compliance.

How a college or university manages challenges is often indicative of institutional maturity and of willingness and ability to improve. It may not be realistic that an institution will not experience challenges. Therefore, CPHE seeks information regarding lapses in the interest of promoting transparency and in the interest of understanding an institution’s adaptability, its ability to manage problems through appropriate processes, and its desire to rise above adversity.

Notes Regarding CPHE Accrediting Processes

Although this document is not intended to describe CPHE, its governance, or its plans for accreditation processes comprehensively, readers may benefit from some practical descriptions here as to CPHE’s anticipated processes for peer review and accreditation.

1. CPHE Peer Visiting Teams of 4 to 5 individuals will assess candidate institutions. Each of these Peer Visiting Teams will be chaired typically by an institutional Chief Executive or Chief Academic Officer and will include at least one faculty member. Members of Peer Visiting Teams will represent public institutions of enrollment size and Carnegie type similar to those of the institution being assessed, whenever possible. All members of visiting teams will participate in orientation and training. Members of visiting teams from a specific university system will not evaluate institutions from the same university system. CPHE Peer Visiting Teams will recommend findings as to accreditation status to the CPHE Accrediting Advisory Committee. (See below.) [CPHE is currently accepting applications and nominations for Chairs and members of Peer Visiting Teams.](#)

2. The CPHE Accrediting Advisory Committee will include institutional executives, subject-matter experts, and faculty. Each Committee member will participate in orientation and training. For purposes of CPHE accrediting activity for the first cohort of 10 colleges and universities, the Accrediting Advisory Committee will not include representatives from any of those 10 colleges and universities. Members of the CPHE Accrediting Advisory Committee will likely include representatives from the six university systems that founded CPHE, along with experts from institutions outside of the six founding university systems. In the event that a member of the CPHE Accrediting Advisory Committee represents a university system, said member will recuse herself or himself from discussion or action regarding any institution from said member's university system. The CPHE Accrediting Advisory Committee will recommend accreditation findings to the CPHE Board of Directors. (See below.)
3. The CPHE Board of Directors will make final determinations as to institutional accreditation on the basis of advice rendered by CPHE Peer Visiting Teams, which is then recommended by the CPHE Accrediting Advisory Committee to the Board of Directors. As the CPHE Board of Directors considers accreditation decisions, any Director who represents a university system will recuse herself or himself from discussion or action regarding any institution from said member's university system.

Processes for appeals regarding accreditation decisions are being determined as of this writing.

The CPHE Board of Directors includes seven members as of this writing: six members representing each of the founding university systems and one "public" member who is not currently associated with a potential CPHE institution. (That "public" member is Dr. Mark Becker, Immediate Past President of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, who was elected to the CPHE Board of Directors during September of 2025.) U.S. Department of Education regulations require the governing boards of accrediting agencies to include one "public" member for every seven members.¹ CPHE's Board of Directors therefore meets this standard. Nevertheless, it is CPHE's plan to recruit additional "public" members

¹ *The Secretary's Recognition of Accrediting Agencies*, 34 C.F.R. § 602, states that an accrediting agency must be governed by a "decision-making body" and that "[a]t least one member of the agency's decision-making body is a representative of the public, and at least one-seventh of the body consists of representatives of the public. . . ."

for a ratio of public members to representative members that will exceed the Department's requirements.

CPHE's governing documents currently cap the membership of the CPHE Board of Directors at 11 members. As noted above, the Board of Directors plans to recruit additional "public" members. The Board of Directors may, at a future date, name members who represent university systems that may join CPHE's governance structure.

Primacy of State Law in Questions of Authority Regarding Public Colleges and Universities

It is common for creation and authority of a public college or university to be rooted in state law or statute. The state typically defines authority as resting with an institutional governing board. Other portions of law or statute may detail various authorities that the governing board may or shall delegate to other parties. Delegation of the governing board's authority is often detailed in institutional bylaws and policies. For example, the governing board typically delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the chief executive, and this delegation is often described in institutional bylaws or policies.

The state has broad authority to define or limit institutional behavior of public colleges or universities, even in cases that may be central to matters that otherwise might be deemed within the parameters of the academic freedom that belongs to the institution. For example, although institutional academic freedom is most often defined to include "who is admitted for study," a state may exercise authority to require a public college or university to award admissions preferences to state residents. Relatedly, a state may exercise authority to limit the percentage of out-of-state students that may be admitted to a public college or university.

The state's authority may extend to matters related to governance, curriculum, and other matters for public colleges and universities.

Organization of This Document

In the text that follows, CPHE offers evidentiary guidance for each CPHE accreditation standard. Guidance is provided *in italics*, as a complement to standards, which are enumerated and in **bold text**:

Integrity, Transparency, and Compliance

- 1. The institution demonstrates integrity across its organization and its activities.**

“Integrity” is a common expectation among standards employed by U.S. accrediting agencies. [Among the Oxford English Dictionary’s definitions of “integrity” is the following: “Soundness of moral principle; the character of uncorrupted virtue, esp. in relation to truth and fair dealing; uprightness, honesty, and sincerity.”](#) CPHE suggests to institutions that an operational definition of “integrity” in relation to accreditation should focus on honesty and fair dealing in an institution’s behavior, including supply of evidence to demonstrate fulfillment of CPHE accreditation standards and including interactions with CPHE generally.

The expectation for integrity therefore applies to each CPHE accreditation standard.

The phrase “across its organization and [its] activities” appears in CPHE Accreditation Standards 1 and 5. This phrase should be operationalized as describing an institution comprehensively. At issue are all aspects of an institution and all aspects of its behavior. Likewise at issue are all associated organizations that operate in support of an institution or with authority delegated by an institution (e.g., 501[c]3 foundations, online program managers, etc.).

As is common among U.S. accrediting agencies, however, fulfillment of CPHE Accreditation Standard 1 does not require supply of evidence. Rather, CPHE will note any alleged incidents that may not demonstrate integrity for an institution to address through communication with and documentation supplied to CPHE. Institutions will find descriptions of this process regarding alleged lapses of integrity in CPHE policies and procedures.

- 2. The institution is transparent in, publishes accurate information regarding, and complies with its own policies and practices.**

[Among the Oxford English Dictionary’s definitions of “transparent” are the following: “Frank, open, candid, ingenuous” and “Easily seen through, recognized, understood, or detected; manifest, evident, obvious, clear.”](#) CPHE suggests to institutions that an operational definition of “transparent” in relation to accreditation focuses on openness, clarity, and ready availability.

In response to CPHE Accreditation Standard 2, CPHE suggests therefore that an institution should demonstrate transparency with evidence that policies and practices are published, readily available, and readily noticed upon revision. Policies and practices at issue are across the institution and its activities.

Accuracy of information regarding policies and practices hinges on to the degree to which enactment of policies and practices adheres to those policies and practices as published—along with the degree to which published policies and practices are current. As such, CPHE suggests that institutions supply evidence in the form of records of enactment that adhere to current descriptions.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence statutes and other governing documents regarding institutional policy-making authority and, if relevant, the degree to which policy-making authority is delegated within the institution. If system-level policies and policy-making are at issue, these shall be supplied, described, and evidenced as well.*
- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence institutional structures or bodies responsible for management, revision, and dissemination of policies and practices—including the degree to which stakeholders are involved in these.*
- *Regarding an institution's compliance with its own policies and practices, an institution shall outline any policies, practices, and structures within the institution that monitor and ensure compliance with institutional policies and governing documents—along with resulting practices. Evidence of the implementation of these policies, practices, and structures will be essential.*
- *An institution shall list and produce (via hyperlinks) all institutional policies and governing documents in relation to Standard 2. If relevant, all system-level policies and governing documents regarding policy authority shall be listed and produced similarly. Evidence of transparency of, accuracy of, and compliance with all of these policies and governing documents will not be required, however. See below for additional guidance.*
- *An institution shall provide its policies and practices, as required by 34 C.F.R. § 602.16, along with evidence of transparency of, accuracy of, and compliance*

with policies and practices regarding the following. Evidence may be restricted to the current academic year:

- *recruiting and admissions practices,*
 - *academic calendars,*
 - *catalogs,*
 - *publications,*
 - *grading, and*
 - *advertising.*
- *In addition, an institution shall provide its policies and practices, along with evidence of transparency of, accuracy of, and compliance with policies and practices regarding the following similarly consequential matters, although not required by 34 C.F.R § 602.16. Evidence may be restricted to the current academic year:*
 - *tuition and fees;*
 - *student discipline, adjudication, and appeals processes;*
 - *hiring and employment processes for all employees;*
 - *promotion and tenure processes for faculty;*
 - *discipline, adjudication, and appeals processes for all employees; and*
 - *grievance procedures for all students and all employees.*
- *An institution shall provide its policies and practices, as required by 34 C.F.R § 602.17, along with evidence of transparency of, accuracy of, and compliance with policies and practices regarding the following. Evidence may be restricted to the current academic year:*
 - *“processes. . . through which the institution establishes that a student who registers in any course offered via distance education or correspondence is the same student who academically engages in the course or program;”*
 - *and*
 - *“processes that protect student privacy and notify students of any projected additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity at the time of registration or enrollment.”*

Suggested evidence

Regarding transparency of, accuracy of, and compliance with institutional policies and practices, CPHE suggests that the institution should supply evidence across the three most recent academic years of review and revision of policies in accordance with any scheduled cadence of assessment; transparency of these policies, accuracy of these policies, and compliance with these policies

across the three most recent academic years; and evidence of management and resolution of incidents requiring correction for insufficient transparency of, inaccuracy of, or non-compliance with policies and advertised practices. CPHE suggests that the same standard should be applied to any system-level policies and practices.

Continuous improvement

CPHE Accreditation Standard 5 regarding continuous improvement applies to the periodic review and revision of institutional policies and practices. At issue are any structures, bodies, and committees charged with the review and revision of policies and practices—along with the cadence by which these reviews and revisions are scheduled.

3. The institution documents its compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act, as required by federal regulations.

U.S. Department of Education regulations regarding standards required of accrediting agencies include this requirement:

Record of compliance with the institution's program responsibilities under title IV of the Act, based on the most recent student loan default rate data provided by the Secretary, the results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews, and any other information that the Secretary may provide to the agency[.]

Required evidence

An institution shall outline policies, practices, and structures (e.g., units or committees) within the institution that monitor and ensure compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act.

Evidence of the implementation of these policies, practices, and structures (e.g., units or committees) within the institution that monitor and ensure compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act shall be provided as well.

Documentation that illustrates compliance over the last three academic years should suffice.

Continuous improvement

CPHE Accreditation Standard 5 regarding continuous improvement applies to the periodic review and revision of institutional policies, practices, and structures

(e.g., units or committees) within the institution that monitor and ensure compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act. The institution should evidence the review and revision of these policies, practices, and structures—along with the cadence by which these reviews and revisions are scheduled.

4. The institution employs conflict-of-interest policies and requires regular declarations regarding conflicts of interest from appropriate personnel.

A complement to CPHE Accreditation Standard 1 regarding integrity generally is CPHE Accreditation Standard 4's focus on conflicts of interest and the appearance of potential conflicts of interest among individual employees, agents, and members of governing boards.

Use of the word “appropriate” in CPHE Accreditation Standard 4 signals the expectation that some institutional personnel conduct work that may present potential for conflicts of interest while other institutional personnel may not. As such, it is neither appropriate nor necessary for some institutional personnel to complete regular conflict-of-interest declarations.

CPHE will not impose an operational definition of the adjective “regular” in relation to declarations, although annual declarations are the norm. Passage of additional time between required completion of declarations will increase the likelihood that new conflicts or potential conflicts have become at issue during time periods between required declarations.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall demonstrate how it determines which personnel must complete conflict-of-interest declarations—while demonstrating also that this determination is enacted as intended. Inclusion of all members of governing boards and all senior executives will be essential.*
- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence relevant policies and practices, provide evidence of implementation, and supply samples of conflict-of-interest declarations—with attention to legal limitations regarding such supply and/or the wisdom of redacting relevant documents.*
- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence officers and structures (e.g., units or committees) responsible for oversight of conflict-of-interest matters.*

- *An institution shall provide evidence of management or adjudication of conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest—with attention to legal limitations regarding such supply and/or the wisdom of redacting relevant documents.*
- *To the degree that institutional conflict-of-interest matters are managed at the level of the university system or the state, documentation of these will suffice, with no expectation that these will be duplicated at the level of the institution.*
- *Supply of evidence regarding the above conflict-of-interest matters over the previous three academic years should suffice.*

Continuous improvement

CPHE Accreditation Standard 5 regarding continuous improvement applies to policies and practices regarding conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest. The institution should evidence the review and revision of these policies and practices—along with the cadence by which these reviews and revisions are scheduled. If, however, conflict-of-interest matters are managed at the level of the university system or the state, institutional control over continuous improvement of these matters will not be relevant.

Continuous Improvement

5. **The institution enacts processes for continuous improvement across its organization and activities, assessing outcomes versus goals, applying lessons learned to the improvement of policies and actions, and then repeating this cycle at appropriate intervals.**

The expectation that an institution employs and demonstrates continuous improvement is one that applies to an institution generally and to many of the notions addressed explicitly within CPHE accreditation standards. As such, regular assessment and implementation of lessons learned from assessment should be interpreted as a sub-category for documentation within many CPHE accreditation standards as well as within CPHE Accreditation Standard 5 specifically. As such, recommendations for descriptions and evidence of continuous improvement are provided within this document, for relevant standards. An institution's citing or restating texts regarding continuous

improvement within its self-study may be efficient in answer to CPHE Accreditation Standard 5 and other standards.

Although CPHE Accreditation Standard 5 refers to the notion of repeating continuous improvement cycles “at appropriate intervals,” CPHE will not dictate the timeline for repeating cycles. An “appropriate” interval may vary according to category of items to be assessed and according to other relevant variables.

Required evidence

An institution shall address continuous improvement generally in answer to CPHE Accreditation Standard 5. In particular, an institution shall cite, describe, and evidence centralized strategic planning, institutional assessment/effectiveness, and similar structures for assessing performance versus goals. Equally important will be institutional practices and structures for applying lessons garnered from assessment to current and future institutional plans and actions.

Suggested evidence

- *To the degree that continuous improvement is executed at the level of units or departments—as complements to centralized/institutional continuous improvement—CPHE suggests that citation, description, and evidence may be deployed selectively but not comprehensively.*
- *CPHE suggests that an institution should address continuous improvement in relation to CPHE accreditation standards, as suggested within the evidentiary guidance for those standards.*
- *Institutional practices that illustrate continuous improvement that may reasonably be cited, described, and evidenced relative to CPHE Accreditation Standard 5 and to other CPHE accreditation standards include but are not limited to the following (in alphabetical order):*
 - *budgeting and fiscal plans,*
 - *curricula,*
 - *governance,*
 - *master facilities plans,*
 - *mission statements,*
 - *personnel (performance of personnel via periodic evaluations, for example),*
 - *policies,*

- *post-tenure reviews,*
 - *program reviews,*
 - *promotion and tenure reviews, and*
 - *strategic plans.*
- *It is common for institutions to assess institutional performance versus the performance of peer institutions. As such, CPHE suggests that institutions should supply information regarding peers, how peers were selected, and the measures for which performance against peers are assessed.*

Governance and Leadership

6. The institution's governance structures and practices demonstrate sound fiduciary oversight and sound executive management.

At issue regarding CPHE Accreditation Standard 6 are the authority by which an institution is established and governed; the authority enacted by system (if applicable) and institutional governing boards; the means by which authority is delegated by the board(s) to other bodies or persons; the management provided by institutional executives; and the degree to which all of these adhere to statute and policy, are ethical, and are aligned with accepted best practices in governance and management.

Similarly at issue are the fiduciary behavior of governing board(s) as corporate bodies, the fiduciary behavior of individual members of governing boards, the management effectiveness of the executive team as a whole, and the management effectiveness of individual executives.

The phrase "sound executive management" should be interpreted by an institution to refer to leadership at the level of the chief executive down and through the institution's organizations and activities. As a practical matter, commentary and evidence of sound executive management need not detail leadership any lower in the chain of command than at the level of deans of institutional colleges and schools, along with senior leadership of all associated organizations that operate in support of an institution or with authority delegated by an institution (e.g., 501[c]3 foundations, online program managers).

Required evidence

- *34 C.F.R § 602.28 states that “an accrediting agency. . . may not accredit or preaccredit institutions that lack legal authorization under applicable State law to provide a program of education beyond the secondary level.” As such, an institution—as a public entity—shall supply, describe, and evidence laws or statutes that provide legal authority from the state to the institution.*
- *Furthermore, in answer to CPHE Accreditation Standard 6, an institution shall describe and cite applicable statutes, bylaws, and policies that relate to system (as applicable) and institutional governance—noting powers and responsibilities possessed by a system (as applicable) and institutional governing board; how any of those powers and responsibilities may be delegated to the chief executive and other persons/bodies; and how powers, responsibilities, and behaviors—in the form of evidence—reflect delegated authorities. An organizational chart will be useful but insufficient to demonstrate specific authorities and evidence of adherence to authorities.*
- *Regarding “sound fiduciary oversight,” an institution shall demonstrate policies and practices fulfilled by governing boards and individual members of governing boards. Documentation and evidence of the board’s fulfillment of the following, based on best practices in fiduciary behavior,² shall be provided as well:*

² *An abundance of resources is available regarding the proper roles of governing boards and of individual members of governing boards. The observations and opinions and suggestions across these resources overlap with one another or echo one another in significant ways.*

Among the resources that may assist an institution in understanding and evidencing the proper roles of governing boards are the following, with the caveat that this list is not intended to be comprehensive:

- American Council of Trustees and Alumni. (2014, August 14). Governance for a New Era.*
- Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. (2023). AGB Board of Directors’ Statement on Influences Impacting Governing Board Independence and Leadership.*
- Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. (2018). An Anatomy of Good Board Governance in Higher Education.*
- Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. (2021). Principles of Trusteeship.*
- Bowen, W. G. (2012). The board book: An insider’s guide for directors and trustees. W. W. Norton & Company.*
- Chait, R.P. (2003). How to help your board govern more and manage less. BoardSource, Inc.*
- Chait, R.P., Ryan, W.P., & Taylor, B.E. (2005). Governance as leadership: Reframing the work of nonprofit boards. John Wiley & Sons and BoardSource, Inc.*
- Eckel, P.D. & Kezar, A. (2006). The challenges facing academic decision making: Contemporary issues and steadfast structures. In P.D. Eckel (Ed.), The shifting frontiers of academic decision making (pp. 1–14). American Council on Education and Praeger.*

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- *Hiring, evaluating, and—as necessary—terminating the employment of the chief executive officer.*
- *Executing fiduciary responsibilities.*
- *Operating as a corporate body, without unauthorized attempts by individual trustees or subsets of trustees to exercise the board's power.*
- *Protecting the institution from undue external influence.*
- *Providing strategic oversight.*
- *Serving as the institutional policy-making body.*
- *Delegating to the chief executive the management of the institution.*
- *Delegating other appropriate authorities to other persons or bodies in a manner consistent with policy.*

Continuous improvement

Regarding the sound fiduciary oversight by a governing board, the following continuous-improvement efforts may be at issue:

- *Assessment and continuous improvement of a board's governance and performance generally.*
- *Orientation programs provided for new members of the governing board.*
- *Continuing education programs for the governing board and/or individual trustees.*
- *Professional development and/or leadership training for trustees.*

Regarding the sound executive management conducted by executives, the following continuous-improvement efforts may be at issue:

- *Evaluations of individual executive personnel.*

Eckel, P.D. & Trower, C.A. (2019). Practical wisdom: Thinking differently about college and university governance. Stylus Publishing, LLC and Inside Higher Ed.

Freedman, J.O. (2004). Presidents and trustees. In R.G. Ehrenberg (Ed.), Governing academia: Who is in charge at the modern university? (pp. 9–27). Cornell University Press.

Ingram, R.T. (2003). Ten basic responsibilities of nonprofit boards. BoardSource, Inc.

Mortimer, K.P., & Sathre, C.O. (2007) The art and science of politics in academic governance: Relations among boards, presidents, and faculty. American Council on Education.

Sweezy v. New Hampshire, 354 U.S. 234 (1957).

Trow, M. (1998). On the accountability of higher education in the United States. In W.G. Bowen & H.T. Shapiro (Eds.), Universities and their leadership (pp. 15–61). Princeton University Press.

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- *Professional development and/or leadership training.*
- *Fulfillment of strategic priorities.*

7. **Institutional decision-making is characterized by shared governance in appropriate processes and as documented in appropriate policies.**

One acceptable definition of shared governance is articulated in the [1966–67 “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities”](#) issued by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. The “Statement” describes the roles of various parties in determining how U.S. institutions of higher education operate in “appropriately shared responsibility and cooperative action among the components of the academic institution.”³

An “interdependence” and “joint effort” among an institution’s governing board, executives, and faculty properly characterize institutional governance and decision-making, according to the “Statement.” The governing board (“the final institutional authority”) delegates “ultimate managerial responsibility” to the institution’s chief executive. Faculty exercise primary responsibility “to determine the appropriate curriculum and procedures of student instruction” (although this responsibility is typically delegated by the governing board to the faculty and may be limited by state law or statute).

In CPHE Accreditation Standard 7, uses of the adjective “appropriate” should be interpreted to allow for the effects of mission, Carnegie type, and institutional size. Furthermore, “appropriate” should be interpreted to suggest latitude—because the manner in which shared governance manifests itself or may be specified in institutional governance may vary reasonably across institutions and even within institutions, depending on occasions, tasks, and processes. That is, there is no single manner in which shared governance must be enacted. As the 1966–67 “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities” notes, “Joint effort in an academic institution will take a variety of forms appropriate to the kinds of situations encountered.”

³ *The 1966–67 “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities” is advisory but not controlling. In fact, the “Statement” announces explicitly that it is not “a manual for the regulation of controversy among the components of an academic institution.” Worth noting, also, is that the “Statement” explicitly omits descriptions of governmental and other authorities that affect the governance of U.S. institutions of higher education.*

Required evidence

An institution shall cite, describe, and evidence relevant statutes, bylaws, and policies that define shared governance and how it is enacted at an institution. In addition, an institution shall provide evidence of shared governance in circumstances not dictated by statutes, bylaws, and policies, if any.

Continuous improvement

CPHE suggests that an institution should produce, describe, and evidence how shared governance is assessed and revised on the basis of evidence.

Mission, Public Purpose, and Academic Excellence

8. The institution fulfills an appropriate mission.

For public colleges and universities, institutional mission is most often dictated by statute and/or by other state/system governing documents. In answer to CPHE Accreditation Standard 8, an institution is required first to supply and describe relevant statutes and governing documents. An institution is required then to evidence the manner in which relevant statutes and governing documents have been interpreted to yield an institutional mission statement. The process by which an institutional mission statement is developed, reviewed, revised, and approved shall be evidenced as well. Stakeholders involved in this process shall be described and evidenced, too.

An “appropriate” mission should be interpreted to denote an institutional mission statement’s alignment with statute and governing documents, subsequent development and approval, institution type (Carnegie classification being a suitable category of type), and institution size (e.g., student body, employees, physical plant).

At issue, then, is the process by which an institutional mission statement is evaluated to demonstrate efficacy and then to inform subsequent revision. CPHE suggests that an institution should demonstrate that each discrete facet of a mission statement should be assessed through continuous improvement—and that evidence of continuous improvement should be supplied in response to CPHE Accreditation Standard 8.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall cite and describe relevant statutes and governing documents that define and/or guide the institution’s mission.*
- *Further, an institution shall evidence the manner in which relevant statutes and governing documents have been interpreted to yield an institutional mission statement.*
- *An institution shall describe and evidence the process by which an institutional mission statement is developed, reviewed, revised, and approved. Stakeholders involved in this process shall be described and evidenced as well.*
- *An institution shall describe and evidence the process by which an institutional mission statement is evaluated to demonstrate efficacy and then to inform subsequent revision.*

Continuous improvement

CPHE suggests that an institution should demonstrate that each discrete facet of a mission statement is assessed through continuous improvement—and that evidence of continuous improvement is supplied—in response to CPHE Accreditation Standard 8.

9. The institution, as a state entity, furthers the public good.

As a complement to CPHE Accreditation Standard 8, CPHE Accreditation Standard 9 focuses on public benefits yielded in execution of mission or as corollary benefits of mission.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the phrase “public good” as “[t]he welfare of the community as a whole. . . .” As such, CPHE suggests that an operational definition of “public good” relative to accreditation should denote the benefits that a college or university generates for persons and groups both inside and outside the boundaries of the institution. That is, an institution furthers the public good through opportunities and services available to the community, along with actions that yield benefits for the community.

In answer to CPHE Accreditation Standard 9, an institution may cite or restate evidence provided relative to CPHE Accreditation Standard 8.

Suggested evidence

CPHE suggests that an institution should provide evidence of fulfillment of public wants, needs, and opportunities. Metrics may include, for example, economic impact, job creation, production of graduates for workforce needs, research advances in health and other fields, lifelong learning opportunities, community engagement projects and outcomes of these, the work of extension faculty, etc.

Furthermore, an institution's partnerships with the state, with state agencies, and with companies/organizations promoting public benefits may be at issue—especially if direct evidence of successful outcomes may be evidenced.

If applicable, an institution may demonstrate that metrics of success in fulfilling public needs are communicated to the public, to government, and to stakeholders.

Continuous improvement

An institution should measure its effects on the community and assess periodically how these effects may be improved.

10. The institution strives for and demonstrates its pursuit of academic excellence.

An institution's definition of academic excellence depends on institutional mission, as derived from state statute, Carnegie type, and institutional size. Particularly at issue are the facets of academic life and inquiry that may exhibit excellence—depending on mission—for faculty, for students, and for staff involved in teaching and in generating new knowledge: teaching, research, creative endeavor, community engagement, etc.

An institution may define “excellence” according to its own definition(s) and/or according to system, state, national, and international measures.

Furthermore, achieving and documenting excellence should be fueled by institutional aspirations for greater excellence, in terms of both quality and quantity.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall document its own definitions of academic excellence and how the institution recognizes excellence among faculty, students, and staff.*

- *An institution shall document indicators of academic excellence as measured by external bodies for faculty, students, and staff.*

Suggested evidence

To the degree that an institution measures its performance versus institutional peers, the institution should provide evidence of measures of academic excellence versus peers.

Longitudinal data provided over the three most recent academic years will generally suffice.

Some measures of academic excellence relative to students may be cited or restated relative to CPHE Accreditation Standard 16.

Likewise, some measures of academic excellence relative to faculty may be cited or restated relative to CPHE Accreditation Standard 11.

Continuous improvement

Institutional aspirations for more and greater academic excellence among faculty, students, and staff will likely be reflected by institutional resources expended to assess and support academic excellence. These may include, for example, specific advising and research opportunities for students; grant, award, and peer support for faculty and staff; and analytical tools that support the measurement of academic excellence's impact.

Faculty

11. **The institution employs faculty of appropriate number and qualifications to support academic programs.**

Parameters for "appropriate" numbers and qualifications of faculty to support academic programs should flow naturally from institutional mission; institution type (Carnegie classification being a suitable category of type); programs, disciplines, and colleges/schools; and student enrollment.

CPHE will not dictate student-to-faculty ratios, although an institution may cite fulfillment of programmatic or discipline-specific accreditation or certification standards regarding student-to-faculty ratios.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall supply institution-level data on the population of faculty by rank.*

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence the following:*
 - *policies and practices for assessing faculty effectiveness in teaching, research, service, and creative endeavor;*
 - *policies and practices for hiring faculty;*
 - *promotion and tenure policies and practices, if any;*
 - *policies and practices for post-tenure reviews, if any;*
 - *policies and practices for faculty development;*
 - *policies and practices for faculty grievances;*
 - *policies and practices regarding faculty teaching loads; and*
 - *student-to-faculty ratios.*

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence policies and practices regarding how the institution defines and determines the appropriate number of its faculty—along with how the institution defines and determines the appropriate number of faculty within categories such as full-time, part-time, tenure and tenure track, adjunct, etc. The degree to which teaching and other responsibilities may be fulfilled by graduate students should be supplied, described, and evidenced as well.*

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence policies and practices regarding how the institution defines and determines the appropriate qualifications of its faculty. Policies and practices may vary reasonably by faculty type, discipline, program, and/or college/school.*

- *Regarding federal regulations in 34 CFR § 602.18, an institution should articulate how it manages matters related to “[i]nstructors who do not meet . . . typical faculty standards, but who are otherwise qualified by education or work experience, to teach courses within a dual or concurrent enrollment program, as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801, or career and technical education courses. . . .”*

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence how its faculty manual and/or similar policy documents anticipate the matters listed above, along with other relevant faculty matters.*

Suggested evidence

Evidence that an institution may consider citing includes the following:

- *student demand for courses versus faculty capacity to teach,*
- *credit and degree production as a function of faculty size,*
- *measures of faculty productivity individually and in the aggregate, and*
- *class sizes and scheduling capacity by day of the week and time slot.*

An institution should supply contextual information regarding the size and qualifications of faculty versus those of peer institutions whenever possible.

Continuous improvement

Rather than simply listing data, an institution should consider and demonstrate how matters of faculty capacity and qualifications are measured and implemented in institutional decision-making and continuous improvement. Data that drive these decisions will be relevant and illustrative.

At issue is the continuous improvement of the faculty generally, of faculty qualifications generally, and of the effectiveness and performance of faculty. An institution should demonstrate how issues of faculty size and capacity are assessed and managed, how issues of faculty qualifications are assessed and managed, how faculty effectiveness and performance are assessed, and how the institution offers methods to improve the effectiveness and performance of faculty.

Academic Freedom and Intellectual Diversity

12. **The institution's policies and practices support the academic freedom of the institution and its faculty.**

Academic freedom belongs both to the institution and to faculty.

*At the level of the institution, the definition of "academic freedom" is generally understood to align with the Supreme Court's 1957 decision in *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*: that an institution determines who teaches, what is taught, how it is taught, and who is admitted for study. As a practical matter, authority to make*

these determinations is often delegated within an institution, with curricular and pedagogical matters delegated to faculty collectively and individually.

Not to be conflated with an individual faculty member's First Amendment rights as an employee of a public institution, faculty at both public and private institutions are generally understood to determine for themselves their teaching and research agendas due to the protections provided by academic freedom.

Academic freedom is arguably the cornerstone of U.S. higher education. Mature institutions of higher education will have and leverage policies and practices that support and protect academic freedom. These may include explicit expectations of governing boards, according to statutes and bylaws; explicit institutional policies; tenure and promotion policies and procedures; and even grievance or disciplinary procedures for faculty. Furthermore, the roles of faculty and of faculty bodies in defining and safeguarding academic freedom likely manifest in faculty manuals and policies and should be evidenced.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence all policies and practices regarding academic freedom.*
- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence any policies and practices regarding tenure—although citing or restating these as leveraged in response to CPHE Accreditation Standard 11 may suffice.*
- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence how academic freedom at the level of the institution is delegated, managed, and protected. How the institution and the governing board protect themselves from undue external influence will be essential.*

Continuous improvement

An institution should assess periodically the state of academic freedom at the institution and how the state of academic freedom may be improved.

13. **The institution's policies and practices support the intellectual diversity of its faculty and students in academic and co-curricular life.**

An [April 23, 2025 Executive Order](#) directs the U.S. Secretary of Education to "take appropriate steps," many of which have not been enacted as of this writing.

Among these “appropriate steps” is the anticipated revision to requirements of accrediting agencies that “accreditation [will] require[e] that institutions support and appropriately prioritize intellectual diversity amongst faculty in order to advance academic freedom, intellectual inquiry, and student learning.”

A December 2005 report entitled “Intellectual Diversity: Time for Action,” published by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, states the following:

In simplest terms, intellectual diversity means a multiplicity of ideas. In the college setting, it is the foundation of a learning environment that exposes students to a variety of political, ideological, and other perspectives. As the American Council on Education, in a statement joined by 29 other higher education organizations, has acknowledged: “Intellectual pluralism and academic freedom are central principles of American higher education.”

Ohio law defines “intellectual diversity” as “multiple, divergent, and varied perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues,” while South Dakota law defines “intellectual diversity” as “a learning environment that exposes students to and encourages exploration of a variety of ideological and political perspectives.” A 2006 law adopted by the South Dakota legislature defines intellectual diversity “as the foundation of a learning environment that exposes students to a variety of political, ideological, and other perspectives.”

CPHE suggests that an operational definition of “intellectual diversity” relative to CPHE Accreditation Standard 13 refers to institutional curricula, developed and enacted by faculty and thereafter experienced by students—along with co-curricular opportunities for students. Institutional policies and practices for curricular and co-curricular activities should purposefully introduce students to varied (and even contradictory) perspectives for analyzing, interpreting, understanding, and—in some cases—solving academic, societal, and public-policy matters. The varied perspectives brought to bear may be ideological, methodological, political, theoretical, etc.

Required evidence

An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence institutional policies and practices that support intellectual diversity, including, for example, in hiring, promotion, and, if applicable, granting of tenure; course development; academic

program review and approval; and the designation of courses that meet general education and academic program core requirements.

An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence any interventions devised and enacted to improve support for intellectual diversity.

Suggested evidence

An institution may supply results of institutional assessments devised to measure intellectual diversity and/or perceptions of intellectual diversity on campus.

Curricula

14. Institutional curricula are appropriate to mission and designed with rigor appropriate to degree level and/or credentialing requirements.

CPHE Accreditation Standard 14 leverages the word “appropriate” in relation to institutional curricula as dictated by mission, by Carnegie type, by degree level, and/or by credentialing requirements. As such, CPHE suggests that an institution should demonstrate curricular alignment with mission, institution type, degree level, and/or credentialing requirement. Because programmatic curricula may be shaped by programmatic or discipline-specific accreditation requirements, these may be relevant as well.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence policies and practices that govern institutional authority for curricular matters.*

- *An institution shall supply and describe the comprehensiveness of a course catalog (and/or other, readily available curricular resources) for the current academic year for denoting clearly the following:*
 - *Degree, major, and program requirements*
 - *General education requirements within the undergraduate curriculum*
 - *Policies and practices for approving new degrees, majors, programs, and colleges/schools*
 - *Policies and practices for monitoring viability of degrees and programs*
 - *Policies and practices for awarding credit for experience-based learning*
 - *Policies and practices for awarding transfer credit*

- *Consistent with 34 CFR § 602.17, an institution shall supply, describe, and evidence that it “[m]aintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate in light of the degrees or certificates awarded. . . .” An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence the role of faculty and/or other professionals in assessment of curricular effectiveness versus goals—that is, that the institution “[i]s successful in achieving its stated objectives at both the institutional and program levels. . . .”*
- *Consistent with 34 CFR § 602.17, an institution shall supply, describe, and evidence that it “[m]aintains requirements that at least conform to commonly accepted academic standards, or the equivalent, including pilot programs in [34 CFR] § 602.18(b). . . .”*
- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence policies and practices for ensuring consistency and rigor of curricula, regardless of modality of delivery.*
- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence policies and practices for ensuring consistency and rigor of curricula if offered by or in collaboration with third-party providers such as online program managers.*
- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence policies and practices for program review.*

Suggested evidence

An institution should supply data regarding practices of peer institutions when possible and practical in answer to the matters listed above.

Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement relative to curricula may take the form of program review, periodic assessment of general education requirements, periodic inspection of credit requirements across the entire curriculum, credit and degree production, and program/major viability. These and other institutional assessment efforts should be evidenced, with particular focus on the manners in which assessment results—including evidence of student learning—affect curricular revisions and improvements.

Measures of Program Length

15. Institutional program lengths are appropriate to degree level and/or credentialing requirements.

CPHE Accreditation Standard 15 leverages the word “appropriate” in relation to institutional curricula as dictated by mission, by Carnegie type, by degree level, and/or by credentialing requirements. As such, CPHE suggests that an institution should demonstrate alignment of program lengths with mission, institution type, degree level, and/or credentialing requirement. Because programmatic curricula may be shaped by programmatic or discipline-specific accreditation requirements, these may be relevant as well.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence policies and practices that govern institutional authority for institutional program lengths.*
- *An institution shall supply and describe the comprehensiveness of a course catalog (and/or other, readily available curricular resources) for the current academic year for denoting program lengths.*
- *Norms in U.S. higher education define program lengths in terms of credit hours for the following degrees:*
 - *60 credit hours for an associate’s degree*
 - *120 credit hours for a bachelor’s degree*
 - *30 credit hours for a master’s degree*

If an institution implements a unit of measure other than the credit hour to define program lengths, then the institution shall define and justify use of said unit of measure clearly. Furthermore, an institution shall cite, describe, and evidence adherence to the above program lengths for associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees. In the event that program lengths deviate from the above standards, the institution shall justify said deviation.

- *For doctoral programs and any other credentials, an institution shall cite, describe, and evidence adherence to published program lengths.*
- *An institution shall cite, describe, and evidence adherence to published program lengths for general education programs.*

- *An institution shall cite, describe, and evidence policies and practices for awarding credit for work completed at an institution other than the institution awarding the degree or credential.*

Suggested evidence

Information submitted by an institution in response to items above may benefit from comparison data that portray the practices of peer institutions.

Continuous improvement

An institution should assess degree requirements periodically, with special attention to norms and trends. In addition, institutions should be mindful of credit requirements in excess of accepted norms, in that these exacerbate problems related to the time required for students to complete degrees. Prolonged time to degree entails additional/unnecessary tuition prices paid by students and families, along with opportunity costs associated with students' postponed entry into the labor market.

Student Success and Student Support Services

16. **The institution employs best practices to measure and improve both student learning and student success as assessed by varied methods.**

CPHE deems prioritization of student outcomes as a primary quality that differentiates CPHE from other accrediting agencies. At issue is a focus on outputs rather than inputs—coupled with a continuous, concerted effort to model and leverage best practices in terms of tactics and measurement that will further student success and the improvement of relevant assessments.

CPHE suggests, therefore, that an institution should adopt a ceaseless attention to student success: tactics, programs, experiments, pilot programs, measurement (both qualitative and quantitative), and improvement.

CPHE recognizes that different states have access to and leverage different data, that data capabilities may vary by institution, and that data definitions likely vary as well. As such, CPHE will enable latitude in expectations and methodologies for measuring student success and student learning.

Rates of persistence and completion may employ federal data definitions; however, rates of persistence and completion that account for transfer students,

part-time students, and other enrollment dynamics not captured by federal data definitions will be a useful complement to traditional measures.

CPHE will not dictate a methodology for measuring return on investment—because institutional access to data sources may vary, along with data definitions.

Measures of graduates' salaries versus tuition and fee prices should be disaggregated by majors/programs and by degree level. Longitudinal data regarding this return on investment should anticipate variation in the number of years required for some programs to yield returns.

Special attention to production of degrees and credentials that support particular state workforce needs will be appropriate, as will special attention to production of degrees and credentials that yield important societal impact while perhaps yielding small (or even negative) salary returns to students.

Tactical efforts in support of student success and measurement of student success should be outlined, with evidence provided selectively and with no expectation of comprehensiveness.

An [April 23, 2025 Executive Order](#) directs the U.S. Secretary of Education to “take appropriate steps,” many of which have not been enacted as of this writing. Among these “appropriate steps” is the anticipated requirement that institutions should “use data on program-level student outcomes to improve such outcomes, without reference to race, ethnicity, or sex.” CPHE recommends strongly that institutions should submit data regarding student outcomes as if this anticipated requirement is enforced currently.

Required evidence

- An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence participation in IPEDS reporting for completion and retention rates and graduate earnings data. Similarly, an institution shall supply, describe, and evidence tactics for improvement or stability in those IPEDS metrics over time.*
- If an institution is part of a state university system or state higher education commission that has selected and defined student success metrics as part of its academic program application, academic program review, performance funding computations, or similar processes, the institution may demonstrate*

that it employs best practices to “measure” student learning and student success by evidencing that it participates in such a framework. To demonstrate that it employs best practices to “improve” student learning, the institution shall supply, describe, and evidence tactics for improvement or stability in those metrics over time.

- *If an institution is not a part of such a state university system or state higher education commission, to demonstrate that the institution employs best practices to “measure” student outcomes, the institution shall select and define student success metrics consistent with its mission. Such metrics should ordinarily include measures of retention, completion, post-completion earnings, and return on investment, and may include measures such as professional licensure exam pass rates, post-completion employment rates, and evidence of students continuing their education. An institution may use data created for other purposes, such as IPEDS reporting, to demonstrate compliance with this standard. An institution demonstrating compliance with this standard may demonstrate that it employs best practices to improve student learning by providing evidence of improvement or stability in its student success metrics over time.*
- *If not included among the data outlined above, an institution shall supply, describe, and evidence data regarding student debt, along with tactical efforts to alleviate student debt.*
- *If not included among the data outlined above, an institution shall supply, describe, and evidence its assessment of student learning, governance and management responsibility for student learning, and tactical efforts to improve student learning. Measurement of student learning may entail institutionally designed and normed assessments and/or nationally normed assessments.*

Suggested evidence

- *An institution may supply data regarding rates of persistence, completion, and postgraduate attendance that account for transfer students, part-time students, and other enrollment dynamics not captured by federal data definitions.*
- *An institution is encouraged to consider, supply, describe, and evidence selectively its holistic approaches to improving student success and student*

learning—especially as these may be varied and may include the following. Citing or restating text relative to CPHE Standard 17 may be sufficient:

- *programs correlated with improvements to student success and return on investment, including apprenticeships, co-ops, and internships; career services and graduate/professional school advisement; mentoring and tutoring programs; etc.*
 - *tactics for easing transfer processes*
 - *tactics for informing students regarding return on investment*
 - *tactics for speeding time to degree*
- *An institution may supply data regarding students' performance on institutional or system exit examinations.*

Continuous improvement

Continual improvement of data quality, representative quality, and objective results should be evidenced.

Continuous improvement of assessments and tactics intended to improve student success and student learning should be evidenced as well.

17. **The institution provides student support services of appropriate variety and scope, for both academic and co-curricular purposes.**

CPHE suggests that an institution may achieve partial fulfillment of CPHE Accreditation Standard 17 by citing or restating text regarding tactical efforts enacted to improve student success and student learning relative to CPHE Accreditation Standard 16.

Again, an [April 23, 2025 Executive Order](#) directs the U.S. Secretary of Education to “take appropriate steps,” many of which have not been enacted as of this writing. Among these “appropriate steps” is the anticipated requirement that institutions should “use data on program-level student outcomes to improve such outcomes, without reference to race, ethnicity, or sex.” CPHE recommends strongly that institutions should submit data regarding student outcomes as if this anticipated requirement is enforced currently.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence student support services for both academic and co-curricular services.*

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence staffing of student support services for both academic and co-curricular services. Citing or restating text relative to CPHE Standard 18 may suffice.*

Continuous improvement

Documentation of continuous improvement of methods to bolster student success, student learning, academic services, and co-curricular services may entail citing or restating text supplied in answer to CPHE Standard 16.

Fiscal and Administrative Capacity

18. The institution maintains fiscal and administrative capacity sufficient to fulfill its mission.

U.S. Department of Education regulations (especially [34 CFR 668.171\[g\]\[1\]](#)) differentiate the requirements for demonstrating fiscal stability for public, not-for-profit institutions versus for private, for-profit and private, not-for-profit institutions. As such, CPHE enacts requirements for public colleges and universities that leverage this differentiation.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall demonstrate fiscal capacity through evidence supplied regarding audit and regarding budget oversight.*
 - *Audit: An institution that is subject to regular audit by its state auditor, equivalent office, or independent auditor will ordinarily demonstrate compliance with CPHE's fiscal requirements by furnishing the most recent such audit that is not disclaimed, adverse, or qualified, and that does not express doubt about the institution's fiscal stability. If such an audit contains findings, the institution shall demonstrate that it has resolved those findings or has a concrete, actionable plan for doing so.*
 - *Budget oversight: An institution demonstrates compliance with CPHE's fiscal requirements by demonstrating that the institution maintains a coordinated, comprehensive, and flexible financial plan for the institution's long-range financial health.*
- *If not detailed in answer to audit and budget oversight matters outlined above, an institution shall cite, describe, evidence fulfillment of state laws and*

system or institutional policies and procedures regarding financial planning and budgeting.

- *Regarding the relationship between institutional costs and institutional tuition prices charged to students, CPHE recognizes that some public institutions may not exercise direct control of tuition prices and fees. For example, tuition prices and fees may be determined at the level of the system or the state rather than at the level of the institution. In cases such as these, an institution should describe how tuition prices are set and how the institution leverages input into these price-setting processes.*

Regardless of any circumstance regarding an institution's authority to set tuition prices, each institution possesses mechanisms for controlling costs. Oversight of costs, cost savings, process improvement, retirement of outdated or unnecessary infrastructure, and other relevant matters should be described and evidenced in terms of institutional efforts to control costs that may result in higher tuition prices.

- *An institution shall demonstrate administrative capacity by evidencing that it is organized to provide efficient and effective administrative, program, and resource support for the attainment of institutional mission.*

Suggested evidence

- *CPHE suggests that an institution should address the following in response to CPHE Accreditation Standard 18, if these are not addressed directly in answer to required evidence regarding audit and budget oversight as outlined above:*
 - *Data and narrative detail regarding institutional debt, along with debt carried by any associated entities*
 - *Data and narrative detail regarding institutional endowments, endowments held by institutional subsidiaries, and endowments held by associated entities for the purpose(s) of benefitting the institution*
 - *Data and narrative details regarding institutional bond rating(s)*
- *CPHE suggests that data regarding administrative capacity should include the following:*
 - *Evidence of executive leadership qualifications, from the level of college/schools deans up to the chief executive*
 - *Evidence of formative personnel evaluations*

- *Evidence of leadership and management training*

Continuous improvement

An institution should demonstrate periodic assessment and improvement of fiscal and administrative capacity. Comparative data regarding the practices of peer institutions may be relevant and useful.

Facilities and Other Resources

19. The institution maintains facilities, equipment, supplies, and infrastructure sufficient to fulfill its mission.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall evidence that it operates and maintains facilities that are adequate to serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and mission-related activities. Doing so shall entail the following:*
 - *Compliance with safety and health laws. The institution shall comply with all ordinances and laws relative to the safety and health of persons on the campus. In lieu of citing and addressing all relevant safety and health laws, the institution shall supply information regarding any alleged lapses in compliance over the three most recent academic years, with evidence as to how any alleged lapses in compliance have been resolved.*
 - *Laboratories and equipment. The institution shall demonstrate adequate laboratories and equipment for supporting the particular program of instruction and for enhancing student-learning outcomes.*
 - *Experiential learning sites. The institutions shall demonstrate assurances that sites used in field placement, internships, externships, clinical rotations, and similar experiential learning activities are safe and adequate.*
 - *Housing. The institution shall demonstrate that housing for students owned, leased, maintained, or approved by the institution are appropriate, safe, and adequate.*
 - *Capital maintenance: An institution shall demonstrate adherence with laws and institutional policies and procedures regarding how capital maintenance is maintained.*
 - *Equipment. An institution shall demonstrate that equipment required to fulfill the institution's mission is operational and in an adequate state of repair.*

- *Infrastructure: An institution shall demonstrate sufficient scope of infrastructure for fulfillment of mission. Information technology and its support of the academic mission will be essential—especially as these are sufficient to support current needs as well as the evolving advances of technology and the related, evolving needs of stakeholders.*

Suggested evidence

- *CPHE advises that, in answer to CPHE Accreditation Standard 19, an institution should describe and cite governance and management authority regarding facilities, equipment, supplies, and infrastructure individually.*
- *Similarly, CPHE suggests that an institution should describe the scope of an institution's facilities, equipment, supplies, and infrastructure generally—with no expectations regarding comprehensiveness. Data regarding inventory, value, depreciation, and annual budgets will be useful—as will institutional determinations of sufficiency.*
- *CPHE suggests further that an institution should supply the following:*
 - *A master facilities plan*
 - *Data on deferred maintenance and any backlog of deferred maintenance*
 - *Data on the facilities condition index of institutional buildings*

Continuous improvement

An institution should assess periodically its resources and its capacity for fulfilling institutional mission. Supply of detailed studies for future action, based on current circumstances, such as a facilities master plan will be illustrative.

- 20. The institution maintains access to scholarly collections, materials, and tools sufficient to fulfill its mission.**

At issue relative to CPHE Accreditation Standard 20 are library facilities, library collections, and research tools—along with the institution's ability to evolve in the face of changing technologies—all in support of institutional mission. As such, some relevant matters may not be controlled by a library or by library personnel per se and may be distributed and controlled across an institution.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall describe and evidence scholarly collections, materials, and tools as these exist across the institution. Similarly, an institution shall describe and evidence access to these.*
- *An institution shall describe and evidence knowledgeable stewardship of these resources, along with knowledgeable guidance that enable access, in the form of qualified personnel.*

Suggested evidence

Descriptions supported by data regarding collections, utilization, and faculty/staff support are suggested—along with management and advisory policies, practices, and structure (e.g., units or committees) for budgeting, management, and planning for the future.

Continuous improvement

An institution should demonstrate how it maintains adequate scholarly resources and how it maintains tools and infrastructure sufficient to keep pace with technological change.

Records of Student Complaints

21. Upon the Commission for Public Higher Education's request, the institution will supply records of student complaints—as required by U.S. Department of Education Regulations—and will demonstrate adherence to regulations, policies, and practices for management of student complaints.

U.S. Department of Education regulations regarding standards required of accrediting agencies include this requirement: "Record of student complaints received by, or available to, the agency." It is the responsibility of CPHE to maintain student complaints received by CPHE and to report these to the U.S. Department of Education as requested. Student complaints that are "available to" CPHE should be interpreted by an institution as student complaints received and managed by the institution, which must in turn be supplied to CPHE as requested by CPHE.

Required evidence

- *An institution shall supply, describe, and evidence institutional policies regarding student complaints, along with evidence of compliance with these policies over the three most recent academic years.*
- *An institution shall supply a log of student complaints that indicates, at minimum, the nature of each complaint, any investigative steps completed, and the resolution of the complaint. Data should be redacted as appropriate. Data from the three most recent academic years should suffice.*

DRAFT

COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION



UPDATES

- October 1, 2025: CPHE Board of Directors adopts accreditation standards.
- October 22, 2025: CPHE issues call for nominations and applications for members and Chairs of CPHE Peer Review Teams.
- November 14, 2025: CPHE announces the 10 colleges and universities in the first cohort to be accredited by CPHE.



UPDATES

- December 31, 2025: U.S. Department of Education awards \$1M FIPSE grant to CPHE.
- To be published in the Federal Register on January 27: U.S. Department of Education invites nominations for negotiators to serve on Negotiated Rulemaking Committee regarding accreditation. Nominations due in 30 days.
- February 17, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. EST: *Chronicle of Higher Education* to host a webinar regarding accreditation featuring CPHE Board Chair Mark Becker, Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent, and SACSCOC President Stephen Pruitt. Other participants TBA.
- March 18, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. EST: ACExtended webinar hosted by ACE President Ted Mitchell regarding CPHE.



UPDATES

- CPHE Board of Directors considering option to name other “public” (i.e., not “representative”) members of the Board.
- Compositions of CPHE Accreditation Advisory Committee and CPHE Peer Visiting Teams developing.
- Interest among public institutions and systems in joining CPHE continues.
- CPHE plans to file for recognition from the U.S. Department of Education during 2027.



UPDATES

- Refreshed logo
- Refreshed website
- Email newsletters for stakeholders

[Subscribe to CPHE newsletters here](#)



FORECASTED NEXT STEPS



- Week of January 26: Consultations and revisions
- Week of February 2: Draft evidentiary guidance to be issued for public comment over a four-week period
- Week of March 2: Consultations with FREA and CPHE Standards and Procedures Working Group
- Timeline TBD: Revisions
- TBD: Further consultations, **if necessary**
- TBD: Adoption of evidentiary guidance by CPHE

SACSCOC Update

APL Meeting 2_6_2026

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Redline Changes

- **Institutional Changes**

- Institution Relocation
- Level Authorization Removal
- Level Change to a Lower Level

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Redline Changes

- **Program Changes**

- Clock Credit Hour Conversion
- Competency based Education by Direct Assessment Notification
- Comparative Academic Arrangement with Title IV Entities
- Correspondence Education
- Dual Academic Award
- Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies)
- Joint Academic Award with SACSCOC Institution(s)
- New Program Notification
- Program Designed for Prior Learning- Approval
- Program Designed for Prior Learning –Notification
- Program Re-open

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Redline Changes

- **Off-campus Instruction Site/ Additional Location Changes**
 - Extensive Review
 - Limited Review
 - Off –campus Instructional Site Relocation
 - Definitions and Guidelines
 - Non-branch Campus
 - Branch Campus
 - Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change
 - Off-campus Instructional Site Re-open

SACSCOC Fifth Year Interim Report Timeline

Description of Activity	Track B
Institutions receive Notification Letter from the SACSCOC President	End of April 2026
Due date for Fifth-Year Interim Report	March 1, 2027
Review by the Fifth-Year Interim Review Committee	April 2027

SACSCOC Fifth Year Interim Report Timeline

Orientation with Writers and Contributors to Standards part of fifth year interim report	February 2026
First Draft Deadline	March 31, 2026
University Compliance Update	April 2026
Second Draft Deadline	May 29, 2026
University Compliance Update	June 2026
Third Draft Deadline	July 31, 2026
Final Draft Deadline	September 30, 2026
University Compliance Update	October 2026
Final Review and Website Link Checking	Nov. 2026- Jan. 2027
Submit Fifth Year Interim Report to SACSCOC	March 2027

CHPE Updates

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Questions???

Donald Miles, MPA

Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Intelligence and Accreditation

Executive Director OIRAA

SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison

803-777-9088

dmiles@mailbox.sc.edu

Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics

University of South Carolina

1300 Pickens Street, Room 134

Columbia, SC 29208



M. Ron Cox, Jr., Ph.D., Dean
USC Palmetto College Columbia

**Report to the Palmetto College Faculty Senate
20 February 2026
TEAMS Video Conference**

I. Palmetto Pathway

- 88 of 89 students in the FALL 2025 cohort completed their initial semester and have enrolled in classes for SPRING 2026. This is a 98.88% retention rate within the program.
- The FALL 2025 Pathway students completed an average of 14.72 credit hours and an average GPA of 3.092.
- Pathway students should receive their SYSTEM TRANSFER APPLICATION for full admission to USC Columbia around the end of March. USC Columbia Admissions will review the applications after all SPRING 2026 grades have been submitted.
- We anticipate a continuation of the program in FALL 2026 with a cohort of around 100 students. Freshmen orientation sessions for students entering the program have been set for July 13 & 14; 15 & 16; 20 & 21; 22 & 23.
- As of FALL 2025, ninety-two (92) students who started out in Palmetto Pathway have completed their USC bachelor’s degree. A year-by-year breakdown is as follows:

Cohort Year	Cohort Size	Completed Program	Continued at USC	Notes*
2019 20				
2020 21				
2021 22				
2022 23				
2023 24				
2024 25				
2025 26				2026)

*six-year graduation rates based on SACS criteria for *Student Achievement*

II. Liberal Studies & Organizational Leadership

- The SPRING 2026 course schedule for BLS/BOL includes thirty-five (35) distinct courses (42 sections with multiple sections of courses such as PALM 401 & 493, PCAM 205, etc.).
- Chelsea Corbett continues to do a yeoman's job with advisement for students in both the BLS & BOL degree programs, and has joined the University Advisors' Network (UAN), which provides resources for all professional academic advisors serving undergraduate students at USC.
- As of February 10, SPRING 2026 enrollment in BLS stands at 100 and enrollment in BOL stands at 67 (167 total). This compares to 98 and 61 respectively (159 total) in SPRING 2025 – an overall increase of 5.03%.
- Thirty (30) students applied for FALL 2025 graduation (this includes both programs), and 28 have been approved.
- In FALL 2025, thirty-eight (38) BLS & BOL students earned perfect 4.0 GPAs and were named to the USC President's list. Forty-three (43) BLS & BOL students were recognized on the Dean's List (semester GPA of 3.50 – 3.99).
- The BLS/BOL Academic Advisory Committee met on February 06 and will meet again on April 03. Proposed changes to the curricula will be forwarded to System Affairs.
- Pursuant to USC Policy ACAF 2.20, the Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree program will undergo academic program review beginning in SPRING 2026. Dr. Steve Lowe, program director for BLS, is spearheading our efforts in this regard.

III. Fort Jackson / Palmetto College Military Programs

- Sincere thanks to all who were able to attend the ribbon cutting for our Palmetto College AI Innovation Lab in the Army Continuing Education Services (ACES) building at Fort Jackson on January 21. The story may be found online at https://www.army.mil/article/290139/innovation_lab_opens_at_fort_jackson
- We are excited to have re-gained a physical presence on base and look forward to the scheduling of on-site classes (in addition to our online offerings) to better serve our military students (as well as veterans and dependents) there.
- In a meeting on February 11 with the Chancellor, Associate Provost, and Vice Chancellor for Enrollment (as well as others), we discussed:
 - Palmetto College's marketing strategy for military students (I particularly focused on marketing BLS & BOL as degree options)
 - PC's impending return to offering some on-site courses at the Fort Jackson ACES center
- The South Carolina CHE, in collaboration with the SC Department of Veterans' Affairs, has developed a virtual and in-person training opportunity for administrators, registrars, admissions officers, and others, focusing on the acceptance and application of academic credit for prior military learning. The opening (virtual) session is scheduled for March 06, with the in-person session being held on April 17. Dr. Amber Novotny and I have both registered to participate in this training, which hopefully will facilitate our ability to allow military students to apply prior training and learning for BLS & BOL degree credit.

IV. Other Items of Note

- **Carolina Experience**

- USC is nationally recognized for an outstanding “first year experience” for undergraduate students. As a result of findings from the “Imagine Carolina” survey last year, the University has established a “Carolina Experience” office committed to providing more unified support for students beyond the first year (upperclassmen as well as transfer students).
- I met with the program director, Dr. Amber Fallucca, on February 09 to discuss how the Carolina Experience might be better utilized by students “transferring” from Palmetto Pathway to USC Columbia, as well as how their services might be utilized by online students in the BLS & BOL degree programs across the state and nation – not only to make them feel more connected to USC as students in the University but also to make them aware of available resources.
- As a result, Dr. Fallucca visited PC Columbia and met with me, Laura Faile, and Chelsea Corbett on Monday, February 16 to discuss future collaboration and cooperation between Carolina Experience and students in our academic programs.

- **Measles**

- According to the CDC, South Carolina leads the nation in the number of confirmed measles cases in 2026, with a 91% vaccination rate reported for 2024-2025 (down from 96% in 2020, and reinforcing the Palmetto State’s tradition of being at the top of lists we’d prefer to be at the bottom of, and on the bottom of lists we’d prefer to be atop). Documents suggest 95% immunization is needed to achieve “herd immunity.”
- The SC Department of Public Health has established a “Measles Dashboard” which is updated regularly. It may be found online at <https://dph.sc.gov/diseases-conditions/infectious-diseases/measles-rubeola/measles-dashboard>.
- As of February 17, the SC Department of Public Health (DPH) reports 962 confirmed cases of measles, 913 (94.9%) of which are located in Spartanburg County. Other counties with confirmed cases are Greenville (35), Anderson (7), Cherokee, Lancaster, and Sumter (less than five each).
- 92.8% of case patients (893) have been unvaccinated or unknown vaccine status, and almost 90% of cases involve children, including 253 children under age five years.
- Along with several folks from across the Palmetto College campuses, I attended a virtual meeting on February 10 with representatives from across South Carolina to discuss how higher education institutions are handling the recent outbreaks, and our dealings with the Department of Public Health.
- Stacy Fritz is our primary contact person on the USC Columbia campus. DPH (in addition to campus leadership) must approve all institution messaging related to measles (outbreak or prevention).

- **First-Generation Symposium 2026**

- USC will host this event on Friday, March 27 from 9:00 am until 1:15 pm in the University Conference Center (8th floor, Close-Hipp Building). Faculty & staff from ALL USC capuses are invited to register at no cost.
- Registration deadline is Wednesday, March 18. Additional information may be found online at https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/special_events/first_generation_symposium/?utm_campaign=uscnews&utm_medium=email&utm_source=usctoday

V. Miscellaneous News & Updates

- This year's "Give 4 Garnet" will be held on March 25 & 26 (a total of 1 day, 8 hours, and 01 minute – "1801" – Get it?). PC Columbia will again stress donations to the David L. Burggraf Scholarship, which goes to a non-traditional student in the BLS, BOL, or Elementary Education degree programs of Palmetto College.
- USC Palmetto College's chapter (Upsilon Zeta) of the **Alpha Sigma Lambda** honor society will hold its virtual induction ceremony on Thursday, April 02 at 4:00 pm via TEAMS. We will be inducting non-traditional who are currently enrolled in the BLS, BOL, or Elementary Education degree programs through Palmetto College, as well as professional members dedicated to adult learning from across the PC campuses.
- We are excited to share that **Dr. Julia Elliott**, Professor of English and Women's & Gender Studies, has been nominated by booksellers across the South for the **Southern Book Prize** in fiction for her story collection, *Hellions*. This award, sponsored by the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance, recognizes exceptional storytelling.
- Congratulations to **Dr. Mary Hjelm**, Distinguished Professor of English, for her recent recognition as a "Career Influencer." The University Career Center conducted a "First Destination" survey, asking graduates to identify faculty and staff who helped shaped their career decisions and post-graduation plans. This recognition reflects Dr. Hjelm's impact and support of students during their academic careers at USC.
- Congratulations and BEVIAMO! to **Dr. R. Mac Jones** for publication of his chapbook, *Astrosommelier*, by Bottlecap Press. The work consists of speculative poetry asking what alcohol might be like in a variety of futures: what wine will taste like in space, what whiskey will be distilled on an abandoned planet, and what it will feel like to pop a beer bottlecap in our cyberpunk tomorrow.
- Congratulations to **Dr. Shelley Jones**, Associate Professor of English, for recognition of her recent participation in the Community of Practice for the Student Experience Project (SEP). The project, sponsored by the Graduation & Retention Network (GARNET), is designed to enhance student success and to foster an inclusive, supporting learning environment in the best traditions of the University of South Carolina.
- Congratulations to **Dr. Chris Nesmith**, Associate Professor of English, who has received a \$2500 Community of Practice experiential learning grant from the Center for Integrative and Experiential Learning for the period January 2026 through May 2027.
- Sincere thanks to **Professor Patrick Saucier** for his leadership in the revival and modification of PC Columbia's Stephen L. Dalton Award for outstanding service to students – through teaching, advising, mentoring, student support, program development, and other forms of direct service – by faculty and staff members of PC Columbia.
- Additional thanks to **Professor Saucier** and to the inimitable **Ms. Jean Carrano** for their work in developing an AI-focused workshop initiative, *Teaching with AI in the Room: Prompt Engineering and Assignment Design That Preserves Student Engagement*. The workshop is designed to help faculty work with AI intentionally rather than defensively by focusing on assignment design; specifically, how to create learning experiences that require student presence, reflection, judgment, and accountability. The goal is not simply to respond to AI as a technological development, but to use this moment to strengthen student engagement and instructional clarity across disciplines. The 60-minute online participatory workshop is scheduled for March 10 and again on March 13.

- We are very proud of **Professor Shelly Huhtanen**, Adjunct Instructor of Speech, who teaches students in the Palmetto Pathway program and has been nominated for the M. Stuart Hunter Award for outstanding teaching in UNIV 101. We are honored to have her as a part of our Pathway academic team.
- Kudos to **Ms. Laura Faile**, program for Palmetto Pathway, who has completed USC's Improvement Leader Program for 2025-2026. The closing ceremony was held on Feb. 12 in the Campus Room of Capstone House. Laura's project – "Palmetto Pathway Onboarding Improvement" – will be presented on Tuesday, March 24 at 2:00 pm and will be viewable on TEAMS.

My sincere thanks to the Senate for allowing me to share some of the goings-on at Palmetto College Columbia.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Ron Cox, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

M. Ron Cox, Jr., Dean
Palmetto College Columbia



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
PALMETTO COLLEGE

M. Ron Cox, Jr., Ph.D., Dean
USC Palmetto College Columbia
Associate Dean for Access, Opportunity, and Engagement

**Access, Opportunity, and Engagement
Report to the Palmetto College Faculty Senate
20 February 2026**

USC Council of Academic Inclusive Excellence Officers

- The USC Council of Academic Inclusive Excellence Officers (CAIEO) met on December 12, 2025 and again on January 23, 2026. The main topics of discussion included:
 - Title IX and compliance of websites and mobile applications to be accessible to individuals with disabilities (deadline is April 24, 2026 for public entities of 50,000 or more); smaller entities have until April 26, 2027 to reach compliance.
 - Impact of the “One Big Beautiful Bill” on recruitment, retention, and financial aid – especially on recruiting and retention within graduate and professional programs
 - College and departmental responses to the “Modern Think” Survey results. According to the published timeline, the Presidential Commission and college/division action planning committees are currently reviewing survey data and recommendations. Progress updates, outcomes, and action plans are to be shared Summer-Fall 2026. https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/human_resources/toolbox/projects-initiatives/engagement_insights_survey/timeline.php
- The Thomas Cooper Library has partnered with the USC Center for Civil Rights History & Research to build collections about the Palmetto State’s role in the US Civil rights movement. The digital exhibit may be found online at: https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_libraries/exhibits_events_news/events/justice_for_all_exhibit.php.
- The USC Center for Civil Rights History & Research presented “Rosa Parks’ America” on Tuesday, February 17 from 5:00 until 6:30 pm in the Kendall Room of the South Caroliniana Library. The event was held in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- On Tuesday, February 24, at 6:00 pm the Nickelodeon Theatre will have a special screening of the documentary film, *Boycott*. Tickets may be purchased online at <https://nickelodeon.org/events/boycott/>.
- The USC Center for Civil Rights History & Research, in collaboration with the Richland County Library, will sponsor “Unforgettable: Honoring Our Living Civil Rights Legends” on Sunday, March 1, from 3 pm until 5 pm, at the Richland County Library on Main Street, Columbia. The event is open to the public.

- USC Press is holding a Black History Month sale, offering 40% off all books plus FREE shipping on all U.S. orders over \$50.00. For more information, visit <https://uscpress.com/>.
- The ACLU is reporting that the US Department of Education has “conceded the end of its February 15, 2025 ‘Dear Colleague’ directive that sought to restrict diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts” in American schools and colleges. The story may be found online at <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/department-of-education-backs-down-on-unlawful-directive-targeting-educational-equity>.
- On January 29, the SC House of Representatives passed H.4756 (by a vote of 96-19) – the “Student Physical Privacy Act” – which would extend an existing K-12 law on bathrooms and changing rooms to include state-funded institutions of higher learning. Any institution not in compliance would have 25% of its state funding withheld. The bill defines a person’s “sex” as “a person’s biological sex, either male or female, as observed or clinically verified at birth.” The bill does, however, require all public school buildings and all buildings in public institution of higher learning to provide at least one single-user restroom and changing facility. The bill currently resides in the Senate Education Committee.
- Another bill – H.4604 – was introduced on January 13 and referred to the Committee on Education and Public Works. The “Merit and Equal Opportunity in Higher Education Act of 2026” seeks “to ensure that in the absence of DEI structures and race-conscious considerations, admissions, hiring, promotion, and retention decisions in South Carolina’s public higher education system are truly merit-based, transparent, and auditable.”
- CAIEO is next scheduled to meet on Friday, March 27. Please let me know if there are any campus-specific (or PC-specific) items which you would like brought to the group’s attention.

Palmetto College Access, Opportunity, and Engagement (AOE)

- The Palmetto College AOE Council met on Thursday, February 19 via TEAMS.
- In attendance were Patrick Saucier (PC Columbia), Dana Lawrence & Tyrie Rowell (Lancaster), Marchetta Williams (Sumter), and Emily Schafer (Union)
- Discussion during the meeting consisted mostly of updates regarding events and concerns from each campus. Representatives from all campuses have been asked to share a list of events related to AOE for sharing with the USC CAIEO.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Ron Cox, Jr.

M. Ron Cox, Jr., Associate Dean for AOE
Palmetto College



**PC Faculty Senate Report
February 20, 2026
Eric M. Reisenauer, Ph.D.**

Faculty (as reported)

Since last Senate (November 14, 2025), 8 faculty produced 11 publications, presentations, or other scholarly works, or won awards and other recognition for scholarly work or service:

Soumyadip Acharyya, Dan Kiernan, and Mohammad Rahman

- Dr. Kiernan, Dr. Acharyya, and Dr. Rahman represented USC Sumter at Alice Drive Elementary (ADE) school on 1/22/26. They presented at ADE Family STEAM Night on the science & math related to fruit fly development. Students not only gained knowledge but actually worked with living fruit flies. They continue to work to build community connections.

Eric Bultman

- Became the advisor for and led the reorganization of the University of South Carolina Drama Club. Fire Ant Theatre is now an active student organization with a goal of presenting at least one student led theatrical production each semester. As of February 2026, the organization has twenty-one members.

Sher Chhetri

- Sher Chhetri presented a poster at Palmetto College Campuses Fall Social and Faculty Research Conference at USC Union on Friday, October 24, 2025. The title of the presentation was "Exponentiated Odd Lindley-X Power Series Class of Distributions: Properties and Applications." The work was joint with Fastel Chipepa, Nonhle Mdziniso and Shahid Mohammad.
- Published an article: Otunuga, O.M., Chhetri, S. & Long, H. Statistical analysis of stationary and transition probability densities for atmospheric forcing in a climate change model. *Stochastic Environmental Research and Risk Assessment* 40, 22 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00477-025-03153-3>

Abstract:

There has been widespread use of stochastic differential equations in modeling climate change, especially the stochastic models with alpha-stable

Lévy jumps. The family of Lévy-stable distributions is used in many applications for modeling heavy-tailed data. These distributions are crucial for capturing extreme events, such as market crashes and abrupt climate changes. Although tests like p-variation, quantile-tests, and maximum likelihood methods based on characteristic functions have proven to be successful in determining parameters in stochastic and alpha-stable Lévy dynamics, knowing the closed-form distribution of the process helps in capturing certain properties of the process. In this work, a well-known stochastic differential equation describing a climatic state that depends on ocean circulation and atmospheric forcing is considered. The unique stationary and transition probability density functions of the atmospheric forcing process, satisfying Itô and Stratonovich dynamics, and the properties of the distributions are obtained, analyzed, and used to estimate parameters in the model. We validate our claim by comparing the results obtained in this study with simulated distributions and by applying the methodology to real-world volcanic aerosol forcing data.

- Dr. Chhetri recently served as a peer reviewer for two manuscripts, one for the Journal of Probability and Statistics and another for Discover Analytics (Springer Nature).
- A student from Introduction to Statistical Reasoning (STAT 110) course acknowledged Dr. Sher Chhetri in the “Thank a Teacher” program conducted by the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) in Fall 2025. Dr. Chhetri received a “Letter of Appreciation” and a “Certificate of Appreciation” from the CTE.

Vincent Frontero

- My poem “When I Was Seven, I Was a Tiger” has been accepted for publication in Pictura Journal.

Austin Jenkins

- Lindsay Pettus Conservation Award from Katawba Valley Land Trust

Dan Kiernan and Pearl Fernandes

- Dr. Kiernan presented a poster at the conference: PC Social on Friday, Oct. 24 in USC Union. Plankton Exploration at Swan Lake Iris Gardens: A Mentoring Summer Research Project for Students

Dan Kiernan

- Dr. Dan Kiernan led our SGA in representing USC Sumter at Carolina Day at the State House. Our SGA president and vice president were accompanied 2 students from OSP. Interim Dean Reisenauer & Director of Marketing & Public Relations, Alethia Hummel, also participated.

Campus/Accolades

- The admissions department hosted our Fall Sumter Scholar event in December. They honored nearly 20 students that are in the top 25% of their high school senior class and have qualified for free tuition from USC Sumter.

- This winter USC Sumter broke ground on a new outdoor classroom. The outdoor space is the final phase of the renovation to our Science Building. The new space is adjacent to the Science Building and will provide a unique and engaging learning environment for students that participate in science courses such as South Carolina natural history and environmental studies.
- USC Sumter, along with Morris College and Central Carolina Technical College, hosted the 26th annual Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Dream Walk. The community event celebrates the life and legacy of Dr King with a program followed by a three-mile walk.
- USC Aiken at Sumter's Education Program held a Professional Program Induction Ceremony to celebrate students as they start their teaching practicum. The teaching practicum marks their first real experience stepping into classrooms, observing master teachers, supporting learners, and beginning to develop their own voice as future educators.
- In honor of Black History Month, USC Sumter hosted an event honoring the contributions of Dr. Ronald E. McNair. Other special guests include The University of South Carolina Ronald E. McNair Program and members of the McNair Family & the Ronald E. McNair Committee.
- The Fall 2025 USC Sumter Esports program competed in 7 championships, winning 4! Championship winners were NJCAA Call of Duty 4v4 D1, NJCAA Call of Duty WarZone D1, Call of Duty League WarZone and Eastern College Athletic Conference Call of Duty D2 4v4.

Athletics

- Fundraising efforts have been successful thus far raising over \$30,000, with the Alumni Golf Tournament in November raising an additional \$12,000 for Athletic scholarships.
- Will Thompson was named head coach for the baseball program.
- Dustin Smith is our new Track and Field head coach.
- JJ Lott is the new assistant softball coach.
- Nick Petit and Jackson Price are the new baseball assistant coaches.
- Baseball, softball, tennis, track and field, and golf are in season this spring.
- We are hosting the NJCAA Women's Tennis National Championships, in partnership with the City of Sumter and the PTC, in May.

Spring Enrollment (currently):

Spring 2026 HDCT = 1746 in comparison to 1637 HDCT in Spring 2025.



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
LANCASTER

**Report to the Palmetto College Faculty Senate
February 20, 2026**

**Dr. Courtney Catledge
Regional Palmetto College
Dean**

People

Enrollment

As of February 17, 2026, Spring enrollment stands at 2273. These numbers reflect a strong enrollment for the Spring semester. Recruitment plans are underway for summer and fall 2026.

Faculty/Staff searches in progress:

- Accounts Receivable Manager
- Admission Counselor (Recruiter)
- Assistant Professor of Biology
- Instructor of Psychology
- Instructor of Sociology
- Assistant Professor/ Instructor of Computer Science

New Hires

Lauren Thomas, Director of the Health Coach Training Pathway and Instructor of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior.

Samantha Etim, Nursing Instructor and Simulation Lab Coordinator.

Recent Faculty Accomplishments:

Aghasafari, S., Cai, L. & Malloy, M (Accepted Publication). “Visualizing Protein Structure: Integrating AI, Graphic Storytelling, and Media Arts in STEAM-Based Chemistry Education.” *Journal of Chemical Education*. This is one of the most competitive and highly regarded journals in chemical education.

Aghasafari, S., & Needles, T. (Accepted). “Enhancing STEAM Education Through Media Arts: A Multidisciplinary Approach.” *Connected Arts Networks, Art*

Education.

Stan Emanuel was featured in WalletHub's recent article Credit Cards for People with No Credit. You can find it here: https://wallethub.com/credit-cards/no-credit/#expert=Stan_Emanuel

Ernest Jenkins gave a presentation on "Honoring Local Connections to the American Revolutionary Era" to the Lancaster Breakfast Rotary Club on January 14, 2026.

Athletics

The breakdown of fall 2025 grades for all USC Lancaster Athletes:

Men's Soccer: 17 players at a 3.0 or better, 2 of whom received a 4.0

Women's Soccer: 18 players at a 3.0 or better, 7 of whom received a 4.0

Volleyball: 4 players at a 3.0 or better

Baseball: 36 players at a 3.0, 5 of whom received a 4.0

Baseball kicked off the season with an away game last weekend at East Georgia State College. Upcoming game schedule can be accessed at [this link](#).

Employee Support

Please remember that **the university offers work-life balance and wellbeing support** through our [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP). These services are helpful in times of stress and adjustment.

USC Lancaster in our Communities

USC Lancaster admissions, academic affairs, and financial aid hosted and presented at the School Counselor luncheon on February 13, 2026. Over 20 were in attendance.

We will connect with residents at **Sun City Carolina Lakes and Tree Tops later in February for registration for a second 8-weeks course.**

USCL leadership and students attended **Carolina Day** at the statehouse on **February 17th** with 16 students and 5 staff/administrators.

Other items...

Horizon Education Grants were created to celebrate and support educators working with students PreK through college, in the communities of Great Falls and Fort Lawn, SC, and all of Lancaster County. They are designed with two primary goals in mind:

To tie innovative, collaborative teaching and learning to the goal of Building and Supporting a Healthy Community; To promote and support the development of our students' full potential to succeed as outlined in the "Profile of the SC Graduate."

Collaboration across grade levels, school campuses, and communities is highly encouraged. Every educator in our service area is eligible for both an individual classroom grant **AND** a team grant each year. The Spring 2026 deadlines include January 18th, February 15th, March 15th, and April 19th, 2026.

W. Brent Burgin Lunch and Learn on February 27 2026 at the NASC- a lecture by Prof. Deborah Rowell, Instructor of Criminal Justice at USC Lancaster, PhD Candidate. “The Dark Side of Women’s History: How Female Serial Killers Defy the Narrative.”

Pop-Up Art Market at the USC Lancaster Native American Study Center on Saturday February 21st from 10 am – 4 pm featuring, Blue Heron Group, Catawba Nation, and Amanda Wilson, Catawba Nation.

There is an upcoming production by the Lancaster Players- “*Hairspray.*” Come out and support on **February 27th and 28th at 8 pm and March 1st at 2 pm**

Representing the system campuses, **President Amiridis presented FY 2026 budget requests to the House Ways and Means Higher Education Sub-committee** (Jan 29, 2026). The meeting went well with great dialogue between the University and the house members.

Representing the system campuses, **President Amiridis will present FY 2026 budget requests to the Senate Finance Committee Hearing March 2026.**

The inaugural meeting of the **USC Lancaster Staff Organization** took place on Friday January 30th, 2026, with good participation. It was offered in a hybrid format to promote participation. Lunch was provided and the discussion was centered around role and responsibilities of the organization as well as the structure and bylaws.

AssetWorks is now live for faculty, staff, and students to report maintenance and custodial concerns.

Save the date – Give 4 Garnet 2026

Give 4 Garnet is a one-day, eight-hour, and one-minute celebration of the University of South Carolina system that will begin at 5:59 a.m. on March 25 and end at 2 p.m. on March 26. It provides an opportunity for students, employees, alumni, family, and friends to come together virtually and demonstrate their support. Specific emphasis this year is USCL Soccer, Travel Study, and the Fred “Henry” Shute Archaeology Lab Fund.

Commencement 2026: Planning is underway for an outdoor commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 2 at 11:00 am. This year’s speaker this year is Chad Douglas, Executive Partner at Primary Talent Partners. The ceremony will take place just in front of the Crawford Rose Garden. The pre-ceremony and post-ceremony receptions will both take place in the Arnold Special Events Room in Bradley.



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
SALKEHATCHIE

**Palmetto College Faculty Senate
February 20, 2026
Campus Dean's Report**

Campus Highlights:

- Spring headcount enrollment, as of today, is 738, which is up 24 from this date last year. FTE is at 422, up 34 from this date last year.
- The campus hosted several successful events in December, including the Holiday Luncheon, Chancellor Wilson's visit, and the Preventive Health Screening.
- USC Salkehatchie will be hosting a Business After Hours event in partnership with the Allendale Historical Society on March 19. This event aligns with a State Museum exhibit that will be on campus throughout the week.
- USC Salkehatchie is partnering with SC Works to create connection points in the iCarolina Lab on both campuses. These will provide the campus and community with access to online workforce resources, unemployment insurance information, and career services offered through SC Works. We are working to schedule ribbon cuttings on both campuses, with days and times to be announced soon.
- Negotiations are ongoing to reestablish the nursing partnership program. Donations from various sources have been secured and grants have been/are being written/submitted.
- USC Salkehatchie was represented by approximately 25 students and staff at Carolina Day in Columbia on February 17.
- WJBF has installed their Skyview weather camera on the Student Services Center at the Allendale campus, offering a live view of the north end driveway, fountain, and flag pole. The camera provides real-time weather conditions to WJBF's meteorologists and viewers across the region.
- A new crosswalk has been installed on the Walterboro campus to improve pedestrian safety.
- Hosted a successful Teacher Cadet Day on February 6 on the Allendale campus. The SC Teacher of the Year spoke with participants.
- The Salkehatchie Leadership Institute and Walterboro Library are partnering to host a Leadership Workshop Series on February 24 and 25. Our Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Student Success will be the speaker.

- USC Salkehatchie will be hosting a Business After Hours event in partnership with the Allendale Historical Society on March 19. This event aligns with a State Museum exhibit that will be on campus throughout the week.
- Athletic events continue to be available via live streaming on the Urban Edge Network, accessible through the web or mobile app. Faculty and staff are encouraged to support student-athletes by viewing streamed games when unable to attend in person.

Athletic Updates:

- Men's Basketball will be hosting Pack the Stands Night on February 25.
- Congratulations to Coach Matt Lynch, Men's Basketball Coach, for being named the National JUCO Coach of the Week by HoopDirt.com.
- Congratulations to Doous Alemdar, Men's Basketball, on being named the Kesia Brown State Farm Student-Athlete of the month.
- Congratulations to the Women's Basketball team for clinching the Division I Region 10 regular season title.
- Twelve men's soccer players and 8 women's volleyball players were named to the fall 2025 Region 10 All-Academic Team.
-

HR Updates:

- Hires since last report:
 - Meagan Driggers – Recreation Assistant/Cheering Coach
 - William “Bill” Frye – Admissions Counselor
 - Renee Kinloch – Academic Advisor
 - Diana Diaz Lopez – Director of Student Support Services
 - Isaac Robinson – transitioned to Academic Advisor
- Currently accepting applications for the following positions:
 - Assistant Professor/Instructor of Business
 - Assistant Professor/Instructor of Foreign Language
 - Director of Communications, Marketing, and Alumni Relations
 - Student Life Coordinator
- Aiming for Excellence Award winners:
 - December – Carmen Taylor
 - January – Rocshe Green
 - February – Gwyne Lacanin

Faculty accomplishments:

- Dr. James Cooke presented his pre-circulated paper, “‘A Fascinating Parallel’: African American Responses to the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement,” at the Massachusetts Historical Society’s African American History Seminar (virtual). The presentation highlighted new research on African American engagement with global civil rights movements. November 20, 2025
- Dr. David Dangerfield was interviewed by the SC Historical Society for their podcast. The episode focused on his research on free persons of color and enslaved South Carolinians amid the American Revolution. February 9, 2026.

- Dr. David Dangerfield was invited by the SC Department of Archives and History Foundation to give a lecture on free persons of color and enslaved experiences during the American Revolution, as part of the Foundation's annual Revolutionary War Symposium. November 15, 2025.
- Dr. David Dangerfield presented "Performing Whiteness in Gray: Free Men of Color, the Confederate Military, and Race in the South Carolina Lowcountry," at Usages du Passe: Experiences Minoritaires en Actes dans les Ameriques. November 20, 2025.
- Dr. Wei-Kai Lai presented "A Journey of Inequalities" at the Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) Mathematics Conference.
- Dr. Sarah Miller received a CIEL Rolling Grant to support the HIST 214 Public History courses exhibit "Celebrating Walterboro: 200 Years" to be part of the WHAM! (Walterboro History, Arts, and Music Festival) April 29 - May 9.
- Dr. Justin Mogilski received a PURE grant entitled "Developing an intervention to test whether BDSM improves relationship quality among people with adverse childhood experiences." This grant will fund the software needed to begin a student-led, independent research project beginning during the Spring 2026 semester.
- Dr. Justin Mogilski appeared on Dr. Justin Lehmillers' "Sex & Psychology Podcast" to discuss data collected at USC Salkehatchie and recently accepted for publication in Archives of Sexual Behavior.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. April Cone
Campus Dean

Randy Lowell, USC Union
Dean's Report
February 20, 2026

- Enrollment has reached a new record for Spring, with a headcount of 1,569 (up 19.9% from 1,308 last year), and FTE of 901 (up 21.4% from 742 last year), with increases from last Spring in dual enrollment and traditional student populations.
- The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education's most recent annual Statistical Abstract included a number of impressive metrics for our campus, including:
 - o 121 degrees awarded for fiscal year 2023-2024 (up from 118 from the previous fiscal year, and up from 50 degrees awarded ten years ago in 2014-2015).
 - o 47.6% Graduation Rate for first-time, full-time undergraduates entering in Fall 2021 (up from 37.5% for previous year; ranks #1 among all of the 4 PC Campuses and 16 Technical Colleges in SC).
 - o 75.9% Success Rate for first-time, full-time undergraduates entering in Fall 2021 (up from 71.9% for previous year; ranks #3 among all of the 4 PC Campuses and 16 Technical Colleges in SC).
 - o 69.9% Retention of first-time, full-time undergraduates from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024 (ranks #2 among all of the 4 PC Campuses and 16 Technical Colleges in SC).
 - o 50% LIFE Scholarship Retention for Freshmen in Fall 2023 retaining LIFE in Fall 2024 (ranks #1 among all of the 4 PC Campuses and 16 Technical Colleges in SC).
 - o 36.2% LIFE Scholarship Retention for Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors (combined) in Fall 2023 retaining LIFE in Fall 2024 (ranks #1 among all of the 4 PC Campuses and Technical Colleges in SC).
- The new Student Clothes Closet on campus is available to students to utilize this semester. It is located in the student lounge behind the Bookstore, near the Food Pantry. Spring hours are Wednesdays from 10:00-12:00 and Thursdays from 2:00-3:00. Students can call or text 864-424-8055 if they need to arrange an alternative time to utilize this resource. They will need to present their Carolina Card to access this free resource.
- We have welcomed two new maintenance staff to campus in Union and out at the athletic facilities in Jonesville and The Coop, Jason Fowler and Gene Dawkins. We still have an ad out for some maintenance work out at our Laurens Location in Clinton as well.
- In athletics, not only have our teams found success in competition this year, but they have also continued to excel in the classroom, as reflected in an overall Athletics GPA of 3.25 for Fall 2025. This included softball at 3.69, golf at 3.46, men's soccer at 3.28, bass fishing at 3.28, volleyball at 3.13, baseball at 3.12, and women's soccer at 3.01.
- Congratulations to our faculty on some recent accomplishments so far in 2026, including:
 - o Dr. Andrew Kettler, Assistant Professor of History:
 - Interviewed with EcoCast as part of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment: For the Once and Future Cow, in January

[\(https://asleecocast.podbean.com/e/cows-in-the-caribbean-cattle-chat-with-chaz-and-andrew/\)](https://asleecocast.podbean.com/e/cows-in-the-caribbean-cattle-chat-with-chaz-and-andrew/).

- Published the book *The Once and Future Cow: Agency, Appetite, and the Anthropocene* in January (<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/once-and-future-cow-9781350568297/>)
 - Dr. Randy Lowell, Professor of Psychology, in work with undergraduate researchers at USC Union, Kyla Downs-Paprocki and June Heitman, entitled “Can You Spot a Serial Killer,” received Magellan Scholar Grant (\$4,819 awarded) and Undergraduate Research Conference Presentation Grants (\$1,000 awarded) from USC Columbia’s Office of Undergraduate Research for Spring 2026. This work will be presented at the annual Southeastern Psychological Association’s meeting at the end of March in New Orleans, LA.
 - Dr. Steve Lownes, Associate Professor of World Languages, presented “Writing for Ethnocultural and Clinical Empathy in a Pre-nursing non-Western Humanities Course at a Two-Year College” at the annual Modern Languages Association Conference in Toronto, Canada, in January.
 - Ashley Rabanal, Instructor of Art, is part of a group exhibition hosted by the Hite Institute of Art & Design with the University of Louisville, KY. *Maybe Kudzu Covering My Body: Camouflage in the South* features 18 artists who explore camouflage as subject, action, metaphor, visual reference, or by actively camouflaging (January 9 through February 28, [Reception: Maybe Kudzu Covering My Body | University of Louisville Events](#)).
 - Tracey Stapleton, Instructor of Spanish, serving as Organizer and Moderator for the ISU Arconexiones virtual college in 2026, with the Theme of Weaving Resiliences (<https://www.isu.edu/anthropology/student-experience/arconexiones-conferencia/>)
- In facilities, we have a number of projects, including the following:
- The Main Building opened back up for classes last month after an extensive renovation, including new HVAC system, elevator, carpet, paint, furniture, etc.
 - The Laurens Location projects in Clinton completed its teaching kitchen and bathroom renovations, and putting some finishing touches in the boat storage area and golf room.
 - New Bantams signage has been installed on the exterior of the Truluck Gym on campus in Union.
 - Restroom work continues at the baseball field, as well as work in the Jonesville gym and its roof.
 - The Student Services Building on the Union campus will be emptied out over Spring Break to prepare for a project to have a new roof put on it, temporarily relocating staff to the Family Life and Rippy buildings on campus.
- The Budget remains in good shape, as expenditures sit at just over 59% as we crossed over the 58% point in the fiscal year, and looking to finish slightly ahead on tuition revenue from what was anticipated.