July 14, 2005

MEMORANDUM

To: Members, Advisory Committee on Academic Programs

From: Dr. Gail M. Morrison, Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing

Consideration of Policy and Procedures for Approval of New or Revised Mission Statements

Summary

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976 (as amended), **SECTION 59-103-45.** the CHE has the duty to

> (6) review and approve each institutional mission statement to ensure it is within the overall mission of that particular type of institution as stipulated by Section 59-103-15 and is within the overall mission of the State.

The responsibility for reviewing proposed mission statement revisions and making recommendations to the members of the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) now rests in the Division of Academic Affairs and Licensing (AA&L). The draft policy and guidelines below are an effort to provide criteria for institutional mission statements and to establish a comprehensive process for mission statement review within the AA&L division of the CHE.

In keeping with the requirement of the law, and taking into consideration mission statement-related requirements for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) (**Attachment 1**) and existing Performance Funding (PF) requirements for Indicator 1C – Mission Statement (**Attachment 2**), the proposed policy is intended to:

1. Provide South Carolina public institutions with clear guidelines for mission statement revisions;

2. Insure to the greatest extent possible that CHE-approved mission statements will meet SACS-COC principles, guidelines, and expectations;

3. Create a flexible mechanism for approval of non-substantive changes to mission statements; and

4. Define the process flow for institutions wishing to revise mission statements.

MISSION STATEMENT POLICY

Mission Statement Requirements:

1. Each public institution of higher education shall have a mission statement that:

   a. Relates the mission of the institution to the state and sector missions as stated in Act 359 of 1996 (§59-103-15, SC Code of Laws, 1976, as amended);

   b. Addresses, as appropriate, the major functions of teaching, scholarship/research and service;

   c. Speaks to the type of students that the institution serves, their educational goals, and how the institution meets those goals;

   d. Contains a description of degree and program offerings to encompass all levels of degrees (e.g., Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Certificates) and all areas of the curriculum (e.g., technical, liberal arts, engineering, allied health, etc.).

   e. Provides descriptive information (e.g., name of institution, public status, two-year/four-year/research, rural/suburban/urban, approximate FTE size, and, as appropriate, service area);

   f. Describes major course delivery styles to include electronic and non-traditional means of course delivery;

   g. Is clearly written and communicated to the institutions' constituencies; and

   h. Is approved by appropriate bodies, (i.e., area boards, boards of trustees, technical system board, CHE).

2. Only CHE-approved mission statements shall be distributed to the institution's constituencies either electronically or in print.

3. Published mission statements will include the dates of Board and CHE approval.

4. Revised mission statements shall be submitted to the CHE for approval within 90 days of Board approval.

Review and Approval Process

Final approval of new or revised mission statements shall be the responsibility of the CHE. Mission statement revisions fall into two broad categories: substantive revisions and minor revisions. Each type of revision follows a unique process for revision.

Substantive revisions are those revisions which change the nature, function, type, or sector of the institution. Examples include, but are not limited to, changes in sector, degree levels offered, program offerings, and service area.

Minor revisions are those revisions which do not change the nature, function, type, or sector of the institution. Examples include revisions for clarity and grammar, changes in size, CHE-approved changes in program mix, board-approved name changes, and editorial changes. However, any proposed revision that is determined by CHE staff to be of such nature or scope as to constitute a substantive revision shall be considered as such.

Proposed new mission statements and substantive revisions of existing statements must be considered for approval by the full CHE after recommendation by the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing (CAA&L). Minor revisions must be considered for approval by CHE staff within the Division of Academic Affairs and Licensing, with such approvals presented to the CAA&L as information items.

Proposed drafts of new or revised mission statements can be submitted by institutional officers to CHE staff for informal review prior to formal presentation to an institution's Board. While this review is not required, it is strongly suggested. The process for consideration and approval of new or revised mission statements shall follow the steps below:

New or revised mission statement:

- Approved by institution Board

- (Technical colleges) Approved by Tech System Board

- Submitted to CHE staff for consideration

If minor change:

- Staff reviews change and either approves or disapproves proposed changes.

- Staff informs institution of decision (Institution can appeal disapproval to CAA&L).

- Staff informs CAA&L.

- Institution publishes approved statement.

If substantive change:

- Staff forwards statement and recommendation to CAA&L.

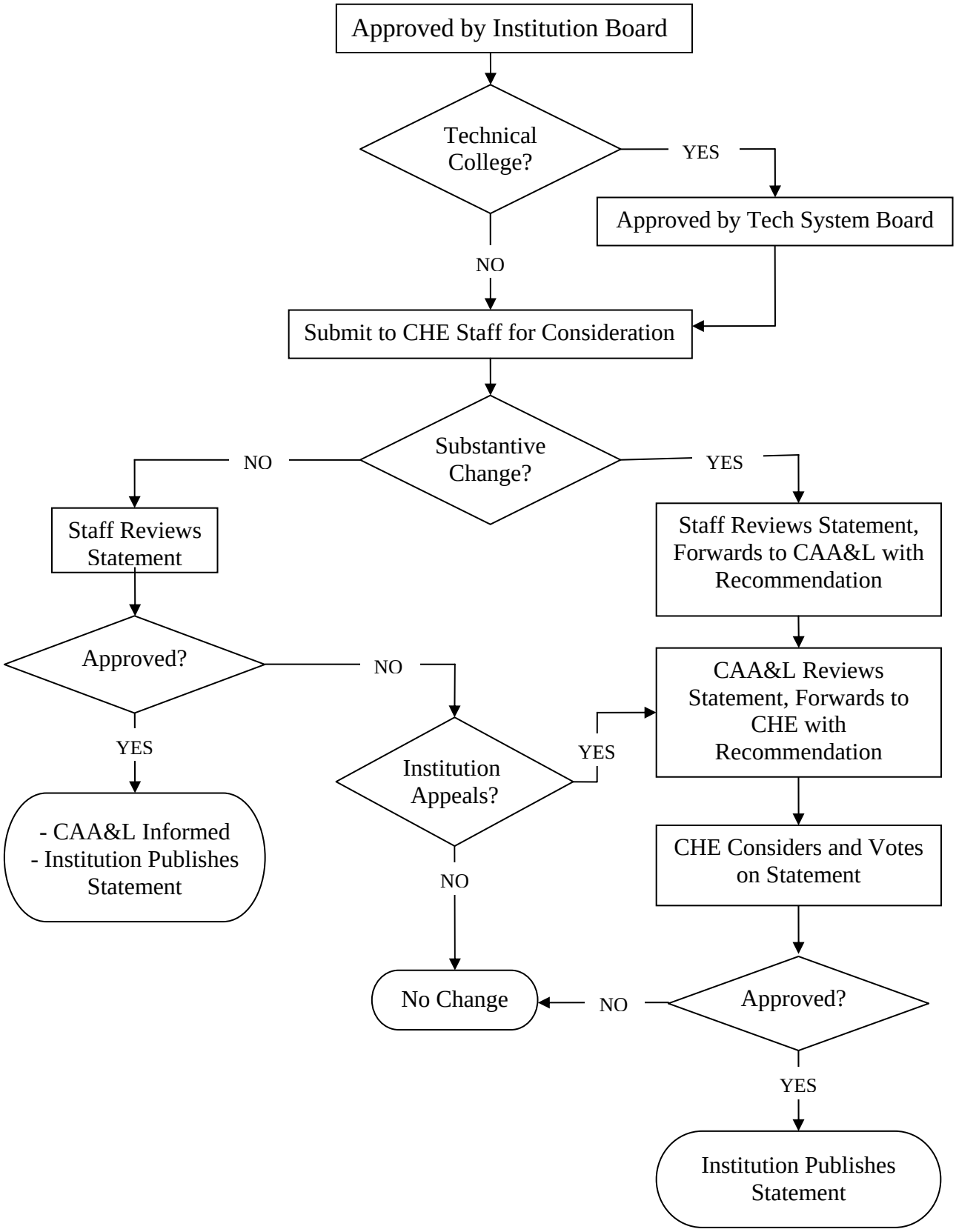
- CAA&L reviews statement and votes to either recommend or not recommend full CHE approval.

- CHE considers and votes on statement.

- Institution is given formal notice of CHE action.

- Institution publishes approved statement.

Process Flow for New or Revised Mission Statements



SACS-COC Policy

The current (as of 7/1/05) Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) policy on mission statements as contained in Section 3 of the *Principles of Accreditation* reads in full:

3.1 **Institutional Mission**

3.1.1 The institution has a clear and comprehensive mission statement that guides it; is approved by the governing board; is periodically reviewed by the board; and is communicated to the institution's constituencies.

Other references to mission statement are found in Section 2 of the *Principles of Accreditation:*

2.4 The institution has a clearly defined and published mission statement specific to the institution and appropriate to an institution of higher education, addressing teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional Mission)**

2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

According to staff at SACS-COC, the non-specific nature of the mission statement guideline is intended to allow institutions leeway to develop individual mission statements that are not forced into a set format or content. Also, according to staff, there is no intent to add detail to the guidelines in the near future.

The lack of detailed criteria does not mean that there are no expectations for mission statement content, however. The use of the word "comprehensive" implies at least some expectations for content, albeit without explicit guidelines the only way to discover them is through anecdotal means. SACS-COC staff has indicated that there are instances in which content problems in mission statements can lead to recommendations in an accreditation review. Some of the unwritten criteria that can be derived from the examples given include (related PF criteria number in ***bold italics***):

- The statement must include a general description of the institution to include type (e. g., two-year/four-year, technical/comprehensive, regional, etc.) ***(PF 3a).***

- The statement must speak to the type of students that the institution serves, their educational goals, and how the institution meets those goals ***(PF 3c).***

- The statement must contain a description of degree and program offerings to include all major offerings (e.g., Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Certificates, liberal arts, engineering, allied health, etc.) ***(PF Gen. Rec. 2).***

- The statement must contain a description of major course delivery styles to include electronic and non-traditional means of course delivery.

- The statement must include goals which can be tied to institutional effectiveness reporting. ***(PF 3c, f).***

- The statement must actually contain the words "teaching" and "learning" and, presumably, "research," and "public service" if those are part of the institutions activities. ***(PF 1).***

In addition, the more defined areas of Section 3.1.1, notably the statement that the mission statement "is approved by the governing board; is periodically reviewed by the board; and is communicated to the institution's constituencies" can also be of issue during SACS reviews. SACS-COC staff has indicated that a non-CHE-approved mission statement would be grounds for a recommendation in an accreditation review report. In addition, a S.C. technical college is currently facing questions from its SACS review team as to the "communicated to its constituencies" requirement in the *Principles*, apparently because the mission statement is not found on <u>all</u> of its printed material, including brochures and program pamphlets.

Performance Funding Indicator 1C – Mission Statement

IN ORDER TO RECEIVE CHE APPROVAL, MISSION STATEMENTS MUST HAVE THE CHARACTERISTICS LISTED BELOW AS WELL AS CONFORM TO THE CHE'S GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR EVALUATION OF MISSION STATEMENTS, ALSO LISTED BELOW:

The **DEFINED CHARACTERISTICS OF A MISSION STATEMENT** were developed from the SACS Criteria (current as of 2002, replaced by very general statement below) for what is suggested for inclusion in an institutional mission statement and are as follows:

1) Must relate the mission of the institution to the state and sector missions as stated in Act 359 of 1996 (§59-103-15, SC Code of Laws, 1976, as amended);

   Must address, as appropriate, the major functions of teaching, scholarship/research and service *(with service is defined as (a) service to the public including community service, (b) service to other institutions, (c) service to the discipline, and (d) service to the institution).*

2) Must address the size of the institution in general terms, and

3) Must address the following:

   a) pertinent description of information (e.g., public/private, two-year/four-year university, rural/suburban/urban, etc.);

   b) delineation of the geographic region for which the institution intends to provide services;

   c) description of types of students which the institution hopes to attract, accompanied by statements about the types of occupations or endeavors which graduates will be prepared to undertake;

   d) statements expressing essential beliefs, values or intent of the institution;

   e) outline of the major functions of the institution (e.g., general education, developmental education, vocational and technical education, professional education, student development, community or public service, research, continuing education, etc);

f) general description of the skills, knowledge, experiences, and attitudes ideally to be acquired or developed by the institution's students; and

g) be approved by appropriate bodies, (e.g., boards of trustees, state boards, etc.).

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR THE CHE EVALUATION OF MISSION STATEMENTS: *An institutional mission statement should accurately reflect what the institution is authorized to do and should be specific enough so the general public can easily read and understand the differences among and between the institutions of higher education in the State even when the institutions might be from the same sector as defined by Act 359 of 1996.*

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND EXPLANATION: It is important to understand that enough specificity should be used to signify differences, but not so much specificity that an institution would have to change it mission statement on a yearly basis. Three general recommendations, accepted by the Commission on Higher Education in October, 1997, to assist the institutions in formulating a mission statement include:

GENERAL RECOMMENDATION 1, SIZE OF INSTITUTION: The institutional mission statement should explicitly state the approximate size of the institution i.e. the size of Performance University is approximately 10,000 - 15,000 FTE students (fall semester count). Saying that an institution is of "moderate size" or a "small size" was generally not believed to be specific enough for the general public to ascertain size. The institution should indicate whether its enrollment is FTE or headcount, annual or fall only.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATION 2, MAJOR FUNCTION OF THE INSTITUTION: More specificity was needed by many institutions regarding the type and level of degrees which the institution confers upon graduation. For example, it is not sufficient to state that an institution has undergraduate degrees since "undergraduate" by definition could or could not include an associate's degree. If an institution offers any degrees, it should specify the level of degree it confers, e.g., associate's degrees, certificates, and/or baccalaureate degrees. The same specificity is needed at the graduate level, e.g., a Performance University offers master degrees, first-professional degrees, and Ph.D. level degrees. This is critical since many of the teaching institutions offer some Ph.D. level degrees and many do not.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATION 3, STYLE, GRAMMAR, AND READABILITY: Although not a part of the direct evaluation, an institution's mission

statement should be grammatically correct and highly readable in nature. An overall observation is that some institutions' mission statements had misspellings, subject/verb agreement problems or verb tense problems. In so far as the public nature of an institution's mission statement, an overall observation is that they should be carefully edited for typographical, grammar, and style errors.