

March 14, 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Members, Advisory Committee on Academic Programs

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

**Draft Excerpt from Report on Admission Standards for First-Time Entering
Freshmen
FY 2005-06: Meeting High School Course Prerequisites**

Please find attached a draft excerpt from the annual report on Admission Standards for First-Time Entering Freshmen, Fall 2005. We need to discuss the diminishing compliance with course prerequisites, and that discussion needs to be related to our discussion of contemplated changes in the course prerequisites related to discussions at the expanded ACAP-EEDA meetings.

Please look at your institution's compliance rate. As we have asked questions about the data, it has become apparent to us that in general little attention is being paid to the data and a variety of errors continue to surface.

We have included some brief references to some of the more current reports that reiterate the importance of appropriate course selection and appropriate rigor in the undergraduate curriculum as critically important to successful completion of the baccalaureate degree. We would welcome your suggestions for other appropriate references.

Act 629 of 1988, *The Cutting Edge*, requires that with respect to admission standards at the public colleges and universities:

- In consultation and coordination with the public institutions of higher learning in this state, the State Commission on Higher Education shall ensure that minimal admissions standards are maintained by the institutions.
- The commission, with the institutions, shall monitor the effect of compliance with admission prerequisites that are effective in fall, 1988 (Section 59-104-10(A)).

In April 1988, the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs adopted a procedure that requires each institution annually to report on applications, acceptances, and enrollment, and to specify the minimum approximate SAT score (combined math and verbal) that is required of most applicants for admission as freshmen.

Attached is the annual report on 2005 admission standards for first-time entering freshmen at South Carolina public senior colleges and universities. This document summarizes the results of one of five different reports related to admission standards and to measures of achievement of first-time entering freshmen for the fall of 2005.

The Report is presents the Fall 2005 Data Related to High School Course Prerequisites and the data was electronically supplied by the institutions via the Commission on Higher Education's Management Information System (CHEMIS).

In Act 359 of 1996, the General Assembly reiterated the importance of reporting admissions standards. Section 59-103-45(3) again directs the Commission to review minimum undergraduate admission standards.

Please review this document and contact Dr. Paula Gregg (e-mail: pgregg@che.sc.gov) with any corrections as soon as possible so that the report may be considered by the Committee on Academic Affairs at its meeting on April 6.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Committee approve the following:

1. With a decrease in applicable first-time freshmen meeting all the high school course prerequisites for public college admission, the senior institutions whose compliance rate falls below the state average of 92.4 percent should provide by June 1, 2006, to the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing a report on

reasons for declining compliance and a plan of action to increase compliance (The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, Lander, South Carolina State, USC-Aiken, USC-Beaufort, USC-Upstate, and Winthrop), thereby enhancing student preparation for success in college.

Extent to Which 2004 Freshmen Met the High School Course Prerequisites

Since Fall 1988, public senior colleges and universities in South Carolina have required that applicants for freshmen admission (who graduated from high school in 1988 or subsequent years) must have completed certain high school courses before being admitted. The required courses include the following:

- 1. Four units of English:** At least two units must have strong grammar and composition components, at least one must be in English literature, and at least one must be in American literature. Completion of College Preparatory English I, II, III, and IV will meet this criterion.
- 2. Three units of Mathematics:** These include Algebra I (for which Applied Mathematics I and II may count together as a substitute if a student successfully completes Algebra II), Algebra II, and Geometry. A fourth higher-level mathematics course is strongly recommended. The fourth course should be selected from among algebra III/trigonometry, pre-calculus, calculus, statistics, or discrete mathematics.
- 3. Three units of Laboratory Science:** Two units must be taken in two different fields and selected from among biology, chemistry, or physics. The third unit may be from the same field as one of the first two units (biology, chemistry, or physics) or from any laboratory science for which biology and/or chemistry is a prerequisite. Courses in earth science, general physical science, or introductory or general environmental science for which biology and/or chemistry is not a prerequisite will not meet this requirement. It is strongly recommended that students take physical science (taught as a laboratory science) as a prerequisite to the three required units of laboratory science outlined in the section.
- 4. Two units of the same foreign language.**
- 5. One unit of United States History:** One unit of U.S. History is required; a half unit of Economics and a half unit in Government are strongly recommended.
- 6. Four units of electives:** Four college preparatory units must be taken from at least three different fields selected from among Computer Science, English, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages, Humanities, Laboratory Science (excluding earth science, general physical science, general environmental science or other introductory science courses for which biology and/or chemistry is not a prerequisite), Mathematics above the level of Algebra II, and Social Sciences. It is suggested that one unit be in Computer Science which includes programming (i.e., not just keyboarding) and one unit in Fine Arts (appreciation of, history, or performance).

7. One unit of physical education or ROTC.

NOTE: Each institution may make exceptions in admitting 1) students who do not meet all of the prerequisites, limited to those individual cases in which the failure to meet one or more prerequisites is due to circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the student or 2) students who have taken the Tech Prep (Applied Academics) courses rather than the required college preparatory curriculum described above and who meet all other institutional admissions criteria.

As shown on **Table 3**, the proportion of all applicable first-time freshmen meeting all of the prerequisites decreased from 95.26 percent in 2004 to 92.4 percent in 2005. The percent of students meeting all of the prerequisites is still below the 1999 average of 98.15 percent. This decrease is largely attributable to the continued low percentages at USC-Beaufort from 97.62% in 2003 to 57.86% in 2004, with a slight increase of 68.9% in 2005 when it became a four-year institution and all students rather than merely “baccalaureate ready” students were factored into the data. Additionally, Lander University shows notably decreased compliance at 74.4% (-18.4%). Other fluctuations in compliance are relatively small at the four year institutions. One of the regional two-year campuses, USC-Union, also shows significantly decreased compliance at 66.7% (-26.2%).

TABLE 3						
Percent of Applicable¹ First-Time Freshmen Meeting High School Course Prerequisites						
	2003 Applicable Freshmen	2003 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2004 Applicable Freshmen	2004 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2005 Applicable Freshmen	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites
Research Institutions						
Clemson	2,767	99.8%	3,018	99.7%	2,903	97.7%
USC-Columbia	3,429	97.5%	3,337	96.1%	3,659	96.5%
Sub Total	6,196	98.5%	6,355	97.8%	6,562	97.0%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities						
The Citadel	553	100.0%	569	100.0%	585	87.9%
Coastal Carolina	1,238	91.2%	1,304	90.0%	1,494	86.1%
College of Charleston	1,860	97.2%	1,940	97.6%	1,984	97.4%
Francis Marion	768	93.0%	746	94.6%	803	94.6%
Lander	547	90.3%	652	92.8%	577	74.4%
SC State	810	100.0%	960	100.0%	1,013	87.7%
USC-Aiken	549	83.2%	599	80.0%	594	84.0%
USC-Beaufort	42	97.6%	140	57.9%	212	68.9%
USC-Upstate	667	89.7%	636	88.5%	709	87.3%
Winthrop	1,059	92.3%	990	94.4%	999	91.0%
Sub Total	8,093	93.7%	8,536	93.3%	8,970	89.0%
Total Sr. Institutions	14,289	95.8%	14,891	95.2%	15,532	92.4%
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC						
USC-Lancaster ²	63	100.0%	66	93.9%	74	90.5%
USC-Salkehatchie ²	12	100.0%	9	100.0%	1	100.0%
USC-Sumter ²	61	100.0%	60	100.0%	58	100.0%
USC-Union ²	18	100.0%	14	92.9%	15	66.7%
Sub Total USC Two-Year	154	100.0%	149	96.6%	148	91.9%
Grand Total	14,443	95.8%	15,040	95.3%	15,680	92.4%

¹Not applicable to foreign students, GED students, and students who graduated prior to 1988.

²At the USC two-year campuses, the prerequisites are applicable only to those students classified by the institution as baccalaureate-ready and accepted as such.

Analysis of CHEMIS data on which course prerequisites students are not meeting indicate that laboratory science has been the predominant area for the last three years. In 2001-02 the implementation of a third science course prerequisite occurred. This increase in an additional science course appears, from the data, to be the primary reason for the percentage of students not meeting the prerequisites for the last three years. Additionally, 2005 data indicates that elective requirements are another area where course prerequisites are not being met. However, of particular concern are those institutions whose compliance falls below 90%. The intent of the prerequisites is to enhance the preparation of students to do well in college. The recently released report, *The Toolbox Revisited*, by the United States Department of Education, indicates that the academic intensity of the student's high school curriculum still counts more than anything else in precollegiate history in providing momentum toward completing a bachelor's degree (US DOE, February 2006). As the recently released report for ACT (2003) shows, no matter what students' initial level of achievement, students who take the core set of courses are more likely to have higher ACT Composite scores than students who take less than the core set of courses. The *Trends in College Admission 2000* report indicates that four-year institutions rate the pattern of high school coursework as important to admission immediately behind high school GPA or rank and admissions test scores like ACT or SAT. South Carolina falls below national averages at least in part because the recommended required high school courses are not followed.

The lowest compliance rate is shown by USC-Beaufort (68.9%), which only became a four-year institution in Fall, 2004. USC-Beaufort will need to continue to work closely with the high schools to communicate the importance of compliance since half of accepted freshman lack prerequisite courses in discipline areas represented by the prerequisites. The Commission should expect to see significant improvement in compliance rates, and USC-Beaufort should target reaching at least a 90% compliance rate with first-time entering freshman in Fall 2008.

Given the fact that in 2001 institutions agreed to require a third lab science, a dip in the compliance rate was to be expected. By 2005, it is reasonable to expect that students would be improving their compliance with the new prerequisite, and in general that is happening throughout the system. However, an analysis of the data for the six institutions with unacceptably low compliance (The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, College of Charleston, Lander, South Carolina State, USC-Aiken, USC-Beaufort, USC-Upstate, and Winthrop) shows that non-compliance includes other prerequisite areas as well.

The next lowest compliance rate with the high school course prerequisites is Lander University (74.4%). A Lander University representative responded to a staff inquiry that they would look into the reason for the significant decrease and report this information as soon as it is available.

Coastal Carolina (86.1%), displays a downward trend (91.2% to 90.0% to 86.1%) over the past three years. In response to a staff inquiry, Coastal Carolina notes the out-of-state enrollment is higher and some states do not have the same course prerequisites in high school as South Carolina. This is validated by the overall lower percentages for all institutions shown in **Table 3B**.

USC-Upstate (87.3%) also shows a downward trend (89.66%; 88.52%; 87.3%). However, a USC-Upstate representative responded to a staff inquiry by identifying the procedure used to record tech-prep courses in the data base as the cause for the decline. Students with tech-prep courses on their record did not appear to fare worse in their college courses at USC-Upstate than other students, according to USC-Upstate.

The Citadel showed a decrease in the percent of freshmen meeting the prerequisites from 2003 and 2004 (1005) to 87.9% in 2005. In response to a staff inquiry, a Citadel representative stated the there was an error in the reporting process in 2003 and 2004 from the Office of Institutional Research and this process was altered for the 2005 report. In that alteration, the code to indicate the indicated exceptions was not used; instead the code for “met” was used. Thus, compliance was over-stated in 2003 and 2004.

In this report, the percent of applicable first-time Freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites has been broken down further into “In State Only” (**Table 3A**) and “Out-of-State Only” (**Table 3B**) to determine if out-of-state students are responsible for a decrease in the percentage of first-time Freshmen meeting the high school course prerequisites. It does not appear that they are in every case.

TABLE 3A						
Percent of Applicable¹ First-Time Freshmen Meeting High School Course Prerequisites In State Only (GEO-Origin = SC)						
	2003 Applicable Freshmen	2003 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2004 Applicable Freshmen	2004 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2005 Applicable Freshmen	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites
Research Institutions						
Clemson	1,814	99.8%	1,863	99.6%	1,888	98.1%
USC-Columbia	2,576	98.2%	2,386	97.6%	2,464	98.3%
Sub Total	4,390	98.9%	4,249	98.5%	4,352	98.2%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities						
The Citadel	246	100.0%	224	100.0%	244	96.7%
Coastal Carolina	598	93.5%	684	93.3%	726	89.4%
College of Charleston	1,086	98.6%	1,029	98.6%	1,092	98.4%
Francis Marion	729	93.1%	699	94.7%	764	95.3%
Lander	522	90.2%	618	93.5%	555	74.8%
SC State	662	100.0%	790	100.0%	809	86.8%
USC-Aiken	516	82.6%	557	81.9%	541	85.2%
USC-Beaufort	40	97.5%	125	60.0%	194	69.6%
USC-Upstate	626	90.1%	596	89.6%	669	87.6%
Winthrop	889	94.4%	879	96.8%	844	94.1%
Sub Total	5,914	93.9%	6,201	93.9%	6,438	89.8%
Total Sr. Institutions	10,304	96.1%	10,450	95.8%	10,790	93.2%
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC						
USC-Lancaster ²	62	100.0%	65	93.8%	73	90.4%
USC-Salkehatchie ²	11	100.0%	9	100.0%	1	100.0%
USC-Sumter ²	59	100.0%	60	100.0%	58	100.0%
USC-Union ²	18	100.0%	14	92.9%	15	66.7%
Sub Total USC Two-Year	150	100.0%	148	96.6%	147	91.8%
Grand Total	10,454	96.1%	10,598	95.8%	10,937	93.2%

¹Not applicable to foreign students, GED students, and students who graduated prior to 1988.

²At the USC two-year campuses, the prerequisites are applicable only to those students classified by the institution as baccalaureate-ready and accepted as such.

TABLE 3B						
Percent of Applicable¹ First-Time Freshmen Meeting High School Course Prerequisites Out-of-State Only (GEO-Origin not = SC)						
	2003 Applicable Freshmen	2003 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2004 Applicable Freshmen	2004 Percent Meeting Prerequisites	2005 Applicable Freshmen	2005 Percent Meeting Prerequisites
Research Institutions						
Clemson	953	99.7%	1,155	100.0%	1,015	97.0%
USC-Columbia	853	95.4%	951	92.4%	1,195	92.9%
Sub Total	1,806	97.7%	2,106	96.6%	2,210	94.8%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities						
The Citadel	307	100.0%	345	100.0%	341	81.5%
Coastal Carolina	640	89.1%	620	86.5%	768	83.1%
College of Charleston	774	95.2%	911	96.4%	892	96.2%
Francis Marion	39	89.7%	47	93.6%	39	82.1%
Lander	25	92.0%	34	79.4%	22	63.6%
SC State	148	100.0%	170	100.0%	204	91.2%
USC-Aiken	33	93.9%	42	54.8%	53	71.7%
USC-Beaufort	2	100.0%	15	40.0%	18	61.1%
USC-Upstate	41	82.9%	40	72.5%	40	82.5%
Winthrop	170	81.2%	111	75.7%	155	74.2%
Sub Total	2,179	92.9%	2,335	91.7%	2,532	87.0%
Total Sr. Institutions	3,985	95.1%	4,441	94.0%	4,742	90.6%
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC						
USC-Lancaster ²	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.0%
USC-Salkehatchie ²	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
USC-Sumter ²	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
USC-Union ²	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sub Total USC Two-Year	4	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.0%
Grand Total	3,989	95.1%	4,442	94.0%	4,743	90.6%

¹Not applicable to foreign students, GED students, and students who graduated prior to 1988.

²At the USC two-year campuses, the prerequisites are applicable only to those students classified by the

institution as baccalaureate-ready and accepted as such.

A Comparison between **Table 3A** and **Table 3B** indicates that the percent of first-time Freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites is lower at every 4-year institution except for South Carolina State University.