

CHE  
05/01/2008  
Agenda Item 7.02E

May 1, 2008

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Dr. Layton McCurdy, Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

**From:** Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Chair, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing, and Members

**Consideration of Annual Evaluation of Associate Degree Programs  
FY 2005-2006**

**Background**

The South Carolina 1979 Master Plan requires the annual review of associate degrees in the State's public higher education institutions. In 1996, the passage of Act 359 underscored the importance of program accountability by focusing on questions related to time to degree and graduates' first-time passing rates on professional licensure examinations. Over time, the concept of accountability of institutions of higher education has grown on the national agenda.

The purposes of this study remain relevant as part of the focus of both state and national governments on institutional accountability. The language of Act 359 maintained the purposes of this annual review as they had been articulated in earlier legislation and Commission policy, as follows:

- 1) to insure that programs demonstrate responsiveness to employment trends and meet minimum standards of enrollment, graduation, and placement; and
- 2) to identify programs which need to be strengthened.

Given the preponderance of associate degree programs which are employment-related to specific occupations or occupational sectors, this report has for many years sought to provide insight into specific programs which are *either exceptionally achieving their ends or are underperforming* in relationship to the state's current and future economic development needs.

The procedures for this review require each program's productivity to be evaluated in terms of enrollment, number of graduates, and percent of graduates placed in a related job or continuing their studies full-time. The following criteria apply:

1. Each program must produce at least six graduates during the evaluation year or an average of at least six graduates over the most recent three-year period.
2. At the most recent fall term, each program must enroll at least 16 students who generate 12 full-time equivalents.
3. At least 50 percent of the graduates available for job placement must be placed in a job related to their education or continue their education on a full-time basis.

Programs which fail to meet the above criteria must be canceled, suspended, or put on probation unless their continuation is justified to the Commission. Justification for programs may take into consideration such factors as manpower requirements, funding, and employment "stop outs" of students. In addition, three programs—General Technology, Vocational Technical Education, and General Engineering Technology—have historically had different and much more flexible standards of evaluation because of the unique needs they have filled and the low enrollments which they were expected to produce. Accordingly, General Technology, Vocational Technical Education, and General Engineering Technology have historically been considered "justified" for continuation regardless of whether they met the evaluation requirements.

When a program is placed on probation, the institution may continue to offer the program but must provide a plan for the program to meet all criteria within three years. Suspension means that the program's inability to meet the minimum criteria is serious enough to discontinue temporarily the enrollment of new students in the program until the institution can study the need and demand for the program. A program may remain on suspension for three years.

### **Distribution of Associate Degree Programs by System and Sector**

For this reporting period, associate degree programs exist in all sixteen technical colleges, the four two-year regional branches of the University of South Carolina, and the four four-year campuses of the University of South Carolina. After next year's report no

further associate degree program data will be reported from the four-year campuses of USC-Aiken and USC-Upstate, since both campuses have discontinued their only associate degree program, the Associate Degree in Nursing. USC-Beaufort, formerly a two-year institution which was approved to become a four-year institution in June, 2002, has been permitted by the Commission on Higher Education to continue to offer the associate of arts/associate of science degree program at the military bases in Beaufort. The Commission's decision was made after a request had been received from the military leadership in the Beaufort area. All other associate degrees in public institutions of higher education in the state are offered in two-year institutions with the sole exception of the AA/AS at Fort Jackson offered by USC-Columbia.

*The associate degree programs in the state's public institutions were evaluated using Fall 2006 enrollment data and academic year 2005-2006 graduation and employment data.* Nine (9) associate degree programs in the two-year USC campuses, four (4) associate degree programs in the four-year USC campuses (i.e., including the two now-discontinued Associate Degree in Nursing programs at USC-Aiken and USC-Upstate), and 301 associate degree programs in the technical college system were evaluated.

Associate degree programs implemented within the past three years in the Technical College system have always been excluded from this analysis. No new associate degree programs have been added at any of the USC two-year campuses or four-year campuses during the past three years. It is unlikely that additional two-year programs will be opened at any USC two-year campus, since 1) USC increasingly views these campuses as part of a larger concept (called "Palmetto College") which is to work with USC-Columbia for delivery of an array of programs; and 2) the Technical College System holds the view that it must pre-approve all new two-year degree programs at any public institution which might lead to immediate employment.

### **General Analysis of the Programs of Study in the USC System**

As stated above, all USC regional campuses designated as "two-year," as well as USC-Beaufort and USC-Columbia at Fort Jackson, continue to offer Associate of Arts/Associate of Science degree programs. In February 1998, in response to the requirements of Act 359 and to earlier concerns about the perceived inappropriateness of one of the state's three research institutions offering an associate degree, USC-Columbia requested and received approval to revise its mission statement so that its ongoing offering of the Associate of Arts degree program at Fort Jackson would be officially included as part of its institutional mission. Enrollment and graduation data show (**see Table 1**) that this program is very small.

Because it is small and peripheral to the mission of the state's comprehensive *research* university, the AA/AS at Fort Jackson would be more appropriately offered by a

two-year institution, either USC-Sumter or Midlands Technical College. Accordingly, at the meeting of the Commission in Orangeburg on June 7, 2007, when the last annual report of the associate degree programs was reported for Commission action, this report included a portion of narrative on the USC-Columbia-at-Fort Jackson AA/AS program. In response the Commission requested that the staff meet with the personnel at USC-Columbia to discuss the issues further.

While it appears peripheral and anomalous for an AA/AS program to be part of the program offerings at USC-Columbia, the University administration has maintained historically that the program is important for carrying out the University's community and humanitarian mission. The University administration has been adamant that this program should not be transferred to either USC-Sumter or Midlands Technical College. The administration has been equally firm that the program not be phased out over time.

USC-Beaufort's continuation of the offering of the AA/AS degree presents another special case. Data from that institution show that the number of AA/AS associate degree students is still reported as a single category of degree recipients (N=39) at an institution that has only recently assumed baccalaureate degree-granting responsibilities. Graduates of the program at USC-Beaufort show a steady decrease for each of the past seven years. (See **Table 1**.)

Over the past four years the numbers of graduates from the AA/AS programs in the University of South Carolina system have varied considerably as Table 1 shows. The data reported from the USC-Columbia Institutional Research Office show that for 2005-2006 three of the six USC campuses offering the AA/AS program have experienced decreases in graduates for 2005-2006 over the 2004-2005 academic year. Of the three campuses experiencing increases in graduates, two were two-year regional campuses. The third was USC-Columbia at Fort Jackson, which increased from a negligible four to eight graduates. In all, the total number of AA/AS recipients in the USC System has decreased 5.5% in the year from 2004-05 to 2005-2006.

Completion of an AA/AS degree prior to transferring to a four-year institution has been shown to increase the odds that a student will also complete a baccalaureate degree. That fact, linked with students' eligibility for the Legislative Tuition Assistance Program while working toward their AA/AS, suggests that the two-year USC regional campuses should consider preparation of a master plan to increase the numbers of AA/AS degree recipients each year for the next decade. This suggestion has been made in this report for each of the past four years, but has thus far elicited no response from the University. Owing to the value added that increased numbers of baccalaureate-degree completers bring to the state's economic and civic development, the reiteration of this suggestion is useful.

**Table 1**  
**USC-System AA/AS Program Graduates**

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
<b>4-Year:</b>							
USC-Columbia (Ft. Jackson)	12	14	19	14	12	4	8
USC-Beaufort	87	63	72	79	73	56	39
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>2-Year:</b>							
USC-Lancaster	74	86	96	81	69	71	91
USC-S'hatchie	93	83	90	80	84	92	76
USC-Sumter	152	160	161	119	70	74	62
USC-Union	51	35	52	45	55	49	51
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>327</b>

Source: USC annual reports on associate degree data

### **Applied, Occupationally-Specific Two-Year Degrees in the USC System**

In the past few years, two of the four-year campuses of the University of South Carolina have terminated the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program: USC-Upstate (end of Spring Semester 2004) and USC-Aiken (end of Fall Semester 2005.) This report is the next to last annual report in which data will be reported for students who were enrolled in those programs.

The two-year campuses of the USC System present another important challenge to and opportunity for higher education institutions in South Carolina. Three of the four of these two-year regional campuses are found in communities where a technical college is neither located nor found nearby. These three campuses are USC-Lancaster, USC-Salkehatchie, and USC-Union. Of these three, only USC-Lancaster offers occupationally-specific degree programs, although neither the authorizing legislation nor Act 359 prohibits the others from offering occupational degrees. The occupational programs at USC-Lancaster are nursing, criminal justice, and business. Graduates from the occupationally-specific two-year programs at USC-Lancaster, USC-Aiken, and USC-Upstate are listed below in **Table 2** for 2005-2006:

**Table 2**  
**USC System Graduates of Two-Year Occupationally-Specific**  
**Programs of Study**  
**(Academic Year 2005-2006)**

	<b>Nursing</b>	<b>Criminal Justice</b>	<b>Business</b>
USC-Aiken	25	---	---
USC-Lancaster	27	15	19
USC-Upstate	33	---	---

Three years ago, this annual report suggested the inclusion (or, in the case of Lancaster, the increase) of offerings of two-year occupationally-related degree programs in the curricula of the three remaining two-year regional USC campuses located in communities where no technical college is located (i.e., Lancaster, Union, and Salkehatchie). The logic behind this position was to spur economic development in those communities with underutilized USC facilities by inviting the neighboring technical college to bring its expertise in technical fields to supplement the arts and sciences instruction available from the USC campus' faculty.

Two years ago the Commission asked that these two systems address the Commission's concerns about using the resources of the two systems cooperatively so that technical and occupational programs could be offered on the USC two-year regional campuses. The State Technical College System responded by noting efforts of the technical colleges to rent or build new facilities in regions served by USC two-year campuses. The University of South Carolina did not respond to this request, but subsequently has received approval for a Program Modification to offer a USC-Columbia-based Bachelor of Science in Nursing-Generic (BSN-Generic) program at USC-Salkehatchie and at USC-Lancaster. Neither system's response addresses the Commission's central concern, i.e., the need for the two systems to cooperate to offer technical, associate degree programs to promote economic development in three small communities. Cooperation between the two systems could be accomplished beginning with an intentional dialogue between the systems to establish a legal, functional, and administrative arrangement for implementing at Union, Salkehatchie/Allendale, and Lancaster a plan to offer technical associate degree programs on the two-year USC regional campuses.

**Summary of USC System Offerings in Associate Degrees**

Graduation rates and student enrollment data for the current review period show that all the two-year programs in the USC system (AA/AS and occupational programs) are now meeting the productivity requirements for two-year programs, *but the system has produced fewer AA/AS graduates each year since 2001-2002*. The three occupational

programs at USC-Lancaster are producing relatively small numbers of graduates, which reflect the relatively sparse population of the area served. However, two of the three of those occupationally-related programs (i.e., Nursing and Criminal Justice) are producing more graduates for the current report than in last year's.

The institutional decisions taken at USC-Upstate and USC-Aiken to cease offering the associate degree in nursing have resulted in the transfer of these programs to neighboring technical colleges. Plans for enrollments and degree completions in the two new ADN programs at the technical colleges suggest that each of these area programs will produce more graduates than their predecessor programs had produced.

### **General Analysis of Associate Degree Programs in the Technical Colleges**

A summary of the number of programs evaluated over the past 24 years in various categories at the technical colleges is found in **Table 3**.

**Table 3**  
**Twenty-three Year Summary**  
**Annual Associate Degree Program Evaluation**  
**In the Technical Colleges**

<b>Year Evaluated</b>	<b>Good Standing</b>	<b>On Probation</b>	<b>Under Suspension</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>	<b>Total</b>
1983	198	30	10	12	250
1984	206	33	2	9	250
1985	214	16	17	9	256
1986	212	30	11	9	262
1987	216	29	11	6	262
1988	204	44	15	4	267
1989	215	41	13	5	274
1990	254	44	12	8	318
1991	244	46	6	10	306
1992	251	36	11	4	302
1993	247	36	16	1	300
1994	260	31	16	5	312
1995	275	35	5	5	320
1996	267	25	14	6	312
1997	262	29	11	6	308
1998	270	18	9	7	304
1999	261	31	7	2	301
2000	264	30	7	5	306
2001	269	22	9	7	307
2002	294	26	10	2	332
2003	297	19	14	1	331
2004	265	22	11	5	303
2005	276	13	8	4	301
<b>2006</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>301</b>

In the data for the current annual report, 15 (5%) programs of study out of a total of 301 which were analyzed at the technical colleges are on probation. By comparison, last year's report showed a total of 13 (4.3%) degree programs on probation; and the previous year 22 (7.3%) programs were on probation. During the past two years this report has recorded the two lowest numbers and percentages of "noncompliant" programs since the report was initiated in 1983. For this reporting year, the specific programs (by degree and institution) on probation can be found in **Table 4**.

**Table 4**  
**Associate Degree Programs on Probation**  
**in Fall 2006**  
**(N=15)**

<u>College</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Program</u>
Aiken Technical College	BUS	Marketing
Florence-Darlington Tech	HEA	Medical Laboratory Technology
Florence-Darlington Tech	HEA	Health Information Management
Trident Technical College	HEA	Occupational Therapy Assistant
Florence-Darlington Tech	ENGR	Engineering Graphics Technology
Spartanburg Community College	ENGR	Engineering Graphics Technology
Trident Technical College	ENGR	Civil Engineering Technology
Tri-County Technical College	ENGR	Industrial Supervision Technology
Greenville Technical College	ENGR	Mechanical Engineering Technology
Spartanburg Community College	ENGR	Mechanical Engineering Technology
Trident Technical College	ENGR	Mechanical Engineering Technology
Denmark Technical College	IND	Electronics Technology
Trident Technical College	IND	Machine Tool Technology
Central Carolina Tech	AGR	Natural Resources Management
Midlands Technical College	ENGR	Engineering Design Technology

### **Engineering and Industrial Technology Programs**

In last year's report, Engineering Technology programs were at the top of the categorical list of programs on probation (N=5) with Industrial Technology programs second (N=4). This year Engineering Technology remains at the top of the probation category with eight (8) programs on probation. Health programs, however, represent the second largest group (N=3) with Industrial Technology slipping to third place (N=2). Business and Agriculture each had one (1) program on probation. (Engineering Technology and Industrial Technology also had 71% of all programs moving from "Probation" to "Good" for the current reporting time period, as can be seen by comparing **Table 7** found later in this report).

For seven years this report has cited the gulf between the often-stated need for Engineering Technology graduates and the small enrollments and graduates in these programs. The Technical College System two years ago reported an initiative to address this issue more systematically by focusing on three areas:

- Elimination of excess coursework in some programs;

- Consolidation of multiple “engineering technology” programs at a single institution to concentrate resources and produce a more integrated curricular approach; and
- Vigorous recruitment of talented high school students—including the granting of college course credit through *Project Lead the Way*—into Engineering Technology programs.

Newly assembled data comparing three-year averages of enrollments in Engineering Technology suggest that these initiatives are not working or not working as well as they must to reach the goal of sustainable and vibrant Engineering Technology programs throughout the state. These three-year averages for credit hours generated were calculated for the 1994-1997 period and for the 2004-2007 period for all enrollment terms (i.e., Fall, Spring, Summer, etc.) within each of those three-year periods. The data show a decrease from the 1994-1997 period to the 2004-2007 period of -8786 (-15% from 59,095 to 50,309) semester course credits generated. If the assumption is accepted that South Carolina’s 21st century economy will be built by engineers, supported by many more engineering technology graduates, much more must be done to understand why this decrease has occurred and what is being done to reverse the trend.

### **Continuing Success of the AA/AS Programs in the Technical Colleges**

The purpose of the AA/AS is to be the degree program in public two-year institutions to prepare students for transfer into baccalaureate programs. In South Carolina, AA/AS programs were begun in the 1970s in response to the needs of persons who for reasons of finance, geography, and/or historical under-representation in higher education (especially mature students, women, and minorities) found it much more possible to begin a baccalaureate degree program by taking the first two years of coursework at a technical college.

In 1998, for the first time, the nine technical colleges with the most recently approved AA/AS programs had their programs reviewed for productivity. Only in the reports of 1998, 2001, and 2002 (and, in the latter two reports, only on a technicality) did one of the 16 technical colleges fail to meet the productivity standards for the AA/AS.

For this reporting year, all AA/AS programs in the Technical College System are in the “good” category. (See **Table 5**.)

**Table 5**  
**Graduates of AA/AS Degrees by Technical College, 2002-03 through 2006-07**

	Year				
	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
Aiken Tech	53	36	26	28	31
Central Carolina	28	29	36	31	28
Denmark	27	11	45	20	22
Florence-Darlington	50	61	76	56	58
Greenville	169	155	177	155	136
Horry-Georgetown	92	72	73	66	71
Midlands	238	249	223	228	200
Northeastern	38	27	30	18	24
Orangeburg-Calhoun	11	10	5	11	9
Piedmont	62	52	79	54	52
Spartanburg Community College*	61	69	79	61	42
Lowcountry	19	34	12	13	16
Tri-County	65	75	73	54	66
Trident	342	290	315	378	328
Williamsburg	12	16	8	13	21
York	15	37	26	20	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1272</b>	<b>1223</b>	<b>1287</b>	<b>1206</b>	<b>1117</b>

\*Formerly Spartanburg Technical College

As **Table 5** demonstrates, the AA/AS programs in the Technical College System have been a great success in opening up the possibilities for transferring into a four-year degree program for many South Carolinians. The data for 2005-2006 show that the programs continue to produce a significant number of graduates. The current year is second highest for the Technical College System’s graduates in AA/AS; only 2003-2004 was higher. Eight institutions graduated more and eight graduated fewer students from the AA/AS program in this reporting period than in the preceding year.

### **Importance of the Associate Degree Nursing Programs**

For a number of years this report has articulated two points about the program of study leading to the associate degree in nursing:

1. In South Carolina as elsewhere the associate degree in nursing is accepted by employers (as it is throughout the United States, except in South Dakota which does not recognize the associate degree for professional Registered Nurse designation) as a legitimate degree for a

Registered Nurse (R.N.), who is paid virtually always at the same rate as a baccalaureate-prepared nurse.

2. Meeting employers' demands for a well-educated nursing workforce to provide safe care in hospitals and other healthcare settings will require the sustained commitment of each institution to enroll and graduate increasingly large numbers of students for some number of years. Because the associate degree programs have been the largest programs historically in South Carolina, they must continue to enroll and graduate very large numbers of new nurses. (As in many other states, South Carolina regularly graduates about 2/3's of all its new nurse graduates from associate degree programs.)

The *level of employer demand* for nurses is unknown because no publicly available database exists to show what that might be. It is, therefore, not possible yet to know exactly for how many years a sustained commitment to increase the numbers of nursing graduates will be required. On the other hand, what is known is the success in increasing the *supply of graduates* from nursing programs in the Technical College System since the issuance of the *Colleagues in Caring* report in 2001. As **Table 6** shows, four years ago for the reporting year of 2001-2002 the number of graduates of the technical colleges' eleven existing ADN programs *decreased* 3.6% over the previous year's graduation numbers. In the following year (2002-2003), there was a 6% *increase* of graduates from the 11 programs over the 2001-2002 academic year. In 2003-2004 there was an even higher annual *increase over the 2002-2003 year* (+ 22.7%). In the 2004-2005 report, the increase continued (+5.2%).

For the current reporting year of 2005-2006, a decreased number of students graduated in associate degree nursing programs (from 968 to 940; or - 3.9 % ) over the previous year. (**See Table 6.**) However, this decrease is not systemic; one institution, Greenville Tech, is responsible for most of the annual decrease of graduates. There are two contending explanations for this drop. First, spokespersons from the Greenville Hospital System have stated publicly that Greenville Hospital System has no appreciable shortage of nurses. Secondly, the nursing faculty at Greenville Technical College have stated that they reduced the numbers of students in the program when they discovered in doing a national self-study for accreditation through the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission (NLNAC) that the institution had insufficient numbers of adequately prepared clinical faculty members; and they, therefore, decreased the numbers of students in the program accordingly.

Since the closing of the USC-Aiken and USC-Upstate associate degree programs in nursing, the USC-Lancaster ADN program has become the sole associate degree in nursing in the state outside the technical college system. Since 2004 three more associate degree programs have been added in the Technical College system (i.e., Spartanburg

Community College in Fall 2004; Aiken Technical College in Fall 2005; and Northeastern Technical College in Fall 2007). The technical college programs at Aiken Technical College and Spartanburg Community College have enrolled larger numbers of students than their now-closed area predecessors had done. The increased numbers of graduates in the Technical College System’s nursing programs since the early years of the decade is a result of both initial enrollments in new programs and enhanced enrollments in established ones.

**Table 6**  
**Total Number of Graduates from Technical Colleges’**  
**Associate Degree in Nursing Programs for Years**  
**2000-2001 through 2005-2006**

2000-2001	725
2001-2002	706
2002-2003	748
2003-2004	918
2004-2005	968
<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>940</b>

### **Degree Programs No Longer on Probation**

For the current reporting year, a total of seven programs which had been on probation in the technical colleges for last year's reporting period have been recommended by the State Technical College System for placement in good standing. In this group there were two programs in Engineering Technology, three programs in Industrial Technology and one program each in Business and Public Service. The degrees and institutional locales of all the programs moving from Probation to Good are found below in **Table 7**.

**Table 7**  
**Degree Programs Returning to**  
**“Good” Status from “Probation” 2004-2005**  
**(N=7)**

<u>College</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Program</u>
Williamsburg Tech	BUS	Office Systems Technology
Trident Tech	IND	Aircraft Maintenance Technology
Midlands Tech	IND	Automotive Technology
Florence-Darlington Tech	ENGR	Civil Engineering Technology
Central Carolina Tech	ENGR	Civil Engineering Technology
Florence-Darlington Tech	IND	Machine Tool Technology
Orangeburg-Calhoun Tech	ENGR	Criminal Justice Technology

**Tabular Analysis of Associate Degree Programs**

**Tables 8 and 9** provide a succinct quantitative analysis of the programs of the technical colleges for this period which are on suspension or have been cancelled. It is noteworthy that there are few programs in each category, a fact which suggests that planning in the Technical College System for technical programs, based upon community and business demand for graduates in certain fields, minimizes the need to suspend and cancel programs. It is also of interest that the largest number of these suspended and canceled programs is in Industrial Technology and Engineering Technology, a fact which is mirrored in the earlier stage of the productivity analysis where these same kinds of programs are more likely to be on probation.

**Table 8**  
**Associate Degree Programs On Suspension in 2006**  
**(or Continued for 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Suspension)**  
**(N=5)**

<u>College</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Program</u>
<b>First Year:</b> (None)		
<b>Second Year:</b>		
Technical College of the Lowcountry	IND	Building Construction Technology
Horry-Georgetown Technical College	IND	Electronics Technology
Aiken Technical College	IND	Machine Tool Technology
<b>Third Year:</b>		
Aiken Technical College	ENGR	Computer Engineering Technology
Greenville Technical College	IND	Computer Electronics Technology

**Table 9**  
**Associate Degrees Cancelled in Fall 2006**  
**(N=4)**

<u>College</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Program</u>
Central Carolina Technical College	BUS	Marketing
Midlands Technical College	HEA	Pharmacy Technology
Aiken Technical College	ENGR	Electro-Mechanical Engr. Tech.
Spartanburg Community College	PSER	Interpreting

**Summary**

All 11 of the associate degree programs in the University of South Carolina system and 277 (92%) of the 301 technical college programs evaluated for this report meet the “good” status requirements for this reporting year. The associate degree programs in the USC system and the Technical College System are overwhelmingly meeting the modest statewide productivity standards which have been measured since 1983 in these annual reports. The programs in the USC system present two issues: 1) the under-utilization of facilities in three relatively isolated two-year institutional campuses; and 2) the anomalous offering of the AA/AS by USC-Columbia, which both insists upon offering this program (rather than transferring it to its own two-year Sumter campus or to the neighboring Midlands Technical Colleges) and aspires to the mantel of flagship

comprehensive research institution in South Carolina. The resistance of the University's administration to considering alternatives to the AA/AS at Fort Jackson offering makes a resolution of this issue in the near future unlikely.

The data on programs in the Technical College System also suggests a need to: 1) address the 15% decrease in credit hours generated in Engineering Technology curricula over the past decade; and 2) monitor data from the ADN programs of technical colleges when their enrollments and/or graduates fall as long as a "crisis" in the RN population is said to exist anywhere in South Carolina.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commends favorably to the Commission approval of this report's designation of programs for the current reporting year as shown in **Tables 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9**. Because of the importance of certain associate degree programs to economic development in South Carolina, the staff further recommends that

- The State Technical College system be requested to review any existing institutional plans and consider a system plan for increasing enrollments and retention to graduation in the Engineering Technology area of the curriculum; and
- The Commission, the State Technical College System, and the USC System work collaboratively to develop ideas and a schedule of implementation for cooperative programming at the three identified two-year Regional Campuses for offering technical associate degree programs directed toward support for economic development in those three communities.