



South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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CAAL
8/26/14
Agenda Item

August 26, 2014

MEMORANDUM

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

From: MaryAnn Janosik, Ph.D., Director, Academic Affairs

Consideration of the College of Charleston Mission Statement Revision

Background

The College of Charleston has requested that the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) approve changes to its mission statement [Appendix 1A]. The College of Charleston Board of Trustees approved a revised mission statement on July 23, 2014 [Appendix 1B], and the President submitted the statement and request for consideration to CHE the following day. CHE staff determined that the requested revisions, which include a change in sector from a “comprehensive” institution (four-year college or university) to a “research” institution, are substantive in nature and, therefore, not within CHE guidelines for staff approval authority and require consideration of the Commission.

Legislation to create a new or redesigned research institution in Charleston by statute was debated during the 2013-14 session of the South Carolina General Assembly but was ultimately not successful. Members of both the House and Senate chambers raised numerous arguments both in favor of and in opposition to this initiative. In July, the College of Charleston brought its request for a mission and sector change to CHE for resolution.

Staff Analysis

Act 359 of 1996 established the mission of higher education in South Carolina and identified the missions of four sectors of public higher education institutions in the state. CHE was vested with the authority and responsibility for approving each institutional mission statement to ensure it is within the overall mission of the state and of the particular type of institution [SC Code of Laws, §59-503-15 and §59-103-45(6)]. Presently, the College of Charleston is identified in its approved mission statement as a comprehensive (four-year) university. According to the statute outlining sector missions, four-year colleges and universities may not offer doctoral degrees with two exceptions: (1) doctoral degrees offered prior to the passage of Act 359 of 1996, and (2) doctoral degrees in marine science approved by CHE pursuant to a change in sector mission enacted with the passage of Act 213 of 2012.

The current request made by the College of Charleston, as provided for in the board-approved mission statement and as described in subsequent correspondence from the College of Charleston, seeks to establish the College of Charleston as a research institution. The University of Charleston, SC would be designated to house the College of Charleston's graduate and research programs with the authority to offer targeted doctoral programs tied directly to the economic growth and development of the Lowcountry region.

According to current statute, the requested change, as submitted, would simultaneously require a sector change for the College of Charleston. Sector change reviews may contain multiple steps and can extend over the course of several months. The last time the Commission approved a sector change was 2002, when University of South Carolina Beaufort moved from a two-year regional campus of the University of South Carolina to a four-year university.

College of Charleston officials have indicated the need to move quickly to establish its authority to offer doctoral programs in order to secure substantial external funding. A sector review process could impede the College of Charleston's ability to acquire the resources available to support new doctoral degree programs. The College of Charleston has stated that its request for changes to its mission is "only one cautious step for CHE and the College of Charleston in the direction of offering new doctoral programs in Charleston, if and when appropriate programs are identified and funding is available."

The College of Charleston has asserted that it has no immediate or long-term intention of offering "a comprehensive array of doctoral programs," nor any immediate plans to seek increased funds from the state. The request to substitute "research" for "comprehensive" in its mission appears to be rooted in the College of Charleston's desire to be in compliance with current state statute that limits the offering of doctoral programs to "research institutions." [Section 59-103-15]

The challenge centers on finding a resolution by which the College of Charleston's request for approval of a revised mission statement would result in the designation of the University of Charleston, SC as the College of Charleston's research institution, but not in a sector change for the College of Charleston. Additionally, there needs to be consistency among the institution's mission statement, South Carolina statutes, and the authority and responsibility of the Commission to review and approve institutional mission statements. [Section 59-103-15]

If the Commission were to approve the July 23, 2014, board-approved mission statement as submitted, there could be widespread implications for the other four-year comprehensive colleges and universities in the state that may seek to offer similar, targeted doctoral programs. The result of such action could include the potential for an unprecedented financial burden on students and the state that could compromise South Carolina's higher education enterprise.

The staff recommendation does not address the broader challenge facing higher education in South Carolina which would require an assessment of how much expansion of graduate and doctoral education is in the state's best interests, how it would be funded, and how it should be delivered. The College of Charleston has not submitted detailed information to explain how much any new doctoral programs will cost, what the University of Charleston, SC will look like, or how its research designation will impact other research institutions in the state.

Staff acknowledges these gaps in its analysis. It is confident that information included in the doctoral build-up plan requested from the College of Charleston will provide more specific information about the College of Charleston's academic and financial plans. In addition, CHE has rigorous policies and procedures in place that govern the development of new academic programs, which will further ensure that the College of Charleston does not act in haste developing new doctoral degrees.

Staff has considered a variety of questions from various stakeholders, some of which express concern about the unintended consequences that may result from the College of Charleston's proposed mission change. Nonetheless, several key factors emerged that ultimately assisted the staff in crafting its recommendation:

- The 1992 creation of a University of Charleston, SC allows the College of Charleston Board of Trustees to "exercise the necessary powers and authority for the university" as set forth in the statute. [Section 59-130-30(20); 1992]
- Designating the University of Charleston, SC as the College of Charleston's "research institution" through a revised mission statement is consistent with Commission authority to review and approve mission statements "to ensure it is within the overall mission of that particular type of institution." [Section 59-103-45(6)]
- The College of Charleston is unique in its institutional bifurcation. No other four-year comprehensive university in the state houses a separate research institution (University of Charleston, SC) authorized by statute.
- College officials have stated that the budget for the University of Charleston, SC will be separate from that of the College of Charleston. Further, they have stated that new doctoral programs "will not be permitted to compromise undergraduate instruction and quality."
- The College of Charleston has provided initial documentation to support its request to offer targeted doctoral programs through the University of Charleston, SC, including evidence of economic need for doctoral programs in the Lowcountry region and comparative research with other institutions in the Southeast that have charted a similar course advancing capacity for research degrees.

Staff Recommendation

In order to satisfy the College of Charleston's request for a change in mission statement that (1) retains the primary focus of the College of Charleston's mission as a four-year undergraduate institution, (2) designates the University of Charleston, SC as the College of Charleston's research institution, and (3) maintains consistency with state statutes and the Commission's authority, staff commends favorably to the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing approval of the College of Charleston's request to change its mission with the following conditions:

- Approval by the College of Charleston Board of Trustees of the Proposed CHE Staff Mission Statement Revision (Appendix IC), or an acceptable revision that maintains the integrity of the College of Charleston as a comprehensive four-year institution but designates a research institution--the University of Charleston, SC--that will function as a separate entity within the College of Charleston under the provisions of Section 59-103-15. The University of Charleston, SC will offer targeted doctoral degrees that support the economic growth and development of the Lowcountry region.

- Confirmation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) that the College of Charleston's mission statement change does not constitute substantive change according to its accreditation guidelines.
- Submission of a doctoral build-up plan to the Commission that responds adequately to questions raised by CAAL members at their August 7, 2014 meeting; and subsequent recommendation by staff and approval of the plan by CAAL and the Commission.

Two assumptions support this recommendation:

- 1) That the unique statutory authority of the College of Charleston and the University of Charleston, SC, establishes a distinct bifurcation of institutional autonomy that is not found at any other public four-year comprehensive university in the state;
- 2) That the Commission's authority to "review and approve mission statements to ensure it is within the overall mission of that particular type of institution" [Section 59-103-45(6)] allows it to designate the University of Charleston, SC as a research institution while maintaining the designation of the College of Charleston as a four-year university.

Further, the staff recommends to CAAL that this approval pertain only to the College of Charleston and its designated research institution, the University of Charleston, SC, with no further extension to South Carolina's other four-year comprehensive institutions. The College of Charleston's situation is unique, and its request for a mission statement change has been reviewed in light of these circumstances.

Finally, in reference to the preceding paragraph, the staff strongly encourages CAAL members to consider a second, separate proposal to the Commission seeking statutory change that would re-define sector designations in the state of South Carolina. These revisions should be made so that the statute [Section 59-103-15(B1-4)] is consistent with definitions used by regional accrediting agencies (such as SACS-COC), or the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. A comparative chart showing Carnegie, SACS-COC and South Carolina sector definitions is available upon request.

Appendix I

A) College of Charleston Current Mission Statement

The College of Charleston is a state supported comprehensive institution providing a high quality education in the arts and sciences, education and business. Consistent with its heritage since its founding in 1770, the College retains a strong liberal arts undergraduate curriculum. Located in the heart of historic Charleston, it strives to meet the growing educational demands primarily of the Lowcountry and the state and, secondarily, of the Southeast. A superior quality undergraduate program is central to the mission of the College.

The College of Charleston seeks applicants capable of successfully completing degree requirements and pays particular attention to identifying and admitting students who excel academically. The College of Charleston serves a diverse student body from its geographical area and also attracts students from national and international communities. The College provides students a community in which to engage in original inquiry and creative expression in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom. This community, founded on the principles of the liberal arts tradition, provides students the opportunity to realize their intellectual and personal potential and to become responsible, productive members of society.

In addition to offering a broad range of baccalaureate degree programs, the College currently provides an increasing number of masters' degree programs, which are compatible with the community and the state. As a prominent component of the state's higher education system, the College encourages and supports research. Its faculty is an important source of knowledge and expertise for the community, state, and nation. Additionally, the College provides an extensive credit and non-credit continuing education program and cultural activities for residents of the Low country of South Carolina.

This Mission Statement (also called the Statement of Purpose) has been approved or revised by the Board of Trustees of the College of Charleston on March 12, 1986; January 16, 1991, February 15, 1994; and on July 13, 2006.

B) College of Charleston Mission Statement As Approved by the College of Charleston Board of Trustees July 23, 2014

The College of Charleston is a state-supported research institution providing a high-quality education in the arts and sciences, education and business. The faculty is an important source of knowledge and expertise for the community, state, and nation.

Consistent with its heritage since its founding in 1770, the College retains a strong liberal arts undergraduate curriculum. Located in the heart of historic Charleston, it strives to meet the growing educational demands primarily of the Lowcountry and the state and, secondarily, of the Southeast. A superior undergraduate program is central to the mission of the College of Charleston.

In addition to offering a broad range of baccalaureate degree programs, master's degree programs are provided through the University of Charleston, South Carolina (UCSC). UCSC, which houses the graduate and research programs associated with the College, anticipates offering a limited number of doctoral degrees, should location and need warrant. Additionally, the College provides an extensive credit and non-credit continuing education program and cultural activities for residents of the Lowcountry of South Carolina.

The College of Charleston seeks applicants capable of successfully completing degree requirements and pays particular attention to identifying and admitting students who excel academically. The College of Charleston serves a diverse student body from its geographic area and also attracts students from nation and international communities. The College provides students a community in which to engage in original inquiry and creative expression in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom. This community, founded on the principles of the liberal arts tradition, provides students the opportunity to realize their intellectual and personal potential and to become responsible, productive members of society.

The Mission Statement (also called the Statement of Purpose) has been approved or revised by the State College Board of Trustees or the College of Charleston Board of Trustees on January 16, 1974; March 12, 1986; January 16, 1991; February 15, 1994; July 13, 2006; and July 23, 2014.

C) CHE Staff Proposed New Mission Statement with Changes Shown (edits underlined)

The College of Charleston is a state-supported ~~research~~ comprehensive institution providing a high-quality education in the arts and sciences, education and business. The faculty is an important source of knowledge and expertise for the community, state, and nation.

Consistent with its heritage since its founding in 1770, the College retains a strong liberal arts undergraduate curriculum. Located in the heart of historic Charleston, it strives to meet the growing educational demands primarily of the Lowcountry and the state and, secondarily, of the Southeast. A superior undergraduate program is central to the mission of the College of Charleston. As a prominent component of the state's higher education system, the College encourages and supports research.

In addition to offering a broad range of baccalaureate degree programs, the College incorporates the University of Charleston, South Carolina (UCSC), established by state statute in 1992, which serves as a research institution where the graduate and research programs associated with the College are housed. UCSC provides master's degree programs and anticipates offering a limited number of doctoral degrees should location and need warrant. The College also provides an extensive credit and non-credit continuing education program and cultural activities for residents of the Lowcountry of South Carolina.

The College of Charleston seeks applicants capable of successfully completing degree requirements and pays particular attention to identifying and admitting students who excel academically. The College of Charleston serves a diverse student body from its geographic area and also attracts students from national and international communities. The College provides students a community in which to engage in original inquiry and creative expression in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom. This community, founded on the principles of the liberal arts tradition, provides students the opportunity to realize their intellectual and personal potential and to become responsible, productive members of society.

The Mission Statement (also called the Statement of Purpose) has been approved or revised by the State College Board of Trustees or the College of Charleston Board of Trustees on January 16, 1974; March 12, 1986; January 16, 1991; February 15, 1994; July 13, 2006; July 23, 2014; and August/September xx, 2014.