



South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Ken Wingate, Chair, and Members, S.C. Commission on Higher Education

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

Consideration of Francis Marion University Mission Statement Revision

Background

Francis Marion University has requested that the Commission approve changes to its mission statement. Changes were submitted to Commission staff who determined that the one of the requested changes was substantive and did not fall under the Commission guidelines for staff approval. A summary explanation follows with a staff analysis and recommendation for the requested changes. Francis Marion's current mission statement, revised mission statement, and markup copy with changes shown are attached as **Appendix I**.

The revised mission statement was approved by the Francis Marion Board of Trustees on June 15, 2012, and transmitted to the Commission on Higher Education on July 25, 2012. Commission staff reviewed the revised statement and found that several of the proposed changes are minor revisions which do not change the nature, function, type, or sector of the institution. The substantive change requested is to eliminate the specificity of graduate programs offered. The current Commission-approved mission statement states that the University offers "master's degrees in business, education, nursing, and psychology, as well as a specialist degree in school psychology" while the proposed mission statement states that the University "offers professional degrees at the baccalaureate, master's, and specialist levels."

Francis Marion University received approval for a revised mission statement at the May 3, 2012, Commission meeting that added nursing to the list of programs in which master's degrees are offered. At that time, Commission staff discussed proposed changes to the mission statement with institutional personnel and recommended the change in language to eliminate the specificity of graduate programs offered.

Discussion

Many of the proposed changes resulted from a comprehensive review of the University's mission statement that occurred during the University's strategic planning process in Spring 2012 to prepare for the next Southern Association of Colleges and Schools reaffirmation of accreditation. With respect to degree programs offered, the proposed change will allow the University to submit proposals for new graduate programs to the Commission for consideration without having to revise its mission statement each time. In addition, the proposed changes to the mission statement will make the statement similar to the mission statements of other comprehensive teaching universities, such as College of Charleston, Winthrop, Lander, and the Citadel, in that it lists the level of degrees offered (bachelor's, master's, and specialist) but does not explicitly identify each degree program offered by name.

Staff Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commends favorably to the Commission approval of the revised mission statement for Francis Marion University.

APPENDIX I

A) Francis Marion University Current Mission Statement

B) Francis Marion University Mission Statement As Approved by the Francis Marion University Board of Trustees, June 15, 2012

C) Proposed New Mission Statement with Changes Shown

A) Francis Marion University Current Mission Statement

Francis Marion University is a four-year public institution established by the state of South Carolina. It is located in the northeastern part of the state near the city of Florence and has approximately 4,000 students. Its purpose is threefold: to provide students with an excellent education, stimulate inquiry and research, and serve the Pee Dee region of South Carolina.

Francis Marion University adheres to the primary purpose for which it was established as a college in 1970: to make available excellent educational programs for the people of the region and the state. The University offers bachelor's degrees in a wide range of liberal arts disciplines, as well as in the health sciences, education, and business. The University also offers master's degrees in business, education, nursing, and psychology, as well as a specialist degree in school psychology. While maintaining high standards, we serve students with a broad range of preparation and ability. We seek a wide variety of students, primarily from the Pee Dee region, but also from the entire state, other states, and foreign countries. We believe that a student body diverse in age, racial and ethnic background, and country of origin enriches the education of our students. To achieve its educational goals, the University has outstanding faculty members distinguished by high achievement and diverse academic background. We provide traditional and, when appropriate, non-traditional instruction, access to an excellent library as well as electronic resources, and staff members committed to the success of the individual student. A low student-faculty ratio and faculty concern for the individual student help us to achieve our goal. In addition, the University provides students with special learning opportunities, such as an honors program, internships, study abroad, and cooperative degree programs.

Since our highest priority is excellence in teaching and learning, we believe that intellectual inquiry and analysis by students and faculty members are essential. We encourage all scholarly pursuits, including student research for courses and faculty research for presentation and publication as well as the classroom. The University provides faculty members with support for academic development, such as research funds. Our goal of an academic experience built on inquiry and research as well as the transmission of information allows students to develop their ability to think and communicate, to gain the knowledge and skills to pursue a career or further study, to appreciate the creativeness of the human mind, to be aware of the human and natural environment of the world, and to have the capacity to pursue a life of learning and understanding.

The University also attempts to serve the needs of Florence and the surrounding area in ways beyond formal education. Our numerous cultural activities and athletic programs benefit not only students, but also the community. To foster the economic development of the region, we offer consulting services to business, industry, and government. Academic and practical assistance to area schools is basic to our endeavors. Faculty and staff members participate in and contribute to a great variety of community activities.

Francis Marion is a unique university. It focuses on traditional liberal arts and new academic programs. It is small enough to provide individualized attention to each student, but large enough to offer much variety in academic and cultural resources. It thus combines the advantages of a small liberal arts college with the resources of a public university.

B) Francis Marion University Mission Statement As Approved by the Francis Marion University Board of Trustees, June 15, 2012

Francis Marion University is a four-year public institution established by the state of South Carolina. It is located in the northeastern part of the state near the city of Florence and has more than 4,000 students. Its purpose is threefold: to provide students with an excellent education, stimulate inquiry and research, and serve the Pee Dee region and the state of South Carolina.

Francis Marion University adheres to the primary purpose for which it was established as a college in 1970: to make available excellent educational programs for the people of the region and the state. The University offers bachelor's degrees in a wide range of liberal arts disciplines, as well as in the health sciences, education, and business. The University also offers professional degrees at the baccalaureate, master's, and specialist levels. While maintaining high standards, we serve students with a broad range of preparation and ability. We seek a wide variety of students, primarily from the Pee Dee region, but also from the entire state, other states, and foreign countries. We believe that a student body diverse in age, racial and ethnic background, and country of origin enriches the education of all students. To achieve its educational goals, the University has outstanding faculty members distinguished by high achievement and diverse academic backgrounds. We provide traditional and, when appropriate, non-traditional instruction, access to an excellent library as well as electronic resources, and staff members committed to student learning and success. A low student-faculty ratio and faculty concern for the individual student help us to achieve our goals. The University recognizes the importance of the out-of-the-classroom experience and offers opportunities for students to engage in activities that promote personal growth. In addition, the University provides students with special learning opportunities, such as an honors program, internships, study abroad destinations, and cooperative degree programs.

Since our highest priority is excellence in teaching and learning, we believe that intellectual inquiry and analysis by students and faculty members are essential. We encourage all scholarly pursuits, including student research for courses and faculty research for presentation and publication and for use in the classroom. The University provides faculty members with support for professional development through resources for innovative teaching, scholarship, and service. Our goal of an academic experience built on inquiry and research as well as the transmission of information allows students to develop their ability to think and communicate, to gain knowledge and skills, to pursue a career or further study, to appreciate the creativeness of the human mind, to be aware of the human and natural environment of the world, and to have the capacity to pursue a life of learning and understanding.

The University also serves the needs of Florence and the surrounding area in ways beyond formal education. Numerous artistic and cultural activities, athletic programs, health initiatives, and outreach efforts benefit not only our students, but also the community. To foster the economic development of the region, we offer consulting services to business, industry, and government. Academic and practical assistance to area schools is basic to our endeavors. Faculty and staff members participate in and contribute to a wide range of community activities.

Francis Marion emphasizes liberal arts education while offering new academic programs with innovative technology. It is small enough to provide attention to each student, but large enough to offer a variety of academic and cultural resources. It thus combines the advantages of a liberal arts college with the resources and programs of a public university.

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

Francis Marion University is a four-year public institution established by the state of South Carolina. It is located in the northeastern part of the state near the city of Florence and has more than 4,000 students. Its purpose is threefold: to provide students with an excellent education, stimulate inquiry and research, and serve the Pee Dee region and the state of South Carolina.

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