

September 4, 2003

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Dr. Vermelle J. Johnson, Chairman, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

Consideration of Request for Amendment to License
Forrest Junior College, Anderson, SC
A.A.S., Medical Assisting, and
A.S. in General Studies

Summary

Forrest Junior College requests amendment of its license to offer a program leading to the A.A.S. degree in Medical Assisting and a program leading to the A.S. in General Studies degree. The Commission currently licenses FJC to offer a program leading to the A.A.S. degree in Business Administration with specializations in Accounting, Child Care Management, Legal Office Administration, Medical Office Administration, Computer Information Systems, Office Administration, and Legal Assisting/Paralegal Studies. FJC also offers diploma programs for Administrative Office Assistant, Bookkeeper, Computer Repair and Service Technician, Managed Care Assistant, Medical Assistant, Medical Clinical Assistant, Medical Office Assistant, Network Repair and Service Technician, and Phlebotomy.

The Commission has licensed Forrest Junior College (FJC) as a degree-granting institution since March 2, 1989. Before that, FJC operated since 1963 as a non-degree granting institution by authority of the State Department of Education. Dr. John Re and Mr. Charles E. Palmer, Jr. are the owners of the institution, having purchased it from Charles M. Forrest in 1985. Mr. Forrest purchased the school in 1951 from Mr. R. C. Carr, who founded the school in 1946 as the Carolina School of Commerce.

The Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) has accredited FJC since 1965; the current term of accreditation is through October 2003. FJC is undergoing its self-study and will have an on-site visit this fall. Since May 31, 1994, the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accredits the Medical Assistant program. Its most recent evaluation was in 1997; the current term of accreditation is through spring 2005.

A.A.S., Medical Assisting

Medical Assisting is an allied health profession whose practitioners function as members of the health care delivery team and perform administrative and clinical procedures. Graduates work in clinics and offices of medical doctors, hospitals, health and allied services providers, and other health practices. They may also be employed as phlebotomists, ECG Technicians, hospital ward clerks, insurance coders, medical billing clerks, insurance billing clerks, hospital admissions clerks, or chiropractic assistants. Administrative duties may include scheduling and receiving patients, preparing and maintaining medical records, performing administrative procedures, transcribing medical records, handling telephone calls, writing correspondence, serving as a liaison between the physician (including telephone screening) and other individuals, and managing practice finances. Clinical duties may include asepsis and infection control, taking patient histories and vital signs, performing first aid and CPR, preparing patients for procedures, assisting the physician with examinations and treatments, collecting and processing specimens, performing selected diagnostic tests, and preparing and administering medications as directed by the physician and as permitted by state law.

The program was developed in accordance with the guidelines recommended by the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation (CAHEA), sponsored by the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA), and the American Medical Association (AMA). The diploma program has been recognized and accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Program (CAAHEP) on recommendation of the Committee on Accreditation for Medical Assistant Education. Upon successful completion of the program, graduates are eligible to take the National Verification Examination for Certified Medical Assistants. School officials anticipate that they will complete ACICS and the AAMA accreditation processes for the amendment of the program in December 2003. They plan to implement the program in January 2004.

The College currently offers a program leading to a diploma in medical assisting. The existing facilities, learning resources, and equipment are adequate to support the program. Local physician offices, hospitals, and urgent care centers participate with student externships. An outline of the proposed A.A.S. curriculum is

shown in the table shown below. Courses highlighted are courses that are presently offered in the diploma program.

Curriculum content – A.A.S. in Medical Assisting		
		<u>Quarter Hours</u>
Area I - Business Component		
BUS 115	Personal Finance	3.0
BUS120	Life Planning	3.0
BUS125	Basic Letter & Memo Writing, or Approved Elective	3.0
CIS100	Introduction to Computers	3.0
CIS115	Computer Information Systems I	3.0
CIS 120	Computer Information Systems II	3.0
CIS125	Internet Basics	1.5
KEY105	Keyboarding Speed & Skill Development	3.0
OFF100	Bookkeeping	1.5
OFF135	Machine Dictation Transcription, or approved elective	3.0
OFF140M	Adv. Machine Dictation Transcription-Medical, or approved elective	3.0
	Component Total	30.0
Area II - Major Component – A grade of “C” or better is required		
HEA110	Medical Terminology	3.0
HEA135	First Aid and Safety	3.0
HEA150	Introduction to Medical Assisting	3.0
HEA160	Medical Office Management	3.0
HEA165	Medical Office Procedures	3.0
HEA170	Clinical Procedures I	3.0
HEA175	Clinical Procedures II	3.0
HEA180	Medical Laboratory Techniques I	3.0
HEA185	Medical Laboratory Techniques II	3.0
HEA190	Medical Coding & Insurance Processing	3.0
HEA200	Pharmacology	4.5
HEA285C	Supervised Field Experience-Clinical	3.0
HEA285A	Supervised Field Experience-Administrative	3.0
	Component Total	40.5
Area III - General Education Component		
ENG120	English Composition I	4.5
ENG125	Business Communications	4.5
ENG200	English Composition II	4.5
SCI120	Principles of Mathematics	4.5
SCI220	Anatomy & Physiology I	4.5
SCI225	Anatomy & Physiology II	4.5
SOC110	Ethics	4.5
SOC125	Principles of Psychology	4.5
	Component Total	36.0
Area IV - Elective Component		10.5
Courses are selected with consultation of an advisor		
Minimum Total Quarter Hours		117.0

Students applying for admission must provide official transcripts showing that they have a high school diploma or a GED. Applicants must have completed a physical examination indicating good physical health prior to beginning HEA 285. The test must include TB screening, Hepatitis B Panel, and RPR. Hepatitis B Inoculation is strongly encouraged if results from the Hepatitis B panel are negative. Tuition is \$110 for each credit hour for U.S. residents and \$190 for each credit hour for non-residents; total tuition for the 117 credit-hour program is \$12,870 and \$22,230 respectively for residents and non-residents. Students are also responsible for purchasing uniforms and accessories, for health examinations, certification, and graduation fees.

Faculty who teach general education courses must have completed a least 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline and hold at least a master's degree or hold the minimum of the master's degree with a major in the teaching discipline. Faculty who teach professional, occupational, and technical courses must possess appropriate academic preparation (usually a bachelor's degree) or academic preparation coupled with work experience. The minimum academic preparation for faculty teaching in professional, occupational and technical areas must be in a related field and at the same level at which the faculty member is teaching.

FJC projects enrollment of 50 students per academic year. It currently enrolls 116 students in the diploma program; those currently enrolled in the diploma program may choose to matriculate into the degree program or to teach-out in the diploma program.

According to the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, medical assistant is expected to be one of the fastest growing occupations through the year 2010. Job prospects should be best for medical assistants with formal training or experience. The earnings of medical assistants vary, depending on experience, skill level, and location. Median annual earnings of medical assistants were \$23,000 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between \$19,460 and \$27,460 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$16,700, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$32,850 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest number of medical assistants in 2000 were as follows:

Offices and clinics of medical doctors	\$23,610
Hospitals	22,950
Health and allied services, not elsewhere classified	22,860
Offices of osteopathic physicians	21,420
Offices of other health practitioners	20,860

Tri-County Technical College in Pendleton is the only institution in the

geographical area of Anderson that offers a medical assisting program. Tri-County offers a 48-credit-hour program leading to a diploma in Health Science with a major in Medical Assisting. CAAHEP accredited that program on April 29, 2002. It does not offer a degree in medical assisting.

A.S. in General Studies

The proposed program leading to the Associate in Science degree in General Studies is designed to meet the needs of the student who wants to complete a general associate degree before pursuing more advanced or specialized study towards a bachelor's degree. The curriculum is composed of courses FJC already offers. The existing facilities, learning resources, and equipment are adequate to support the program. An outline of the proposed curriculum is shown in the following table. FJC does not offer any courses in foreign language, biology, chemistry, calculus, statistics, trigonometry, or physics.

Curriculum content – A.S. in General Studies		
<u>Area 1 – Business Component</u>		<u>Quarter</u>
<u>Hours</u>		
BUS105	Introduction to Business Enterprise	4.5
BUS115	Bookkeeping and Personal Finance	4.5
BUS120	Life Planning	4.5
CIS100	Introduction to Computers and Internet Basics	4.5
CIS115	Computer Information Systems I	4.5
CIS120	Computer Information Systems II	4.5
HEA135	First Aid and Safety	3.0
KEY105	Keyboarding Speed & Skill Development	<u>3.0</u>
<u>Component Total</u>		<u>33.0</u>
<u>Area 2 – General Education Component</u>		<u>Quarter</u>
<u>Hours</u>		
ENG120	English Composition I	4.5
ENG125	Professional Communications	4.5
ENG200	English Composition II	4.5
SCI100	Introduction to Geography	4.5
SCI120	Principles of Mathematics	4.5
SCI230	Geo-Political Geography	4.5
SOC105	Contemporary Issues	4.5
SOC110	Ethics	4.5
SOC125	Principles of Psychology	4.5
SOC230	Marriages and Families	4.5
SOC245	Economics I: Microeconomics, or approved elective	4.5
SOC260	Survey of Art, Music, and Literature	4.5
<u>Component Total</u>		<u>54.0</u>

<u>Area 3 – Elective Component</u>		<u>Quarter</u>
<u>Hours</u>		
SCIELE	Life Science Elective	4.5
SOCELE	Social Science Elective	4.5
ELE	General Elective	4.5
ELE	General Elective	4.5
<u>Component Total</u>		<u>18.0</u>
<u>Minimum Total Quarter Hours</u>		<u>105.0</u>

Students applying for admission must provide official transcripts showing that they have a high school diploma or a GED. Tuition is \$110 for each credit hour for U.S. residents and \$190 for each credit hour for non-residents; total tuition for the 105-credit-hour program is \$11,550 and \$19,950 respectively for residents and non-residents. Students are also responsible for textbooks, supplies, student fees, graduation fees, and required course materials. The school projects enrolling 30 students if CHE licenses the program for implementation in January 2004.

The material FJC submitted to CHE with the application for licensure of the program states that the objective of the program is transfer to a bachelor's degree. However, it also references two reasons an individual seeks an associate degree. The two reasons cited are 1) to improve chances for promotion in the workplace (or to obtain a better position elsewhere) and 2) to increase income.

CHE Regulation 62-11. Program and Instructor Requirements for Associate Degree Programs, includes the following paragraph:

- C. The Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees primarily prepare the student to transfer to an upper-division baccalaureate degree program. To qualify as a transfer program, a minimum of fifty percent of credit hours required for completion of that program shall consist of college-level courses in the arts and sciences.

To add an academic degree to the offerings of FJC would mean a change of focus and mission of the institution from the current focus which is to offer programs leading to occupational degrees. Some institutions may currently accept limited transfer credit from JFC. However, accredited bachelor's degree-granting institutions typically require that transfer credit be earned at institutions that hold regional accreditation, in this case, accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

The request FJC submitted states that FJC officials expect to make formal application for SACS accreditation in May 2004. The staff suggested that they first gain SACS accreditation and then reconsider adding the program leading to the A.S. in General Studies. However, the officials of FJC submitted the application material and

asked that the staff include the item on the agenda for September to enable the school to include the program in its submissions to ACICS this fall and to SACS in May 2004.

CHE staff met with Forrest Junior College officials and discussed the program and the “catch-22” nature of offering the program before FJC is SACS accredited. Dr. Ann Chard, Associate Executive Director, Commission on Colleges, SACS, confirmed that if FJC did not offer the degree when it applied for SACS accreditation and then decided to offer it, the college would have to start the application process over again. CHE staff is concerned about the possible detrimental effects on students if FJC offers the program before it attains SACS-accreditation. The officials of the institution express great confidence in their ability to attain SACS accreditation and assure the staff that they are willing to provide disclosures to students regarding the potential and even probable difficulties in transferring the program as well as the current lack of SACS accreditation. In addition, FJC officials are committed to meeting timelines they established to accomplish SACS accreditation and have agreed to provide to the CHE interim reporting on progress in attaining SACS accreditation.

Tri-County Technical College in Pendleton is the only institution in the geographical area of Anderson that offers associate-degree-transfer programs. Tri-County Technical College offers a 60- to 66-credit-hour program leading to the A.S. or the A.A. The transfer curricula at Tri-County are different in that they do not have the business component.

Recommendation

The staff suggests that the Committee recommend to the Commission approval of an amendment of the license for Forrest Junior College to offer a program leading to the A.A.S. degree in Medical Assisting for implementation after ACICS and CAAHEP accreditation are obtained.

Further, the staff suggests that the Committee recommend to the Commission approval of an amendment of the license for Forrest Junior College to offer a program leading to the A.S. degree for implementation after ACICS accreditation is obtained provided that:

1) The institution require that each student and applicant sign and date a statement similar to the following:

I understand that Forrest Junior College is not accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the regional accrediting agency for the

southeastern region of the United States. Forrest Junior College is accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Schools (ACICS).

I understand that it is unlikely that regionally accredited institutions will accept by transfer credit earned at Forrest Junior College.

I understand that it is unlikely that regionally accredited institutions will accept as a prerequisite for admission into bachelor's or graduate programs a degree earned at Forrest Junior College.

2) The institution establish a timeline under which it will gain SACS accreditation; report to the CHE staff on each step in the timeline; provide to the CHE staff a copy of correspondence to and from SACS; and discontinue advertising and enrolling students into the A.S. in General Studies if it becomes apparent that it is unable to meet the timeline to gain SACS accreditation by 2009.

The Committee will make its recommendation to the Commission on September 4.