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MEMORANDUM

To: Chairman Tim Hofferth and Members, SC Commission on Higher Education

From: Terrye Seckinger, Chair, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

Annual Report on Admission Standards for First-Time Entering Freshmen, Fall 2015

Background

In 1988, in response to Act 629, the Commission on Higher Education began to report data related to first time entering freshmen for each South Carolina public institution. The act, *The Cutting Edge*, required the Commission to monitor the admission standards at the public colleges and universities to comply as follows:

- In consultation and coordination with the public institutions of higher learning in this state, the State Commission on Higher Education shall ensure that minimal admission 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 addition, in Act 359 of 1996, Section 59-103-45(3), the General Assembly reiterated the importance of the Commission reporting admission standards to include these categories: freshmen applications, acceptances, and enrollment; minimum admission requirements set by individual institutions; mean SAT and ACT scores for freshmen classes; college preparatory course prerequisites compliance; and, information on provisional students.

Findings

The attached *Annual Report on Admission Standards for First-Time Entering Freshman, Fall 2015* provides findings from data reported by the 12 South Carolina public senior colleges and universities regarding admission standards. In Fall 2015, the public senior institutions admitting freshmen in South Carolina

received 101,553 applications from individuals, both in-state and out-of-state, seeking admission as first-time freshmen. Of the first-time freshmen applicants 62.3 percent (63,296) were offered admission, and 29.5 percent (18,703) of applicants offered admission accepted and enrolled. This is a one percent decrease among the public senior institutions for both applicants offered admission, and those accepted and enrolled compared to Fall 2014.

As a recent trend, the number and percentage of applicable first-time freshmen meeting all of the college preparatory course prerequisites continues to increase. In Fall 2015, 91.2 percent of first-time freshmen met all the prerequisites compared to 85.4 percent in 2014, 85.3 percent in 2013 and 91.7 percent in 2012. Data indicates that among the public senior institutions, the percentage of freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites slightly increased from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015. Seven of the 12 institutions (58.3 percent) demonstrate increases in freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites, while four institutions (33.3 percent) demonstrate decreases in freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites. Retention rates among students who did not meet the high school course prerequisites are lower for the majority of the public senior institutions. Four institutions indicate an increase in freshmen-to-sophomore retention rates for students who did not meet the high school course prerequisites, while eight institutions demonstrate a decrease in retention rates for the same category of students from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015.

The majority of students attending South Carolina public senior institutions continue to take the SAT (9,948 students) rather than the ACT (8,320 students) as a college entrance examination. Between 2014 and 2015, four public senior institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, Coastal Carolina, and Francis Marion) indicate an increase in the average combined SAT/ACT mean. Seven institutions (the Citadel, College of Charleston, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Beaufort, USC Upstate, and Winthrop) demonstrate a decrease.

An institution may offer two types of admission to a degree-seeking student, regular or provisional. The classification is based on whether or not the applicant meets the institution's minimum admission criteria. Among the public senior institutions, only 50 percent indicated admitting "provisional" students, yet all have first-time freshmen not meeting the college preparatory course prerequisites. The institutions reporting provisional students were all comprehensive teaching colleges and universities in South Carolina. South Carolina State University admitted the largest percentage of provisional freshmen (13.0 percent), followed by Winthrop University with a percentage of 11.9. Although, the data indicate that the percentage of provisional students admitted to the comprehensive sector continues to fluctuate at several institutions, the levels remain below the 15 percent threshold CHE formally recommended.

Institutions continue to adjust admission requirements for first-time entering freshmen. The required minimum SAT/ACT scores are, generally, lower for students with a higher GPA and high school class rank at most institutions. The minimum admission standards of the public senior institutions in South Carolina for Fall 2016 incorporate the use of both GPA and high school class rank. Six public senior institutions (Clemson, College of Charleston, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate) report an intent to apply both methods. Three institutions (South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and USC Beaufort) require the same minimum SAT/ACT scores for students regardless of high school class rank, and three institutions required the same minimum SAT/ACT scores for student regardless of GPA (Francis Marion, South Carolina State, and USC Beaufort). In addition to SAT/ACT scores, class rank, and GPA, considerations to include the SAT writing component as an admission requirement are constantly changing, likely a result of The College Board redesigning the assessment to include or not include the writing component over the years. In Fall 2016, three institutions (Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, and

USC Upstate) require the SAT writing component and use it as a factor in admission decisions. Five institutions (The Citadel, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and USC Beaufort) do not require the SAT writing component, while four institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, College of Charleston, and Winthrop) use it as supplemental information in evaluating college readiness.

Structure and Methods

The Annual Report on the 2015 admission standards compliance for first-time entering freshmen at South Carolina public senior institutions is presented in five segments:

- [Part I: Fall 2015 Applications, Acceptances, and Enrollments](#)
- [Part II: Fall 2015 Data Related to College Preparatory Course Prerequisites](#)
- [Part III: Fall 2015 SAT and ACT Scores](#)
- [Part IV: Fall 2015 Provisionally Admitted Students](#)
- [Part V: Fall 2016 Minimum Admission Standards](#)

The report relies on the Commission on Higher Education Management Information System (CHEMIS) as the primary data source for information presented. Parts II-IV and the enrollment data included in Part I are collected through CHEMIS, and self-reported by each institution. The data is supplied by the institutions no later than November 1 of each calendar year. The institutions provide the data for Part V through a separate questionnaire with topic-specific queries. Data verification, generally, occurs no later than December of each calendar year.

Recommendation

The staff proposes the Committee favorably commend the report to the Commission.

ANNUAL REPORT ON ADMISSION STANDARDS FOR FIRST-TIME ENTERING FRESHMEN, FALL 2015 SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SENIOR INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

The Annual Report on the 2015 admission standards compliance for first-time entering freshmen at South Carolina public senior institutions is presented in five segments:

- [Part I: Fall 2015 Applications, Acceptances, and Enrollments](#)
- [Part II: Fall 2015 Data Related to High School Course Prerequisites](#)
- [Part III: Fall 2015 SAT and ACT Scores](#)
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In accordance with the Commission's North Star of *Access, Affordability, and Excellence*, this report details new student access in that it demonstrates efforts to collaborate with South Carolina institutions to expand postsecondary education opportunities for residents, in-state and out-of-state, through the dissemination of information about institutional admission requirements and outcomes.

Part I: Fall 2015 Applications, Acceptances, and Enrollments

South Carolina has 13 public senior institutions: 1) The Citadel; 2) Clemson University; 3) Coastal Carolina University; 4) College of Charleston; 5) Francis Marion University; 6) Lander University; 7) Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC); 8) South Carolina State University; University of South Carolina (USC) campuses in 9) Columbia, 10) Aiken, 11) Beaufort, and 12) Upstate; and 13) Winthrop University. Three of the public senior institutions, Clemson, MUSC, and USC Columbia, are research institutions. However, MUSC only offers undergraduate programs that begin through articulation agreements in the junior year, and thus does not admit freshmen students. As a result, MUSC is not included in the annual report on admission standards.

In Fall 2015, South Carolina's 12 public senior colleges and universities admitting freshmen received 101,553 applications from individuals seeking admission as first-time freshmen. **Table 1** (p. 5) presents the number and percentage of students who applied, and accepted and enrolled at each public senior institution. Of the first-time freshmen applicants, 63,296 (62.3 percent) were offered admission. Of those offered admission, 18,703 (29.5 percent) applicants accepted admission and enrolled. This is similar to the national average of 29.9 percent of 18 – 24 year olds enrolled in 4-year degree-granting postsecondary institutions (NCES, 2016). Overall, a decrease of approximately one percent occurred among the public senior institutions for both applicants offered admission (63.7 percent), and those accepted and enrolled (30.5 percent) in Fall 2014 (CHE, 2017).

Table 1 Applications, Acceptances, and Enrollments S.C. Public Senior Institutions, Fall 2015					
Institution	Number of Applications¹	Number of Applicants Offered Admission¹	Percent of Applicants Offered Admission	Number Accepted and Enrolled	Percent Accepted and Enrolled
Research Institutions					
Clemson	22,396	11,483	51.3%	3,447	30.0%
USC Columbia	25,740	16,611	64.5%	5,199	31.3%
Total	48,136	28,094	58.4%	8,646	30.8%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities					
The Citadel	2,437	1,845	75.7%	602	32.6%
Coastal Carolina	17,252	10,291	59.7%	2,368	23.0%
College of Charleston	11,722	9,043	77.1%	2,237	24.7%
Francis Marion	3,681	2,167	58.9%	739	34.1%
Lander	2,615	1,283	49.1%	559	43.6%
SC State	2,445	2,320	94.9%	494	21.3%
USC Aiken	2,341	1,463	62.5%	616	42.1%
USC Beaufort	1,992	1,245	62.5%	517	41.5%
USC Upstate	4,056	2,273	56.0%	835	36.7%
Winthrop	4,876	3,272	67.1%	1,090	33.3%
Total	53,417	35,202	65.9%	10,057	28.6%
Grand Total	101,553	63,296	62.3%	18,703	29.5%

¹ Reported by the institutions.

As shown in Table 1, South Carolina State University offered admission to the largest percentage (94.9 percent) of applicants, but only 21.3 percent accepted and enrolled. Two institutions (The Citadel and College of Charleston) offered admission to 70 - 80 percent of applicants. Four institutions (USC Columbia, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and Winthrop) offered admission to 60 - 69 percent of applicants. Four institutions (Clemson, Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, and USC Upstate) offered admission to 50 - 59 percent of applicants. Lander offered admission to the lowest percentage of applicants (49.1 percent), but had the largest percentage (43.6 percent) of students accept and enroll.

A comparison of data from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 indicates the percentage of students accepted and enrolled **decreased** for six institutions: Clemson, USC Columbia, Coastal Carolina, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and USC Upstate (CHE, 2017). USC Upstate experienced the largest decrease in the percentage of students accepted and enrolled (-5.3 percent). An **increase** occurred among The Citadel, Lander, USC Beaufort, and Winthrop, with the largest increase at Lander (11.2 percent). The College of Charleston and Francis Marion percentage of accepted and enrolled students remained the same as in 2014. The majority of the public senior institutions, 75 percent, meet and exceed the national average of students accepted and enrolled.

Table 2 (p. 6) provides a five-year overview of applications, acceptances, and enrollments. The number of applicants increased by 17,187 over the last five years, and the number enrolled increased by 1,032 students. However, the percentage of applicants accepted and enrolled **decreased** by 2.4 percent from 2011-2015, including a one percent decrease from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015. Still, the percentage remains consistent with the national average.

TABLE 2 Applications, Acceptances, and Enrollments, Five Year Comparison S.C. Public Senior Institutions					
Year	Number of Applications	Number of Applicants Offered Admission	Percent of Applicants Offered Admission	Number Accepted and Enrolled	Percent Accepted and Enrolled
2011	84,366	55,419	65.7%	17,671	31.9%
2012	88,322	57,118	64.7%	18,040	31.6%
2013	87,745	57,492	65.5%	17,938	31.2%
2014	94,735	60,373	63.7%	18,432	30.5%
2015	101,553	63,296	62.3%	18,703	29.5%

Part II: Fall 2015 Data Related to College Preparatory Course Prerequisites

Since Fall 1988, public senior institutions in South Carolina require that applicants complete certain high school courses prior to entering college. The Commission reviews, vets, and updates the list of course prerequisites to ensure alignment with minimal institution requirements. The following table details the college preparatory course prerequisites implemented in Fall 2011, and valid through Fall 2018 (CHE 2006, 2012). The requirements for first-time freshmen beginning in Fall 2019 were revised, approved, and distributed to the South Carolina Department of Education and made available to the public in Spring 2015 (CHE, 2015). The next revision cycle is scheduled to begin in Fall 2020.

College Preparatory Course Prerequisites 2011
Four (4) 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.
Four (4) 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 should be selected from among Algebra III/trigonometry, pre-calculus, calculus, statistics, discrete mathematics, or a capstone mathematics course and should be taken during the senior year.
Three (3) Units of Laboratory Science: Two units must be taken in two different fields of the physical or life sciences 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 this section. It is also strongly recommended that students desiring to pursue careers in science, mathematics, engineering or technology take one course in all three fields.
Two (2) Units of the same Foreign Language.
Three (3) Units of Social Science: One unit of U.S. History is required; a half unit of Economics and a half unit in Government are strongly recommended.
One (1) Unit of Elective: One unit must be taken as an elective. A college preparatory course in Computer Science (i.e., one involving significant programming content, not simply keyboarding) is strongly recommended for this elective. Other acceptable electives include college preparatory courses in English; fine arts; foreign languages; social science; humanities; laboratory science (excluding earth science, general physical science, general environmental science, and other introductory science courses for which biology and/or chemistry is not a prerequisite); or mathematics above the level of Algebra II.
One (1) Unit of Physical Education or ROTC.
One (1) Unit of Fine Arts: One unit in Appreciation of, History of, or Performance in one of the fine arts.

Each institution may also make exceptions in admitting 1) students who do not meet all of the prerequisites in cases where 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 admission criteria (CHE 2006, 2015). Thus, some variation of admission requirements from one college to the next is the normative. The College Board (n.d.) states “there’s no magic formula when it comes to college admission decisions” and that many factors influence admission.

Table 3 (p. 8) presents the number and percentage of applicable first-time freshmen meeting all of the college preparatory course prerequisites, also referred to as compliance rate. The proportion of all applicable first-time freshmen meeting all of the prerequisites **decreased** from 91.7 percent in 2012 to 85.3 percent in 2013. However, it has been on a steady incline since 2013. There was an **increase** from 85.3 percent in 2013 to 85.4 percent in 2014, and a subsequent **increase** to 91.2 percent in 2015. However, the percentage of students meeting the college preparatory course prerequisites continues to fall below the 1999 average of 98.15 percent. Of the public senior institutions, Francis Marion was the only institution in Fall 2015 that met and exceeded the 1999 average with a percentage of 99.5.

The prerequisites for first-time freshmen who do not meet the requirements are either waived or additional courses are required. The number of in-state students not meeting the college preparatory course prerequisites is proportionally less than the number of out-of-state students for all public senior institutions, but Francis Marion. In Fall 2015, 610 in-state students did not meet the requirements compared to 1021 out-of-state students. All but one of the public senior institutions, Francis Marion, waived the prerequisites. Instead, Francis Marion required four students, all in-state students, to take additional courses to meet the prerequisites. Francis Marion demonstrated a 100 percent compliance rate among out-of-state students, but this is only 0.6 percent higher than the percentage of in-state students.

Table 3
Percent of Applicable¹ First-Time Freshmen Meeting College Preparatory Course Prerequisites

Institution	2012 ³			2013 ³			2014 ³			2015			Percentage Diff. Comparing 2012 and 2015
	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	
Research Institutions													
Clemson	3,463	3,396	98.1%	3,289	2,786	84.7%	3,475	2,966	85.4%	3,447	3,099	89.9%	-8.20%
USC Columbia	4,549	3,861	84.9%	5,009	4,076	81.4%	4,927	3,963	80.4%	5,073	4,424	87.2%	2.30%
Total	8,012	7,257	90.6%	8,298	6,862	82.7%	8,402	6,929	82.5%	8,520	7,523	88.3%	-2.30%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities													
The Citadel	676	615	91.0%	645	568	88.1%	539	479	88.9%	602	557	92.5%	1.50%
Coastal Carolina	2,176	2,039	93.7%	2,064	2,014	97.6%	2,348	2,280	97.1%	2,331	2,254	96.7%	3.00%
College of Charleston	2,135	2,097	98.2%	2,107	2,072	98.3%	2,164	2,120	98.0%	2,226	2,182	98.0%	-0.20%
Francis Marion	814	732	89.9%	744	682	91.7%	758	723	95.4%	739	735	99.5%	9.60%
Lander	559	495	88.6%	505	449	88.9%	533	497	93.2%	541	502	92.8%	4.20%
SC State	664	622	93.7%	566	526	92.9%	641	570	88.9%	494	430	87.0%	-6.70%
USC Aiken	512	453	88.5%	634	532	83.9%	605	528	87.3%	570	505	88.6%	0.10%
USC Beaufort	399	329	82.5%	397	288	72.5%	388	275	70.9%	460	387	84.1%	1.60%
USC Upstate	767	699	91.1%	766	640	83.6%	784	655	83.5%	779	697	89.5%	-1.60%
Winthrop	1,120	1,023	91.3%	1,077	1,010	93.8%	1,011	955	94.5%	1,081	1,004	92.9%	1.60%
Total	9,822	9,104	92.7%	9,505	8,781	92.4%	9,771	9,082	92.9%	9,823	9,253	94.2%	1.50%
Total Senior Institutions	17,834	16,361	91.7%	17,803	15,643	87.9%	18,173	16,011	88.1%	18,343	16,776	91.5%	-0.20%
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC²													
USC Lancaster	98	83	84.7%	363	188	51.8%	319	145	45.5%	100	36	36.0%	-48.70%
USC Salkehatchie	20	17	85.0%	287	13	4.5%	256	3	1.2%	0	0	-	-85.00%
USC Sumter	82	81	98.8%	226	169	74.8%	216	151	69.9%	0	0	-	-98.80%
USC-Union	4	4	100.0%	100	3	3.0%	134	0	-	0	0	-	-100.00%
Total USC Two-Year	204	185	90.7%	976	373	38.2%	925	299	32.3%	100	36	36.0%	-54.70%
Grand Total	18,038	16,546	91.7%	18,779	16,016	85.3%	19,098	16,310	85.4%	18,443	16,812	91.2%	-0.50%

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

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

³ As reported in *Annual report on admission standards for first-time entering freshmen, Fall 2014* (CHE, 2017).

Institutional Findings

The compliance rate is the number and percentage of applicable first-time freshmen meeting all of the college preparatory course prerequisites. As shown in Table 3, for Fall 2015, six (one more than in 2014) public senior institutions (The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, College of Charleston, Francis Marion, Lander, and Winthrop) indicate a compliance rate between 90 - 100 percent; and six public senior institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate) indicate a compliance rate between 80 – 90 percent. None of the public senior institutions demonstrate a compliance rate less than 80 percent. Although four of the public senior institutions (Coastal Carolina, Lander, South Carolina State, and Winthrop), indicate a slight **decrease** in the compliance rate from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015, an **increase** occurred among seven institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, The Citadel, Francis Marion, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate). The largest increase in the compliance rate occurred for USC Beaufort with an increase of 13 percent. Francis Marion University has the highest compliance rate at 99.5 percent, and has indicated a steady incline over the past four years. The compliance rate for College of Charleston remains at 98 percent, the same as the data indicated in 2014 (CHE, 2017).

Although USC Beaufort continues to demonstrate the lowest compliance rate among the public senior institutions at 84.1 percent, the rate increased in Fall 2015 after experiencing a decline in both Fall 2013 and Fall 2014. The institution indicated an increase of 9.2 percent in the compliance rate between 2011 and 2012 (73.3 percent and 82.5 percent, respectively) with the revised college preparatory course requirements. The increase in the compliance rate was followed by a 10 percent decrease in compliance rate between 2012 and 2013 (82.5 percent and 72.5 percent, respectively), followed by a 1.6 percent decrease between 2013 and 2014 (72.5 percent and 70.9 percent, respectively). The compliance rate then increased to 84.1 percent in 2015. The increase resulted in an overall 1.6 percent increase in compliance from Fall 2012 to Fall 2015. The data received from USC Beaufort reveals the majority of first-time freshmen who did not meet the college preparatory prerequisites occurred in the areas of Lab Science (34.9 percent), Fine Arts (21.4 percent), Mathematics (18.5 percent), and Foreign Language (13.6 percent). In addition, in-state students at Beaufort account for the majority of first-time freshmen students not meeting the college preparatory course prerequisites (74.8 percent).

Foreign Language remains the primary area in which prerequisites are not met among the six public senior institutions reporting a lower compliance rate (USC Columbia, Coastal Carolina, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and Winthrop) in Fall 2015. The highest number of students not meeting the requirements for Foreign Language occurred among Coastal Carolina (29 students) and South Carolina State (30 students). However, Fine Arts and Lab Science also emerged as areas in which prerequisites are not met for institutions with lower compliance. Two institutions, each, indicate Lab Science (USC Aiken and Winthrop) and Fine Arts (USC Columbia and Lander) as other areas in which prerequisites are not met.

Previous reports indicate the rate of compliance among “out-of-state” students contributed to a lower overall compliance rate (CHE 2012, 2014, 2017). Considering admission requirements can vary from one college to the next within and across state lines, a higher compliance rate among in-state students is expected since the prerequisites are disseminated to the South Carolina K-12 system to use as a resource in preparing students for college. In Fall 2015 data, out-of-state students continue to represent a higher percentage of first-time freshmen not meeting the college preparatory course prerequisites. **Table 3A** (p. 11) and **Table 3B** (p. 12) represent the number of applicable first-time freshmen meeting high school

course prerequisites “In-State” and “Out-of-State”, respectively. A comparison between the last column of both Table 3A and Table 3B in Fall 2015 indicates the compliance rate of first-time in-state freshmen is higher than for out-of-state freshmen for all but one public senior institution, Francis Marion University. Overall, the decrease in the compliance rate only occurs among out-of-state students (-2.1 percent). In addition, the amount of the decrease in compliance is larger among out-of-state students, ranging from .7 percent to 16.5 percent, with Winthrop indicating the largest percentage. Therefore, the decrease in compliance reported in Table 3 is likely attributed to out-of-state students as a result of larger decreases from Fall 2012 to Fall 2015. Three institutions (Clemson, College of Charleston, and South Carolina State) experienced a decrease in the compliance rate among both in-state and out-of-state students.

Five senior public institutions, Clemson, USC Columbia, The Citadel, Francis Marion, and Lander, increased the compliance rate among out-of-state students in 2015. Six senior institutions report a compliance rate for out-of-state students below the average of 85.5 percent for all institutions, ranging from 61.8 percent to 78.5 percent. This is an improvement in compliance among out-of-state students from Fall 2014 in which the lowest compliance was 36.1 percent. However, among the six public senior institutions with an overall lower compliance rate in Fall 2015 compared to Fall 2014 (USC Columbia, Coastal Carolina, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and Winthrop), in-state students accounted for the majority of first-time freshmen not meeting the prerequisites for four of the institutions (Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and Winthrop).

Table 3A
Percent of Applicable¹ First-Time Freshmen Meeting College Preparatory Course Prerequisites (In-State)

Institution	2012 ³			2013 ³			2014 ³			2015			Percentage Diff. Comparing 2012 and 2015
	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	
Research Institutions													
Clemson	2,114	2,073	98.1%	2,000	1,756	87.8%	2,104	1,895	90.1%	2,100	1,993	94.9%	-3.20%
USC Columbia	2,458	2,255	91.7%	2,569	2,289	89.1%	2,460	2,165	88.0%	2,552	2,444	95.8%	4.07%
Total	4,572	4,328	94.7%	4,569	4,045	88.5%	4,564	4,060	89.0%	4,652	4,437	95.4%	0.68%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities													
The Citadel	347	337	97.1%	339	316	93.2%	275	259	94.2%	311	303	97.4%	0.33%
Coastal Carolina	1,015	983	96.8%	952	936	98.3%	966	952	98.6%	939	917	97.7%	0.86%
College of Charleston	1,068	1,059	99.2%	1,113	1,104	99.2%	1,195	1,185	99.2%	1,245	1,234	99.1%	-0.08%
Francis Marion	782	705	90.2%	710	658	92.7%	715	683	95.5%	707	703	99.4%	9.23%
Lander	522	467	89.5%	473	429	90.7%	508	476	93.7%	504	470	93.3%	3.75%
SC State	509	483	94.9%	439	405	92.3%	445	388	87.2%	370	324	87.6%	-7.33%
USC Aiken	470	423	90.0%	549	478	87.1%	537	481	89.6%	513	467	91.0%	1.03%
USC Beaufort	322	281	87.3%	313	251	80.2%	324	253	78.1%	398	346	86.9%	-0.37%
USC Upstate	703	653	92.9%	697	601	86.2%	712	610	85.7%	746	672	90.1%	-2.82%
Winthrop	1,014	940	92.7%	1,002	949	94.7%	917	880	96.0%	992	949	95.7%	2.97%
Total	6,752	6,331	93.8%	6,587	6,127	93.0%	6,594	6,167	93.5%	6,725	6,385	94.9%	1.14%
Total Senior Institutions	11,324	10,659	94.1%	11,156	10,172	91.2%	11,158	10,227	91.7%	11,377	10,822	95.1%	1.02%
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC²													
USC Lancaster	97	83	85.6%	340	181	53.2%	308	143	46.4%	89	34	38.2%	-47.40%
USC Salkehatchie	20	17	85.0%	37	13	35.1%	4	3	75.0%	0	0	-	-85.00%
USC Sumter	81	80	98.8%	214	166	77.6%	198	149	75.3%	0	0	-	-98.80%
USC-Union	4	4	100.0%	13	3	23.1%	0	0	-	0	0	-	-100.00%
Total USC Two-Year	202	184	91.1%	604	363	60.1%	510	295	57.8%	89	34	38.2%	-52.90%
Grand Total	11,526	10,843	94.1%	11,760	10,535	89.6%	11,668	10,522	90.2%	11,466	10,856	94.7%	0.58%

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

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

³ As reported in *Annual report on admission standards for first-time entering freshmen, Fall 2014* (CHE, 2017).

Table 3B
Percent of Applicable¹ First-Time Freshmen Meeting College Preparatory Course Prerequisites (Out-of-State)

Institution	2012 ³			2013 ³			2014 ³			2015			Percentage Diff. Comparing 2012 and 2015
	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	Applicable Freshman	Number Meeting Prerequisites	Percent Meeting Prerequisites	
Research Institutions													
Clemson	1,349	1,323	98.1%	1,289	1,030	79.9%	1,371	1,071	78.1%	1,347	1,106	82.1%	-15.99%
USC Columbia	2,091	1,606	76.8%	2,388	1,787	74.8%	2,455	1,798	73.2%	2,521	1,980	78.5%	1.74%
Total	3,440	2,929	85.1%	3,677	2,817	76.6%	3,826	2,869	75.0%	3,868	3,086	79.8%	-5.32%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities													
The Citadel	329	278	84.5%	306	252	82.4%	264	220	83.3%	291	254	87.3%	2.79%
Coastal Carolina	1,161	1,056	91.0%	1,112	1,078	96.9%	1,382	1,328	96.1%	1,392	1,337	96.0%	5.05%
College of Charleston	1,067	1,038	97.3%	994	968	97.4%	969	935	96.5%	981	948	96.6%	-0.66%
Francis Marion	32	27	84.4%	34	24	70.6%	43	40	93.0%	32	32	100.0%	15.60%
Lander	37	28	75.7%	32	20	62.5%	25	21	84.0%	37	32	86.5%	10.79%
SC State	155	139	89.7%	127	121	95.3%	196	182	92.9%	124	106	85.5%	-4.22%
USC Aiken	42	30	71.4%	82	54	65.9%	66	47	71.2%	57	38	66.7%	-4.73%
USC Beaufort	77	48	62.3%	79	37	46.8%	61	22	36.1%	62	41	66.1%	3.83%
USC Upstate	64	46	71.9%	58	39	67.2%	62	45	72.6%	33	25	75.8%	3.86%
Winthrop	106	83	78.3%	75	61	81.3%	94	75	79.8%	89	55	61.8%	-16.50%
Total	3,070	2,773	90.3%	2,899	2,654	91.5%	3,162	2,915	92.2%	3,098	2,868	92.6%	2.28%
Total Senior Institutions	6,510	5,702	87.6%	6,576	5,471	83.2%	6,988	5,784	82.8%	6,966	5,954	85.5%	-2.13%
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC²													
USC Lancaster	1	0	-	13	7	53.8%	6	2	33.3%	11	2	18.2%	18.18%
USC Salkehatchie	0	0	-	1	0	0.0%	0	-	-	0	0	-	-
USC Sumter	1	1	100.0%	6	3	50.0%	5	2	40.0%	0	0	-	100.00%
USC-Union	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	-	-
Total USC Two-Year	2	1	50.0%	20	10	50.0%	11	4	36.4%	11	2	18.2%	-31.82%
Grand Total	6,512	5,703	87.6%	6,596	5,481	83.1%	6,999	5,788	82.7%	6,977	5,956	85.4%	-2.23%

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

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

³ As reported in *Annual report on admission standards for first-time entering freshmen, Fall 2014* (CHE, 2017).

Retention and Compliance

The *Annual Report on Admission Standards* also examines the freshman-to-sophomore retention rate of first-time freshmen in relationship to the college preparatory course prerequisite compliance data for the last five years. Retention rate, reported by each institution, is “the rate at which entering freshmen in a fall semester enroll the following fall semester” at the same institution (The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems [NCHEMS], 2015). NCHEMS reports the Fall 2015 national retention rate is 79.8 percent and has steadily increased since 2009. NCHEMS also reports the Fall 2015 retention rate for South Carolina is 76.6 percent. South Carolina retention rates usually fall below the national average, but began to increase in 2012 (74.1 percent) after a slight decline in 2011 (73.7 percent) from a rate of 73.9 percent in 2010 and 75.0 percent in 2009. However, the Fall 2015 rate is also a slight decline from the Fall 2014 rate of 76.8 percent.

Table 3C (p. 14) shows the overall retention rate and the retention rate of first-time freshmen who did not meet the recommended college preparatory course prerequisites for the South Carolina public senior institutions. The average retention rate among the 12 public senior institutions is 79.2 percent, which is only slightly below the national retention rate and above the state retention rate of South Carolina in Fall 2015 and slightly below the Fall 2014 rate of 79.6 percent (CHE, 2017). However, seven (Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate) of the 12 institutions fall below both the state and national retention rates. Five (Clemson, USC Columbia, The Citadel, College of Charleston, and Winthrop) institutions equal or exceed the state and national retention rates. Clemson demonstrates the highest retention rate at 92.8 percent, followed by USC Columbia (87.1 percent) and The Citadel (86.1 percent). USC Beaufort (53.4 percent) and South Carolina State (56.6 percent) indicate the lowest retention rates.

The overall retention rate among the public senior institutions in South Carolina remained constant at nearly 80 percent from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 (CHE, 2017). Six institutions (The Citadel, College of Charleston, Francis Marion, Lander, USC Aiken, and USC Beaufort) **increased** the overall retention rate of first-time freshmen from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015. The retention rate remained the same for Clemson, USC Columbia, and Winthrop, and three institutions (Coastal Carolina, South Carolina State, and USC Upstate) indicate a **decrease** in retention rates from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 for both first-time freshmen meeting and not meeting the college preparatory prerequisites.

Based on previous data, first-time freshmen who meet the college preparatory course prerequisites are more likely to remain in college and transition to sophomore year compared to students who did not meet the requirements (CHE 2012, 2014, 2017). Ten of the 12 senior institutions demonstrate a **decreased** retention rate for students who did not meet the college preparatory course requirements (Clemson, USC Columbia, Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, USC Upstate, and Winthrop), while two indicate an **increased** rate of retention for students who did not meet the high school course requirements (The Citadel and College of Charleston). Winthrop (28 percent) presents the largest difference in retention between students who meet and do not meet the college preparatory requirements followed by South Carolina State (16.1 percent) and USC Aiken (16.1 percent). Coastal Carolina follows USC Aiken with a retention difference of 15 percent. Clemson indicates the smallest difference at 1.4 percent.

Although it is expected for first-time freshmen meeting the college preparatory course requirements to have a higher retention rate than students not meeting the requirements, retention and increasing retention of all admitted students is the desired outcome. However, retention efforts often cost in time

and money to students, institutions, and government (Simpson, 2005). Students who transfer to another school or drop out after freshmen year can negatively impact the institution's retention rate, one of the legitimate metrics related to success of an institution's performance, as well as their bottom line. Ultimately institutions are interested in practices that cover costs, but provide a financial return and increase student success. On the other hand, from the perspective of students and parents, retention rates are indicators of satisfaction with the school, academic and personal support, and the potential return on investment in attending a particular institution. Five public senior institutions (The Citadel, College of Charleston, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and Winthrop) indicate an increase in the retention rate among students meeting the requirements from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015. The retention rate remained approximately the same for Clemson, USC Columbia, Francis Marion, and Lander, but decreased for Coastal Carolina, South Carolina State, and USC Upstate. However, the majority of institutions experienced a lower retention rate from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 among students not meeting the college preparatory course prerequisites. Eight (USC Columbia, The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, USC Upstate, and Winthrop) of the 12 public senior institutions indicate a decrease in the retention rate among students not meeting the requirements. The remaining institution (Clemson, College of Charleston, Francis Marion, and USC Beaufort) demonstrate a higher retention rate among this subgroup. College of Charleston and USC Beaufort experienced an increase in retention among both students meeting and not meeting the college preparatory requirements. On average, there was only a 1.6 percent difference in retention rates for students meeting the prerequisites compared to those not meeting the prerequisites, a slight increase from the 1.2 percent difference in 2014 (CHE, 2017).

Table 3C
Fall 2014 First-Time Freshmen Not Meeting High School Prerequisites
Retained at Same Institution in Fall 2015
S.C. Public Senior Institutions

Institution	Applicable Freshmen	Total Retention Fall 2015	Applicable Freshmen Meeting Prerequisites			Applicable Freshmen Not Meeting Prerequisites		
			Number	Retained	Percentage	Number	Retained	Percentage
Research Institutions								
Clemson	3,475	92.8%	2,966	2,758	93.0%	509	466	91.6%
USC Columbia	4,927	87.1%	3,963	3,471	87.6%	964	818	84.9%
Total	8,402	89.4%	6,929	6,229	89.9%	1,473	1,284	87.2%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities								
The Citadel	539	86.1%	479	411	85.8%	60	53	88.3%
Coastal Carolina	2,348	64.5%	2,280	1,481	65.0%	68	34	50.0%
College of Charleston	2,164	79.3%	2,120	1,680	79.2%	44	36	81.8%
Francis Marion	758	69.1%	723	503	69.6%	35	21	60.0%
Lander University	533	69.0%	497	345	69.4%	36	23	63.9%
SC State	641	56.6%	570	333	58.4%	71	30	42.3%
USC Aiken	605	68.6%	528	373	70.6%	77	42	54.5%
USC Beaufort	388	53.4%	275	153	55.6%	113	54	47.8%
USC Upstate	784	68.5%	655	459	70.1%	129	78	60.5%
Winthrop	1,011	76.5%	955	745	78.0%	56	28	50.0%
Total	9,771	70.4%	9,082	6,483	71.4%	689	399	57.9%
Grand Total	18,173	79.2%	16,011	12,712	79.4%	2,162	1,683	77.8%

Part III: Fall 2015 SAT and ACT Scores

The *Annual Report on Admission Standards* highlights scores from the average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Testing (ACT) assessments for all first-time entering freshmen as indicators of academic preparation and college readiness. The SAT is composed of three sections: 1) Critical Reading, 2) Mathematics, and 3) Writing (The College Board, 2015a). In Fall 2015, the majority of students attending South Carolina public senior institutions continue to take the SAT (9,948 students) rather than the ACT (8,320 students) as a college entrance examination. Less than 1 percent of first-time freshmen (117 students) take both the SAT and ACT, and 1.7 percent (318 students) did not take either assessment.

The scores of students who report only ACT scores are converted to SAT equivalencies using the ACT-SAT concordance tables developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and The College Board (The College Board, 2015b). The converted scores are then averaged with the SAT scores to construct an SAT/ACT combined mean. When ACT scores are converted into SAT equivalencies and combined into the mean, the SAT/ACT combined mean is slightly lower than the SAT combined mean excluding ACT scores (except for the research institutions).

In general, the combined SAT/ACT mean is lower because more than one SAT combined score (verbal and math) converts into the same ACT score, whereas only one ACT composite score converts to an SAT combined score except at the lowest end of the range. Depending on the range within students' scores fall (including ACT/SAT equivalencies in the calculation of the mean), a student's score could either increase or decrease the combined mean at that institution. The SAT total score is reported on a scale ranging from 400 – 1600 (The College Board, 2015c). In 2015, all students taking the SAT completed the Writing section (The College Board, 2015a). For this report, the national and state overall mean SAT scores for 2015 college-bound seniors who took the SAT at any time during their high school year through June 2015, and using the most recent score, is examined. Nationally, the average mean scores is 1006 without the writing section and 1490 with the writing section (The College Board, 2015a). The South Carolina overall mean scores are 975 without the writing section and 1442 with the writing section (The College Board, 2015d).

Although all students taking the SAT in 2015 took the Writing section (The College Board, 2015a), the South Carolina institution in which they sought admission may not require the writing section and/or factor the writing score into admission decisions (CHE, 2017). **Table 4** (p. 16) details the following for Fall 2015 first-time freshmen attending public senior institutions in South Carolina by sector: 1) SAT/ACT combined mean, 2) combined mean for SAT scores only, and 3) percentage of students reporting ACT scores only. Clemson indicated the highest average SAT/ACT (1267) and SAT (1251) combined means, followed by USC Columbia with average scores of 1221 and 1209, respectively. South Carolina State indicated the lowest average SAT/ACT (774) and SAT (770) combined means, but also indicated the highest percentage of student reporting an ACT score (56.3 percent).

Based on the 2014 Admission Standards annual report, nearly half of the institutions (USC Columbia, Coastal Carolina, College of Charleston, Francis Marion, and USC Upstate) factor the writing component into Fall 2015 admissions (CHE, 2017). The remaining institutions (Clemson, The Citadel, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and Winthrop) did not. Clemson and USC Columbia also consider the writing component as supplemental/holistic information. The SAT scores reported by each public senior institution do not include the writing score. In comparing the overall national and state SAT means with the SAT means of the South Carolina senior public institutions, the average score of five institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, The Citadel, College of Charleston, and Winthrop) exceeds the national and state

Table 4 SAT/ACT Scores of First-Time Entering Freshmen, Fall 2015 (Including Foreign, Provisional, and Aged 22 and Above Students) S.C. Public Senior Institutions and USC Two-Year Regional Campuses			
Institution	SAT & ACT Combined Mean¹	SAT (Only) Combined Mean	% Reporting ACT Score
Research Institutions			
Clemson	1267	1251	49.5%
USC Columbia	1221	1209	45.5%
Average Research Institutions	1240	1225	47.1%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities			
The Citadel	1082	1084	42.9%
Coastal Carolina	1018	1005	37.7%
College of Charleston	1136	1119	46.8%
Francis Marion	956	958	50.5%
Lander	983	971	44.9%
S.C. State	774	770	56.3%
USC Aiken	988	991	37.3%
USC Beaufort	932	924	36.4%
USC Upstate	961	949	38.6%
Winthrop	1044	1024	48.3%
Average Comprehensive Teaching Institutions	1022	1010	43.4%
Average Senior Institutions	1124	1107	45.1%
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC			
USC Lancaster	887	892	35.9%
USC Salkehatchie	806	820	46.9%
USC Sumter	913	924	51.6%
USC Union	751	722	48.0%
Average USC Two-Year	854	859	43.7%

¹ ACT scores converted to SAT equivalencies using the ACT/SAT Concordance Tables.

average. Five institutions (Francis Marion, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate) fall below the national and state average, and two institutions, USC Aiken and Coastal Carolina, falls below the national average, but above the state average.

Table 5 (p. 17) compares the SAT/ACT combined mean for each institution for the most recent five years. Four public senior institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, Coastal Carolina, and Francis Marion) indicate an **increase** in the average combined SAT/ACT mean between 2014 and 2015 while seven institutions (The Citadel, College of Charleston, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Beaufort, USC Upstate, and Winthrop) demonstrate a **decrease**. South Carolina State indicated the largest decrease (-54 points).

When comparing the change in combined mean from 2011 to 2015, five public senior institutions indicate an **increase** in the average combined SAT/ACT mean, and six institutions demonstrate a **decrease**. All institutions indicating a decrease from 2014 to 2015, also demonstrate a decrease in the combined mean from 2011 to 2015, except for Lander. Lander demonstrates a decrease from 2014 to 2015, but averages an increase from 2011 to 2015. USC Aiken demonstrated no change from 2014 to 2015, as well as the average from 2011 to 2015. Despite the decreases, the average combined SAT/ACT mean for public senior institutions in South Carolina increased from 2011 to 2015.

Table 5 SAT/ACT Scores of First-Time Entering Freshmen ¹ (Including Foreign, Provisional, and Students Age 22 and Above) S.C. Public Senior Institutions and USC Two-Year Regional Campuses							
Institution	2011 SAT/ACT Combined Mean	2012 SAT/ACT Combined Mean	2013 SAT/ACT Combined Mean	2014 SAT/ACT Combined Mean	2015 SAT/ACT Combined Mean	2014-2015 Change Combined Mean	2011-2015 Change Combined Mean
Research Institutions							
Clemson	1236	1253	1254	1264	1267	3	31
USC Columbia	1200	1202	1212	1218	1221	3	21
Average Research Institutions	1214	1224	1229	1237	1240	3	26
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities							
The Citadel	1085	1083	1079	1083	1082	-1	-3
Coastal Carolina	999	998	1004	1001	1018	17	19
College of Charleston	1147	1159	1153	1141	1136	-5	-11
Francis Marion	945	944	942	942	956	14	11
Lander	966	976	979	985	983	-2	17
S.C. State	866	835	799	828	774	-54	-92
USC Aiken	988	982	986	988	988	0	0
USC Beaufort	943	942	951	948	932	-16	-11
USC Upstate	984	984	972	971	961	-10	-23
Winthrop	1059	1049	1037	1056	1044	-12	-15
Average Comprehensive Teaching Institutions	1023	1023	1021	1021	1022	1	-1
Average Senior Institutions	1105	1113	1118	1120	1124	4	19
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC							
USC Lancaster	870	870	873	882	887	5	17
USC Salkehatchie	807	798	798	802	806	4	-1
USC Sumter	934	931	931	944	913	-31	-21
USC Union	820	834	834	799	751	-48	-69
Average USC Two-Year	866	859	859	863	854	-9	-12

¹ ACT scores converted to SAT equivalencies using the ACT/SAT Concordance Tables.

Part IV: Fall 2015 Provisionally Admitted Students

An institution may offer two types of admission to a degree-seeking student. Applicants meeting the institution's minimum admission criteria, and offered admission, are classified as regular students. Applicants not meeting the institution's regular admission requirements, but offered admission using alternative criteria, are classified as provisional students.

Table 6 shows provisional freshmen as a percent of total first-time entering freshmen in Fall 2015 for each public senior institution and the USC two-year regional campuses. Among the public senior institutions, only 50 percent indicated admitting "provisional" students, yet all have first-time freshmen not meeting the college preparatory course prerequisites. The institutions reporting provisional students were all comprehensive teaching colleges and universities in South Carolina. South Carolina State University admitted the largest percentage of provisional freshmen (13.0 percent), an increase of 1.9 percent from 2014 (CHE, 2017). Winthrop University followed South Carolina State with a percentage of 11.9, an increase of 2.8 percent from 2014. Clemson, USC Columbia, The Citadel, Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, and USC Aiken report admitting no provisional first-freshmen in 2015.

Table 6			
Provisional Freshmen as a Percent of Total First-Time Freshmen, Fall 2015			
S.C. Public Senior Institutions and USC Two-Year Regional Campuses			
Institution	Total First-Time Freshmen	Provisional Freshmen	Percent Provisional
Research Institutions			
Clemson	3447	0	0.0%
USC Columbia	5199	0	0.0%
Total	8,646	0	0.0%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities			
The Citadel	602	0	0.0%
Coastal Carolina	2,368	0	0.0%
College of Charleston	2,237	152	6.8%
Francis Marion	739	0	0.0%
Lander	559	23	4.1%
S.C. State	494	64	13.0%
USC Aiken	616	0	0.0%
USC Beaufort	517	9	1.7%
USC Upstate	835	57	6.8%
Winthrop	1,090	130	11.9%
Total	10,057	435	4.3%
Total Senior Institutions			
	18,703	435	2.3%
USC Two-Year Regional Campuses			
USC Lancaster	359	0	0.0%
USC Salkehatchie	258	1	0.4%
USC Sumter	194	0	0.0%
USC Union	98	0	0.0%
Total USC Two-Year	909	1	0.1%
Grand Total	19,612	436	2.2%

At a meeting on August 25, 1997, the Commission approved several recommendations for the institutions to consider regarding provisional students (CHE 2012, 2014, 2017). Among these recommendations were two related to the data presented in **Table 6** (p. 18):

- Research universities should limit provisional admissions to no more than 10 percent of the first-time entering freshman class.
- Four-year comprehensive teaching colleges and universities should limit provisional admissions to no more than 15 percent of the first-time entering freshman class.

As evident by reviewing the data presented in Table 6, in 2015, all institutions were in compliance with the recommendations. Trend data for provisional admissions for the last five years for the public senior institutions is provided below in **Table 7** (p. 19):

Table 7						
Provisional Freshmen as a Percent of Total First-Time Freshmen						
S.C. Public Senior Institutions						
Institution	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Research Institutions						
Clemson	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
USC Columbia	3.7%	16.0%	13.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities						
The Citadel	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Coastal Carolina	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
College of Charleston	13.8%	12.1%	9.5%	10.1%	10.4%	6.8%
Francis Marion	0.0%	0.8%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%
Lander	0.0%	4.5%	4.0%	3.5%	5.4%	4.1%
S.C. State	8.1%	2.4%	7.4%	7.1%	11.1%	13.0%
USC Aiken	7.3%	4.8%	6.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
USC Beaufort*	2.9%	6.7%	3.4%	2.0%	2.5%	1.7%
USC Upstate	7.8%	9.0%	6.5%	0.0%	5.9%	6.8%
Winthrop	9.6%	10.0%	12.0%	12.2%	9.1%	11.9%
USC Two-Year Regional Campuses						
Average Percentage of All Campuses	63.8%	64.5%	68.8%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%

The data indicate that the percentage of provisional students admitted to the comprehensive sector continues to fluctuate at several institutions over the last five years. As of this report College of Charleston decreased the percentage of provisional first-time freshmen by 3.6 percent, and Winthrop to nearly 12 percent following a percentage of 9.1 percent in 2014. South Carolina State University admitted a larger number of provisional students in 2015 compared to the previous five years for the second subsequent year, but remains below the recommended 15 percent.

The University of South Carolina System consists of the Research 1 campus (USC Columbia), three comprehensive campuses that are separately funded and accredited (USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate), as well as four two-year regional campuses (USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter, and USC Union). It is important to note that, prior to the implementation of the Banner enterprise system in fall 2013, when students applied to a regional campus, the application was compared to USC Columbia's admission standards. If the student was eligible for admission to Columbia yet desired admission to a specific regional campus, the student was classified as "baccalaureate-ready", indicating they were a USC Columbia-admissible student.

Regional (two-year) campus admitted students must earn a minimum 2.0 GPA and at least 30 hours in order to be able to change campuses to Columbia for most programs of study, some may have higher GPA and/or specific course requirements. USC reports that regional campuses do not provide remediation and the procedural change explains the large reduction in the number of first-time entering freshmen classified as provisional students for the USC two-year campuses over the past three years to almost non-existence.

Part V: Fall 2016 Minimum Admission Standards

A component of Act 629 of 1988 requires the Commission to work with public institutions of higher learning in South Carolina to ensure minimal admission standards are maintained by each institution. The publication and dissemination of minimal admission standards was recommended by external consultants who argued that unless students have a clear sense of institutional expectations, they could not rise to meet the expectations. In 1988, each institution was required to specify annually the minimum required SAT score (combined math and verbal) for admission as freshmen. In 1993, the Commission approved the collection of additional data to include minimum ACT scores if submitted in lieu of SAT scores.

It is important to note minimum admission standards are approximate. Some institutions apply a predictive equation to determine admission. At such institutions, the minimum required scores will vary depending on the value and weight of the other elements in the admissions formula. For this reason, the minimum SAT and ACT scores reported by the institutions as required for admission are to be used as guideposts for students aspiring to admission to any given institution.

Institutions continue to adjust admission requirements for first-time entering freshmen. Year after year, institutions report transitioning from the use of class rank to set the approximate minimum SAT/ACT score to the Grade Point Average (GPA) of the core high school college preparatory curriculum. In order to more accurately report the approximate minimum SAT/ACT score for institutions, the Commission requests information on which method institutions apply to set the minimum score and presents the results in this report. The required minimum SAT/ACT scores are, generally, lower for students with a higher GPA and high school class rank at most institutions.

The data are separated into two tables indicating institutions that use class rank (**Table 8**, p. 21) and/or core GPA (**Table 9**, p. 22) to set the approximate minimum SAT/ACT score. Six institutions (Clemson, College of Charleston, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate) report the application of both methods, one less institution than in 2014 (CHE, 2017). Lander now reports utilizing only the core GPA.

Table 8 shows the approximate SAT and ACT score requirements reported by institution **using class rank** in Fall 2015. Three institutions (South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and USC Beaufort) require the same minimum SAT/ACT scores for students regardless of high school class rank.

Table 8 Admission Requirements Approximate Minimum SAT Score (Combined) and Minimum ACT Score Requirements for First-Time Entering Freshmen 2016								
Institution	High School Class Rank						Predictive Equation ¹	
	Top 20% of Class		Top 50% of Class		Top 80% of Class		Yes	No
	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT		
Research Institutions								
Clemson	1060	23	1300	30	1580	36	X	
USC Columbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities								
The Citadel	950	20	950	20	950	20		X
Coastal Carolina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
College of Charleston ²	941	19	1100	24	-	-		X
Francis Marion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
S.C. State	830	17	830	17	830	17		X
USC Aiken	800	17	800	17	-	-	X	
USC Beaufort	800	17	800	17	800	17		X
USC Upstate	850	18	900	19	900	19	X	
Winthrop	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC								
USC Lancaster	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
USC Salkehatchie	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
USC Sumter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
USC Union	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

¹ Some institutions use predictive equations, a formula combining high school class rank, high school grade point ratio, and SAT or ACT score, to determine which students to admit. At these institutions, the minimum required score will vary depending on the value and weight of the other elements in the formula.

² No test score minimums for public school students from pilot counties in top ten percent initiative program. Counties include Berkeley, Charleston, Clarendon, Colleton, Dorchester, Orangeburg, Williamsburg.

” – “ means not applicable.

Table 9 shows the approximate SAT and ACT score requirements reported by institution **using core GPA** in Fall 2015. Three institutions (Francis Marion, South Carolina State, and USC Beaufort) required the same minimum SAT/ACT scores for student regardless of GPA.

Table 9 Admission Requirements Approximate Minimum SAT Score (Combined) and Minimum ACT Score Requirements for First-Time Entering Freshmen 2016								
Institution	High School Core GPA and Minimum SAT/ACT score						Predictive Equation ¹	
	Core GPA 2.0		Core GPA 3.0		Core GPA 4.0			
	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	Yes	No
Research Institutions								
Clemson	1580	36	1280	29	970	22	X	
USC Columbia	1250	28	950	20	700	15	X	
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities								
The Citadel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coastal Carolina	960	20	900	19	860	18		X
College of Charleston	N/A	N/A	1154	25	1097	24		X
Francis Marion ²	-	-	780	16	780	16		X
Lander	1050	23	900	19	820	17		X
S.C. State	830	17	830	17	830	17		X
USC Aiken	910	19	800	17	800	17	X	
USC Beaufort	800	17	800	17	800	17		X
USC Upstate	900	19	900	19	850	18	X	
Winthrop University	N/A	N/A	900	19	850	18		X
USC Two-Year Regional Campuses								
USC Lancaster	1250	28	950	20	700	15	X	
USC Salkehatchie	1250	28	950	20	700	15	X	
USC Sumter	1250	28	950	20	700	15	X	
USC Union	1250	28	950	20	700	15	X	

¹ Some institutions use predictive equations, a formula combining high school class rank, high school grade point ratio, and SAT or ACT score, to determine which students to admit. At these institutions, the minimum required score will vary depending on the value and weight of the other elements in the formula.

² At Francis Marion, a new freshman applicant who has a high school GPA of 2.3 or below may be presented to the Admissions, Advising, and Retention Committee for possible admittance if they have an SAT score of at least 1000 or an ACT score of at least 22.

" - " means not applicable.

In 2005, a mandatory writing/essay section was added to the SAT, creating a three SAT scores (Critical Reading, Math, and Writing) on a scale of 200-800 and amending the total perfect score to 2400 (The College Board, 2015). However, the essay became optional and scored separately, and reverting back to a maximum combined score of 1600, following an update in 2014. As a result, considerations to include the SAT writing component as an admission requirement is also constantly changing. **Table 10** (p. 23) shows that over a decade later, in Fall 2016, three institutions (Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, and USC Upstate) require the SAT writing component and use it as a factor in admission decisions. Five institutions (The Citadel, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and USC Beaufort) do not require the SAT writing component, while four institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, College of Charleston, and Winthrop) use it as supplemental information in evaluating college readiness.

Table 10		
Requirement of SAT Writing Component for Admissions in Fall 2016		
Institution	Yes/No	Additional Information
Research Institutions		
Clemson	No	Supplemental information in a student's application. The writing component is not included in the predictive formula.
USC Columbia	No	Supplemental information in a student's application. The writing component is not included in the predictive formula.
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities		
The Citadel	No	
Coastal Carolina	Yes	Assessment of new student success.
College of Charleston	No	No longer requires the freshmen to submit the writing component of either the SAT or ACT, but it is highly recommended. When submitted it is considered as another source of information in evaluating the academic readiness of the student and is considered in combination with other qualitative and quantitative factors.
Francis Marion	Yes	Students who score 500+ on the writing component are exempt from taking in house English Placement Test.
Lander	No	
S.C. State	No	
USC Aiken	No	
USC Beaufort	No	
USC Upstate	Yes	Uses for appropriate placement in freshman English courses.
Winthrop	No	Writing component is not included in admission decisions. It is reviewed for a possible correlation between freshmen students' performance in their first writing course.

First-time freshmen can also comprise adults attending college for the first time or embarking on a career change. Full-time undergraduate students 25 years of age or older are generally referred to as “nontraditional” students (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Nontraditional students make up a significant proportion of full time undergraduate students. In Fall 2015, students 25 years of age or older and enrolled in degree-granting public 4-year and 2-year postsecondary institutions comprised 11 and 23 percent, respectively, of full-time undergraduates (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Nontraditional students are unique in more characteristics than just age. They often are employed full-time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled; financially independent as it relates to financial aid eligibility; responsible for dependents, including spouse, children, and/or sick or elderly family members; and/or single parents (not married or married, but separated) (U.S. Department of education, 2002). Thus, family and work responsibilities influence their time, energy, and financial resources while pursuing postsecondary education.

Table 11 (p. 24) shows the number of first-time freshmen aged 25 or older, or “nontraditional students”, in the South Carolina public senior institutions and USC Two-Year Regional Campuses for the past five years. Since 2012, the number of first-time entering freshmen aged 25 and older has steadily declined for both categories of institutions. From Fall 2014 to Fall 2015, the number of first-time freshmen 25 years of age or older **decreased** by 14 percent. The decrease is largely attributed to the USC Two-Year Regional Campuses, which have admitted a greater percentage of the non-traditional aged student population in previous years.

Table 11						
Number of First-time Freshmen Aged 25 and Older by Year, Five-Year Comparison						
S.C. Public Senior Institution and USC Two-Year Regional Campuses						
Institutions	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Grand Total
Research Institutions						
Clemson	1	1	0	0	0	2
USC Columbia	3	4	2	0	3	12
Medical Univ. of S.C.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	5	2	0	3	14
Comprehensive Teaching Colleges & Universities						
The Citadel	1	0	1	0	4	6
Coastal Carolina	4	1	4	3	3	15
College of Charleston	3	0	0	1	0	4
Francis Marion	3	0	0	4	2	9
Lander	0	1	0	0	1	2
South Carolina State	1	4	2	4	1	12
USC Aiken	0	1	4	0	1	6
USC Beaufort	4	2	4	2	2	14
USC Upstate	6	5	1	2	9	23
Winthrop	1	2	0	0	0	3
Total	23	16	16	16	23	94
Total Senior Institutions	27	21	18	16	26	108
Two-Year Regional Campuses of USC						
USC Lancaster	16	17	19	11	5	68
USC Salkehatchie	81	52	45	10	15	203
USC Sumter	3	4	3	11	6	27
USC Union	15	15	20	16	3	69
Total USC Two-Year	115	88	87	48	29	367
Grand Total	142	109	105	64	55	475

Conclusion

The attached *Annual Report on Admission Standards for First-Time Entering Freshman, Fall 2015* provides findings from data reported by the 12 South Carolina public senior colleges and universities regarding admission standards. In Fall 2015, the public senior institutions admitting freshmen in South Carolina received 101,553 applications from individuals, both in-state and out-of-state, seeking admission as first-time freshmen. Of the first-time freshmen applicants 62.3 percent (63,296) were offered admission, and 29.5 percent (18,703) of applicants offered admission accepted and enrolled. This is a one percent decrease among the public senior institutions for both applicants offered admission, and those accepted and enrolled compared to Fall 2014.

As a recent trend, the number and percentage of applicable first-time freshmen meeting all of the college preparatory course prerequisites continues to increase. In Fall 2015, 91.2 percent of first-time freshmen met all the prerequisites compared to 85.4 percent in 2014, 85.3 percent in 2013 and 91.7 percent in 2012. Data indicates that among the public senior institutions, the percentage of freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites slightly increased from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015. Seven of the 12 institutions (58.3 percent) demonstrate increases in freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites, while four institutions (33.3 percent) demonstrate decreases in freshmen meeting high school course prerequisites. Retention rates among students who did not meet the high school course prerequisites are lower for the majority of the public senior institutions. Four institutions indicate an increase in freshmen-to-sophomore retention rates for students who did not meet the high school course prerequisites, while eight institutions demonstrate a decrease in retention rates for the same category of students from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015.

The majority of students attending South Carolina public senior institutions continue to take the SAT (9,948 students) rather than the ACT (8,320 students) as a college entrance examination. Between 2014 and 2015, four public senior institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, Coastal Carolina, and Francis Marion) indicate an increase in the average combined SAT/ACT mean. Seven institutions (the Citadel, College of Charleston, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Beaufort, USC Upstate, and Winthrop) demonstrate a decrease.

An institution may offer two types of admission to a degree-seeking student, regular or provisional. The classification is based on whether or not the applicant meets the institution's minimum admission criteria. Among the public senior institutions, only 50 percent indicated admitting "provisional" students, yet all have first-time freshmen not meeting the college preparatory course prerequisites. The institutions reporting provisional students were all comprehensive teaching colleges and universities in South Carolina. South Carolina State University admitted the largest percentage of provisional freshmen (13.0 percent), followed by Winthrop University with a percentage of 11.9. Although, the data indicate that the percentage of provisional students admitted to the comprehensive sector continues to fluctuate at several institutions, the levels remain below the 15 percent threshold CHE formally recommended.

Institutions continue to adjust admission requirements for first-time entering freshmen. The required minimum SAT/ACT scores are, generally, lower for students with a higher GPA and high school class rank at most institutions. The minimum admission standards of the public senior institutions in South Carolina for Fall 2016 incorporate the use of both GPA and high school class rank. Six public senior institutions (Clemson, College of Charleston, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate) report plan to apply both methods. Three institutions (South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and USC Beaufort) require the same minimum SAT/ACT scores for students regardless of high school class rank, and three institutions required the same minimum SAT/ACT scores for student regardless of GPA (Francis Marion,

South Carolina State, and USC Beaufort). In addition to SAT/ACT scores, class rank, and GPA, considerations to include the SAT writing component as an admission requirement are constantly changing, likely a result of The College Board redesigning the assessment to include or not include the writing component over the years. In Fall 2016, three institutions (Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, and USC Upstate) require the SAT writing component and use it as a factor in admission decisions. Five institutions (The Citadel, Lander, South Carolina State, USC Aiken, and USC Beaufort) do not require the SAT writing component, while four institutions (Clemson, USC Columbia, College of Charleston, and Winthrop) use it as supplemental information in evaluating college readiness.

Future Opportunities

Data-driven decision making, if successful, often generates significant conversation that can translate research and theory into best practice. This report can serve to inform our institutions and all stakeholders about gaps in our educational landscape and the support needed for all postsecondary students, but especially the underserved students, and can ignite further research. Commission staff intend to explore other issues related to admission standards in higher education, and ultimately increase student access and success, while enhancing institutional effectiveness.

Future iterations of the *Annual Report on Admission Standards* may include demographic data that describes the characteristics of first-time freshmen in South Carolina. The examination of trend data of the various subject areas highlighted in the report and definitions for provisional admission are also opportunities for development. Trend analysis would allow for the assessment of patterns and changes over time, especially in student retention and persistence. Additionally, the retention of all admitted students is a topic that deserves more exploration.

Most importantly, the 2015 *Annual Report on Admission Standards* reveals nontraditional students remain an untapped market for public postsecondary education. With the burgeoning South Carolina economy facilitated by an influx of jobs with the addition of new companies across various sectors, workforce development has renewed focus and has become a statewide priority. However, many business and industry representatives indicate the emerging and existing workforce is not prepared or equipped with the necessary skills for initial employment and advancement. Institutions of higher learning are presented with an opportunity to align our training, programs, and degrees to the labor market, staying attuned and responsive to workforce needs.

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