

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

Meeting held via Zoom Conference

June 4, 2020, 12:30 p.m.

Minutes of the Meeting

Members

Commissioner Wes Hayes, Chair
Commissioner Paul Batson
Commissioner James Battle
Commissioner Bettie Rose Horne
Commissioner Charles Dalton

Commissioner Linda Dolny
Commissioner Edgar Dyer
Commissioner Devron Edwards
Commissioner Mark Smith
Commissioner Charles Munns

Commissioner Ben Satcher
Commissioner Terrye Seckinger
Commissioner Julie Brown

Excused Members

Commissioner Cleveland Sellers
Commissioner Patrick White

Guests Attending

Ms. Beth Bell, Clemson University
Ms. Christine Smalls Brown, Medical University of South Carolina
Ms. Elizabeth Caselbaum, College of Charleston
Mr. John Catalano, University of South Carolina Union
Mr. James Colbert, Lander University
Dr. Mark Del Mastro, College of Charleston
Mr. Tim Drueke, Winthrop University
Ms. Shirley Hinson, College of Charleston
Ms. Trena Houpp, University of South Carolina
Dr. Scott Jones, Lander University
Mr. Jeffrey Perez, SC Independent Colleges and Universities
Dr. Sebastian Van Delden, College of Charleston
Dr. Fran Welch, College of Charleston

Commission Staff Present

Dr. Rusty Monhollon
Dr. Jennifer Almeda
Ms. Laura Belcher
Ms. Monica Goodwin
Dr. John Lane
Mr. Christopher Robinson
Mr. Andrew Roof
Ms. Shakara Smith
Mr. Georges Tippens
Ms. Bunnie Ward
Mr. Bryce Wilson
Dr. Karen Woodfaulk

All Attended by Phone or Video Conference

Chair Hayes convened the meeting at 12:30 p.m. and welcomed all in attendance.

I. 1. Introductions and Roll Call to Establish Quorum

Ms. Belcher introduced the Commissioners and guests in attendance. She confirmed a quorum of the Commission and announced that the meeting was being held in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. Chair Hayes opened the floor to Commissioner Munns to share a reflection, which is included below:

“Please let’s pause in reflection or prayer as is your individual custom... for these are certainly challenging times ... we simultaneously face a bunch of significant and troubling issues .. we reflect on three of them as we begin our meeting today:

- 1). A pandemic... Lord, please receive those who have been lost and guide their families, help those now suffering, bless those who provide care and healing.
- 2). Economic disruption from the pandemic and riots... soften the pain of those hurting, give hope to those living in uncertainty, bless those giving to and serving for others
- 3). Effects of racial injustice... we see systemic issues and in too many cases individually racist actions. Open our hearts and minds to find and implement positive measures toward real, effective, and enduring solutions.

Lastly in the midst of these challenges give us the wisdom, strength and courage to guide the SC Higher Education System, which is the reason we are here today. Properly guided higher education is, can be, and should be, part of the answer to and mitigation for all three of these crises.

With your help, and with our collective compassion, wisdom and experience we will get through this. Amen and thank you.”

Commissioner Seckinger requested that the reflection be added to the official record. Chair Hayes approved adding the reflection to the official record without objection.

2. Approval of Minutes

Chair Hayes introduced the draft minutes of the May 7, 2020, meeting and asked whether there were any additions or corrections. Commissioner Batson noted a discrepancy in the draft minutes regarding the Finance and Facilities Committee report located on page three of the minutes. He explained that the consent agenda was not approved to be presented to the full Commission, but that a motion was made to recommit the items back to the Committee on Finance and Facilities for review at a later date. Commissioner Dalton acknowledged Commissioner Batson’s change and asked that the following correction be made on page three:

Replace the statement: *Commissioner Dalton discussed the purposes, costs, and funding sources of the seven proposed capital projects and one requested lease approval. The consent agenda, which was brought forward as a motion from the Committee and therefore did not require a second, passed unanimously.*

With:

Commissioner Dalton noted that while the Committee on Finance and Facilities recommended the seven proposed capital projects and one requested lease approval at its committee meeting on May 5, in light of the uncertainty caused by Covid-19 surrounding state and institutional finances, he was presenting a motion to recommit the seven capital projects and one lease request to the Committee on Finance and Facilities for review at a later date. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Batson and passed unanimously. Commissioner Batson commented that colleges would not be required to go through the vetting process again.

Commissioner Dalton motioned to amend the minutes as stated, Commissioner Dolny seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Seckinger motioned to approve minutes as amended, Commissioner Satcher seconded the motion and the amended minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Chair's Report

Chair Hayes thanked Commissioner Munns for the opening reflections. He then extended a special thanks to everyone for the adjustments made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He reported that the Commission has been working with the Governor and the Legislature on budget issues. He added that the Commission had received the recommendations from the S.C. Higher Education Advisory Committee (HEAC) that will guide the work during the upcoming CHE Strategic Planning Retreat. Chair Hayes recognized President Monhollon for working closely with university presidents regarding their plans for reopening in the fall and for the continued work of the Agency.

4. President and Executive Director's Report

Chair Hayes called on President Monhollon to give his report. President Monhollon opened his report by introducing his new Executive Assistant, Shakara Smith. He then presented a new policy made effective June 1 pertaining to CHE staff returning to the agency based on the guidelines of the South Carolina Department of Administration. President Monhollon outlined the three phases:

- **Phase I** (no earlier than June 15), a small number of employees will return to CHE offices based on a schedule approved by their supervisor and President Monhollon. High risk employees and those impacted by school and daycare closings will not be required to return but may continue to telework. Only one staff member per division will be allowed to work in the office simultaneously, excluding President Monhollon's direct reports. PPE, cleaning supplies (disinfectant), and hand sanitizer will be provided to staff members. Face coverings will be required, unless medically documented otherwise. No more than one person will be allowed in break rooms. Non-essential travel and face-to-face meetings will be prohibited. Some essential travel will be allowed but must be approved by President Monhollon.
- **Phase II** (no earlier than June 29), or as the SC Department of Administration initiates, no more than 50% of staff may return. Conference room usage will continue to be limited and visitors will only be allowed by appointment and with face coverings.
- **Phase III** (no earlier than August 3), or as the SC Department of Administration initiates, all staff will return full time unless accommodations are needed. This will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

President Monhollon reported that the ability to move to Phase III will be based upon recommendations of healthcare professionals, the reopening of schools, availability of daycares and other childcare options.

President Monhollon discussed the work of the accelerateSC Task Force and its plans to request the General Assembly adopt the Task Force's recommendations. As requested, President Monhollon provided the Task Force with the financial implications of the pandemic's impact on universities and predictions for the remainder of the year. As reported to the Task Force, he added that since March, expenses of more than \$82 million have been incurred by SC universities to adapt to remote/online learning.

He continued to explain that colleges and universities are actively working on their reopening plans for the fall semester and that it is estimated that \$122 million will be needed to prepare campuses for social distancing measures. President Monhollon added that the associated costs relate to health, safety, sanitation, and protective equipment. He also reported that there has been significant loss in revenue, which might continue into the fall.

President Monhollon shared a few statistics from national surveys: 85 percent of students are unhappy with online learning and report that they will not return if courses are held solely online; 25 percent of incoming college students report that they will not or it is too early to decide whether they will return in the fall; 40 percent of parents of high

schoolers will delay students going to college due to safety concerns. He explained that nationally some institutions could see up to a 20 percent drop in enrollment as suggested by national consulting firms.

President Monhollon continued to explain the national and state impacts of the pandemic. He added that SC institutions are creating their re-entry plans. He noted that the estimated \$122-million startup cost is simply a projection and can change given different circumstances, such as another outbreak. Each institution will need to plan on reopening based on their specific circumstances and local health conditions. President Monhollon opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Munns asked whether costs would be mitigated by institutions having liability insurance. President Monhollon responded that liability insurance protects in the context of lawsuits and workers compensation claims for essential workers who must report to work. It also provides institution limited protections.

Commissioner Seckinger expressed the need for a uniformed and broadened transfer policy among higher education institutions that will allow students to continue their education. She also suggested that student protection plans for each university be posted on the Commission's website. Commissioner Seckinger inquired with Dr. John Lane if there is a transfer policy currently being developed. Dr. Lane affirmed the extant 86 course-by-course transfer policy, and the block-transfer recommendation by certain disciplines revised approximately 10 years ago. He then informed the Commission that he will add discussion about transfer policy to the upcoming ACAP meeting on June 9. Dr. Lane added that many constituents have expressed their concern regarding this topic, particularly relating to pass/fail policies. Commissioner Seckinger recommended flexibility in addressing the transfer policy considering some courses in specific academic degree programs are not included.

Commissioner Smith commented on COVID-19 testing. He shared his personal experience with being tested and added that the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control does not support universal testing as a mitigation solution since the test only captures a current point in time and cannot predict transfer of the virus to students after the test is administered. He added that he has been advised that testing should be conducted only on symptomatic individuals.

President Monhollon acknowledged Commissioner Seckinger's comments and noted Dr. Lane addressing the transfer concern at the next ACAP meeting. He added that the topic might be broached at the CHE Strategic Planning Session in July. He stated the Commission plans to post institutions' safety plans on the website once those plans are finalized.

Commissioner Seckinger summarized her earlier comments that the transfer policy needs to be softened and safety needs ensured, while allowing students to continue their education in their home environment for a period. She agreed with Commissioner Smith that testing all students is not strategic as it is only good in the moment. Commissioner Battle added that testing is useful as it identifies those who are infected and prevents them from spreading the disease.

President Monhollon transitioned to the next topic and solicited feedback on the draft memo provided by Ms. Laura Belcher to be sent to university presidents regarding the Commission's support of reopening in the fall. A motion was made by Commissioner Munns to send a letter similar to the draft presented, seconded by Commissioner Dalton. Chair Hayes informed the Commission that a motion was not needed for President's Monhollon's request. Commissioner Munns withdrew the motion, and Commissioner Dalton withdrew the second. Commissioner Horne expressed a desire for racial violence to be addressed in a similar letter and commended Lander's strong message regarding respect and safety to every student. Commissioner Dolny thanked Commissioner Horne for bringing attention to the mentioned topic. She explained that racial injustice issues are on parents' minds along with COVID-19 concerns. Commissioner Dolny expressed support of the CHE memo regarding re-opening in the fall.

Commissioner Seckinger encouraged the Commission to collaboratively produce innovative ideas, to help in the re-opening process. President Monhollon thanked the Commissioners for their feedback and stated he will move forward with distributing the letter once finalized.

President Monhollon discussed the creation of the SC Higher Education Recovery Advisory Group, which will meet next week to begin planning work. He also mentioned his recent meetings with various stakeholders.

As mentioned in the Chair's report, President Monhollon stated final recommendations of the SC Higher Education Advisory Committee will be used to focus discussion during the CHE Strategic Planning Session in July. Chair Hayes thanked President Monhollon for his report.

5. Legislative Report

Chair Hayes asked Ms. Bunnie Ward to present the Legislative Report. She shared that the Legislature will return June 23 and June 24 to discuss the Cares Act fund allocations. Ms. Ward mentioned the presentation given by President Monhollon to the Senate Re-Open SC Select Committee on Tuesday was well received. Ms. Ward commented that she has attended the House Education and Public Works Committee meetings focused on the K-12 reopening plan, and the House Business Liability Committee which addressed liability protection as businesses reopen. She informed the Commission that the General Assembly will reconvene in September to address the next fiscal year budget.

Ms. Ward reported on CHE communications over the last few months and that a communications strategy is being developed. She explained two current projects including a July communication on campus reopenings and campus safety; and a September communication regarding the value of the higher education system. She concluded her report by stating that the agency is working on rebranding CHE's website.

6. Committee Reports

6.01 Report of the Executive Committee

No report.

6.02 Report of the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

Commissioner Munns introduced the items from the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing:

6.02.A Sense of the Committee regarding COVID-19

- a. Commissioner Munns explained that CAAL met to discuss ground rules in which the Committee would proceed with its work through the fall. He reported that the Committee concluded that review and approval of programs should continue.

6.02.B Program Approvals

Commissioner Munns described the program on the Consent Agenda: B.S., Electrical Engineering from the College of Charleston.

Commissioner Munns explained that an appeal had been exercised for reconsideration of the initial denial of the degree program. He stated that the revised proposal discussed the need for the program; the signed MOU with The Citadel for collaboration; the intention for the program to serve a different category of students; the proposed costs, and information about a \$1 million gift for the program. Commissioner Munns informed the Commission that the Committee recommended approval. Chair Hayes opened the floor for any comments.

Commissioner Horne commended The Citadel for its willingness to collaborate. Commissioner Brown stated that the proposal was meaningful and also commended their collaboration. Commissioner Seckinger mentioned that the MOU prevents any discord between the two institutions. The consent agenda, which was brought forward as a motion from the Committee and therefore did not require a second, passed unanimously.

Commissioner Munns asked Dr. Lane to explain the approval statistics notated on the agenda. Dr. Lane provided the approval rate for the past two academic degree program review cycles: 74 percent ending with the June 2019 CHE Meeting and 88 percent ending with the December 2019 CHE meeting.

Commissioner Horne reminded the Commission of the numerous levels of approval a program must complete at the institutional level prior to the multiple reviews that the Commission executes.

6.03 Report of Committee on Access and Equity and Student Services

Commissioner Batson reported that the Committee met last month and recommended the following informational items be presented to the Commission.

A. College Transition Need-based Grant Program FY2018-2019

Commissioner Batson noted that \$32 million were appropriated in lottery funds and 31,000 students received grant funding.

B. Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program, 2018-2019

Commissioner Batson noted that the report explains how the appropriated \$73 million was allocated.

C. College Application Month Report

Commissioner Batson explained the initiative which supports students applying for college admission. He noted that 25,000 students participated this last year with 215 high schools sponsoring events. He stated that 49,000 applications were submitted through this initiative.

Chair Hayes thanked Commissioner Batson for his report.

6.04 Report of Committee on Finance and Facilities

Commissioner Dalton reported that the Committee did not meet this month. He explained that two projects were received from institutions but were not time critical. He informed the Commission that the Vice Chair of the Committee, Commissioner Dolny, will work with Mr. Georges Tippens and team to outline the scope, purpose and points to consider when the Committee meets next. Chair Hayes thanked Commissioner Dalton for his report.

7. Other Business Announcements

The next CHE meeting and Strategic Planning Session will be held on July 30-31.

Commissioner Batson reminded the group of the Committee on Access and Equity and Student Services meeting will convene at 2:30 pm today and extended an invitation to Commissioners.

8. Public Comment

Chair Hayes asked whether there was any public comment. There were no comments from the public.

II. 9. End of Business Meeting

Chair Hayes thanked the Commission and staff for the great work done during the COVID-19 pandemic and then adjourned the meeting at 2:12 pm.