

**South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services**
1122 Lady Street, Suite 300
Columbia, SC 29201

**Minutes of the Meeting
Main Conference Room
June 6, 2019
10:30 a.m.**

Members Present

Mr. Charles Munns
Mr. James Battle
Dr. Bettie Horne
Dr. Cleveland Sellers

CHE Intern

Ms. Kanasha Barnes-Adams
Southern Education Foundation
Leadership Initiative Fellow

Staff Present

Dr. Karen Woodfaulk
Ms. Lorinda Copeland
Mr. Kevin Glears
Dr. Gerrick Hampton
Ms. Davaris Hatten
Mr. Jesse Kimbrough
Mr. Frank Myers
Ms. Emily Wells
Ms. Leslie Williams

Guests Attending

Mr. Ray Jones, SC Student Loan Corporation
Dr. Charlie Spell, SC State University
Ms. Reinell Thomas-Myers, SC State University

1. Introductions and Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Munns called the meeting to order at 10:37 a.m. Ms. Emily Wells introduced the guests in attendance and confirmed that the meeting was held in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

A **motion** was made (Sellers), **seconded** (Munns), and **carried** to approve the minutes of April 4, 2019.

2. Consideration of SC Student Loan Corporation FY2019-20 Administrative Budget Request SC Teachers Loan Program (For Approval)

Dr. Karen Woodfaulk provided a brief summary of the SC Teachers Loan Program. She stated that the South Carolina General Assembly authorized the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to establish regulation to govern the program. The two primary responsibilities assigned to CHE are the approval of the annual administrative budget and approval of the appropriation request for the SC Teachers Loan Program. CHE works with the Office of the State Treasurer to ensure the appropriation request is distributed to the SC Student Loan

Corporation. The FY2019-20 proposed administrative budget request was submitted to the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation's board members on May 14, 2019. Dr. Woodfaulk noted that the transfer of collections to a third party servicer was previously approved by the Committee. There was discussion regarding the issue of borrowers having the knowledge and information about their loans to prevent defaults. Because of this concern, the SC Student Loan Corporation initiated an outreach program which increased the budget.

Commissioner Munns asked Mr. Ray Jones, Vice President of Loan Programs, SC Student Loan Corporation, for clarification regarding the approved, actual and proposed budget for third party servicing fees. Mr. Jones responded that the approved budget included twelve months of servicing transfers. However, the servicing transfers did not occur until February. Commissioner Munns asked if the proposed FY2019-20 budget for third party servicing fees was the annual amount. Mr. Jones responded yes. Mr. Jones further explained that a review of the initial assumptions regarding the loans were conducted and the FY2019-20 budget for third party servicing fees was reduced. Commissioner Munns also asked if the proposed increase for printing and postage was for outreach activities. Mr. Jones responded yes. Mr. Jones also stated that there was concern that a servicing transfer could possibly cause confusion for borrowers. Although the loan servicer is Firstmark Services, the SC Student Loan Corporation created an additional outreach to consistently review any changes in the loan status of borrowers.

Commissioner Horne asked if there was any dialogue with students to determine the actual loan amount needed versus the loan amount requested. Mr. Jones responded that the Teachers Loan Program is a forgivable program with annual and aggregate limits. Freshman and sophomores can receive \$2,500 each year, juniors and seniors \$5,000 each year and the aggregate limit \$20,000. The loan amount processed is the lesser of the annual limit or the amount certified by the financial aid office. He further stated that the Teachers Loan Program is a forgivable program with the intent of ensuring qualified borrowers enter the teaching profession in South Carolina. However, the annual and aggregate limits are low and \$2,500 is not a sufficient enticement for teachers to work in a rural geographical area. Mr. Jones stated there should be additional efforts for incentives to get qualified teachers in schools that truly have a need.

Mr. Jones agreed that there is over borrowing in federal and private loan programs. The SC Student Loan Corporation is moving toward a goal of responsible borrowing. Approximately 150 financial aid events were conducted to provide students and parents with the information to make qualified and educated loan decisions. Students are borrowing amounts that exceed tuition and fees to fund additional costs. In his opinion, there are federal loan programs that should not be included in educational programs because of the percentage rate for fees. Awareness regarding the availability of programs such as the SC Teachers Loan Program should be increased to help reduce expenses in other loan programs. Commissioner Horne asked about an issue with some federal student loans that were not forgiven and went into default. Mr. Jones responded that the public service loan forgiveness initiative started years ago. In his opinion, eligibility requirements should have been evaluated because there were assumptions by borrowers regarding loan forgiveness. The proper information was not provided to borrowers and loan forgiveness was denied. These borrowers could have been employed in other geographical areas and possibly with higher earnings. Mr. Jones stated

that there is discussion within the federal government as to whether public service loan forgiveness should continue, discontinue, or change.

Commissioner Munns requested that the issue regarding the amount for forgivable loans be presented with the annual appropriation request. He stated that the Committee or possibly another agency could advocate for an increase in the amount for loan forgiveness. Commissioner Munns also asked about the status of the proposed change in policy for geographic and/or subject area forgivable loans. Dr. Woodfaulk responded that the recommendation from the Teachers Loan Advisory Committee was presented to and the Committee will be revisited with the Chair of the Teachers Loan Advisory Committee. Commission staff is ready to move forward with the Advisory Committee's recommendation regarding the proposed change.

Mr. Jones stated that the proposal to adjust critical geographic and/or subject areas to allow all teachers forgiveness is a great idea and an incentive to create teachers in South Carolina. Mr. Jones would like the opportunity to discuss further because the manual process created by the change would affect the budget. Commissioner Horne asked if the additional \$2,500 for juniors and seniors should be included in this discussion. Mr. Jones responded that the additional \$2,500 for juniors and seniors would increase their annual limit to \$7,500. The increase for juniors and seniors may be appropriate because students often change majors after the freshman year. The intent is to see that students are matriculating before additional funds are awarded to eliminate the burden of additional debt. The critical issue in South Carolina is the teacher shortage because all schools need teachers. There are teachers not receiving loan forgiveness because of their subject and geographic area which is an issue due to the teacher shortage in our state.

The Committee **moved** (Horne), **seconded** (Sellers) and **carried** to approve the FY2019-20 Administrative Budget Request for the SC Teachers Loan Program

3. **SC Program for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers (SC-PRRMT) Quarterly Report (Quarter 3) (For Approval)**

Dr. Woodfaulk stated that the SC Program for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers (SC-PRRMT) offers on campus and satellite teacher education courses primarily for the recruitment of non-traditional teachers. Dr. Woodfaulk noted that there has been an increase in the number of sites. Dr. Woodfaulk also noted that the letter from State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman, which was a recommendation from the Committee, increased interest in the program. She stated that outreach to rural areas as well as through recruitment fairs assisted in further expansion. Commissioner Munns asked if the staff assessment was that the SC-PRRMT was making successful progress. Dr. Woodfaulk responded yes. She stated that the number of participants had increased to 88 and that the number of regional sites had increased from two to eight. She further explained that there are several counties within a regional site.

Ms. Reinell Thomas-Myers stated that there were nine graduates for 2018-19 and that all graduates were teaching in rural areas in South Carolina. Dr. Charlie Spell stated that participants graduate and move right into teaching jobs. However, efforts have to continue and increase for continued success. Matriculating through the first and second year is not

sufficient. Assistance is needed with passing all required examinations which is difficult for non-traditional students. Commissioner Munns noted that the PRAXIS pass rate had increased. Dr. Spell responded that additional efforts are needed not only for the SC-PRRMT, but for all of higher education. Commissioner Munns stated that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing (CAAL) has an initiative to increase the number of teachers by reviewing how the PRAXIS is administered and graded. Commissioner Munns asked why the number of seniors decreased for spring 2019. Ms. Thomas-Myers responded there was a decrease because of the number of seniors who did not pass the PRAXIS.

Commissioner Horne asked if the PRAXIS was taught by subject area to identify the area of difficulty. Dr. Spell responded that the concern for rising seniors has been the PRAXIS Core. PRAXIS Core is the common core curriculum which is not fully implemented and is a statewide concern. A student can be classified as an education student, however, to be classified as an education candidate, students must pass all three areas of PRAXIS Core. Once a student becomes a teacher education candidate, there are other required examinations. Commissioner Horne asked if the scores for basic literacy skills are reported separately. Dr. Spell responded yes. Commissioner Horne asked if support was available before the examination. Dr. Spell responded that PRAXIS Core preparation sessions were established three years ago. Also, a grant was secured from the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity which has assisted with faculty training and strengthening course content. Commissioner Horne asked if students have the option to only attend sessions for the area of weakness. Dr. Spell responded yes and that students provide the results of the previous test.

Commissioner Horne asked about the letter from State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman. Ms. Thomas-Myers responded that the letter was personable, positive and encouraging. Ms. Thomas-Myers suggested the dissemination of another letter for the 2019-20 school year. Commissioner Munn asked that a recommendation for another letter be presented during the next meeting. Dr. Woodfaulk suggested for the purpose of timing that it might be better if the letter is drafted during the summer months. Dr. Woodfaulk will contact the S. C. Department of Education.

The Committee **moved** (Sellers), **seconded** (Horne) and **carried** to approve the SC-PRRMT Quarter 3 Report.

4. **Palmetto Fellows Year Round Application Process** (*For Information, No Action Required*)

Dr. Woodfaulk provided a brief summary of the Palmetto Fellows Program. She stated during the President's Council Task Force meeting it was discussed how CHE could attract eligible Palmetto Fellows students earlier to keep the best and brightest in South Carolina. Although it is called late award and early award, the scholarship process is essentially "year round."

As an overview, Ms. Emily Wells stated the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship was established in 1988 with about 42 students per year with an award amount of \$2,500. There was an increase in 1996 of funding by the General Assembly. Ms. Wells stated in 2002 funding was increased to \$6,700 for the 1st year and \$7,500 for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years. Ms. Wells indicated the

General Assembly established the Math/Science Enhancement for Palmetto Fellows in the amount of an additional \$2,500 which allows students to receive up to \$10,000.

In May of 2019, Ms. Wells stated the Palmetto Fellows regulations were approved to allow for a change in the process to “year-round,” a gap year and proration of funds for students in their final semester. Ms. Wells indicated for 2018-19 cohort CHE awarded 8,896 students the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. Dr. Woodfaulk stated when the SC Lottery was initiated, the General Assembly wanted to increase the number of Palmetto Fellows in South Carolina by increasing funding. Dr. Horne asked if we are succeeding in keeping the best and brightest in South Carolina. Ms. Wells responded, the number of students who choose to attend an out of state institution is small. Of the 3,200 eligible students in the early 2019-20 academic year award there are approximately 200 students that have indicated they are going out of state. Dr. Woodfaulk noted approximately 89 percent of eligible Palmetto Fellows remain in South Carolina. More data information regarding students that have designated an out of state institution is available.

Ms. Wells stated that there are no changes to the current eligibility requirements for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. For the early award, a student must rank in the top 6 percent in 10th or 11th grade; and have a 3.5 S. C. UGP GPA by the end of 11th grade; and earn a 1200 on the SAT or 27 on ACT. Late award students have an additional option of ranking in the top 6 percent 12th grade year with a S. C. UGP GPA of 3.5 by the end of 12th grade.

Ms. Wells explained that currently, the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship early award period is open from October through December. Once the applications are received and processed students are notified in March of their status. This year, the early award period will open in August and the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship materials will be updated with new changes. However, moving forward the process for Palmetto Fellows Scholarship early awards will open in May of the junior year and will run to April of the senior year. This allows a larger period of time for counselors to submit information. This will also allow for students to receive notification of their Palmetto Fellows Scholarship eligibility earlier in the year. Ms. Wells stated there are workshops planned during the fall and summer to include homeschools, private schools and the S.C. Department of Education. A one-page document will be created to assist high school counselors with understanding the new process as well as the Guidance Counselor Listserv.

Dr. Horne asked if the new process for Palmetto Fellows Scholarships will be on the website. Ms. Wells responded the regulations and brochures have been updated on the CHE website to reflect the new information.

Dr. Woodfaulk stated that five workshops for counselors hosted by the S.C. Department of Education will occur in the fall. The updated information regarding Palmetto Fellows Scholarships will also be on the Guidance Counselor Listserv for high school counselors.

Ms. Wells stated with the upcoming change for Palmetto Fellows Scholarships public schools are now required to submit a rank report each year based on students being submitted for rank. CHE notified counselors last year of this change and to archive their reports for students. This will allow for CHE to ensure schools are not double ranking students. Schools

may have students who have the same GPA. Ms. Wells stated CHE requires the counselor submit a letter indicating the true rank of these students. Dr. Horne asked if the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship process is a manual process. Ms. Wells responded that each packet consists of an Electronic Application, Certification and Authorization Form, transcripts and test scores. Ms. Wells stated that she and Ms. Leslie Williams review each application packet multiple times before it is processed to ensure that the application information matches the transcript and test score reports.

5. **College Application Month Report, 2018** *(For Information, No Action Required)*

Dr. Woodfaulk stated Dr. Gerrick Hampton manages the College Application Month (CAM) events statewide. The Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services led CHE's effort to initiate College Application Month events and the upcoming Fall 2019 cycle will represent the state's 10th year of programming. Dr. Hampton stated College Application Month South Carolina is part of The American College Application Campaign. The goal of the program is to help high school seniors complete college applications. Advertising and registration are on the CHE College Access website, SCCANGO.org. High schools can register and select a date for their event during the August through November timeframe. Dr. Hampton stated high schools can choose the format of their program. Typically, the high schools host in one of three different formats. Schools may have an event all day, a night program or some schools select an entire month to hold their event. Dr. Hampton stated that this past fall, the Cyber Academy of South Carolina hosted the first virtual CAM event. The Cyber Academy partnered with college representatives to train them on how to use Black Board, a virtual education platform. Dr. Hampton will contact other virtual schools to gauge their interest in hosting CAM events in the future. Dr. Horne asked about the number of virtual schools Dr. Hampton will contact. Dr. Hampton replied there were three schools in the past that signed up but did not participate. He will start with those three but will also reach out to the S. C. Department of Education for additional virtual schools.

Dr. Hampton stated program started in 2009 with 12 high schools along the I-95 corridor. This past year the program consisted of 237 high schools. Counselors are asked to register the number of students in their senior class. Dr. Hampton stated that of the total 47,406 seniors enrolled in the 237 participating CAM high schools, 24,129 participated in a CAM event. Students are asked to complete a survey at the end of the event. Dr. Hampton explained that in the past a drawing to receive an iPad has been held at the end of CAM season. During 2018, CHE continued its partnership with the SC Office of the Treasurer to offer a scholarship incentive. A senior from Gaffney High School and a second senior from Whale Branch High School were awarded scholarships through the SC Office of the Treasurer. Dr. Hampton notes CHE is working with this office to increase the number of scholarships awarded to CAM participants.

Dr. Hampton stated that there will be a celebratory relaunch of the CAM program in the Fall of 2019 with 3 signature CAM events to celebrate the program's 10th year. The events will be

held at Wando High School, Irmo High School, and Wade Hampton High School (Greenville, SC) in October 2019.

6. SC State Approving Agency Update (SAA) *(For Information, No Action Required)*

Dr. Woodfaulk provided a brief summary of the SC State Approving Agency (SAA). She stated the SAA is a part of the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) which is comprised of 50 approving agencies who act on behalf of the federal government to evaluate educational/vocational institutions and training establishments.

Mr. Frank Myers stated that the SAA is the state approving agency for the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA). The SAA approves programs at the colleges and universities for veterans and their dependents to receive their GI Bill benefits. Mr. Myers also stated that the SAA conducts compliance surveys at educational institutions and training establishments to ensure the enrollment certifications are in accordance with the DVA Educational Services approval requirements.

Mr. Myers further stated that each year, the SAA enters into an agreement (previously DVA Contract and now the Cooperative Agreement) with the DVA Central Office effective October 1st through September 30th. At the end of each federal fiscal year, SAA's are evaluated by the Joint Peer Review Group (JPRG). The JPRG consists of four DVA Regional Processing Office Chief Education Liaison Officers and four NASAA members. Mr. Myers noted he has served seven years as a JPRG member. The JPRG rates each SAA's based upon the performance measures that are outlined in the Cooperative Agreement. Mr. Myers further stated that there are only three ratings an SAA can receive. The three ratings are satisfactory, minimum satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Mr. Myers informed the committee members that South Carolina has received all satisfactory ratings from the JPRG.

Mr. Myers noted that the DVA operates on a three-year cycle for auditing the educational institutions and training establishments within the state. Educational institutions and training establishments selected for an audit are considered active facilities. An active facility consists of a veteran(s) or a dependent(s) who has received GI Bill Educational benefits during the three-year period.

There were total of 244 active educational institutions and training establishments in 2017. In 2018, there were 253 active facilities and in 2019 there are 241 active facilities. Mr. Myers stated that in addition to conducting audits at the educational institutions, the SAA is responsible for reviewing and approving the institution's academic programs and policies as presented in the catalogs.

During the selected three-year cycle of FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019, the SAA approved 8,648 new programs at the educational institutions. Noted for each year are the new program approvals: FY2017 - 4,248 approvals, FY2018 - 2,718 approvals and FY2019 - 1,682 approvals.

With the approvals, the SAA revised 370 programs at the education institutions in FY2017, 407 programs in 2018, and 185 programs in FY2019. Mr. Myers stated that during the

academic catalog review, programs at the education institutions may be disapproved. Commissioner Munns asked Mr. Myers for clarification regarding disapprovals of programs. Mr. Myers stated that the program disapprovals can be voluntary by the educational institution or the institutions may no longer meet the approval criteria in accordance with Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations 21.4253, 21.4254, and 21.4259. However, when an educational institution would like to be approved to offer veterans education and training for GI Bill benefits, the institution must meet criteria in accordance with Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations 21.4253 and 21.4254.

Mr. Myers stated that the number of veterans receiving their GI Bill benefits in FY2017 was 11,758 veterans, 11,513 veterans in FY2018 and 11,004 veterans in FY2019.

7. **Other Business**

Dr. Woodfaulk introduced Ms. Kanisha Barnes-Adams, a Southern Education Foundation Leadership Initiative Fellow, who has a seven-week internship at CHE. Ms. Barnes-Adams is currently a doctoral student at the University of Alabama majoring in Instructional Leadership. During her internship at CHE, Ms. Barnes-Adams will be working on college access initiatives.

9. **Adjournment**

There being no additional items before the Committee, Commissioner Munns requested a motion for adjournment. A **motion** (Battle) was made, **seconded** (Sellers), and **carried** to adjourn the meeting at 11:52 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorinda Copeland/Leslie Williams