

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education  
Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services

Minutes of the Meeting  
Virtual Meeting  
February 4, 2021  
2:42 p.m.

**Committee Members Present**

Mr. Paul Batson, Chair  
Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Assistant Chair  
Dr. Hugh Mobley  
Dr. Mark A. Smith

**Committee Members Absent**

Mr. Devron Edwards

**Guests Present**

Dr. Jesulon Gibbs-Brown, SC State University  
Ms. Reinell Thomas-Myers, SC State University

**Staff Members Present**

Dr. Rusty Monhollon  
Dr. Karen Woodfaulk  
Ms. Lisa Collins  
Ms. Lorinda Copeland  
Mr. Kevin Glears  
Dr. Gerrick Hampton  
Ms. Kathryn Harris  
Mr. Jesse Kimbrough  
Mr. Frank Myers  
Ms. Colette Reamer  
Ms. Laverne Sanders  
Ms. Leslie Williams

**1. Introductions and Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Paul Batson called the meeting to order.

Dr. Karen Woodfaulk introduced the presenters on the agenda. Ms. Laverne Sanders introduced the guests in attendance, and she confirmed that the meeting was held in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

A **motion** was made (Horne), **seconded** (Mobley), and **carried** to approve the minutes of October 1, 2020.

**2. SC Program for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers (SC-PRRMT) FY2019—2020 Quarter I and Quarter II Report (For Approval)**

Dr. Karen Woodfaulk provided an overview of Proviso, H630, Part 1B SECTION 1A of the 2019-2020 Appropriations. She explained that the Proviso provides funds for the state's teacher recruitment programs and specifically for the SC State University PRRMT program. This program, according to the Proviso, shall promote teacher recruitment with primary emphasis on recruiting minority teachers throughout the state.

Dr. Woodfaulk noted that SC-PRRMT submits quarterly reports to the Commission. She said the Commission is apprised of the SC-PRRMT program's progress in meeting the goals of the Proviso. Dr. Woodfaulk provided data for Quarter 1. She reported 80 students were enrolled during Fall 2020. She said 10 seniors, 15 juniors, 26 sophomores and 26 freshmen were enrolled in the SC-PRRMT program. Also, 3 MAT students were enrolled during Fall 2020. Dr. Woodfaulk stated that thirteen of the students

were teacher assistants, and ten of the students were enrolled in a subject area of critical need. She stated that seven of the students graduated during Fall 2020 and were employed in a critical need subject area. Dr. Woodfaulk stated five of the seven graduates were assigned to full-time teaching positions.

Dr. Woodfaulk stated that SC-PRRMT reported an increase from 80 students to 87 students in Quarter 2 for Spring 2021. She said SC-PRRMT has a total of nine regional SC-PRMMT sites throughout the state. The more recent sites established were in Lee County, Laurens School District 55, and Newberry County. She reported SC-PRRMT shared with Commission staff that challenges remain due to the COVID-19 pandemic which included cancellations of teacher recruitment fairs. However, SC-PRRMT will continue to reach out to potential students in Aiken, Barnwell, Bamberg, Marion, Lee, Lexington Counties, Hampton School Districts I and II, Richland School District I and II, and Laurens School District 55 and 56. .

Ms. Reinell Thomas-Myers, Program Director of SC-PRRMT, provided graduation rates and student enrollment data that Commissioner Bettie Horne inquired about at the October 1, 2020 meeting. She stated that 13 graduated from 2016-2017. Ms. Thomas-Myers stated 12 remained in the same district. She reported 12 graduated in 2017-2018, and 12 remained in the same district. There were ten graduates in 2018-2019, and nine remained in the school district. Ms. Thomas Myers stated there were 10 graduates in 2019-2020, and 8 graduates remained in the school district. Commissioner Horne suggested that CHE staff and SC-PRRMT staff converse with Ms. Bunnie Ward. She also suggested changing the data into percentages. Commissioner Mark A. Smith recommended writing an article on the achievement of the SC-PRRMT program.

Ms. Thomas-Myers provided data on forgivable loans. and tuition. She reported that the forgivable loans for FY2020-21 is \$324,482. Ms. Thomas-Myers reported that SC-PRRMT distributed \$204,326. She stated the average forgivable loan is \$2,554. Ms. Thomas-Myers said presently seven graduates are teaching in the state. She stated the average projected forgivable loan for Spring FY 2021 was \$2,064.

Ms. Thomas-Myers reported that Fall 2020 tuition was \$6,331, and Spring 2021 tuition was \$6,436. She explained that the new student tuition is \$6,486. Ms. Thomas-Myers stated that the tuition cost increase for new students was due in health insurance costs. She explained that all the classes are presently online, and the students meet with their professors weekly. Ms. Thomas-Myers stated that recruitment is continuing using the career fair list from previous years, and SC-PRRMT staff is also contacting potential students by phone and email. She said there are no face-to-face career fairs due to the Covid-19 pandemic. SC-PRRMT plans to have virtual career fairs with various school districts in the spring. Ms. Thomas-Myers stated that SC-PRRMT continues to provide PRAXIS preparation by Zoom beginning February 15, 2021.

Dr. Gibbs-Brown provided her appreciation to the Committee. She stated that she is working along with Ms. Thomas-Myers.

Chairman Batson asked if SC-PRRMT had a grasp on the total number of teachers in South Carolina that are a product of the program. He recommended adding the information to the article that was recommended by Commissioner Smith. Ms. Thomas-Myers replied that the total is included in the annual report.

Commissioner Horne **motioned** to accept SC-PRRMT's FY2019-20 **Quarter I and Quarter II Report**. Commissioner Mobley **seconded**, and the motion **carried**.

### **3. S.C. Scholarships Appeals Cycle 2020-21 (For Information)**

Dr. Woodfaulk provided a brief overview of the 2020-21 scholarships appeals. She explained that, by SC General Assembly authority, the Commission is authorized to hear scholarship appeals due to extenuating circumstances.

Ms. Kathryn Harris explained that appeals are offered to students receiving the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, and HOPE Scholarships who fail to meet the academic or credit hour requirements to retain their scholarships for the next school year. She provided the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship regulatory authority is Section 62-355; the LIFE Scholarship is Section 62-1200.55; and the HOPE Scholarship is Section 62-900.120.

Ms. Harris provided a timeline of the appeal process. She stated the appeal timeline is published on the CHE's website. She explained institutions' financial aid office calculates the student's continued scholarship eligibility at the end of the Spring term. Ms. Harris reported the appeal cycle was opened early in April 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated the appeal cycle normally opens in May. Ms. Harris reported students who are notified by their institution's financial office that they are failing to meet the Palmetto Fellows requirement or any student that is failing to meet the HOPE or LIFE Scholarship requirements, was allowed to attend Summer 2020 term to meet the credit hour requirements or raise their GPA. She explained that if students have extenuating circumstances and fail to meet credit hour and/or academic requirements, they may submit an appeal to CHE. Staff closes the appeal cycle in early September annually. The appeal cycle closed on September 4, 2020. When appeals are received, CHE staff collectively review the appeals. Ms. Harris stated students are notified once the appeal decisions are made. The students then have five business days to request a reconsideration by the appeal committee in December. Ms. Harris said the appeal committee met in December and is comprised of a representative from the staff of the SC Commission on Higher Education, a Commissioner from the SC Commissioner on Higher Education Board, three institutional representatives, (one public senior college, one private college one two-year technical college), a member from a public or private high school sector, one business representative and one SC General Assembly or a legislative staff member. Ms. Harris reported that the appeal committee reviewed 34 appeals on December 4, 2020, and the students were notified via certified mail.

Ms. Harris stated the appeal guidelines remain on the website after the appeal cycle has closed. When students contact CHE staff because of extenuating circumstances, they are referred to the appeal guidelines on the website. The appeal guidelines document is very thorough and provides what documentation is required for extenuating circumstances. The appeal guidelines help the students to know what documentation is needed in order to submit an appeal.

Ms. Harris explained that there are three extenuating circumstances category. She said due to COVID-19 a fourth extenuating circumstance was added in 2020. Campus disruptions related to COVID-19. Ms. Harris shared the extenuating circumstances categories and their definitions which include: 1) Serious health condition of the student; 2) Death or serious health condition of an immediate family member; 3) Traumatic or extraordinary event; and 4) Disruptions on campus due to COVID-19.

Ms. Harris presented the renewal requirements for each Scholarship. She explained that the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship requires that students earn accumulative 3.0 institutional GPA by the end of the academic year and earn at least 30 credit hours.

Ms. Harris reported the LIFE Scholarship students are required to maintain a cumulative 3.0 LIFE GPA by the end of the academic year and need to earn an average of 30 credit hours by the end of the academic year. She stated the credit hours can include AP, IB, Dual Enrollment, CLEP, exempted credit hours and any credit hours the student has earned since enrolling in college. Ms. Harris provided the 2020 scholarship award amounts.

Ms. Harris explained that the HOPE Scholarship is designed that students receive up to \$2,500 plus a \$300 book allowance towards the student cost of attendance for the first year of attendance at an eligible institution. She said students can only have the SC HOPE Scholarship for their first year. Ms. Harris explained that at the end of the first year, if the student has met the LIFE Scholarship continuing eligibility requirements, the student then qualifies for the LIFE Scholarship.

Ms. Harris reported in 2019-20 a total of 224 appeals were received. She stated 189 appeals were reviewed, 29 applications were incomplete, and 6 appeals were referred to the institutions for resolution. She stated once an appeal is reviewed by CHE staff, the student is notified by email. Ms. Harris explained that if the appeal is denied, the student has five business days to notify CHE staff in writing for a request to reappeal in December to the appeal committee. She reported that the appeal committee heard 34 appeals on December 4, 2020.

Ms. Harris reported that 48 Palmetto Fellows appeals were heard. She stated that the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship program had 29 appeal approvals, 16 denials, 3 referred to the institutions and 9 reappeals were reconsidered by the committee in December. Commissioner Horne asked about the reappeals. Ms. Harris replied that the committee confirmed the decision by the CHE staff and there were no adjustments to the CHE staff decisions.

Ms. Harris reported that the LIFE/HOPE Scholarships had 141 appeals. She stated that the LIFE/HOPE Scholarships had 44 approvals, 92 denials, 2 students currently not enrolled, 3 referred to the institutions and 26 reappeals were reconsidered by the committee in December.

Commissioner Batson asked if all the appeals were considered in one day, and if the committee had an opportunity to study the appeals before the committee met. Ms. Harris replied the all the appeals were considered in one day. She further explained that prior to the committee meeting, documentation is sent to the committee members by FedEx to study each of the appeal cases. Ms. Harris stated that staff provides a review of the individual appeals on the day of the committee meeting. Dr. Woodfaulk explained that a layover day is scheduled if a second day is needed. She explained that the appeal guidelines also state the allowable and unallowable circumstances for appeal. Dr. Woodfaulk stated appeals that do not qualify are referred to the institutions. Commissioner Mobley stated he would like to see what the comparison of the number of appeals in a non-COVID year is to see if there is a difference. Dr. Woodfaulk stated staff would look at Dr. Mobley's request. She said that this year, some of the institutions provided non punitive grade options, such as a satisfactory or unsatisfactory grading options. She stated that this grading option helped many students.

#### **4. Tucker Hipps Transparency Act (*For information*)**

Dr. Woodfaulk provided a brief update on the Tucker Hipps Transparency Act. The Tucker Hipps Transparency Act in Act 265 of 2016 requires S.C. four-year public institutions, with exception of the Medical University of SC (MUSC) and The Citadel, to maintain reports of actual findings of certain misconduct by the fraternity and sorority organizations. She stated the permanent continuation of the Act was passed by the SC General Assembly on April 26, 2019. The reports are listed on each institution's website. The institutions are required to update their reports at least forty-five calendar days before the start of the fall and spring academic semesters. Dr. Woodfaulk explained that the institutions must provide the required reports under this section on their websites in a prominent location for a period of four years. Institutions must notify CHE within fourteen days calendars that the reports have been updated. The report of findings and violations for each institution were provided to the Committee.

Commissioner Batson asked if the institutions were required to provide this information annually to CHE. Dr. Woodfaulk replied that according to the Act, the institutions must list the findings on their website and provide notification to CHE. Commissioner Batson asked has the Act made a difference to the colleges and universities. Dr. Woodfaulk stated colleges and universities have been very forthright with providing the information requested.

## 5. Other Business

Dr. Woodfaulk reported that Ms. Bunnie Ward provided Public Law 116-315 at the Commission meeting on February 4th. She stated the federal law was signed through Executive Order on January 5, 2021. Dr. Woodfaulk explained that beginning August 1, 2021, the federal law will allow for veterans and their covered individuals who currently have a three-year restriction on eligibility for instate tuition to have the restriction removed. Dr. Woodfaulk stated CHE complies with the current federal law in the state. At present, anyone who needs to transfer their eligibility to a dependent, spouse or children, as long as the transfer is completed in a three-year period, the eligible student can receive instate tuition. She said a survey would be sent to the institutions to determine possible fiscal impact. Dr. Woodfaulk stated additional students would be covered under this Act if approved by the SC General Assembly.

Commissioner Horne asked whether the SC General Assembly is supporting this bill. Dr. Woodfaulk stated she believes there is support for the bill and that legislation has been introduced to support the change. Commissioner Horne suggested making Commissioner Munns aware of the information provided on PL 116-315.

Commissioner Smith asked if there is a way to let it be known that S.C. would much rather have PELL Grant open for access and equity instead of going backwards and doing something retroactive, like student loan forgiveness. He stated the state needs to make its voice heard for what really would be helpful for our students. Commissioner Batson responded that we could possibly address the Pell Grant for access and affordability. The cancellation of student debt will have varied opinions, and he would not want to take a position for CHE on the cancellation of student debt. Commissioner Batson stated a conversation on the Pell Grant and student debt could begin with Chairman Wes Hayes and Dr. Monhollon before taking it to the Commission. He said he will speak with Chairman Hayes and provide a follow-up. Dr. Woodfaulk stated that the Pell Grant was increased to a maximum \$6,395. She noted that S.C. considered a "high tuition" state and the value of a Pell Grant is somewhat diminished due to the tuition and fee costs.

## Proposed Meeting Dates

Commissioner Batson requested a motion to approve the proposed meeting dates. Commissioner Smith **motioned** approval of the proposed meeting dates and Commissioner Horne **seconded**, and the motion **carried**.

## 6. Adjournment

There being no additional items before the Committee, Commissioner Batson requested a motion for adjournment. A **motion** (Horne) was made, **seconded** (Mobley), and **carried** to adjourn the meeting at 3:42 p.m.