



Minutes of the Council of Presidents
November 5, 2025
Synergy Business Park
Santee Conference Room, Suite 105
100 Executive Center Drive
Columbia, SC 29210

Council of Presidents Members Present:

Dr. Galen DeHay, Tri-County Technical College, *Chair, presiding*
Dr. Tim Hardee, SC Technical College System
Dr. Randy Lowell, University of South Carolina Union
Dr. Al Panu, University of South Carolina Beaufort
Dr. James Winebrake, Coastal Carolina University
Dr. Vicky Wood, Trident Technical College
Dr. Craig Wilson, University of South Carolina Palmetto
Dr. Kyle Wagner, Northeastern Technical College
Dr. Walt Tobin, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College
Dr. Gregory Little, Midlands Technical College
Dr. April Cone, University of South Carolina Salkehatchie
Dr. Hope Rivers, Piedmont Technical College
Dr. Eric Reisenauer, University of South Carolina Sumter
Dr. Marilyn Fore, Horry-Georgetown Technical College
Dr. Patricia Lee, Williamsburg Technical College
Dr. Larry Miller, Greenville Technical College
Dr. Richard Cosentino, Lander University
Ms. Beth Bell for Dr. James Clements, Clemson University
Dr. Edward Serna, Winthrop University (*virtual*)
Dr. Forrest Mahan, Aiken Technical College (*virtual*)
Dr. Andrew Hsu, College of Charleston (*virtual*)
Dr. Eric Brown, Denmark Technical College (*virtual*)
Dr. Jennifer Willbanks, Central Carolina Technical College (*virtual*)
Dr. Bennie Harris, University of South Carolina Upstate (*virtual*)
Dr. Suzanne Thomas, Medical University of South Carolina (*virtual*)
Dr. Richard Gough, Technical College of the Low Country (*virtual*)
Dr. Daniel Heimmermann, University of South Carolina Aiken (*virtual*)



CHE Staff:

Dr. Jeffrey Perez, President & Executive Director
Ms. Laura Belcher
Ms. Kathryn Harris
Dr. Karen Woodfaulk

Other Guests Present

Dr. Stephen Pruitt, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
Mr. Graham Tew, Francis Marion University
Mrs. Hope Stacy, Tri-County Technical College

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. Chairman DeHay welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves.

The meeting agenda was posted on the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) website with proper notice of the meeting. The meeting was held in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). There were no public guests or media present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Dr. DeHay introduced the draft minutes of the June 3, 2025, Council of Presidents (COP) meeting, and asked if there were any additions or corrections. Dr. Tobin made a motion to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Dr. Rivers. The minutes were unanimously approved.

III. College Transition Program

Dr. Perez informed Council that a recommendation given by the Government Efficiency and Oversight Committee ensures the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) confers with the Council of Presidents on the College Transition Program (CTP). He introduced Dr. Woodfaulk and Ms. Harris to provide an overview of the CTP.

Ms. Harris noted the CTPs are inclusive, non-degree postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities, which provide academic, career, and independent living instruction. She discussed the current program status, funding, outcomes, and plans for expansion. CHE convened a CTP taskforce in February 2025, with a goal of expanding opportunities and access in South Carolina. Institutions are being surveyed on their interest in launching new programs to meet student demand and workforce needs.

IV. SACSCOC Update

Dr. Stephen Pruitt, President of SACSCOC, discussed his vision for accreditation, emphasizing his student-first philosophy, balancing accountability and collaborative partnerships with colleges and universities. He elaborated that SACSCOC is reviewing its principles of accreditation, with a goal of streamlining the process. Dr. Pruitt informed Council about new opportunities of recognition in the areas of affordability, student support and success, and return on investment.

They have launched the Principles of Accreditation review period, looking to streamline the process to include faster approvals for substantive change requests utilizing Salesforce. Dr. Pruitt noted retaining all current advisory committees, while adding a Workforce and Economic Development advisory committee and the first ever at SACSCOC, Legislative Advisory Council with legislators from each of the states to complete a bias review of the principles.

Dr. Pruitt advised on Quality Enhancement Plans (QEP) noting that unless beneficial, institutions are encouraged to delay beginning a new QEP as new standards are expected to be approved in December 2026. He stated retraining for peer reviewers is planned, to ensure consistency in the application of new standards.

Dr. Pruitt addressed questions from Council about new accreditors such as Commission for Public Higher Education (CPHE), The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC). He stated SACSCOC must adapt and improve processes to retain members while continuing to maintain high standards.

V. Campus Contributions

Dr. Perez discussed the need to simplify Council of Presidents' meeting and event funding, proposing a \$500 annual contribution from each institution. He stated the process will be reviewed after the first year to determine if this should be a recurring arrangement. Dr. Perez will follow up soon, providing details on the payment process.

VI. Survey Results

Dr. DeHay reviewed summary results of the survey completed by Council, with a goal of identifying focus areas of work for the group this year. The top three issues identified include: funding and financial aid, regulatory relief and efficiencies, and student access and readiness. The top challenges reported were infrastructure and capital need, workforce and program alignment, and regulatory burdens.

Council engaged in discussion on the challenges faced with capital project processes. The Capital Project workgroup was formed to analyze capital project approval inefficiencies, gather data on project thresholds, and to develop recommendations for new thresholds. The workgroup will present recommendations to Council to develop a legislative strategy, supporting the case for raising thresholds. Dr. DeHay will convene the workgroup, with Dr. Cosentino, Dr. Harris, and Dr. Winebrake volunteering to serve.

VII. Telecommuting

Dr. DeHay asked Council for feedback on how the new telecommuting regulations were affecting their institutions. Council discussion focused on exemption requests, staff retention challenges and the lack of an appeal process for denied exemptions. Specifically, members noted inconsistencies in exemption approvals, loss of employees due to denied exemptions, and the barrier to recruitment and retention.

Council discussed the value of developing a unified message from higher education. Once all exemption requests have been received, institutions may be surveyed, collecting data on approvals and denials and the operational impact.

VIII. Other Business

Dr. Perez asked if there were any issues or concerns as we approach the upcoming legislative session. He encouraged Council members to reach out to him or Dr. DeHay if assistance is needed.

IX. Adjourn

The Council of Presidents meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.