



Meeting of the South Carolina Commission  
on Higher Education  
12:30 p.m., September 4, 2025  
1122 Lady Street, Suite 400, Columbia, SC 29201  
and Zoom Webinar

**Members**

Commissioner Wes Hayes, Chair  
Commissioner Oran Smith, Vice Chair  
Commissioner Paul Batson  
Commissioner Jenni Bryson  
Commissioner Gene Fant  
Commissioner Mark Masters

Commissioner Charles Schulze  
Commissioner Doug Snyder  
Commissioner Dino Teppara  
Commissioner Mick Zais

**Members Excused**

Commissioner Edgar Dyer

**Commission Staff Present**

Jeff Perez  
Argentini Anderson  
Laura Belcher  
Jessica Berry  
Fran Brune  
Stephanie Charbonneau  
Scheri Eichelberger  
Monica Goodwin  
Gerrick Hampton  
Kathryn Harris  
Matthew Hartenstine  
Brett Mills  
Mariana Manic

Alfie Mincy  
Rick Moul  
Angela Peters  
Kenita Pitts  
Melissa Price  
Christopher Robinson  
Kathy Rollins  
Atlantis Seckal  
Kara Smith  
Tracy Solet  
Chariti Spann  
Sondra Stephenson  
Tanya Weigold  
Leslie Williams  
Bryce Wilson  
Karen Woodfaulk  
Lishu Yin

**Guests**

Suzanne Austin, College of Charleston  
Beth Bell, Clemson University  
Phillip Bridgmon, University of South Carolina  
Aiken  
Betty Boatwright, South Carolina State  
University  
Teresa Burns, Coastal Carolina University  
Lewis Carter, SC House of Representatives  
Zachary Christian, Tuition Grants Commission  
James Colbert, Lander University  
Walter Collins, University of South Carolina  
Palmetto College  
Beth Costner, Winthrop University  
Mark Del Mastro, College of Charleston

Kira Demery, Higher Education Tuition Grants  
Commission  
Tim Drueke, Winthrop University  
Rob Essaf, Clemson University  
Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University  
Stuart Floyd, North Greenville University  
Daniel Heimmemermann, University of South  
Carolina Aiken  
Trena Houp, University of South Carolina  
Jeremy King, Clemson University  
Nathaniel Miner, Coastal Carolina University  
Al Panu, University of South Carolina Beaufort  
Erin Paysinger, Lander University  
Jay Ragley, Advocatus USA  
Karin Roof, The Citadel

Katie Smith, University of South Carolina Aiken  
Allison Steadman, Francis Marion University  
Pam Steinke, University of South Carolina  
Upstate  
Rosline Sumpter, Technical College System

Reinell Thomas-Myers  
Ross Waddell, Higher Education Tuition Grants  
Commission  
Lindsay Yearata, CERRA  
Tangar Young, South Carolina State University

All Attended either In-Person, by Phone, or via Video Conference

Chair Hayes convened the meeting at 12:33 p.m. and welcomed all in attendance.

**I. 1. Introductions and Roll Call to Establish Quorum**

Ms. Belcher introduced the Commissioners. She confirmed a quorum of the Commission and announced that the meeting was being held in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Chair Hayes introduced the draft minutes of the August 7, 2025, CHE Business meeting and asked for any additions or corrections. Commissioner Zais motioned to approve minutes as presented, and Commissioner Cuddy seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**3. Chair's Report**

Chair Hayes expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts in organizing the recent CHE Retreat. He also extended thoughts to Commissioner Dyer and announced the upcoming vice chair election for the board.

Chair Hayes opened the floor for nominations for vice chair. Commissioner Batson nominated Commissioner Smith, and Commissioner Zais seconded the nomination. Chair Hayes called for the vote and Commissioner Smith was reelected as vice chair.

**4. President and Executive Director's Report**

President Perez welcomed new Commissioners Bigham and Dukes.

He provided an update on tuition mitigation, noting that the Commission remains on track to submit the required report to the General Assembly. He also stated that a separate proviso directs CHE to conduct an audit of the Higher Education Excellence Enhancement Program (HEEEP) by November 1, for which auditors have been engaged to meet the deadline.

Regarding Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion, President Perez reported a 53 percent completion rate, ranking South Carolina 16th nationally.

President Perez presented preliminary enrollment data, noting that while total headcount in technical colleges has decreased between 2021 and 2025, total 49 full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment has increased. He reported that graduate headcount enrollment, however, has shown a downward trend.

Commissioner Zais inquired about funding opportunities for non-traditional students starting new careers. Commissioner Batson confirmed that such funding is available, and President Perez added that the SC Works program provides certification support.

Chair Hayes asked whether any private or public institutions are experiencing significant enrollment challenges. President Perez responded that there are none at this time. Commissioner Batson observed that tuition pricing continues to influence out-of-state students to attend in-state institutions. President Perez noted that the Coordinating Council for Workforce Development (CCWD) is studying this issue closely.

## **5. Committee Reports**

### **5.01 Report of the Executive Committee**

Chair Hayes reported that there were no new items for consideration.

### **5.02 Report of the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing**

**Edgar Dyer**

Chair Hayes announced that there were no items to report on the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing.

### **5.03 Report of the Committee on Student Services**

**Jenni Bryson**

Chair Hayes called on Commissioner Bryson to provide a report on the Committee on Student Services. Commissioner Bryson reported that there are four items for action and three informational items, which she summarized. Regarding item 5.03. B., SC PRRMT FY 2026-27 Budget Request, Dr. Woodfaulk informed the Commission of a \$442,000 carry-forward balance. Commissioner Bryson motioned to approve the budget request, and Chair Hayes called for the vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Bryson motioned to approve item 5.03.C., College Transition Program Scholarship Report. Chair Hayes called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding agenda item, 5.03.D., Emergency and Proposed Palmetto Fellows Regulation, Commissioner Bryson explained that the proposed change would make the ACT science portion optional. Dr. Woodfaulk clarified that the goal is to align state scholarship requirements with the ACT's optional science component. Ms. Harris added that students who choose to take the science portion and do not perform well may use a previous score, and that the optional section costs \$18.

Commissioner Fant encouraged the Commission to explore ways to incentivize students. Commissioner Dukes asked whether the proposed change complies with current law, and Dr. Woodfaulk confirmed that it does. Chair Hayes called for the vote, and the motion passed with Commissioner Masters opposing.

Commissioner Bryson summarized agenda item 5.03.F., Centers of Excellence Grant Program FY 2025-26 Budget Request and Request for Proposals and motioned for its approval. Chair Hayes called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Bryson called on Dr. Yin to report on agenda item 5.03.H., FY 26-27 Budget Request for Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA). Commissioner Bryson then motioned for its approval. Commissioner Fant abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest. Chair Hayes called for the vote, and the motion passed with one abstention.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. SC PRRMT Quarter 3 Report (For information, no action)</li><li>B. SC PRRMT FY 2026-27 Budget Request (For Action)</li><li>C. College Transition Program Scholarship Report (For Action)</li><li>D. Emergency and Proposed Palmetto Fellows Regulations (For Action)</li><li>E. Palmetto Fellows Year-Round Application Timeline (For information, no action)</li><li>F. Centers of Excellence Grant Program FY 2025-26 Budget Request and Request for Proposals (For Action)</li><li>G. SC III Report (For information, no action)</li><li>H. FY 26-27 Budget Request for Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) (For Action)</li></ul> |
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Chair Hayes called on Commissioner Batson to provide a report on the Committee on Finance and Administration. Commissioner Batson summarized one action item and three informational items. Commissioner Batson explained and motioned that a three-fourths vote of Commissioners was required to amend the CHE Bylaws to consider the 2026-27 CHE Executive Budget Request. Chair Hayes called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Batson then called on President Perez and Mr. Wilson to present the 2026-27 CHE Executive Budget Request. President Perez and Mr. Wilson outlined several recurring requests including: sustaining personnel funding; increasing information technology fees; PASCAL core infrastructure and content funding; education scholarship enhancement; increased federal spending authority for the State Approving Agency; and increased total fund authority for the State Electronic Library with a total requested increase of \$435,000.

Commissioner Cuddy inquired about current staffing levels. President Perez reported 49 FTE positions, a decrease from the previous year. Commissioner Dukes asked whether all positions are state funded. Commissioner Batson clarified that some licensing-related FTEs are funded through other sources.

President Perez also noted proposed amendments to three provisos: deletion of 3.5. SCIII funding to HEEEP and 11.12 Other Funded FTE Revenue, and an amendment to 3.5 LEA: FY 2025-26 Lottery Funding: College Transition Program. He reported that the agency identified three percent in cost savings, including planned reductions through technology upgrades.

Commissioner Batson reported that the Committee approved the budget with one Commissioner in opposition. He then motioned for the full Commission approval. Chair Hayes called for the vote and the budget passed, with Commissioner Masters in opposition.

Commissioner Batson also summarized information items and invited Ms. Goodwin to provide an update on CHEMIS. Commissioner Batson congratulated her team on their work. Commissioner Batson announced that Commissioner Smith will serve as vice chair of the committee, and Commissioner Batson will remain serving as chair.

**FOR ACTION**

**A. 2026-27 CHE Executive Budget Request (For Action)**

**FOR INFORMATION**

- B. Compliance Audit Update (For information, no action)
- C. Battelle Year End Update (For information, no action)
- D. CHEMIS 2.0 Update (For information, no action)

**5.05 Report of the Committee on Strategic Planning and Accountability (CSPA) Doug Snyder**

Chair Hayes called on Commissioner Snyder to provide a report on the Committee on Strategic Planning and Accountability. Commissioner Snyder reported that the committee will meet prior to the next business meeting to begin work on upcoming initiatives. He summarized the informational items, including updates on external studies and accountability reports.

**FOR INFORMATION**

- A. Accountability (For information, no action)
- B. External Studies Update (For information, no action)

**6. Other Business**

Commissioner Zais asked for an update on consolidating CHE office staff, to which Perez said that it remains a priority. Commissioner Zais made a recommendation for considering usage of the SC Department of Education's office space. Chair Hayes requested an update on this in the future.

**7. Executive Session**

There was not an executive session.

**8. End of Business Meeting**

The business meeting adjourned at 2:19 p.m.