



**Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing (CAAL)
Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2025**

Members Present

Commissioner Eddie Dyer, Chair
Commissioner Terrye Seckinger, Vice Chair
Commissioner Mick Zais

Commissioner Jenni Bryson
Commissioner Oran Smith
Commissioner Doug Snyder

Commission Staff Present

Jessica Berry
Melissa Price
Darnell Holland
Endé Clark
Mark Swart

Shardai Figgures
Leslie Williams
Christopher Glenn
Tracy Solet

Guests

Alissa Warters, Francis Marion University
Allison Steadman, Francis Marion University
Beth Bell, Clemson University
Brian Mallory, University of South Carolina
Beaufort
Briana Peele, Clemson University
David Staten, South Carolina State University
Eric Skipper, University of South Carolina
Beaufort
Erin Paysinger, Lander University
Jagruiti Sahoo, South Carolina State University
James Colbert, Jr., Lander University
Jason DeBacker, University of South Carolina
Columbia
Jeremy King, Clemson University
Katie Smith, University of South Carolina Aiken
Karin Roof, The Citadel
Mark Del Mastro, College of Charleston

Michelle Cook, Clemson University
Nikunja Swain, South Carolina State University
Orgul Ozturk, University of South Carolina
Columbia
Pam Steinke, USC Upstate
Phil Bridgmon, USC Aiken
Rob Essaf, Clemson University
Robin Dawson, University of South Carolina
Columbia
Stanley Ihekweazu, South Carolina State University
Suzanne Thomas, Medical University of South
Carolina
Teresa Burns, Coastal Carolina University
Tim Druke, Winthrop University
Trena Houpp, University of South Carolina Columbia
Walter Collins, University of South Carolina
Lancaster

All attended either in-person or via Zoom

1. Welcome, Introduction, Quorum

Chair Dyer convened the meeting at 10:01 a.m. and welcomed all in attendance.

2. Introductions, Quorum, FOIA

Ms. Solet introduced the Commission members and the in-person guests, confirmed a quorum, and announced the meeting was being held in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

3. Approval of Agenda

Chair Dyer called for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Zais motioned, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryson.** Chair Dyer called for a vote **and the motion passed unopposed.**

4. Approval of Minutes

Chair Dyer called for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 23, 2025 meeting. **Commissioner Smith motioned, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryson.** Chair Dyer called for a vote **and the motion passed unopposed.**

5. New Program Proposals

a. Clemson University, B.S. in Early Childhood and Special Education

A representative from the institution summarized item 5.a., and the floor was opened for questions. Commissioner Zais expressed appreciation for the program. Chair Dyer asked for comment from Dr. Berry, who stated the program is on the list of priority occupations from the CCWD and thanked the institution for the thorough proposal. **Commissioner Smith** stated the proposal is a model proposal and **motioned approval of the program, which Commissioner Bryson seconded.** Chair Dyer called for a vote **and the motion passed unopposed.**

b. Clemson University, B.A. in Modern Languages Education

A representative from the institution summarized item 5.b., and the floor was opened for questions. Commissioner Snyder inquired as to the reason for the shortage of foreign language teachers more broadly, especially as it relates to the languages listed as priority for the state. The institution explained data is not broken out by specific language supply and demand and noted many school districts are utilizing online programs when no teacher is available. Commissioner Zais asked what the South Carolina Department of Education certification requirements are for a native speaker to teach in South Carolina, to which the institution responded by offering likely pathways available to a native speaker. Further conversation was had regarding possible legislation on this topic. **Commissioner Bryson moved approval of the program, which Commissioner Smith seconded.** Chair Dyer called for a vote **and the motion passed unopposed.**

c. Clemson University, M.A.T. in Teacher Residency in Modern Languages Education

A representative from the institution summarized item 5.c., and the floor was opened for questions. Hearing none, Chair Dyer asked for comment from Dr. Berry, who had none. **Commissioner Bryson motioned approval of the program, which was seconded by Commissioner Zais.** Chair Dyer called for a vote **and the motion passed unopposed.**

d. Clemson University, M.A.T. in Modern Languages Education

A representative from the institution summarized item 5.d., and the floor was opened for questions. Hearing none, **Commissioner Smith motioned approval of the program, which was seconded by Commissioner Zais.** Chair Dyer asked for comment from Dr. Berry, who had none. Chair Dyer called for a vote **and the motion passed unopposed.**

e. South Carolina State University, B.S. in Mechanical Engineering

A representative from the institution summarized item 5.e., and the floor was opened for questions. Chair Dyer asked if there is a national accrediting body for mechanical engineering, which the institution confirmed, and stated it would seek accreditation for this program as it has with the other engineering and engineering technology programs. Commissioner Zais inquired as to any partnerships with large manufacturers in the state, which the institution confirmed its long-standing relationship with Boeing and mentioned the grant of one million dollars received from Dominion Energy. Further discussion was had regarding the institution's work with the Battelle Savannah River Alliance, as well as

it's Center for Energy and Environmental Solutions. Commissioner Seckinger asked for the graduation rates for its current engineering programs, which the institution confirmed it would provide. Commissioner Seckinger stated the proposal had more questions from ACAP and CHE staff than the committee has seen previously, and expressed concern the program had been hastily put together. The institution explained it had been diligent in responding fully to all CHE staff questions, to the satisfaction of staff, and noted it's presentation to ACAP had gone well. Commissioner Seckinger indicated there was not enough information in the proposal to make a sound judgment. Chair Dyer asked Dr. Berry for comment and if staff still had concerns with the proposal. Dr. Berry explained the review process, which is summarized in the Executive Summary provided with all new program proposals, and noted proposals would not appear before ACAP or CAAL if CHE staff believed them to be incomplete. Chair Dyer asked if staff were satisfied, which Dr. Berry affirmed. Chair Dyer asked about the anticipated participation rate. The institution stated the numbers in the proposal are very conservative estimates, with much higher participation anticipated, which will help with recruiting and retention. Further discussion was had regarding concern over the number of iterations of the proposal. For reference, Dr. Berry noted a proposal from the January 23, 2025 CAAL meeting which had a similar number of staff questions, and stated staff provide detailed information on the review of all proposals received to assist CAAL with its assessment. Commissioner Seckinger requested the graduation rates of all engineering programs at the institution from the last 4 to 5 years, which the institution agreed to provide. Chair Dyer asked for any further comment. Dr. Berry noted the proposal is for a priority occupation of the Unified State Plan, capturing manufacturing, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and responded no other new mechanical engineering programs are in que for review in response to Chair Dyer's inquiry. Commissioner Smith asked Dr. Berry to confirm staff recommendations had been made and resubmitted, which was confirmed, as well as Chair Dyer's request for confirmation ACAP concerns had been satisfied. **Commissioner Bryson moved approval of the proposal, which was seconded by Commissioner Zais.** Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed. Commissioner Seckinger abstained.**

Commissioner Zais mentioned the curriculum appears to teach how to operate and maintain equipment in the manufacturing industry as opposed to the design and building of equipment. **Chair Dyer confirmed the motion carried and the program approved.**

f. South Carolina State University, B.S. in Computer Engineering

A representative from the institution summarized item 5.f., and the floor was opened for questions. Commissioner Zais asked if there are industry certifications and if the program align with such. The institution confirmed there are several certifications, the program provides hands-on experience and allows students to sit for certification exams in their junior year. Further, the program is regulated by the National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C) and is designated as a Cybersecurity Leadership Center by IBM., both of which allow access to state-of-the art equipment. The curriculum is designed to utilize these assets to enhance certification opportunities. Chair Dyer asked if national accreditation would be sought, which the institution confirmed, as is its long-standing policy of the institution to seek accreditations for all applicable programs, including all engineering and engineering technology programs. Certification examinations are not part of the curriculum, but students are encouraged to sit for them. Commissioner Seckinger requested the institution provide graduation rates for engineering programs over the last three years, which the institution agreed to provide. Chair Dyer asked if the curriculum included computer science as well as computer engineering, which was confirmed. Chair Dyer asked for any comments from staff, which Dr. Berry noted the proposal is for a priority occupation, falling under science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). **Commissioner Bryson moved approval of the proposal, which was**

seconded by Commissioner Snyder. Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

Commissioner Seckinger expressed appreciation for the institution outlining where the REACH Act information is located in proposals and requested course numbers be provided for those which satisfy the REACH Act requirement. Chair Dyer confirmed the compliment to the institution for the clarity of its REACH Act courses. Dr. Berry noted the institutions identify the courses as “REACH Act Compliant” in the proposals and stated they would be moved to the first page of the proposals going forward.

g. South Carolina State University, M.S. in Cybersecurity

A representative from the institution summarized item 5.g., and the floor was opened for questions. Commissioner Zais commented on the importance of industry certifications and the alignment of academic coursework with the employment outcomes we hope to achieve by ensuring the curriculum facilitates certifications and licensures. Chair Dyer asked if there are other such programs in the state, which Dr. Berry confirmed. Commissioner Seckinger mentioned the number of questions staff had regarding the proposal and stated there is no way of knowing if the concerns CAAL [sic] had have been satisfied, which means there is not enough information to make a prudent judgment. Dr. Berry stated staff questions were satisfied in the final proposal as submitted and explained the process of review as: each time questions are asked, institutions incorporate the responses in the next iteration provided to staff. Further, staff do not present to ACAP or CAAL incomplete proposals or ones in which all question have been not been fully answered. Commissioner Bryson asked if there are other similar master’s programs in that state which are also one hundred percent online. Dr. Berry confirmed several similar programs are offered solely online in the state. **Commissioner Bryson moved approval of the proposal, which was seconded by Commissioner Snyder.** Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

h. University of South Carolina Columbia, D.N.P. in Nursing Education

A representative from the institution summarized item 5.h., and the floor was opened for questions. Chair Dyer expressed appreciation for this much needed program, which Dr. Berry confirmed aligns with the priority occupations of Education and Training, and Health Science. Commissioner Zais mentioned the demand allows for elevated compensation for nursing faculty. Commissioner Seckinger asked if Clemson University would be the only other eligible institution to offer a similar program, which the institution explained any four-year institution with professional doctoral status could offer a D.N.P. program. Commissioner Zais asked for an explanation of the pathway for students in Bachelor’s nursing programs, which was explained. Further discussion was had regarding the grade point average (GPA) required for progression and the limited number of seats due to a shortage of faculty and clinical sites. Commissioner Seckinger asked about remediation for students who do not meet the progression GPA requirement, which the institution explained and reemphasized the seat limitations are due to shortages of faculty and clinical sites. Commissioner Seckinger asked if the clinical sites could be financially incentivized at the state level to take on more students, which the institution explained the number of students allowed in clinical settings at a time is limited by state regulation. Further discussion was had regarding the compensation differential from a clinical to a teaching setting. Chair Dyer asked Commissioner Seckinger to work with Dr. Berry to determine what, if anything, could be done to alleviate some of the issues regarding the nursing shortage in the state. Commissioner Smith mentioned the need to have Registered Nurses and not just higher-level nurses and asked for ways in which a nurse with a doctorate level degree should identify him/herself from being referred to as “doctor” in a clinical setting. The institution stated it trains nursing students to introduce themselves and to clarify what their role is in relation to the patient. **Commissioner Smith**

motioned approval of the program, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryson. Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

6. New Center Proposal

- a. University of South Carolina Columbia, South Carolina Economic Policy Center (SC EPIC)
A representative from the institution summarized item 6.a., and the floor was opened for questions. Commissioner Smith expressed appreciation for the center and its ability to professionally evaluate a grant for a fee paid to EPIC. Commissioner Seckinger asked if the General Assembly could hire and pay EPIC for analyses of certain sectors in South Carolina which are viewed as having a problem, which the institution confirmed it would. Commissioner Snyder asked if this type of center would be exclusive to the institution or if other institutions may have these in the future. The institution believes it is in a unique position in the capital city and is willing to collaborate across other campuses, but it will be the only such center in the state. Further discussion was had regarding budget forecasting by General Assembly. Commissioner Snyder stated the center will be more focused on policies. The institution believes the center will be able to assist and collaborate with the legislature. **Commissioner Smith motioned approval of the program, which was seconded by Commissioner Seckinger.** Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

7. Other Business / Discussion

- a. 2025-2026 Academic Program Review Cycle
Dr. Berry presented the proposed program review cycle, which includes ACAP and CAAL meeting date for the 2025-2026 academic year and the floor was opened for questions. No discussion was had.
- b. Notification Summary Report
Dr. Berry presented the report for December 2024 and the floor was opened for questions. No discussion was had.
- c. Prohibition on Use of State Funds for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs
Commissioner Seckinger stated she spoke with the Governor's office and the legislature is moving quickly on the prohibition of use of state funds for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and recommended the institutions immediately begin scrubbing programs which contain DEI. Further stating, once the bill passes, if DEI is still included in higher education, the Attorney General will have grounds to take a strong look at the institutions, which may come out in the press and will be devastating to the public if parents know this is going on in our institutions. Further, DEI is also being turned back at breakneck speed nationally. Commissioner Seckinger stated equity and equality are not the same. Equity means everybody is the same and everything gets dumbed down to the level of the lowest applicant accepted, whereas equality means everyone is treated the same and given the same opportunity to excel. Also, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is the foundation of Marxism, which lawyers in the General Assembly, the President, and his cabinet understand. Commissioner Seckinger advised they will be looking at CHE and all the institutions as a first step and stressed DEI programs need to be scrubbed. Chair Dyer mentioned a letter from House members had already gone out to institutions. Commissioner Seckinger stated her intent of giving official notice to the institutions to not only dismiss the verbiage but also the concept.
- d. Academic Insight Forum
Dr. Berry expressed appreciation to Chair Dyer for his warm welcome and opening remarks at the forum last week, and briefly explained the purpose and some results of the forum, including academic program forecasting. Dr. Berry thanked the attendees and expressed appreciation for their questions and feedback. Further, Dr. Berry thanked the CHE

Academic Affairs staff for their work and contributions to the event, to which Chair Dyer echoed his appreciation of staff and particularly of Dr. Berry for her contributions to Academic Affairs as Interim Director.

- e. Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing
Chair Dyer noted the search for a permanent Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing is under way and he is part of the committee. Chair Dyer thanked Dr. Berry, her staff, and the IT staff for their continued contributions.

8. Adjournment

With no further business before the Committee, **Commissioner Bryson motioned adjournment, which was seconded by Commissioner Zais.** Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed. The meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m.** with a note of the next meeting being **April 17, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.** due to ACAP meeting in the morning at 10:00 a.m.