



Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing (CAAL)
Special Called Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2026

Committee Members Present

Edgar Dyer, Chair
Brian Cuddy, Vice Chair
Oran Smith
Doug Snyder

Jenni Bryson
Daniel Dukes
Mitchell Zais

Commissioner Present

Mark Masters

Commission Staff Present

Jeffrey Perez
Angela Peters
Lishu Yin
Melissa Price
Darnell Holland
Kenita Pitts
Endé Clark
Karen Woodfaulk
Mariana Manic

Mark Swart
Shardai Figgures
Shakara Smith
Timothy Rees
James Thompson
Christopher Robinson
Christopher Glenn
Tracy Solet

Guests

Allison Steadman, Francis Marion University
Briana Peele, Clemson University
Erin Paysinger, Lander University
James Colbert, Lander University
Jeremy King, Clemson University
Mark Del Mastro, College of Charleston
Pam Steinke, University of South Carolina Upstate
Rob Essaf, Clemson University

Sebastain van Delden, Winthrop University
Suzanne Thomas, Medical University of South Carolina
Teresa Burns, Coastal Carolina University
Trena Houpp, University of South Carolina Columbia

All attended either in-person or via Zoom

1. Welcome, Introduction, Quorum

Chair Dyer convened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. and welcomed all in attendance.

2. Introductions, Quorum, FOIA

Ms. Solet introduced the committee members and 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 Smith motioned approval, which was seconded by Commissioner Zais.** 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 November 13, 2025 meeting. **Commissioner Dukes motioned approval, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryson.** Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

5. **Approval of Committee Charter**

Chair Dyer noted receipt of comments and recommendations regarding the committee charter and proposed having Dr. Peters prepare a revised version for committee review before April and to have it added to the agenda for the April meeting. With no opposition or comments from the committee, Dr. Peters stated she would do so.

6. **Approval of remaining 2026 CAAL meeting dates**

Chair Dyer asked if the proposed dates suited the committee members or if there were any conflicts. Hearing none, Chair Dyer called for a motion to approve the meeting dates.

Commissioner Zais motioned approval, which was seconded by Commissioners Smith and Dukes. Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

7. **Other Business / Discussion**

a. **Process for academic program productivity review (2016-2020)**

Chair Dyer called on Dr. Peters to explain the process for program productivity review as well as staff recommendations regarding the same. Dr. Peters explained Dr. Yin has been working to get caught up on the program productivity reviews covering the 2018-2022 and the 2020-2024 review cycles and stated today's meeting would provide a progress report of the recommendations formally approved by the Commission in December 2025. Dr. Peters emphasized CHE is fully aligned with its current policy framework and in keeping with policy requirements, all programs currently under review or which have been identified as non-compliant in the 2016-2020 report have been directed to submit action plans by February 5, 2026. Additionally, programs recommended for termination must submit action plans or phase-out/teach out plans by February 5th.

Dr. Yin presented follow-up findings of the 2016-2020 report, which identified 190 programs as non-compliant, and included the recommendations to: terminate 54 of the non-compliant programs, request action plans for the 135 programs under review, and to exempt one program. Dr. Yin stated if institutions with programs under review do not provide action plans by February 5, the Commission will not accept new program or program modification proposals from those institutions until the action plans are received. Further, such applies for a maximum of three biannual program productivity review cycles, which is six years. Programs will be recommended for termination if they fail to meet program productivity standards at the end of the six years. Commissioner Zais stated six years seems excessive, the U.S. Department of Education is setting in place program productivity requirements, and suggested CHE align with the federal standards.

When asked if the six years also applied to graduate programs, Dr. Yin stated the policy does not distinguish between undergraduate and graduate programs. Additional questions arose regarding the timing of data collection and the use of trending data. Dr. Yin explained no action plans were requested by the Commission in the first review cycle, and the second cycle was during the pandemic, so all programs were recommended for exemption.

Commissioner Zais stated the question is: Are we holding the institutions accountable? And said he did not believe so. Dr. Yin agreed. Commissioner Masters stated responsibility is not wholly on the institutions but also on CHE. Programs are developed by the institutions and approved by CHE, but some key elements are missing in the program approval process to ensure success. Commissioner Smith noted a new policy is being

developed, which Dr. Peters stated will be brought forth in April or May and will include a 2-step preplanning phase with review by staff and ACAP to ensure programs are meeting state workforce needs and are non-duplicative.

Commissioner Zais said the federal plan will be looking at graduates' income, not the number or percentage of graduates. Commissioner Smith explained concerns voiced recently by the House Ways and Means Higher Education subcommittee which were regarding program outcomes and if institutions should be allowed to offer programs with no job prospects. Commissioner Smith indicated the metrics are relevant but are beyond CHE's purview and stressed the subcommittee's request for the most current data as quickly as possible. Commissioner Zais agreed since the data currently being discussed is a decade old. Dr. Perez stated the priority is to provide the most current data as quickly as possible and explained this meeting is to provide a status update on the 2016-2020 report approved by the Commission and to provide context since CHE has not followed its policy entirely. Dr. Perez assured the Commission work is being done to get caught up with the remaining two reports along with the review of the actions plans, many of which may indicate some programs have been terminated. Also, CHE is moving forward with a more coherent policy but currently the goal is clarifying and affirming the numbers from the 2016-2020 report via action plans. Dr. Perez stated CHE is being used as a tool for accountability, which Commissioner Smith confirmed.

Discussion was had regarding how to provide the requested data to the legislature while adhering to the process and without assigning institutions what may be construed as busy work due to the age of the data. Chair Dyer stated he has asked Dr. Peters to do a cost analysis of non-compliant programs based on one she did in Georgia, showing costs versus revenues and providing the net cost to students and taxpayers for supporting these programs. Commissioner Masters stated even if CHE has not requested it, the institutions should have the data readily available, which is not busy work but is extremely valuable. Additionally, any action plans submitted must be from 2012 to 2024 and stated if programs have remained non-complaint since 2012, CHE has done the students and the taxpayers a disservice with degrees earned which have no return on investment. Commissioner Zais agreed and asked Drs. Perez and Peters to revise the request for the institutions to provide action plans through 2024.

Commissioner Zais asked if projected enrollment and graduation rates are included in the program proposals the Commission approves, which Dr. Peters confirmed. Commissioner Zais stated CHE should be reviewing performance and holding institutions to their projections. Dr. Peters explained the in-depth review recommendation, which was approved by the Commission in December, will include a comprehensive review of new programs after five years, which staff will begin this Fall. Dr. Peters also noted the action plans due February 5 will include the 2024 data.

Dr. Yin went on to explain the program termination data received and verified during her 2018-2022 and 2020-2024 reviews. Discussion was had regarding the number of terminated programs, if they were self-terminated or were recommended for termination by CHE, and the number of action plans expected. Dr. Peters explained the numbers and stated the 2018-2022 and the 2020-2024 productivity reports would be provided to the committee in April, along with a summary of action plans once received in February, which will also be provided to the General Assembly. Also, the requested cost analysis report on any remaining programs from the 190 found non-complaint will be provided in April.

Commissioner Smith expressed appreciation for Dr. Yin's 2016-2020 report but noted it is still not considered a full report and asked if possibly a spreadsheet of the forthcoming data could be provided to the General Assembly in the interest of expedience. Though it

would not include the narrative and efforts to build up the programs, it would be current data as requested by the House. Dr. Perez expressed concern in providing data which has not been approved by the Commission, even without the narrative. Chair Dyer stated the cost analysis may ultimately be what they want to see. Dr. Perez noted the budget cycle of the General Assembly needs to be considered and reiterated the data must be verified and the process should not circumvent the Commission's oversight authority but must also be compliant with the directive from the House Ways and Means subcommittee to get the most current data as quickly as possible. Commissioner Masters again stated the institutions have and maintain enrollment, graduation, and completion data for each of their programs and would be able to provide it. Further discussion was had regarding how to proceed in getting the most current data and having it verified. Commissioner Zais stated the data are reported by the institutions and CHE can check the accuracy to the best of its ability but cannot be responsible if data reported are wrong.

Commissioner Masters received confirmation from Dr. Yin that the programs listed as terminated for the upcoming review cycles were self-terminated by the institutions and asked if there were any record of CHE having recommended a program for termination. Dr. Peters explained of the 56 programs recommended for termination in the approved report, 31 had been in the process of self-terminating prior to the report. Dr. Yin stated four programs had been recommended for termination but one of the institutions with two programs recommended for termination appealed and the Commission voted to move its two programs to under review status. Chair Dyer asked Dr. Peters if the nine programs being consolidated would be looked at closely as the institutions could simply be consolidating ones recommended for termination. Dr. Peters noted any plans to consolidate would be included in the actions plans. Commissioner Masters asked if there would be a financial impact statement included in the action plans for terminated and for consolidated programs. Dr. Peters did not recall asking for the information but stated it could be added to the request. Commissioner Masters stated affordability of education is not just on the student but also on the taxpayer and explained the significant investment by the small percentage people who pay taxes in the state, especially retired people, and noted the Commissioners represent all the people in congressional districts, not just students.

Dr. Peters summarized the items to be presented to the committee in April as the: (1) 2018-2022 Program Productivity Report, (2) 2020-2024 Program Productivity Report, (3) summary or spreadsheet of the actions plans, which are due to staff by February 5, and (4) cost analysis of programs which remain non-compliant, especially those noted as non-complaint over multiple review cycles. Dr. Peters thanked Dr. Yin, Academic Affairs staff, CHE Data team, and the institutions. Dr. Perez stated the in-depth studies would not be ready, which Dr. Peters confirmed stating staff would begin in-depth reviews in the Fall. Dr. Peters responded to Commissioner Zais by agreeing if institutions already have a comprehensive review similar to what CHE is requesting, they may submit them.

Chair Dyer thanked Dr. Peters and staff and asked for any other comments or discussion regarding agenda item 7.a. Dr. Perez asked if they were going to discuss the new policy. Dr. Peters stated new policies would be brought forth in April or May, and noted the academic program review policy and procedures are being discussed by an ACAP working group, which contains the lifecycle of a program from a pre-planning phase, to a new program, modification, or notification, followed by a 5-year in-depth review, and finally program effectiveness with program managers monitoring programs annually to identify low producing programs. Dr. Peters noted CHE is going to finish out the program productivity reports through 2024 under the current policy and stated the revised policy would not be effective immediately, and likely not until Fall 2027.

Commissioner Smith expressed appreciation for the conversation and hard work being done in the interest of fairness to the institutions and in providing accurate, timely information to the General Assembly.

8. New Business

a. Classical Learning Test (CLT)

Commissioner Zais requested to speak on new business, which Chair Dyer allowed. Commissioner Zais stated he had received a briefing from the Executive Director of CLT, and suggested CHE express the sentiment that the institutions should consider using the CLT as an alternative to the SAT and ACT due to the dumbing down and renorming of the ACT and SAT over the last 30 years. Commissioner Zais went on to describe the differences in the tests and suggested a statement of support by the Commission may be appropriate at some point, and suggested the Commission ask the CLT Director to do a presentation if there is interest. Chair Dyer asked if there were any objections to adding this to the agenda for the next meeting. Hearing none, Chair Dyer stated it would be added and the agenda would be voted on then.

9. Adjournment

With no further business before the committee, **Chair Dyer called for a motion to adjourn, which was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Zais.** Chair Dyer called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed. The meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.**