



Meeting of the South Carolina Commission
on Higher Education (CHE)
Committee on Strategic Planning and Accountability (CSPA)
10:00 a.m., May 14, 2025, via Zoom Webinar

Members

Commissioner Gene Fant
Commissioner Mark Masters
Commissioner Mick Zais

Members Excused

Commissioner Doug Snyder (Chair)
Commissioner Dino Teppara (Vice Chair)

Commission Staff Present

Jeff Perez
Laura Belcher

1. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting begun at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Belcher confirmed a quorum of Commissioners.

2. Approval of the Agenda

President Perez asked for consideration of the CSPA meeting agenda. Commissioner Fant motioned to approve the agenda as presented, and Commissioner Zais seconded the motion. The agenda was approved unanimously.

3. Approval of the Minutes: April 21, 2025

President Perez introduced the draft minutes of the April 21, 2025, CSPA meeting and asked for any additions or corrections. Commissioner Zais motioned to approve minutes, and Commissioner Fant seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

4. Chair's Report

There were no new items to report.

5. Stakeholder Update

There were no new items to report.



6. Discussion: Higher Education Structure

Commissioner Fant led the discussion regarding the structure of higher education and CHE. Commissioners discussed evaluating and potentially redefining the role of CHE. Below are the key takeaways:

Governance vs. Coordination:

Commissioner Fant stated that CHE is legally designated as a coordinating body, not a governing one. He explained that coordination includes responsibilities such as approving academic programs, collecting data, and funding proposals but lacks back-end enforcement or oversight mechanisms. Commissioner Fant said that there is growing interest—mirroring changes in states like Florida and North Carolina—in whether CHE’s role should be expanded into governance.

Accreditation & Federal Policy Shifts:

Commissioner Fant reported that there have been federal changes under President Trump’s administration that have removed regional restrictions on accreditation, potentially upending traditional governance expectations linked to accrediting bodies like the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). He expressed that these changes could significantly impact how governance and accountability are enforced through accreditation.

Accountability & Closing the Loop:

Commissioner Fant said that current CHE operations emphasize front-end approval and data collection but lack strong accountability follow-up. He said that there is a need to implement a feedback loop—monitoring outcomes and using those insights for enforcement and improvement. Commissioner Fant recommended that CHE functions as a hub, viewing the agency as a central clearing house that has clear authority over all institutions.

Structural Concerns and Risk:

Commissioner Fant stated that changes in governance could impact existing university debt structures and foundational legal documents. He expressed the need for greater clarity on the statutory authority granted to CHE and how it can be operationalized effectively.

Strategic Planning & Authority:

Commissioner Masters emphasized the importance of mapping statutory duties to staff roles to ensure internal accountability. Commissioners agreed that strategic planning should start by clearly defining CHE’s legal authority and responsibilities. Commissioner Masters asked about CHE’s authority, to which Commissioner Fant acknowledged that CHE may have more authority than it currently asserts and that the time is right to strategically claim it. Commissioner Fant shared various resources for Commissioners to review and summarized the appendices.

President Perez thanked Commissioner Fant for his report and reiterated his key takeaways. Commissioners and President Perez discussed weaknesses in K–12 preparation and the disconnect between accreditation processes and actual educational outcomes. Commissioner Masters stated that education, especially at the K–12 level, should prepare students for life, not just college.

Commissioner Masters asked whether CHE has legal counsel who can review the CHE related statutes and clarify CHE’s authority, to which President Perez confirmed that CHE is in the process of hiring internal legal counsel. Commissioner Masters asked whether external counsel could assist in the meanwhile, to which President Perez recommended using internal counsel for the review. Commissioner Masters suggested exploring whether an external legal review could provide a more unbiased interpretation, to which President Perez will further discuss with Commissioner Masters.

7. Strategic Plan 2030 Timeline and Activities Summary

There were no new items to report.

8. Other Business

There were no new items to report.

9. Adjournment

President Perez adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

