



**Advisory Committee on Academic Affairs (ACAP)
Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2026**

Attendees:

Clemson University: Jeremy King, Rob Essaf, Briana Peel, Stephanie Vitalis, David Clayton, Matthew Interis, Thompson Mefford, Brian Dean, Dale Layfield, Catherine DiBenedetto, Alison Starr-Moss

Coastal Carolina University: Gibbs Knotts, Teresa Burns

College of Charleston: Mark Del Mastro, Wes Hitt, Steven Schreiner, Narayanan Kuthirummal, Wes Dudgeon

Denmark Technical College: Marci Middleton

Francis Marion University: Allison Steadman

Lander University: James Colbert, Erin Paysinger, Llyod Willis, Farha Ali, Asma Nazim-Starnes

Medical University of South Carolina: Suzanne Thomas, Michael Bouchard, Nancy Carson, Catherine Durham, David Long, Kristen Poston, Eric Richardson, Melissa Halcomb, Gene Yogodzinski

South Carolina Department of Education: Jessica McLees, Jaclyn Walsh

South Carolina State University: David Staten, Ralph Noble

South Carolina Technical College System: Kimberly Burkett

The Citadel: Karin Roof, Kimberly Subasic, Kevin Bower

Tri-County Technical College: Amanda Elmore

Trident Technical College:

University of South Carolina Aiken: Phillip Bridgmon, Katie Smith, David Morris, Forrest Anderson

University of South Carolina Beaufort:

University of South Carolina Columbia: Trena Houpp, Robin Dawson, Katherine Ryker, Susan Rathbun-Grubb, Andrea Taliaferro, Christeen Stephens, Kendall Roth, Robbie Dedmon, Bill Hauk, George Roy, Andrew Graciano

University of South Carolina Palmetto College: Walter Collins, Amber Novotny

University of South Carolina Upstate: Pamela Steinke, Amanda Karls, Renae Swanson, Matthew Brisebois

Winthrop University: Tim Drueke, Edward Randle, Beth Costner, Meredith Jones, Kevin Ming, P.N. Saksena, Joanna Jackson, Adriana Cordis, Melissa McCartney

Commission Staff:

Angela Peters

Jessica Berry

Melissa Price

Darnell Holland

Endé Clark

Diane McCree

James Thompson

Tim Rees

Ashley Stanley

Marian Chukes

Lishu Yin

Christopher Glenn

Tracy Solet

All attended in-person or virtually

1. Welcome

Dr. Peters welcomed everyone to the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

2. Introductions, Quorum, and Freedom of Information Act

Ms. Solet announced attendance, established quorum, and confirmed the meeting was being held in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

3. Approval of Agenda

Dr. Peters called for a motion to approve the agenda. A motion was made and seconded. Dr. Peters called for a vote. **The motion passed unopposed.**

4. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Peters asked if there were any corrections to the proposed minutes from the June 11, 2026 meeting. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a motion to approve the minutes which was made and seconded. Dr. Peters called for a vote. **The motion passed unopposed.**

5. Chair Updates

Dr. Peters provided the following updates:

- a. Competency Based Education: A survey was sent to all ACAP members. Those members who received a secondary survey were asked to submit them.
- b. Fall Strategic Innovation Forum: On September 17 at 11:00 a.m., Clemson and Francis Marion will be presenting on Neurodivergent students. Dr. Rees will send a link.

Dr. Peters asked Dr. Berry to provide the following updates:

- c. Campus to Commission (C2C) Initiative: Information has been provided to ACAP members regarding a new two-part initiative designed to deepen CHE's partnership with South Carolina's public institutions and to strengthen shared work around high-quality academic programs. The initiative stemmed from conversations regarding more meaningful engagement between formal submissions and reviews.
 - Campus to Commission Institute (C2Ci): a recurring virtual institute to provide guidance and dialogue between CHE staff and campus academic leaders regarding policies, updates, program proposals, and other requirements. The first C2Ci will be held at 10:00 a.m. on October 1, 2026.
 - Commission to Campus Engagement (C2Ce): structured campus visits which will allow CHE staff to engage with stakeholders and to observe firsthand the Commission-approved programs in practice. CHE staff will be visiting Clemson University on September 24, 2026.
- d. New Academic Program Manager: Dr. Felice Knight will be joining the Office of Academic Affairs and Licensing as an Academic Program Manager and will be formally introduced at the next ACAP meeting.

Dr. Peters noted the lengthy agenda and stated she would entertain a motion at the appropriate time to approve all of program modification proposals together versus individually.

6. New Program Proposals

- a. University of South Carolina Aiken, M.A. in Emerging Media
The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.a., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. In response to questions, the representative stated Risepoint will receive 45% of the tuition and overall, their success with Risepoint is a net positive so they are looking to expand their partnership as some of their colleagues have done. Hearing nothing further, Dr. Peters called for a vote to

recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

- b. College of Charleston, B.S./A.B.in Biomedical Engineering
The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.b., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. USC Columbia's representative expressed appreciation for the inclusion of the population-based health framework. In response to questions regarding the Bachelor of Arts degree, the representative explained the A.B. is not Bachelor of Arts degree but instead a cognitive program housed in Classics, which any student may take as long as it is coupled with a major. Hearing nothing further, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**
- c. College of Charleston, B.S.N. in Nursing (Joint with MUSC)
The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.c., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**
- d. Medical University of South Carolina, Ph.D. in Cancer Biology
The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.d., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**
- e. Medical University of South Carolina, M.S. in Health Information Management and Cybersecurity
The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.e., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. USC Columbia's representative expressed interest in partnering to find articulation pathways as they offer similar M.S. and Ph.D. programs. Hearing nothing further, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**
- f. South Carolina State University, B.S. in Animal and Veterinary Sciences
The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.f., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**
- g. Lander University, B.A. in Graphic Design
The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.g., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. USC Columbia's representative noted some overlap with some of their programs but did not consider this duplicative as the institution serves a different population. Winthrop's representative noted their similar program is incorrectly listed as a B.F.A. Hearing nothing further, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**
- h. Lander University, B.S. in Applied Artificial Intelligence
The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.h., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened

for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

i. Lander University, M.S. in Information Systems

The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.i., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

j. University of South Carolina Columbia, B.S. in Industrial Design

The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.j., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented with the representative noting the proposal would be updated prior to submission for CAAL review to include Winthrop's similar program. The floor was opened for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

k. University of South Carolina Columbia, M.S. in Earth and Environmental Science

The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.k., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. Representatives from Winthrop and Francis Marions each expressed interest in discussing pipelines or possibly a 4+1 accelerated option with the institution. Hearing nothing further, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

l. Clemson University, B.S. in Artificial Intelligence

m. Clemson University, M.S. in Artificial Intelligence

n. Clemson University, Ph.D. in Artificial Intelligence

The institution's representative requested permission to move approval of agenda items 6.l through 6.n. simultaneously, which was granted. The motion was made and seconded. The program proposals were presented and the floor opened for questions. In response to a question, the representative noted a strong connection between AI and cybersecurity and stated many students in these programs would likely be involved in cybersecurity applications. Hearing nothing further, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposals to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

o. Clemson University, M.S. in Computational Genetics and Genomics

The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.o., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

p. Winthrop University, B.S. in Human Development and Family Science

The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 6.p., which was seconded. The program proposal was presented and the floor opened for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

7. Program Modification Proposals

A motion was made for agenda items 7.a. through 7.n. to be considered as a batch, which was seconded. Dr. Peters called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

- a. Winthrop University, B.S. in Business Administration
- b. Clemson University, B.S. in Agricultural Education
- c. University of South Carolina Upstate, M.S. in Exercise and Sport Science
- d. University of South Carolina Columbia, B.A. in Liberal Studies
- e. University of South Carolina Columbia, B.A. in Organizational Leadership
- f. University of South Carolina Columbia, B.A. in Early Childhood Education
- g. University of South Carolina Columbia, B.A. in Elementary Education
- h. University of South Carolina Columbia, B.A. in Special Education
- i. University of South Carolina Columbia, B.S. in Middle Level Education
- j. University of South Carolina Columbia, B.S.P.E. in Physical Education
- k. University of South Carolina Columbia, Ph.D. in Library and Information Science
- l. University of South Carolina Columbia, Ph.D. in Geological Sciences
- m. University of South Carolina Columbia, Professional Master of Business Administration (P.M.B.A.) and D.N.P, Clinical Expert
- n. University of South Carolina Columbia, Professional Master of Business Administration (P.M.B.A.) and D.N.P, Executive Healthcare Leadership

A motion was made to approve agenda items 7.a. through 7.n., which was seconded. Dr. Peters called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

8. New Center / Institute / Consortium Proposal

- a. University of South Carolina Columbia, Institute of Geopolitics, Innovation, and Global Competition

The institution's representative moved approval of agenda item 8.a., which was seconded. The new institute proposal was presented with the representative noting the proposal would be updated prior to submission for CAAL review to include the recently approved \$1,000,000 congressionally funded grant for the institute. The floor was opened for questions. Hearing none, Dr. Peters called for a vote to recommend the proposal to CAAL for review. **The motion passed unopposed.**

9. Policies and Reports

- a. Policies and Procedures for Academic Programs, Academic Units, Centers, Institutes, and Consortia (for action)

Dr. Peters thanked ACAP members for their work on the updated policy and procedures, noting their feedback was considered in conjunction with the Commission's statewide responsibilities, and stated she wanted to provide the opportunity for any clarification needed before moving it to CAAL on October 15. Dr. Peters summarized the new program forecasting and the slate of programs which will be presented to CAAL, noting years two and three will be for identifying categories rather than specific program details; institutions will be able to submit a request to the Director of Academic Affairs in the rare event an off-cycle forecast submission date is needed; submission dates will be removed from the policy as the dates are based on CAAL and Commission meeting dates, which change from year to year; and, full board approval must be obtained prior to submission of program modification proposals.

Discussion was had regarding policy formatting and inconsistencies, restructuring or modifying programs, policy and procedures effective dates, ACAP's review of proposals and the format of future meetings, accreditation and threshold requirements, and review deadlines and meeting dates. With no further discussion, Dr. Peters called for a motion to recommend the policy and procedures to CAAL for review, which was seconded. Dr. Peters called for a vote and **the motion passed unopposed.**

b. Program Productivity Policy and Procedures (for information)

Dr. Peters advised the committee members that Commissioner Hayes had appointed a task force to draft the program productivity policy and procedures, which consists of two Commissioners, the ACAP working group, and CHE staff. Dr. Peters explained the elements from the current policy which will remain and stated new items would be: two review processes consisting of the new program performance review, which is the same as the current in-depth review, and the new annual program productivity monitoring; institutions' board chairs and presidents will be required to submit a written response to CHE within 120 days following a CHE recommendation for termination of a program; and special program exemptions, which include programs fully funded by external support, stop-out masters programs, niche or high-needs work force programs supported by state or federal legislation, some of which are in our current policy. Another exemption will be a threshold waiver for qualifying programs which have an accrediting body with lower thresholds than our statewide threshold. Another new item is the post-review fiscal viability exemption request for a program recommended for termination, as well as a 30-day appeal process.

Dr. Peters asked for feedback which would be provided to the task force and noted the draft being discussed now may be different after discussions with the task force. Discussion was had regarding actions plans and a transition period; threshold numbers and waivers; stop-out master's programs; and program approval dates versus implementation dates. Dr. Peters asked the members to email her any additional feedback for the task force to consider.

10. Other Business / Discussion

a. College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) and Dantes Subject Standardized Test (DSST) Guidance

Dr. Rees stated the recently approved Exam-based Credit Awards Policy has been revised to remove CLEP and DSST from the policy as they are solely for college credit and are used more in a credit for prior learning-type action. The guidance document will be on the website.

Dr. Rees gave a brief summary of the recent notice of proposed rulemaking regarding accreditation and stated the window to make public comments would be open until September 20, 2026. He stated South Carolina is considering doing something similar to the North Carolina Reconnect project, which is having success in reenrolling and graduating students and reminded members of the Transfer Convening on October 13, 2026. In response to a question, Dr. Rees stated the agreement with SC TRAC has been extended for another year, through June 30, 2027, as there are no updates from procurement.

b. Workforce Development Update

Dr. Thompson stated a team has been assembled to examine how to move South Carolina forward from non-credit activity toward building a student-centered non-degree credential ecosystem where learner outcomes and mobility may be measured with shared definitions, standardized data, and cross-agency governance. Noting as there is no coherent consensus on what non-credit encompasses in South Carolina there needs to be agreement on what is being measured so outcomes may be measured consistently. The team is focusing on how to move from non-credit to non-degree credentials, understanding what learners achieved and if they produced mobility, and to establish minimum common data elements so institutions can describe programs, credentials, and outcomes in comparable ways, allowing program level versus student-level reporting.

11. Adjournment

With no further discussion, Dr. Peters called for a motion to adjourn, which was made and seconded. **The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.**