



**Meeting of the South Carolina Commission
on Higher Education
Committee on Strategic Planning and Accountability (CSPA)
2:00 p.m., January 13, 2026, via Zoom Webinar**

Members

Commissioner Doug Snyder (Chair)

Commissioner Dino Teppara (Vice Chair)

Commissioner Amy Bigham

Commissioner Gene Fant

Commissioner Mark Masters

Members Excused

Commissioner Mick Zais

Commission Staff Present

Jeff Perez

Laura Belcher

Shardai Figgures

Angela Peters

Noah Perry

Elizabeth Robinson

Kara Smith

Mark Swart

Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Snyder called the meeting of the Committee on Strategic Planning and Accountability (CSPA) to order at 2:00 p.m. Ms. Smith introduced the Commissioners, confirmed the presence of a quorum, and announced that the meeting was being conducted in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Approval of the Agenda

Chair Snyder requested consideration of the CSPA meeting agenda. Commissioner Masters motioned to approve the agenda as presented, and Commissioner Bigham seconded the motion. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes: December 2, 2025

Chair Snyder presented the draft minutes of the December 2, 2025, meeting and invited any additions or corrections. Commissioner Masters motioned to approve the minutes as presented, and Commissioner Bigham seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Snyder reported progress on developing metrics aligned with the Committee's values and initiatives, with a particular focus on Accessibility. Ms. Belcher presented a draft document outlining proposed metrics related to the



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values of Excellence and Accountability, emphasizing that the document remains a work in progress. Chair Snyder stated that the Committee intends to finalize the metrics by June of the current fiscal year.

CHE Metrics Discussion: Accessibility

Chair Snyder recognized President Perez to report on the metric Accessibility on behalf of Commissioner Zais in his absence. President Perez summarized the value and its associated metrics and initiatives. He explained that a metric has been realigned, specifically related to the initiative Promote Higher Education Return on Investment (ROI).

Regarding the metric for Increased Educational Awareness, President Perez reported that the percentage of high school seniors completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) would serve as a proposed measure. Commissioner Bigham raised questions about establishing specific goals for this metric and how to account for students who do not complete the FAFSA. Commissioner Fant highlighted challenges in tracking FAFSA completion rates, noting trust and privacy concerns in certain regions.

The Committee discussed the possibility of tracking non-completion of the FAFSA and agreed to further investigate this approach. Chair Snyder acknowledged the need to consult with subject-matter experts to determine how best to measure this accurately. Chair Snyder and Commissioner Masters expressed concern that the proposed metric did not fully align with the stated initiative.

The Committee discussed alternative metrics for tracking college awareness and educational outcomes. Commissioner Bigham suggested focusing on the Common Application (Common App) and transcript submission processes, clarifying that the Common App often serves as the starting point for college applications. President Perez noted that the Committee could consider tracking the percentage of college students completing the Common App, however; he acknowledged that not all colleges use the platform, which may present a challenge.

Chair Snyder suggested that the Unified State Plan may provide guidance in identifying alternative metrics. Commissioners also explored tracking methods for high school seniors' progress to higher education, including dual enrollment credits and participation in various college-focused programs.

The Committee then discussed metrics for measuring college affordability and student loan debt. Commissioner Masters emphasized that affordability should reflect the total cost of college, rather than solely focus on student loan debt or financial aid. He suggested prioritizing efforts to reduce overall institutional costs rather than increasing financial aid. Commissioner Bigham agreed with this perspective.

Commissioner Bigham and Chair Snyder raised questions regarding how to define and measure affordability across different types of institutions and student populations. The Committee acknowledged the importance of considering both students and taxpayers who contribute to funding higher education.

The Committee also discussed the complexity of comparing costs across institutions. Commissioner Fant noted that variables such as endowments, living arrangements, and extracurricular expenses complicate efforts to establish a simple and consistent metric. Commissioner Masters suggested focusing on total institutional costs divided by total student enrollment. Chair Snyder proposed examining institutions' total annual expenses divided by the number of students served.

The discussion concluded with Commissioner Fant cautioning that federal requirements related to FAFSA analysis and student loan limits must be considered, as institutions are required by law to offer students the maximum allowable loan amounts.



Agency Annual Accountability Report Overview

The Committee reviewed the annual accountability report process, with Ms. Belcher explaining that the report is due September 15th and covers July 1-June 30 activities. Ms. Belcher informed Commissioners that the report includes information on organizational structure, strategic planning, and performance measures, with Chair Hayes having final signing authority. Ms. Belcher provided an overview of the first 17 pages of the Accountability Report. Chair Snyder discussed the Board's role in reviewing the report, with Commissioner Bigham questioning whether the Board should approve the report or simply review it, as the document serves more as an operational update than true accountability measure.

External Studies Update

Ms. Belcher reported progress on external studies, noting four out of 40 Inspector General actions and four out of 18 House Oversight Committee actions remain to be completed by mid to late 2026. President Perez stated that both entities have expressed satisfaction with the agency's progress in addressing the identified concerns.

Commissioner Masters asked whether the agency maintains a report compliance calendar, to which Ms. Belcher confirmed but noted that the Central Calendar contains other agency internal reminders.

Other Business

There was no other business to consider.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Snyder thanked staff and Committee members for their work. Upon hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

