



**Meeting of the South Carolina Commission
on Higher Education
Committee on Strategic Planning and Accountability (CSPA)
2:00 p.m., February 25, 2026, via Zoom Webinar**

Members

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

Commissioner Gene Fant
Commissioner Mark Masters
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 2:04 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: January 13, 2026

Chair Snyder presented the draft minutes of the January 13, 2026, 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 stated that the meeting would focus on the value of Accessibility.

CHE Metrics Discussion: Accessibility Continued

Chair Snyder recognized President Perez and Commissioner Zais to report on Accessibility. President Perez summarized the value and its associated metrics and initiatives. He noted the following:



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Promote Higher Education ROI

The Committee agreed on the current metric for this initiative:

Percentage of graduates employed within their field of study and in SC within three years of graduation.

Increase Educational Awareness

The Committee discussed this initiative and agreed to revise the metric to, *“The percentage of high school seniors who arrange for at least one transcript to be submitted for postsecondary education.”* President Perez said that he will research the extent to which the Department of Education can provide this data.

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 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.

Improve affordability

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.

Commissioner Fant cautioned 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.

At the end of the discussion, the Committee expressed interest in considering the following metrics for the initiative of improving affordability:

- Costs of an institution divided by total number of students (FTE and headcount)
- Percentage of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA
- Average indebtedness of post-secondary graduates per institution
- Percentage of students with debt per institution
- Rate of student loan delinquency and default
- Cost of attendance (tuition, fees, room and board)
- Tuition mitigation funds

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 through June 30 activities. Ms. Belcher reminded Commissioners that the report includes information on organizational structure, strategic planning, and performance measures, with Chair Hayes having final signing authority. Ms. Belcher then provided an overview of the strategic plan results, the strategic plan development and legal data sections. She described the current accountability report strategic plan goals and stated that once metrics are established for the agency's strategic plan, the goals, strategies and measures in the accountability report will be revised to match the plan.

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.

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.

