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Meeting of the South Carolina Commission
on Higher Education
Committee on Strategic Planning and Accountability (CSPA)
2:00 p.m., April 29, 2026, via Zoom Webinar

Members
Commissioner Dino Teppara (Vice Chair)
Commissioner Amy Bigham
Commissioner Gene Fant
Commissioner Mark Masters
Commissioner Mick Zais

Members Excused
Commissioner Doug Snyder (Chair)

Commission Staff Present
Jeff Perez
Laura Belcher
Shardai Figgures
Monica Goodwin
Mariana Manic
Noah Perry
Christopher Robinson
Elizabeth Robinson
Kara Smith
Chariti Spann
Mark Swart

Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Teppara called the meeting of the Committee on Strategic Planning and Accountability (CSPA) to order at 2:10 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 Teppara requested consideration of the CSPA meeting agenda. Commissioner Bigham motioned to approve the agenda as presented, and Commissioner Masters seconded the motion. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes: February 25, 2026

Chair Teppara presented the draft minutes of the February 25, 2026, meeting and invited any additions or corrections. Commissioner Bigham motioned to approve the minutes as presented, and Commissioner Fant seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Teppara shared an update from Chairman Snyder, emphasizing the importance of establishing reasonable performance metrics across technical colleges and universities rather than creating an excessive number of metrics for each initiative. He also expressed appreciation for the committee's work to date.

Strategic Plan Metric Update

President Perez reported on strategic plan metrics and noted the need for improved data access, with support from Ms. Goodwin's team. He then reviewed each initiative and its associated metrics.

President Perez recommended removing the phrase "*modernize internal processes and adopt best practices* to" from Initiative One under the value of excellence. Commissioners supported this recommendation.

Commissioners discussed metrics related to employment rates, educational awareness, affordability, and student debt. President Perez explained that certain data requirements would require partnerships with external organizations.

Commissioners discussed metric one under Initiative Three for affordability: Costs of an institution divided by total number of students (FTE and Headcount).

Commissioner Zais suggested excluding endowment and charitable contributions from affordability calculations. Commissioner Masters disagreed, stating that affordability should focus on actual costs rather than revenue sources to better measure institutional affordability.

Commissioners Zais and Commissioner Masters emphasized focusing on two key affordability metrics:

- Taxpayer dollars per student
- Income from students and parents

They agreed that varying institutional missions justify differing cost structures, with research universities naturally incurring higher per-student costs than technical colleges. Commissioner Fant suggested using graduates as the denominator rather than enrollment numbers, while Commissioner Masters emphasized considering both cost per graduate and degree quality.

President Perez asked Ms. Goodwin's team to review existing business expense dashboards to better compare institutional costs fairly.

Commissioners also discussed strategic higher education metrics focused on student success and graduation rates.

President Perez reviewed metrics regarding employee climate survey results and agency partner collaborations.

President Perez then introduced metrics regarding educational outcomes, including graduation rates and certificates. President Perez proposed using four-year graduation rates for four-year institutions and two-year graduation rates for technical colleges as the primary metric under Initiative Three (Strengthen student success and workforce alignment), while acknowledging that technical colleges may face challenges with this measure due to student demographics.

President Perez respectfully advised that Metrics One and Two (graduation rates) under the value of excellence should take priority over Metrics Three through Five (graduate degrees and workforce-related certificates) and requested Commissioner feedback.

Regarding workforce-related certificates, Commissioner Zais suggested limiting these to technical colleges, while Commissioner Bigham expressed concern that this approach would exclude valuable professional certifications such as Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) credentials earned by university students. President Perez noted that CHE is already working to improve collection of non-degree certificate data.

Under the value of accountability, Initiative One, President Perez recommended removing the phrase "*strengthen CHE's capacity to*," which Commissioners supported.

Commissioners then discussed institutional performance metrics and then metric two (institutions are fiscally sound). President Perez noted that while technical colleges should be measured, similar standards should also apply to institutions such as law schools and educator preparation programs. Commissioner Zais recommended focusing on three key financial ratios in IPEDS including:

- Primary reserve ratio
- Viability ratio
- Net income ratio

Ms. Goodwin agreed to provide Commissioners with information regarding the three key financial ratios available through IPEDS data. She also provided CHE's current financial dashboard in the chat, which provides information on institutional expenses and revenues: https://che.sc.gov/expenditures-revenues-dashboard.

President Perez outlined five financial metrics identified by CHE's Committee on Finance and Administration:

- Unrestricted financial position excluding liabilities for the SC OPEB/pension accrual
- Liquid (current) financial position
- Revenue mix and state appropriation dependence
- Debt load and capital investment strategy
- Enrollment stability and tuition sensitivity

Commissioner Zais emphasized the need for flexibility and willingness to revise metrics over time, noting that excessive measurement creates costs in staff time and resources.

President Perez then asked Ms. Belcher to present the timeline for finalizing strategic metrics. Ms. Belcher stated that the Committee plans to present final metrics to the full Commission for approval at the September retreat. She said that two additional CSPA meetings are currently scheduled to work on the Plan, with the possibility of additional summer meetings if necessary.

Agency Annual Accountability Report Overview

Ms. Smith presented an overview of the agency accountability report, covering budget data, services data, partnerships, and reports data.

External Studies Update

Ms. Belcher provided updates on external studies, reporting that of the 40 actions committed in response to the Inspector General's report, only four remain, with two expected to be completed in the next couple of months and the other two by the end of the year. She reported that there are three remaining items of the 18 prescribed by the House Government Efficiency Legislative Oversight Committee, which will be completed by the end of the year.

Accountability Update

Ms. Belcher also outlined recent reports submitted since February 25th, including the SC Program for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers (SCPRRMT) quarter four report; Proviso 104.10 Purchasing Card Oversight Agency Manual; Telecommuting quarterly report; Proviso 117.21 quarterly report; and IPEDS spring data compilation.

Other Business

There was no other business to consider.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Teppara thanked staff and Committee members for their work. Upon hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.