SOUTH CAROLINA Commission on Higher Education

SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Committee Recommendations

April 2020

THE hunt institute

SHEEO
STATE HIGHER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leaders from across South Carolina came together in late 2019 and early 2020 to serve as members of the South Carolina Higher Education Advisory Committee ("Committee"). The Committee discussed six foundational topics and identified a series of action steps for each, which are summarized in the next section and discussed in detail throughout this report. These recommendations will be presented to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE), who will then use this work to prioritize goals and develop specific next steps.

The Committee was designed to support CHE, led by President and Executive Director Dr. Rusty Monhollon, as it works to ensure that all residents of South Carolina have the support they need to access and succeed in higher education. The Committee evaluated the successes and challenges of South Carolina's current higher education landscape and identified a number of areas for further growth.

CHE partnered with The Hunt Institute and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) to identify 34 bipartisan leaders from across South Carolina who represent a diverse range of perspectives – including representatives from the governor's office, the legislature, the business community, leaders of institutions of higher education (IHEs), students, and professors, among other constituencies (see next page for full list of Committee members).

Former Governor Jim Hodges, who brought a wealth of experience as a state leader in education, chaired the Committee by leading three meetings on a broad range of critical postsecondary issues in education. The Committee identified recommendations for South Carolina across the following foundational topics:

❯ **Preparing Students for Postsecondary Success**
- ▸ Expanding College in High School Programs for All Students
- ▸ Helping Students and Families Understand and Cover the Cost of Higher Education

❯ **Supporting Postsecondary Completion for All Students**
- ▸ Establishing a Statewide Completion Agenda
- ▸ Creating a Comprehensive System of Credit Transfer Agreements

❯ **Strengthening Career Pathways for Tomorrow's Workforce**
- ▸ Building on the Success of Youth Apprenticeship Programs
- ▸ Reconnecting Adult Learners to Career Training Opportunities

At each meeting, The Hunt Institute and CHE staff presented on the state and national contexts of these six topics. Following the presentations, Committee members had in-depth discussions and identified key priorities that they believed CHE should focus on. The final recommendations outlined in this report are designed to support Dr. Monhollon, the CHE Board, and CHE staff to refine CHE's priorities. All Committee members had the opportunity to provide feedback.

This Committee is a continuation of the many important conversations that regularly occur across the state, and this report is meant to inspire meaningful dialogue.

List of Committee Recommendations

1.	Support efforts to establish a student-level, statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) – *mentioned throughout the report.*
2.	Provide students and their families, especially those from traditionally underserved populations, with clear information about college in high school opportunities.
3.	Develop a framework—including a common numbering system—to ensure the transferability of academic credits among all public IHEs in the state.
4.	Increase support for need-based student aid programs in South Carolina.
5.	Implement strategies to encourage more high school students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
6.	Convene IHE leaders to share best practices about strategies to help students complete.
7.	Encourage on-time completion by providing support and information.
8.	Explore strategies for awarding credit for prior learning experience.
9.	Develop a set of best practices to drive the development, implementation, and promotion of youth apprenticeship programs.
10.	Develop clearly defined pathways for youth apprenticeship programs to help high school students make informed decisions.
11.	Integrate youth apprenticeship programs into statewide policies regarding the transition between high school and higher education.
12.	Make higher education accessible to adult learners.

South Carolina Higher Education Advisory Committee Members

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION
Rep. Rita Allison	Chairman	SC House Education & Public Works Committee
Dr. Rob Anderson	President	State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Dr. Bettie Parsons Barger	Assistant Professor, Elementary Education and Literacy	Winthrop University
Melanie Barton	Senior Education Advisor	Governor McMaster's Office
Donna Barton	Research Director	SC Senate Education Committee
Julie Godshall Brown	Commissioner	SC Commission on Higher Education
Bob Caslen	President	University of South Carolina
James Clark	President	South Carolina State University
Susan DeVenny	President & CEO	J. Marion Sims Foundation
Pamela Evette	Lieutenant Governor	Governor McMaster's Office
Henry Giles	President	Spartanburg Community College
Dr. Christen Hairston	Executive Director	Health Sciences Center at Prisma Health
Wes Hayes	Chair	SC Commission on Higher Education
Sen. Greg Hembree	Chairman	SC Senate Education Committee
Bobby Hitt	Secretary of Commerce	SC Department of Commerce
Governor Jim Hodges	President	McGuireWoods Consulting LLC
DeSharah Israel	Student	Midlands Technical College
Dr. Rainey Knight	Interim Executive Director	SC Education Oversight Committee
Elisabeth Kovacs	Deputy Director of Workforce Development	SC Department of Employment and Workforce

South Carolina Higher Education Advisory Committee Members (Continued)

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION
Sen. Shane Massey	Majority Leader	SC Senate Republican Caucus
Dr. David Mathis	Deputy Superintendent	SC Department of Education
Georgia Mjartan	Executive Director	SC First Steps
Dr. Rusty Monhollon	President and Executive Director	SC Commission on Higher Education
Charles Munns	Commissioner	SC Commission on Higher Education
Swati Patel	Executive Vice President	SC Chamber of Commerce
Dr. Jeffrey Perez	President & CEO	SC Independent Colleges and Universities, Inc.
Luke Rankin	Student	University of South Carolina
Paola Santana	Strategy Office for State Policy	Lumina Foundation
Dr. Cleveland Sellers	Commissioner	SC Commission on Higher Education
Molly Spearman	State Superintendent	SC Department of Education
Dr. Mary Thornley	President	Trident Technical College
Dr. Peggy Torrey	Director	TransformSC
Willette Waring-Berry	Assistant Professor	Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College
General Alan Wilson	Attorney General	SC Attorney General's Office

CHE Staff

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION
Anika Ali	Fiscal, Business & Policy Senior Analyst	SC Commission on Higher Education
Laura Belcher	Operations Manager	SC Commission on Higher Education
Monica Goodwin	Data & Research Manager	SC Commission on Higher Education
Dr. John Lane	Director, Academic Affairs	SC Commission on Higher Education
Andrew Roof	Public Information Coordinator	SC Commission on Higher Education
Georges Tippens	Program Manager	SC Commission on Higher Education
Bunnie Lempesis Ward	Director, Governmental Affairs & Communications	SC Commission on Higher Education
Bryce Wilson	Director, Fiscal Affairs	SC Commission on Higher Education
Dr. Karen Woodfaulk	Director, Student Affairs	SC Commission on Higher Education

Preparing Students for Postsecondary Success

▸ *Expanding College in High School Programs for All Students*

Note: *in this document, the phrase "college in high school programs" encompasses dual enrollment, dual credit, and concurrent enrollment programs in South Carolina.*

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

❯ Provide students and their families, especially those from traditionally underserved populations, with clear information about college in high school opportunities.

  ▸ Raise awareness of college in high school opportunities by clearly communicating both the requirements and benefits of such opportunities.

  ▸ Support efforts to establish a linked, student-level, statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) to identify which students are currently taking advantage of college in high school programs.

  ▸ Publicize data on the benefits of college in high school programs, such as the increased college going rates, reduced time-to-degree, and greater average earning potential over time for participating students.

❯ Develop a framework for determining which college in high school courses will provide transferable credit toward degree completion in programs of study at all institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the state.

  ▸ Convene IHE leaders to build on previous efforts to assess or evaluate the learning goals and standards used for credit-bearing coursework.

  ▸ Create a common course numbering system to standardize the courses that provide transferable credit.

  ▸ Produce a resource that contains information about the transferability of college in high school courses and is widely accessible for students, families, and other stakeholders.

▸ *Helping Students and Families Understand and Cover the Cost of Higher Education*

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

❯ Help more low-income residents of South Carolina access higher education by increasing support of need-based student aid programs.

  ▸ It is important to note that both merit-based and need-based aid programs produce important benefits and the two models should not be pitted against each other. However the SC Need-based Grant Program is historically underfunded in comparison to the state's merit-based programs. In order to ensure that appropriate support is given to all South Carolina families, especially those who demonstrate the greatest need for funds to support access to higher education, increased funding should be allocated to the SC Need-based Grant Program.

❯ Implement strategies to encourage more high school students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, which is required to determine whether students can receive both federal student aid, such as Pell Grants, and funding through the SC Need-Based Grant Program.

  ▸ South Carolina has already begun efforts to bring FAFSA completion efforts into high schools across the state. Using a similar model to the College Application Month Program, high schools are being encouraged to host FAFSA completion events during the Fall and Spring. To support them in this effort, CHE staff are engaging IHEs to provide support at these events. The number of FAFSA completion events has increased over the last two years with the new model, going from just 49 FAFSA completion events in 2017-18 to 79 in 2018-19 and 82 FAFSA completion events in 2019-20.

  ▸ Best practices have emerged from other states that have developed FAFSA completion strategies, such as:

    ❯ In Louisiana, the state required high school seniors to complete the FAFSA and enacted a number of supports to help students and schools comply with the requirement.

> In Colorado, state agencies and high schools have developed data sharing agreements so that FAFSA completion efforts can be targeted toward students who have yet to fill out the form.

- CHE staff have developed data sharing agreements with the SC Tuition Grants Commission and select high schools to share FAFSA completion data through the previous SC GEAR UP Program. In addition, CHE staff, under the previous President and Executive Director in 2017, developed an agreement with Colorado to acquire their FAFSA completion portal application. The portal is currently under review with the SC Department of Administration's Technology Division. Upon approval by the Department of Administration, CHE will develop data sharing agreements with districts on a statewide level to allow all high schools access to their student's FAFSA completion status.

Supporting Postsecondary Completion for All Students

▶ *Establishing a Statewide Completion Agenda*

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

❯ Create a forum for IHE leaders to convene and share best practices about strategies to help students complete.

  ▶ The state already has existing resources – such as the Palmetto Calculator, which can help students understand the implications of different student aid products – but could think creatively about how to promote them.
  ▶ State leaders should also think about how to message the benefits of on-time completion in ways that resonate with students.

❯ Explore strategies for communicating the importance of on-time completion, and the supports available to help reach that goal, to higher education students and their families.

  ▶ IHEs can use different forms of communication – such as text message campaigns, twitter, and Facebook – to identify potential completers with the highest potential to return to college and finish a credential and communicate with students and families about completion resources.
    > An SLDS would allow state and IHE leaders to identify the types of students who are failing to complete their degrees and to target support and messaging at those individuals.
  ▶ IHE leaders from the South Carolina Technical College System hold peer group meetings where best practices are shared in role-alike discussions among IHE staff – this could be a model for other IHE and system leaders in the state.
  ▶ These discussions should not be limited to IHE presidents – faculty, administrators, and students should be involved in such conversations as well.

▶ *Creating a Comprehensive System of Credit Transfer Agreements*

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

❯ Explore strategies for quantifying the previous learning, or life experience, of incoming transfer students to provide them with additional credit toward completion of a certificate or degree.

  ▶ Many states and IHEs have developed models for granting prior learning credit that South Carolina leaders could consider adapting.
  ▶ It is especially important to consider ways to grant credit for veteran students based on the education and training they have received from serving in the military.
  ▶ Many other life experiences, including volunteer service, confer valuable skills and should be considered for prior learning credit.

❯ Establish a system to provide clear information about the quality, learning goals, and skill sets that are associated with certain transferrable coursework.

  ▶ Such a system would overcome the perceived lack of trust between IHE leaders, who may not be convinced that the coursework at other IHEs is comparable to similar courses at their school.
  ▶ Credit transfer agreements shouldn't be based on perception of quality, there should be a clear system in place.

❯ Incentivize and support the establishment of reverse transfer policies, which allow students who transfer from a two-year IHE to a four-year IHE to receive an associate degree once they have earned enough credits across both institutions.

Strengthening Career Pathways for Tomorrow's Workforce

▸ *Building on the Success of Youth Apprenticeship Programs*

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

❯ Develop a set of best practices for how IHE leaders can serve as intermediaries that drive the development, implementation, and promotion of youth apprenticeship programs.

   ▸ Such best practices could address the following action items:

   ❯ Create a plan for determining the specific needs of regional employers;

   ❯ Develop a list of all stakeholders who should be involved in the process of planning a youth apprenticeship program; and

   ❯ Audit community resources to determine what supports can be provided for students who will participate in the youth apprenticeship program.

❯ Create guidance on how IHE leaders can develop clearly defined pathways for youth apprenticeship programs to help high school students make informed decisions.

   ▸ Youth apprenticeship programs can be a valuable pathway to high-demand industries and certificates, but they should not be the only option available to students.

   ▸ Clearly articulating certain aspects of youth apprenticeship programs – such as length of program, skills and competencies that will be taught, any costs associated with the program, how college coursework would transfer to different IHEs, and graduate outcome information – will allow students and their families to make smart choices about which pathway would best fit their needs.

   ▸ By supporting the development of an SLDS, state and IHE leaders would be able to compile and publicize information on completion and graduate earnings data for students who participate in youth apprenticeship programs.

❯ Author recommendations to further integrate youth apprenticeship programs into statewide policies regarding the transition between high school and higher education.

   ▸ Current funding structures for college in high school programs could be revised to include incentives for IHE and high school leaders who seek to scale youth apprenticeship programs.

   ▸ Some statewide initiatives, such as the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce's upcoming "Be Pro, Be Proud" initiative, could be expanded to include information about youth apprenticeship programs.

▸ *Reconnecting Adult Learners to Career Training Opportunities*

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

❯ Create a clearinghouse of best practice strategies for making higher education accessible to adult learners.

   ▸ The clearinghouse could include examples of the following initiatives:

   ❯ Establish flexible coursework schedules and sequences, including courses that are offered on nights and weekends as well as online courses;

   ❯ Reform financial aid policies to provide forgiveness to adult learners who have outstanding balances;

   ❯ Develop a system to accept transfer courses from incoming adult learner transfer students, including the use of prior learning assessments to quantify previous life experiences;

> Develop advising/coaching support (persistence and college completion counseling) and outreach and marketing campaigns to support and re-engage adult learners;

> Establish childcare options on or near IHE campuses; and

> Engage with adult learners in the military community.

❯ Ensure that existing statewide efforts to review higher education policy initiatives, such as regional advisory committees, are addressing the concerns of adult learners.

▸ The adult learner perspective should be represented in conversations about state higher education policy, and postsecondary reform agendas should include issues that are responsive to the needs of adult learners.

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