

## South Carolina

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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- 1) Does the state have an identifiable “P-16” effort visible? Who is in charge of this effort?

In 2005 the South Carolina General Assembly passed the Education and Economic Development Act which created the Education and Economic Development Coordinating Council. This council, through a number of sub-committees, is working to increase the high school graduation rate and the college-going rate; to prepare students better for post-secondary education and employment; to align courses and expectations better between high schools and colleges; and to create a seamless transition between high school and college.

Information about the EEDA can be found at <http://www.teachscpathways.org>. The text of the law can be found at <http://www.scstatehouse.net/code/t59c059.doc>.

- a) Does the agency include a utility or function on its website designed explicitly to help potential students locate an appropriate college or university to attend?

Within the framework of the EEDA, the SC State Department of Education (SDE) and South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) are working together to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for such acquisition of such a system.

- 2) Is a mandated or recommended college preparatory curriculum in place in the state’s public high schools?

Yes, there is a set of prerequisite courses that, by statewide policy, South Carolina students in public schools are expected to have completed for admission into any public, four-year institution in the state. This policy was developed through the CHE’s Advisory Committee on Academic Programs, the members of which are the chief academic officers of the public institutions, and confirmed by the Commission on Higher Education itself. This policy has undergone several changes since its inception; most recently it was revised in October 2006 for students who will enter their freshman year in high school in fall 2007 and their freshman year in college in fall 2011. The policy may be accessed at:

[http://www.che.sc.gov/New\\_Web/GoingToCollege/CollPrepPrereq.htm](http://www.che.sc.gov/New_Web/GoingToCollege/CollPrepPrereq.htm).

- 3) Has the state articulated a set of explicit competencies or skills that define what it means to be “college ready?”

The public four-year institutions have evaluated and accepted the Knowledge and Skills for University Success (KSUS) as a standard skill set for academic success. The Commission, working through the EEDA, is currently in the process of developing an understanding

between K-12 and higher education personnel of high school “exit-courses” in alignment with entrance expectations for freshman-level higher education coursework.

- 4) Are systematic programs in place in the state that encourage students to accelerate progress by taking college-level courses while still enrolled in high school?

AP, IB, and Dual Enrollment courses are all taught in at least some of South Carolina’s public secondary schools. The EEDA is pushing the development of statewide policy for public institutions of higher education to implement acceptance of IB and Dual Enrollment coursework. (By state law AP coursework has been required for acceptance as credit in public institutions of higher education, if the student is applying to an institution which offers a course in the AP subject area and the student scored at 3 or above on the AP examination.)

- 5) Is there a statewide policy present that governs placement into college-level courses or remedial courses? Is a standard set of placement tests recommended or required? If yes, are common cut scores for placement decisions in place or do institutions get to set their own?

No statewide policy governs placement of students in public institutions into college-level or remedial courses. By statewide policy since 1996, four-year institutions are not funded to teach developmental courses and are expected to contract with neighboring technical colleges to offer any remedial coursework. Each four-year institution uses its own methods for deciding upon what student levels of learning indicate that a student is eligible for college-level or remedial work. The sixteen colleges of the State Technical College System all use ASSET/COMPASS as the mechanism for determining whether a student is eligible for college-level or remedial courses. However, no two of the technical colleges use the same cut-score in the ASSET/COMPASS for making their decisions on student eligibility.

- 6) Is there a visible statewide transfer and articulation policy? Does this cover all institutions or only public institutions? What are the specifics of this policy?

South Carolina has had a statewide transfer and articulation policy since 1996. The policy is published and available on the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education’s web site at: <http://www.che.sc.gov/AcademicAffairs/TRANSFER/Transfer.htm>.

The policy covers public institutions only; however, nine of 20 South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) institutions have voluntarily accepted this policy for specific curricular areas in which they offer degree work.

- a) Is the transfer/articulation policy accompanied by a statewide transferable general education requirement? Does this name actual courses and/or credits? Are specific competencies identified that the student should meet through this coursework? Is testing used to guarantee student competency for progress or transfer?

Yes. For interested students, the transfer and articulation policy contains five transfer blocks, each of which contains general education coursework designed to transfer to meet significant amounts of the general education requirements of institutions to which the student might transfer in South Carolina. Yes, the transfer and articulation policy names

actual courses and credits. There are no specific competencies identified. Except for end-of-course grades, no mechanism for ascertaining or guaranteeing student competency is used for progress in the AA/AS curricula.

- b) More specifically, does an AA or AS degree from a community college in the state meet general education requirements at public four-year institutions? What mechanisms are in place to make sure this actually happens?

The statewide transfer and articulation agreement provides for giving students who have completed the AA/AS degree “junior level status” in a four-year institution to which they might transfer, but that policy specifically delimits the scope of meaning of that status to items associated with extra-curricular activities (priorities for residence housing, sports tickets, etc.) There is, therefore, no automatic acceptance of the AA/AS and the credits within it toward meeting the General Education requirements of an institution, its colleges, or its programs of study.

- c) Does credit from transfer courses meet specific course requirements at the transfer institution (e.g. American History counts for American History) or do just the credits transfer to count against the total needed for graduation?

There is a list of 86 courses that can be transferred from the technical colleges to 4-year institutions. There is no uniform policy as to how these courses will count towards general education or specific course requirements or total credits to graduate.

- 7) Are there statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree?

There is a program through the SC State Department of Education to grant alternative certification for teachers through the PACE program and the General Assembly approved granting of ABCTE alternative certification for teachers in the 2007 session, but there is no statewide test-out or competency-based provision that might allow students to accelerate progress toward a degree.

- 8) Does the state have an easily-accessible state-supported alternative institution that allows students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution?

There is no current easily-accessible state-supported alternative institution that allows students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution. However, the SREB Electronic Campus allows for many of the same functions.

- a) Does the state have an accessible central bank or catalog of on-line courses contributed by many institutions that enable students to do “one-stop shopping” for electronic courses?

Two avenues are available to South Carolina residents in this regard. SCETV hosts DESC.info (Distance Education South Carolina), a vehicle by which students can search

for courses and/or degree programs (including certificates and teacher education certifications) offered online by South Carolina institutions of higher education. This vehicle is described on its website as “growing.” Secondly, as a member state of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), South Carolina affords its residents and institutions of higher education the opportunity to see all the programs of study and all courses offered online by South Carolina institutions of higher education listed through the SREB-EC site. The goal of the Electronic Campus is to provide students with a central point of reference, giving them easier access to electronic programs and courses. By using the Electronic Campus, students will be able to obtain information over the Internet about each course and program and will know the standards that the colleges and universities have pledged to meet for these distance learning programs and courses. All courses are offered by accredited colleges and universities and carry regular academic credit.

- 9) Does the state provide incentives to institutions for improvements in degree production or graduation rates? For minimizing the number of students graduating with excessive numbers of credits (e.g. more than 120 SCH)?

Yes. The state does provide an incentive to institutions for improvements in degree production. Unless a degree program meets or exceeds the CHE’s statewide standards for productivity in enrollments and graduations in three consecutive two-year cycles (each of which is relying on a five-year rolling average), a degree program will be recommended for termination. The state does not offer incentive institutions for minimizing the number of student graduating with excessive numbers of credits, although the SC Performance Funding Accountability System lists graduation rate as an indicator of a critical success factor. Details about the SC Performance Funding Accountability System can be found at:

[http://www.che.sc.gov/New\\_Web/Rep&Pubs/Perf\\_Fund.htm](http://www.che.sc.gov/New_Web/Rep&Pubs/Perf_Fund.htm)

- 10) Does the state provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees (e.g. tuition rebates or cash bonuses)? For students who complete their programs without amassing additional credits (e.g. within 120 SCH)? Are there financial disincentives for students to take more than the number of credits needed to graduate (e.g. full or out-of-state tuition)?

Certain state scholarship programs are available to students in good academic standing only for a set number of semesters once they matriculate. However, there is no “active” incentive by the state to encourage students to complete their degree programs early and/or without amassing more credits than they need to graduate. Similarly, there is no “active” state-initiated financial disincentive for students to take more than the number of credits needed to graduate.