STANDARD 14.3 COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEWS

The institution applies all appropriate standards and policies to its distance learning programs, branch campuses, and off-campus instructional sites.

Institutional Response

The University of South Carolina Aiken has applied the requisite standards to the off-campus instructional sites at USC Sumter and USC Salkehatchie. Details of the application of each relevant standard as they specifically pertain to instruction on the Salkehatchie and Sumter campuses include:

- **Standard 2.1 Institutional mission.** USC Aiken's mission [S1] specifically mentions "continuing and distance education" and "educational outreach." The university provides comprehensive educational offerings and services to students throughout South Carolina.

- **Standard 3.1.a Degree-granting authority.** All of USC Aiken's degree programs are authorized by the Board of Trustees and the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.[S2] This includes on campus, remote, and online academic offerings.

- **Standard 4.3 Multi-level governance.** The authority of the USC System Board of Trustees to approve programs and policies at remote locations is presented in the narrative to Standard 4.3 - Multi-level governance [S3] under the section discussing the role of boards with respect to institutional policy. The authority of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education to set state-wide policies with respect to distance education is also discussed in this area.

- **Standard 6.2.a Faculty qualifications.** The faculty teaching rosters presented in the narrative to Standard 6.2.a – Faculty qualifications [S4] were comprehensive and included "faculty teaching programs offered at remote sites, and faculty teaching dual credit courses at local schools."

- **Standard 6.2.c Program coordination.** A table of program coordinators was presented in the narrative to Standard 6.2.c – Program coordination [S5] that

included all academic programs, including those located on the Salkehatchie and Sumter campuses. Coordinators were named for all programs at remote sites.

- **Standard 6.3 Faculty appointment and evaluation.** As mentioned in the narrative response to Standard 6.3 – Faculty appointment and evaluation,[S6] appointment, employment, and evaluation policies and procedures apply to all faculty, regardless of the principal location of the faculty member.

- **Standard 6.5 Faculty development.** As mentioned in the narrative to Standard 6.5 – Faculty development [S7], all USC Aiken faculty are provided support to promote and enhance their growth as teachers, scholars, practitioners, and professionals. All faculty members within the USC System are provided opportunities to take additional graduate classes, attend professional meetings and in-service training, and write and present scholarly works in their fields. Sabbatical leave and services provided by the Office of Sponsored Research, the Center for Teaching Excellence, and the Office of Distance Learning are available to all faculty.

- **Standard 7.1 Institutional planning.** As mentioned in the narrative of Standard 7.1 – Institutional planning [S8], the use of remote instruction has been integrated in the institution's strategic plans and in taskforces.

- **Standard 8.1 Student achievement.** The impact of remote offerings on several measures of student achievement is mentioned in the narrative of Standard 8.1 – Student achievement.[S9] Among other things, the offering of degree completion programs at remote sites and online are expected to positively impact persistence to graduation and the number of degrees awarded.

- **Standard 8.2.a Student outcomes: educational programs.** Off-campus instructional sites are included in the programmatic assessment activities of academic units. As mentioned in the narrative to Standard 8.2a – Student outcomes: Educational programs [S10], data are reported and examined in both aggregated and disaggregated forms to ensure comparable outcomes.

- **Standard 8.2.c Student outcomes: academic and student services.** Academic and student services are provided both virtually and in person. For example, Disability Services, the Library, the Help Desk, and the Counseling Center, to name a few, provide services in both formats. Students at remote sites can avail themselves of services located on the remote campus or through online offerings of services located on the Aiken campus. All data are included in the assessment activities of the unit. The narrative to Standard 8.2.c – Student outcomes: Academic and student service [S11] states that support services have as their primary purpose support for student learning and student welfare, regardless of the location of the student.

- **Standard 10.1 Academic policies.** The narrative to Standard 10.1 – Academic policies [S12] indicates that academic policies are uniformly enforced regardless of the location of a USC Aiken student or the instructional delivery practices employed by the institution's faculty. All policies are made available to student, faculty and other interested parties online.

- **Standard 10.2 Public information.** As specified in the narrative to Standard 10.2 – Public information [S13], all students in USC Aiken programs offered at remote USC campuses have onsite program coordinators and advisors who can provide guidance on policy matters. Also, syllabi for online courses include details regarding where students can receive assistance or find policy information.

- **Standard 10.4 Academic governance.** The narrative to Standard 10.4 – Academic governance [S14] makes it clear that faculty within an academic unit of the University have responsibility for the development, implementation, evaluation, and modification of curriculum of all academic programs within that unit, regardless of where or how the instruction is delivered.

- **Standard 10.6 Distance and correspondence education.** The narrative to Standard 10.6 – Distance and correspondence education [S15] demonstrates USC Aiken is in compliance with this standard.

Standard 14.3

- **Standard 10.7 Policies for awarding credit.** As specified in the [narrative to Standard 10.7 – Policies for awarding credit](#) [S16], seminar courses, distance education courses, internet courses, internships, field classes, and other courses which do not share the traditional lecture/laboratory format require the same number of contact or instructional hours required for traditional lecture/laboratory classes. This is also true of classes offered on the Salkehatchie and Sumter campuses. Policies regarding credit hours and course activities are made available online.

- **Standard 10.9 Cooperative academic arrangements.** The [narrative to Standard 10.9 – Cooperative academic](#) [S17] arrangements indicates that the sole cooperative arrangement is an online MEd in Educational Technology offered jointly with the University of South Carolina Columbia campus.

- **Standard 11 Library and learning information.** Library and learning information [resources](#) [S18], [staff](#) [S19], and [access](#) [S20] support both in person and remote services. Students located on the Salkehatchie and Sumter campuses also have access to library and learning services provided by USC Salkehatchie and USC Sumter.

- **Standard 12.1 Student support services.** The [narrative to Standard 12.1 – Student support services](#) [S21] states that all academic support areas (e.g., Library, Disability Services) and appropriate student support areas (e.g., Bookstore, Career Services, Financial Aid, Registrar, and Counseling Center) are provided online to serve both online students and those located at remote sites.

- **Standard 12.4 Student complaints.** As indicated in the [narrative to Standard 12.4 – Student complaints](#) [S22], all students are provided access to an Ombuds. Students on remote campuses are entitled to relief from an academic complaint or grievance through the student grievance procedure established in the appropriate USC Regional Campus Student Handbook. After a judgement has been rendered on that campus, an appeal to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at USC Aiken and a subsequent appeal to the USC Aiken

Chancellor may be made. Students who are taking classes online are provided procedures for handling complaints including a student complaint form. The forms is available on the USC Aiken website.

- **Standard 13.7 Physical resources.** The narrative to Standard 13.7 – Physical resources [S23] includes an assessment of the adequacy of facilities and resources on the Salkehatchie and Sumter campuses.

- **Standard 13.8 Institutional environment.** As indicated in the narrative to Standard 13.8 – Institutional environment [S24], USC Aiken employs technological protocols to protect all students, including those using online instruction at those located at a remote site. In fact, in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, on campus students, faculty and staff were directed to continue their studies and work virtually until a safe and effective protocol could be developed.

Supporting Documentation

S1. Narrative to Standard 2.1 – Institutional mission

S2. Narrative to Standard 3.1.a – Degree-grant authority

S3. Narrative to Standard 4.3 - Multi-level governance

S4. Narrative of Standard 6.2.a – Faculty qualification

S5. Narrative to Standard 6.2.c – Program coordination

S6. Narrative response to Standard 6.3 – Faculty appointment and evaluation

S7. Narrative to Standard 6.5 – Faculty development

S8. Narrative of Standard 7.1 – Institutional planning

S9. Narrative of Standard 8.1 – Student achievement

S10. Narrative to Standard 8.2a – Student outcomes: Educational programs

S11. Narrative to Standard 8.2.c – Student outcomes: Academic and student service

S12. Narrative to Standard 10.1 – Academic policies

S13. Narrative to Standard 10.2 – Public information

S14. Narrative to Standard 10.4 – Academic governance

S15. Narrative to Standard 10.6 – Distance and correspondence education