



PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Name of the Institution: **University of South Carolina - Aiken**

Date of the Review: **November 5-6, 2020**

SACSCOC Staff Member: **Dr. Denise Y. Young**

Chair of the Committee: **Dr. William R. Fannin - CHAIR**
Professor of Management
The University of Texas Permian Basin
Odessa, TX

Section 4: Governing Board

4.2 The governing board

- 4.2.f protects the institution from undue influence by external persons or bodies.
(*External influence*)

Compliance

The institution offered an abundance of evidence to demonstrate that measures are in place to protect the institution from undue influence by external persons or bodies. This includes the broad authority granted to the Board of Trustees by the South Carolina Code of Law sections 59-117-10 and 59-117-40. This authority is delineated in the Article IV of the Board's Bylaws. That board members come from the state's sixteen judicial circuits is as evidence that no one part of the state can unilaterally, unduly influence the institution. The fact that board members are limited to four-year terms serves as additional evidence. Moreover, these terms are staggered to ensure a balance of experienced and new board members to combat undue influence.

The Board's Bylaws require a quorum of eleven members for the transaction of any business of the board and stipulates a majority vote of the members present to approve items. The bylaws also reinforce that the legal authority of the board rests with the collective board and not with any individual board member(s).

Evidence of board member orientations that cover board policies, including by not limited to ethics and conflict of interest, is found in the signed completion forms of two trustees who joined the board in January 2019.

Evidence is also presented of SACSCOC's July 2019 letter inquiring of undue influence in the selection of the Chancellor of the University of South Carolina and System President. The Board's two response letters (July and September 2019) and SACSCOC's August 2019 follow-up for additional information are also in evidence, as is the Board's November 2019 response. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that this incident related to another institution within the University of South Carolina System, but did not involve the institution under review.

The Board of Trustees subsequently engaged AGB as a consultant and committed to establish policies to clarify the roles and responsibilities of board members, improve institutional and system governance, build stronger board practices and board leadership, and develop a comprehensive orientation and annual education programs. Finally, the Board of Trustees created BTRU Policy 1.19 *Protecting the Institution from External Influences* and an oath of office, code of conduct, and statement of commitment.