EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

June 7, 2010

Dr. Belle S. Wheelan
President
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, GA 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Wheelan:

I am writing in reply to your letter dated June 7, 2010 in which you indicated that the Commission on Colleges has no record of receiving the follow up report on the USC Aiken online BSN Completion program that was requested in May 2006. I am enclosing a copy of my letter dated July 3, 2006 and the responses we submitted to the five questions we were asked to answer.

Please let me know if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Ozment
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

cc: Dr. Thomas Hallman
    Chancellor

    Dr. Rudy Jackson
    Vice President, Commission on Colleges

July 3, 2006

Dr. Belle S. Wheelan
President
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Wheelan:

Enclosed are the responses to the questions posed in your letter of May 23, 2006 about the proposed online Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree completion program at USC Aiken. Please let me know if any additional information is required.

The $300 payment for review of this substantive change request is being sent through the Treasurer's Office.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Ozment
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

cc: Dr. Rudolph S. Jackson
    Commission on Colleges

    Dr. Thomas L. Hallman
    Chancellor, USC Aiken

    Dr. Julia Ball
    Dean of Nursing, USC Aiken

Replies to Questions from:
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges

June 8th 2006

1.   Describe structured access to faculty for students.
    Students will be required to attend the USC Aiken and School of Nursing (SON) orientation days at the beginning of the RN to BSN Completion program. During this time, students will be oriented to the University facilities and introduced to the faculty of the SON. In addition, students will be oriented to the online platform used by the SON. At present, Blackboard is used exclusively by the SON Faculty. After classes have begun, students will be required to make online postings at regular intervals as specified by the course faculty, and the course faculty will answer questions and facilitate online discussions according to a rubric (an example rubric is enclosed in Appendix A). In addition to using the course rubric, course faculty will also facilitate class acceptance of course norms (example course norms are enclosed in Appendix B). The course norm document will specify the amount of time that students may expect to wait for a reply from the course faculty under usual circumstances and the method by which the student may obtain a faster response, including telephone numbers with the best time to call. Blackboard allows for students to have confidential online conversations with faculty and students as well as conversations that are open and accessible to all.

2.   How will the institution ensure student access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the Library and other learning information resources?
    Students will receive orientation to the library and academic support services at the time of orientation to the university. The method to access online nursing journals is user friendly and is available through a web link that will be provided in all online classes. If more journals are added to the online collection, students will be notified. USC Aiken has over 180 online nursing journals that may be found at http://atoz.ebsco.com/home.asp?id=3723&sid=112023467&txtKeyword=nurs%2A&SF=Titles& page=1. This collection is adequate for both online and traditional students in the RN to BSN Completion program. Additionally, should students require documents via interlibrary loan, this service will be available to online students in the same manner as for traditional students.

3.   Describe financial support, including a first year budget, as well as projected revenues/expenditures and cash flow.
    No additional funding or new positions will be required for the online RN to BSN completion program. The USC Aiken SON graduated its last class of Associate Degree Nurses in December 2005, thereby allowing nursing faculty members to redistribute their time to embrace an online RN to BSN Completion program. The only expenditures that will be made will be for lap-top computers for the five faculty members teaching online, approximately $7,500.

1

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The funds for the lap-tops are available in a SON Foundation account. The first year of the online program may not have a full complement of 20 students because of the inability to advertise the program before it was approved by all accrediting agencies and students not having their program prerequisites completed. However, it is anticipated that in the fall of 2007, there will be a full cohort of 20 students in the program because of the increased interest by Registered Nurses in online education. Once the online program is established, it is estimated that online students will outnumber the traditional RN to BSN students. USC Aiken has traditionally graduated in excess of 40 RN to BSN Completion students per year, but recently numbers of RN students have been dwindling because of USC Aiken's lack of an online degree completion program. In 2006, USC Aiken expects to graduate 20 – 25 students.

4.   Describe systematic evaluation of instructional results and ways in which those results will be used to improve the program?
        Course evaluations will be completed in an online format that has already been designed and is in operation for other online courses offered at USC Aiken. Summative evaluations are conducted for each course each semester. Traditional and online course evaluations are already used as a method for data collection for course improvement. Data is examined after student and faculty input, and courses are modified when necessary. However, it is planned that during the first time an online course is taught, formative evaluation will be conducted by the course faculty so that modifications may be made while the course is in progress.

5.   How will you determine comparability of learning outcomes between the on campus cohort and online cohort of students in the same program?
        All students will take the same examinations and, in appropriate courses, be required to write papers or essays on the same topics. Clinical experiences will be similar for online and on-campus students and will vary according the individual RN's specialty area (e.g. if a pediatric nurse wishes to concentrate on the complex health needs of a pediatric patient, this clinical experience will differ from an adult nurse who concentrates on the complex health needs of an adult patient).

Discussion Rubric

This tool will be used by the faculty member to assign discussion scores for the class.
To reach a standard required to pass, a score of 15 must be achieved (75%).

Category	4	3	2	1
Quality of Information	Information clearly relates to the main topic and adds new concepts, information. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides at least one supporting detail or example.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic or simply restates the main concept.
Resources	Consistently provides resources even if not required.	Occasionally provides resources even if not required.	Provides resources when requested.	Does not provide resources even when requested.
Critical Thinking	Enhances the critical thinking process consistently through premise reflection and questioning of self and others.	Critical thinking and premise reflection is demonstrated in discussion by the individual only.	Responds to questions but does not engage in premise reflection.	Does not respond to questions posed by the facilitator.
Participation	Encourages and facilitates interaction among members of the online community.	Responds to other members of the online community.	Rarely interacts or responds to other members of the online community.	Responds to the discussion facilitator only.
Professional Language	Both professional vocabulary and writing style are used consistently throughout the discussions.	Both professional vocabulary and writing style are used frequently throughout the discussion.	Both professional vocabulary and writing style are used occasionally throughout the discussion.	Professional vocabulary and writing style are not used.

Developed by Amy Finch PhD and Diane Connelly PhD, RN 12/01 Fort Hays State University

The following course norms are offered for your consideration:
Online Course Norms

The norms and expectations of a group are important to understand when functioning in a segment of society. This is equally true in the online learning community. It will be helpful for all of us to establish "ground rules" for functioning in our community. The following norms are submitted for your review and consideration. We must have consensus on these norms to have an effective community. **Please make your additions or corrections so that we can come to an agreement as to how we will function in this course.**

1. To function effectively, we must begin the course with basic skills and be able to navigate in Blackboard. Please make sure that you have access to a computer that has the minimum requirements outlined by the School of Nursing and that you attend the online orientation required by the School of Nursing.

2. **The course faculty will respond to postings 3 times per week.** If you need help sooner, please email directly to juliab@usca.edu or call 641-3263. You may also post your question on Blackboard and other members of the on-line learning community may be able to assist you sooner.

3. Please feel free to phone me at home at 803-648-6281 if you need urgent assistance. Please do not call after 9:00 p.m. or before 7:00 a.m.

4. Students are to post their discussions a **minimum of two times per discussion question during the time allotted for the module. Please see the following discussion rubric for instructions.**

5. Isolation can be a problem in online courses. Students are encouraged to collaborate on group assignments and projects.

6. You may wish to prepare your postings in MS Word then cut and paste. This allows you to collect your thoughts and make spell checks. However, typos and spelling do not count in discussions.

7. Although online language is changing, please refrain from using "techno language" in discussions or replies. (e.g. AAMOF – As a matter of fact; ROFLOL – Rolling on floor laughing out loud.) There are many, many others. Please be aware that if you do use these expressions on discussion questions, points will be deducted.

8 **We will respect each other's views and observe good "netiquette"**
   a. ALL CAPS = SHOUTING
   b. Remember you are talking to real people.
   c. Everyone makes mistakes – be patient with those unfamiliar with online learning.
   d. Take care to avoid viruses
   e. Be professional
   f. Take care with abbreviations