

**EXCERPT FROM THE 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 - Columbia**

Date of the Review: **November 3-4, 2020**

SACSCOC Staff Member: **Dr. Linda Thomas-Glover**

Chair of the Committee: **Dr. Timothy S. Brophy**
Director, Institutional Assessment
and Professor, Music Education
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32606

14.5

Policy Compliance

- 14.5 The institution complies with SACSCOC's policy statements that pertain to new or additional institutional obligations that may arise that are not part of the standards in the current *Principles of Accreditation*.

(Policy compliance)

(Note: For applicable policies, institutions should refer to the SACSCOC website [<http://www.sacscoc.org>])

Non-Compliance

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Policy, "Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review," states that:

For electronic submissions, please comply with all steps outlined below:

1. Copy the report and all attachments onto the appropriate number of flash drives, in accordance with the number of requested copies of the report. **Each** flash drive should be labeled with the name of the institution and the title of the report. All hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. *Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, since this process will result in a large file that is not searchable.*

As noted throughout this report, the institution provides a preponderance of evidence via links that go to websites outside the flash drive; the Commission expects that institutions provide static information for its reaffirmation records. While the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee made every attempt to review the institution's documentation, some documentation could not be reviewed or considered due to the (a) live websites with no instructions or directions for how to find the intended evidence, (b) broken links, (c) low-quality, blurred images that were unreadable, and (d) lack of direct access to the evidence. In addition, the institution often linked to multipage documents as evidence, and expected the Committee to search the documents for the relevant evidence. The institution's software program (Compliance Assist) has the capability of directing reviewers to specific pages within documents, which expedites the reviewer's work. However, this tool does not work when live links are used to access documents.

The expectation is that all documentation is self-contained within the flash drive provided; therefore, all documentation should be static, downloaded and linked *within* the flash drive. The institution should not expect the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee to search live websites. PDF documents and embedded figures should be inspected for clarity and readability. In some instances, the institution's narrative refers to abbreviations for documents or services without spelling them out the first time; the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee made every effort to interpret them, but in some instances, it was not possible.

To address the institution's failure to comply with the SACSCOC policy, "Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review," the institution needs to provide the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee in its Focused Report a complete narrative with appropriate linked documentation in support of the institution's cases for compliance for all United States Department of Education required standards. These standards are: 5.4 (Qualified administrative and academic officers), 6.1 (Full-time faculty), 6.2.b (Program faculty), 6.2.c (Program coordination), 8.1 (Student achievement), 8.2.a (Student outcomes: educational programs), 9.1 (Program content), 9.2 (Program length), 9.3 (General education), 10.2 (Public information), 10.5 (Admissions policies and practices), 10.6 (Distance and correspondence education), 10.7 (Policies for awarding credit), 12.1 (Student support services), 12.4 (Student complaints), 13.6 (Federal and state responsibilities), 13.7 (Physical resources), 14.1 (Publication of accreditation status), 14.3 (Comprehensive institutional reviews), and 14.4 (Representation to other agencies). This is required even if the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found adequate documentation in support of the institution's case for compliance.