



State of South Carolina Office of the Inspector General

Sent via Electronic Mail

August 22, 2023

OIG File NO: 2023-6271-I

The Honorable Wes Hayes
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
Board of Commissioners, Chairman
1122 Lady Street, Suite 300
Columbia, SC 29201

Dr. Rusty L. Monhollon
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
President and Executive Director
1122 Lady Street, Suite 300
Columbia, SC 29201

Re: Request for a Management Review of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education from the South Carolina House Legislative Oversight Committee (HLOC),
Expansion in Scope by the South Carolina Office of the State Inspector General (SIG)

Dear Chairman Hayes and Dr. Monhollon:

By letter dated August 22, 2023, the HLOC requested the SIG to conduct a management review of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE). This letter is to notify the CHE of an expansion in scope of the SIG's ongoing investigation of the CHE.

On March 24, 2023, the SIG notified the CHE of the initiation of an investigation into the CHE with the focus on six particular areas of CHE performance:

- Employee turnover;
- Employee qualifications, experience and assignments to corresponding job description and duties;
- Expansion of CHE positions, organizational structure, and mission beyond that authorized by statute;
- Use of third-party entities to review courses at two-year technical colleges for qualification at four-year colleges and universities;
- Implementation of REACH Act compliance audit (Act 26 of 2021); and
- Effectiveness and cost-savings to the agency's telework program.

On July 26, 2023, the SIG presented an initial draft of its investigative findings for discussion. By letter dated August 8, 2023, the SIG notified the CHE that Dr. Monhollon and Georges Tippens, CHE deputy director, disclosed content from the draft report during public testimony before the Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee of the HLOC in violation of SC Code of Laws, §1-6-50(C).

The HLOC request will incorporate the following areas into the previously identified areas of scope:

- Organizational culture;
- Organizational structure and chain-of-command;
- Utilization and distribution of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions;
- Managerial practices and decision-making processes, employee corrective action procedures;
- Employee complaint and grievance processes; and
- Employee turnover trends.

The SIG is cognizant of the ongoing HLOC study of CHE. While reviewing the HLOC hearing videos and testimony I have determined that a full financial management review of CHE's business practices and financial projections is required and falls within the "managerial practices and decision-making processes" part of the HLOC request.

I have staffed this expanded scope sufficiently with a mixture of senior auditors and investigators, as well as the Deputy IG and myself to ensure that the investigation is completed in a thorough and timely manner.

At this time, I ask that you notify all CHE staff members of the contents of this letter. As part of this management review, the SIG will conduct an all-employee climate/management survey that will be facilitated by the SIG.

If you have questions regarding this matter, I may be reached at (803) 896-1287. Please ensure the appropriate staff are available to provide additional information on this matter to my staff.

Sincerely,



Brian D. Lamkin
State Inspector General

cc: The Honorable Jeffrey E. "Jeff" Johnson, Chairman,
South Carolina House Legislative Oversight Committee
The Honorable Timothy A. "Tim" McGinnis, Chairman
South Carolina House Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee
Trey Walker, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor of South Carolina
Thomas Limehouse, Chief Legal Counsel, Office of the Governor of South Carolina
Melanie Barton, Senior Education Advisor, Office of the Governor of South Carolina