

3.2.4 The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious or other external bodies and protects the institution from such influence. **(External influence)**

USC provided evidence that the S.C. Code of Laws includes provisions regarding the ethical behavior of public officials and the access and allowable interactions of public officials with external constituents. The Off-Site Review Committee confirmed that Section 8-13-700 of that Code addresses the use of an official position or office for financial gain and requires the disclosure of potential conflicts of interest.

USC also reported that the Secretary of the University Board of Trustees meets with all newly elected/appointed Board of Trustees members prior to the start of their terms, to provide a New Board of Trustees Orientation. The Off-Site Review Committee reviewed evidence of a sample agenda for that orientation, confirming that appropriate topics related to the ethics policy and the State Ethics Commission Rules of Conduct are included. However, USC provided no evidence confirming that the Board members had, in fact, completed this training.

Finally, the narrative does not address any steps that the board has taken to "protect the institution from such influence."

The On-Site Review Committee was provided examples to demonstrate that the Board had protected the institution from undue influence including the Confederate Battle Flag issue, expansion of medical education, and attempts to close System campuses. Also, copies of the orientation certificate sheets that new Trustees sign after receiving training were provided to the extent they existed. These sheets list the items covered in this orientation and include the University of South Carolina Ethics Policy, the Board of Trustees Conflict of Interest Policy, a review of the State Ethics Rules of Conduct, and hyperlinks to the documents relating to these topics. Finally, members of the Committee met with several Trustees as well as the Secretary and General Counsel of the Board of Trustees to confirm their sensitivity to such external influences and the diligence with which the Board meets its ethical responsibilities.