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Focused Report

Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1

The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline in accordance with the guidelines listed below. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

Judgment: Compliant

Response:

Columbia

From a former award-winning CNN senior White House correspondent, to one of the top 10 most vital business educators in the nation, to a former soloist with the New York City Ballet, to an internationally recognized scientist in the field of cardiac electrophysiology and calcium signaling, the Columbia Campus has assembled a quality, diverse faculty to fulfill its **mission**:

Recognized by the Carnegie Foundation as a top research and service institution, nationally ranked in start-up businesses, and conferring over 30%¹ of all bachelor's and graduate degrees awarded at public institutions in South Carolina, the University has a profound relevance, reach, and impact on the people of the state. As the flagship institution of the state system, USC Columbia leads the way in providing all students with the highest-quality education, including the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for success and responsible citizenship in a complex and changing world through engagement in nationally and internationally ranked research, scholarship, community outreach, and artistic creation

Columbia has programs in place to compete internationally for top professors, and has policies in place to ensure that all courses are taught by qualified instructors.

Faculty Excellence Initiative

The **Faculty Excellence Initiative** (FEI) was developed "to recruit faculty who will advance USC as a leader in education and research by building upon areas of existing strengths to achieve national and international prominence." The goal of the FEI is to bring 150 new highly recruited tenure-track faculty members to the Columbia campus to move the university toward an innovative future.

Centenary Plan

The goal of the **Centenary Plan** (CP) is to recruit new faculty who will conduct quality research and attract external funding to support their scholarly activities. The program will provide partial support (up to \$200,000 per hire) towards each position for up to three years. This program is temporarily suspended for the Fall 2010 semester.

Centers of Economic Excellence

The **Centers of Economic Excellence** (CoEE) program allows the three South Carolina research institutions to use state funds to create centers of economic excellence in research areas that will advance South Carolina's economy.

Part of the program supports CoEE endowed chairs, to be filled by world-renowned scientists who will lead the Centers of Economic Excellence. By investing in talent and technology, the CoEE Program is designed to fuel the state's knowledge-based economy, resulting in high-paying jobs and an improved standard of living in South Carolina. Another result of the program is the hiring of world-class scientists to enhance the faculty at each of the research institutions.

Faculty Hiring Procedures

The **Columbia Faculty Manual** (page 18) presents the academic qualifications required of teaching faculty:

Assistant Professor. To be eligible for appointment at the rank of assistant professor, a faculty member normally is expected to hold the earned doctor's degree or its equivalent and must possess strong potential for development as a teacher and scholar.

Instructor. To be eligible for appointment at the rank of instructor, a faculty member normally is expected to possess a master's degree in the teaching discipline or a master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).

These requirements are in concert with the SACS Credential Guidelines. In addition, the **Recruitment of Academic Personnel Policy ACAF 1.00** clearly specifies the hiring authority and the procedures and committees required to hire faculty. The following excerpt verifies the fact that the Columbia Campus



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values faculty with the highest terminal degree in the discipline and that faculty credentials including official transcripts are required to be verified:

8. Credential Verification and Faculty Roster

- a. The final candidate for a faculty position at any level must provide certified copies of academic credentials (i.e. official transcripts) to the hiring authority, as required by SACS. All University faculty and other academic personnel involved in instruction must meet SACS credential requirements for teaching at the appropriate level.
- b. Individuals appointed to a tenure-track faculty position must have obtained a terminal academic degree appropriate to the field. Exceptions may be appropriate in certain professional fields for candidates with the clear equivalent in professional experience and scholarly achievement, when authorized by the campus chief academic officer.
- c. Official records of faculty credentials must be maintained by the office of the college or school dean. Additionally, all faculty and instructional personnel must be included on the college or school's Faculty Roster, as required by SACS.

Finally, the [Job Reference and Background Checks Policy HR 1.90](#) reiterates the requirement of checking official transcripts before extending an offer of hire:

3. Faculty

- a. The background check for this category of employee includes:
 - i. Social security number verification and fraud detection
 - ii. Criminal conviction record – county, state, and federal
 - iii. Driver's license verification and driving record check.
- b. In a separate process, candidates for faculty positions provide certified copies of their transcripts verifying receipt of their terminal degree in compliance with requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

While the policies requiring the checking of faculty credentials (including transcripts) have been in existence and have been followed for many years, only recently have the policies been revised to require the storage of the transcripts of hired faculty. These policy revisions were made in response to the relatively new standard requiring a SACS credential audit of all institutional teaching faculty.

Distance Education

The hiring policies are identical for all faculty members regardless of the primary method of course delivery. As outlined in [Comprehensive Standard 3.4.10](#), the [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) and [University Technology Services](#) offer assistance and training in the development and teaching of distance courses.

The Faculty Roster

The Faculty Roster web page contains links to PDFs for each college, school, and campus. The information in each faculty roster is arranged by department and by faculty member. Fall and Spring courses are included as columns in each document. If more information is required for the course, use the link to the Bulletin at the top of the document, and use the Course Descriptions Link. To view the transcript, if available, click on the faculty member's credentials. To view the curriculum vitae, click on the faculty member's name. CVs are available for tenured/tenure track faculty and lecturers.

Regional Campuses

The USC Regional Campuses utilize qualified faculty to accomplish their mission of providing at least the first two years of a baccalaureate degree as well as general AA/AS degrees and specific two year degrees at the Lancaster campus. All faculty (including adjuncts) must meet the SACS criteria of 18 earned graduate hours in the assigned teaching field and hold a master's degree or higher. Teaching assistants are not utilized. Four ranks of faculty have been established: Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, and Instructor. Advancement from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor and Associate Professor to Professor is dependent on three criteria: Effectiveness as a Teacher, Scholarship, and Service. Effectiveness as a Teacher is further delineated by "Effective Teaching" and "Highly Effective" teaching categories. Course evaluations are scheduled to be administered in all courses taught in order to assess teaching effectiveness.

The Regional Campuses of the University of South Carolina (USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter, and USC Union) are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as part of USC Columbia. This recognition affirms the integrated relationship the campuses have with the Columbia campus. At the core of this integration is the assurance that academic coursework offered by the Columbia and Regional Campuses is identical in rigor and degree applicability. The procedures in place to assure this are as follows:

When a Regional Campus desires to offer a USC Columbia course, the credentials of the proposed instructor are submitted to the Office of the Vice Provost for System Affairs and Extended University. After review by this office, the credentials are forwarded to the academic department responsible for the course. If the instructor is approved, the campus may proceed in offering the course. The majority of searches on USC Regional Campuses for tenure track, full-time faculty are comprised of at least one faculty member representing the USC Columbia academic department or discipline of the position being advertised.

Regional Campuses also serve as distance sites for course offerings of USC Columbia.

Supporting Documentation:

Columbia Mission Statement	http://ipr.sc.edu/mission/columbia_ms.htm
Faculty Excellence Initiative	http://www.sc.edu/provost/fei.shtml
Centenary Plan	http://rfp.research.sc.edu/cp_faculty.shtml
Centers of Economic	http://www.sc.edu/coee/index.php

Excellence	
Columbia Faculty Manual	http://www.sc.edu/policies/facman/Faculty_Manual_Columbia.pdf
Recruitment of Academic Personnel Policy	http://www.sc.edu/policies/acaf100.pdf
Job Reference and Background Checks Policy	http://www.sc.edu/policies/hr190.pdf
Center for Teaching Excellence	http://www.sc.edu/cte/
University Technology Services	http://www.uts.sc.edu
Regional Campuses Faculty Manual	http://saeu.sc.edu/RCFaculty/manual.html
The Faculty Roster	http://sacs.sc.edu/secure/

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