

History of Access and Equity in South Carolina

Era of Compliance: From 1981 to 1986 South Carolina implemented a federally mandated desegregation plan designed to: (1) Enhance the State's public historically Black colleges, (2) Desegregate student enrollments at the State's baccalaureate degree granting public colleges and universities, (3) Desegregate faculties, staffs, and governing bodies of all public colleges and universities in South Carolina. In 1985, the Commission on Higher Education adopted the South Carolina Plan for Equity and Equal Opportunity in Public Institutions of Higher Education - 1986-87 and Beyond, which over a three year period, provided funds to support (1) a Graduate Incentive Fellowship Program, (2) an Other Race Grants Program, (3) a Minority Recruitment and Retention Grants Program, and (4) programs to enhance the State's two public historically Black institutions.

Era of Commitment: In February 1988, the Commission approved guidelines for the Access and Equity Program. Implementation of the Program began on July 1, 1989 allowing funds to be awarded to institutions with well-planned activities that (1) flow from the institution's mission and address the recruitment and retention of minority students and employees, (2) meet specific institutional requirements related to the characteristics of students and faculty, (3) are carefully conceptualized, and (4) are linked to guidelines to emphasize the need to achieve campus climates and academic settings that encourage participation and achievement by African American students.

Vision of Access and Equity Program

Our vision is to achieve educational equity for all students and faculty in higher education. This means that success in college should not be affected adversely by a student's race.

Minority enrollment should be at least proportional to the minority population in South Carolina, and minority graduation rates should be comparable to the graduation rates of other students.

Moreover, progress in the recruitment and retention of minority faculty should be made to enhance diversity among those who convey knowledge to our students.

The Access and Equity Program has 7 goals developed to achieve its purpose:

1. Develop and maintain institutional environments where cultural diversity and the presence of minorities are valued aspects of campus life.
2. Achieve parity in black and white graduation rates at undergraduate, professional, and graduate levels.
3. Make additional progress in hiring minority faculty, professional staff, and other employees.
4. Encourage the transfer of minority students from two-year baccalaureate degree granting institutions.
5. Address financial needs provide incentives for minority students by structuring and maintaining State aid programs for undergraduate, professional, and graduate students.
6. Address the problem of under-representation of black males in higher education in South Carolina.
7. Continue to strengthen historically black colleges to ensure that they will be able to fulfill their missions as full partners in the higher education system and provide quality education programs.

Assessments by Commission on Higher Education staff and institutional self-evaluations are used in reviewing the extent to which progress is made toward achieving Access and Equity Program goals at public colleges and universities. Public higher education institutions are required to have internal evaluation strategies for Access and Equity funded activities and to submit narrative progress reports on an annual basis to the CHE staff. The Commission's Committee on Access and Equity has responsibility for oversight and review of the staff's work in coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the Access and Equity Program.

Results of 1992 Program Evaluation

There is widespread consensus that access and equity have high priority and must remain a visible part of State activities. The purpose and goals of the Access and Equity Program received equally impressive endorsement from all constituencies. . . .1992 Program Evaluation
An external evaluation of the Access and Equity Program was conducted by Dr. Richard C. Richardson, Professor of Education at Arizona State University, during the summer of 1992.

Objective for 1994-95 Beyond

The following broad objectives place priority on new and continuing concerns to be emphasized in the Access and Equity Program in 1994 and beyond:

- At both the State and institutional levels, achieve more positive outcomes in increasing minority enrollments and graduation rates, hiring of African American faculty and professional staff, improving campus climates, and expanding the pool of minority students who will be academically prepared and motivated to succeed in college.
- Reduce institutional reporting requirements, enabling campus-based Access and Equity Program directors to devote more time and energy to fulfillment of Program goals and objectives.
- Ensure the efficient and prudent use of Access and Equity Program funds.
- To challenge public and private institutions of higher learning to broaden their reach into every high school in South Carolina through coordinated efforts.
- To place more emphasis on the Graduate Incentive Program.

Enhancing Historically Black Institutions

The fresh approach to achieving more positive access and equity outcomes includes continued support for efforts to enable South Carolina State University and Denmark Technical College to offer quality programs and fulfill their missions as full partners in the South Carolina public higher education system.