

R. Wes Hayes, Jr.
Chairman

Rusty L. Monhollon, Ph.D.
President & Executive Director



June 14, 2022

The Honorable Merita A. Allison, Chair
House Education and Public Works Committee
South Carolina House of Representatives
429 Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

The Honorable Greg Hembree, Chair
Senate Education Committee
South Carolina Senate
402 Gressette Building
Columbia, SC 29201

The Honorable J. Gary Simrill, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
South Carolina House of Representatives
518C Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

The Honorable Ronnie Cromer, Chair
Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee
South Carolina Senate
401 Gressette Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Chairs:

Proviso 11.20 of the 2021-22 Fiscal Year Appropriations Act requires the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to study and implement a classification system for South Carolina public institutions of higher education that includes a classification of a Doctoral/Professional University. I am pleased to provide the attached study summarizing the CHE's research and recommendations for implementation, which the Commission approved at its May 5, 2022, meeting.

During the past year, Commission staff reviewed degree classifications and the approval process of fourteen states, including ten in the southern region. As a result of this review, the CHE approved implementation of an additional public institution classification in South Carolina: Professional Doctorate University classification.

This classification is available to current Comprehensive Teaching Colleges and Universities who seek to offer no more than five combined professional doctorate or Ph.D. degrees that lead to continued education or employment.

Comprehensive Teaching Colleges and Universities seeking a Professional Doctorate University classification must emphasize professional doctorate programs in allied health related fields (including, but not limited to, Nursing Practice, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Optometry, Speech Language Pathology, Veterinary Medicine, and Pharmacy), and Education (EdD) and other high demand areas.

In order to offer additional professional doctorate or Ph.D. degrees, Comprehensive Teaching Colleges and Universities must seek reclassification from the CHE through a change in mission. The reclassification request must accompany a request to offer one or more Professional Doctorate degree(s). The CHE shall prioritize approval of allied health professional doctorate programs over Ph.D. programs.

The CHE will not approve a reclassification unless the requesting institution demonstrates a strong commitment to successful graduate education and to the successful implementation of the proposed



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doctoral program. Additionally, the CHE will publish any other criteria it deems necessary in agency policy and/or regulation to ensure consistent review of institutional requests.

During the next legislative calendar, the CHE will seek amendment of Section 59-103-15 (B) of the South Carolina Code of Laws, to include the Professional Doctorate University Classification.

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of the citizens of South Carolina and to promote higher education. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have questions or if I may be of assistance to you.

With best regards,



Rusty Monhollon, Ph.D.
President and Executive
Director





CHE Professional Doctoral University Classification

BACKGROUND:

South Carolina law, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-103-15 (2021), categorizes public institutions of higher learning (IHL) into four sectors: 1) Research institutions, 2) Four-year colleges and universities, 3) Two-year institutions-branches of the University of South Carolina, and 4) State technical and comprehensive colleges. Except for five doctoral degrees and two engineering related bachelor's degrees authorized by the General Assembly, four-year colleges and institutions in South Carolina may only offer baccalaureate and master's degrees with approval from the Commission on Higher Education (CHE).

Proviso 11.20 of the General Appropriations Act of fiscal year 2021-22 directed the CHE to study and implement a new classification system for South Carolina public senior institutions no later than June 30, 2022. With appropriate approvals from the CHE, institutions under this classification will be allowed to offer no more than five terminal professional or Ph.D. degrees .

Current Research Classification and CHE Policy for New Programs above Current Function and Mission
Currently, research institutions, and select four-year colleges and universities for specific majors, are authorized to offer doctoral degrees.

Under the CHE's current policy, institutions are prohibited from offering a degree program beyond what is included in their mission statement unless so authorized from the General Assembly. An institution must seek approval from the CHE for a change to its mission and status if it seeks to offer a degree program above its current level.

All proposals to establish new doctoral programs must be accompanied by 1) a review from a qualified out-of-state evaluator approved by CHE staff. Prior to submitting the proposal, the institution must provide to the Commission the following information for at least three prospective evaluators: Curriculum Vitae, description of how the educational qualifications and background of each evaluator are related to the proposed program, and the rationale for identifying the evaluators. The evaluation must analyze the merits of the proposed program; 2) its potential effect on existing programs at the institution; 3) its relationship to similar programs in the state, region, or nation; 4) the institution's readiness and ability to support the proposed program; and 5) workforce and market demand in SC since these programs typically have lower enrollment and higher costs than programs offered at other degree levels. When reviewing the evaluation, the CHE defers to South Carolina and regional statistics over national or international data.

ANALYSIS:

The authority to grant institutional academic program offerings outside of the approved function and/or mission for South Carolina public senior institutions requires approval of the SC General Assembly. To better inform the CHE and the SC legislature, the CHE staff conducted a thorough review of function change and mission expansion policies and procedures in other states across the U.S. to gain an understanding of the intricacy of processes and considerations for South Carolina.

Institutional Classifications

Traditionally, U.S. institutions are classified according to the highest level of degree authorized to award, the range of subjects offered, and the extent to which the institution engages in research activities. The classifications are commonly referred to as institutional classifications or sectors. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education's classification framework, first developed in 1970 to support its research program, is the most utilized framework to classify institutions in the U.S. Originally published for public use in 1973, the *Doctoral Universities* classification is a category for institutions that awarded at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees during the referenced year or institutions with below 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees that awarded at least 30 professional practice doctoral degrees in at least two programs. The *Doctoral Universities* classification is further divided into three sub-categories:

- 1) R1: Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity
- 2) R2: Doctoral Universities – High research activity
- 3) D/PU: Doctoral/Professional Universities (Formerly R3) – Moderate research activity

In 2018, Carnegie revised the R3 classification to include institutions that offer professional doctorates rather than one that focuses solely on the amount of research. More specifically, the third category now incorporates professional practice doctoral-level degrees such as the Juris Doctor (J.D.), Doctor of Medicine (M.D.), Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.), Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.), etc. With this new classification, non-research heavy institutions are seeking a new Doctoral University classification under "D/PU".

South Carolina is a member state of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), a regional interstate compact for education striving to improve public education at every level through collaboratives with policymakers, institutions, and educators. The CHE's analysis of doctoral and professional university classifications examined 14 states, ten (of 15) SREB states (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) and four non-SREB states (Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Washington), selected for geographic diversity.

"The states staff reviewed use a variety of methods to classify public higher education sectors. Most states, like South Carolina, use self-titled institutional classifications, which are documented in legislation or state agency policy. Some states use a combination of self-titles and the Carnegie Classification framework. Table 1 below summarizes the method of classification in the states staff reviewed.

Table 1: Institutional Classifications by State

State	Basis for Institutional Classifications	Doctoral Institutional Classifications
SREB		
Alabama	Self-Titles	Universities
Arkansas	Self-Titles & Carnegie Classification	Doctoral Universities, and Master's Colleges and Universities
Delaware	Self-Titles	Universities
Georgia	Self-Titles	Research Universities, Comprehensive Universities, and State Universities
Kentucky	Self-Titles	Research Universities, and Comprehensive University (Advanced Practice Doctorates)
North Carolina	Carnegie Classification	Doctoral Universities, and Master's Colleges and Universities
Oklahoma	Self-Titles	Research Universities, and Regional Universities (Professional Doctorates)
Tennessee	Self-Titles & Carnegie Classification	Doctoral Universities, and Master's Colleges and Universities
Texas	Self-Titles	General Academic Institutions (Research, Emerging Research, Doctoral, and Comprehensive)
Virginia	Self-Titles	Baccalaureate (Major Research Universities, and Other Institutions (Applied Doctorates))
Non-SREB		
Michigan	Carnegie Classification	Doctoral Universities, and Master's Colleges and Universities
New Jersey	Self-Titles	Research Universities, and State Colleges and Universities
New York	Self-Titles	Universities
Washington	Carnegie Classification for Specific Subgroup of Institutions	Research Universities, Regional Universities (Select Applied Doctorates), and Public Liberal Arts College (Select Applied Doctorates)

Institutional Function and Mission - Determination and Revisions

The mission and function, or role, scope, and purpose of a higher education institution helps to determine its institutional classification. Typically, state legislation or the state agency charged with oversight of public institutions of higher learning define each sector's mission. Table 2 lists the entity responsible in defining a public higher education institution's function and mission.

Table 2: How Function and Mission are defined for Institutions by State

State	Function and Mission determined by
SREB	
Alabama	Statute
Arkansas	Institution
Delaware	Institution
Georgia	State Oversight Agency
Kentucky	State Oversight Agency
North Carolina	Institution
Oklahoma	State Oversight Agency
Tennessee	State Oversight Agency
Texas	Institution
Virginia	Institution
Non-SREB	
Michigan	Institution
New Jersey	Statute
New York	Statute
Washington	Statute

Authority to Approve Academic Programs Outside of Established Function and Mission

In each SREB state, the process surrounding an institution’s request to offer academic programs outside of its approved function or mission requires the higher education oversight agency’s approval, aligns with the role and scope of the institution as outlined in statute or policy, and/or state-wide outlook and impact on economic and workforce development. It is similar for the non-SREB states, except for Michigan. In Michigan, each university is constitutionally autonomous. As a result, central planning for institutional classifications is nonexistent.

A review of the states found that three states have legislatively granted authority to one or more institutions to offer degree programs beyond their mission and focus similar to South Carolina. Kentucky, Virginia, and Washington have legislation detailing institutions’ ability to offer doctoral and professional degrees. Again, New Jersey is the only state in which the legislative authority is restricted to community colleges. Similarly, these programs are approved based on alignment to mission and function and state-wide impact on the economy and workforce.

Eligibility to Expand Function and/or Mission – Process and Criteria

Most [All] of the reviewed states follow an extensive process when reviewing an institution's request to offer a program outside of its current mission and focus. In addition to performing a thorough review of the new program, the states determine whether the institution can support its requested function and/or mission expansion.

Texas requirements includes the identification of recruitment efforts and enrollment projections for underrepresented populations in the proposals for new doctoral programs. The proposal request also

requires additional documentation, such as letters of endorsement from local employers, a feasibility study, 5-year institutional plan for the proposed function, distinction of proposed program from current offerings, documentation of ability to support students at a new degree level, and institutional capacity to hire qualified faculty. Several states, such as Arkansas, North Carolina (specifically for *Doctor's Degree – Professional Practice* programs), Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, New York, and Washington require external reviews and/or on-site visits as part of the application process. Additionally, some states require the requesting institution to participate in a hearing before the state higher education oversight agencies for each request.

Limitations in Quantity and Type

States vary in their approach in allowing institutions to offer doctoral or professional degrees. Some states place limits on the number of these degrees an institution may offer. In addition, some states allow an institution to offer these degrees without reclassification. For example, Alabama institutions have authority to offer up to three degrees at a higher level before needing a higher classification. The table below lists any limitations states place on institutions seeking to offer a higher degree classification.

Table 3: Institutional Limitations on Doctoral Degrees by State

State	Quantity Limitations	Type Limitations
SREB		
Alabama	3	None
Arkansas	None	Align with Function/Mission
Delaware	None	None
Georgia	Research/Comprehensive – None; State Universities – A few	Align with Function/Mission
Kentucky	Research – None	Comprehensives – Advanced Practice Doctorates
North Carolina	None	None
Oklahoma	None	Align with Function/Mission
Tennessee	None	None
Texas	Comprehensive – 5	Can decide if “doctoral” or “professional” is best
Virginia	Major Research Univ. – None; Other Institutions – 10	Other Institutions – Applied Areas of Study
Non-SREB		
Michigan	None	None
New Jersey	University Status – None	Align with Function/Mission
New York	None	None
Washington	None	Disciplines vary by Institution and Outlined in Statue

RECOMMENDATION:

The CHE staff recommend the following:

Creation of a new Professional Doctorate University classification, defined as follows:

A South Carolina public senior institution with a mission or focus to advance the postsecondary educational opportunities for South Carolina citizens and offer baccalaureate, master's, and no more than a combined five professional doctorate or Ph.D. degrees that lead to continued education or employment.

Institutions seeking a Professional Doctorate University classification shall emphasize professional doctorate programs on allied health related degrees (including but not limited to: Nursing Practice, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Optometry, Speech Language Pathology, Veterinary Medicine, and Pharmacy) and Education (EdD) and other high demand areas. The CHE shall give higher consideration to these programs over Ph.D. programs.

Comprehensive Teaching Colleges and Universities seeking to transition to the *Professional Doctorate University* classification must seek reclassification from the CHE. The reclassification request must accompany a request to offer one or more Professional Doctorate degree(s).

The CHE will not approve a reclassification unless the institution demonstrates a strong commitment to successful graduate education and to the successful implementation of the proposed doctoral program. The CHE will publish any other criteria it deems necessary in agency policy and/or regulation when it reviews an institution's request for reclassification.

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