



A Regional Palmetto College

FO Minutes

May 01, 2026 – 9:00 AM

Whitener Building, Community Room

In-person attendance:

Maggie Aziz
Alan Charles
Sarah Carter
Lynn Edwards
Avery Fouts
Sarah Heuss
Andrew Kettler
Katie Klik
Steve Lowe
Randy Lowell
Steve Lownes
Cortney Pinnell
Ashley Rabanal
Emily Schafer
Tracy Stapleton
Jenny Triplett

Online attendance:

Majed Al-Ghandour
Joe Anderson
Gale Ashmore
Monica Coven
Neill Hance
Randy Ivey
Tekla Johnson
Sandy Phillips-Long
Andrew Pisano
Caroline Wilson

Future FO meetings:

August 21, 10 am.

Dr. Klik called the meeting to order at 9:04 am.

Approval of minutes from April 24 meeting:

A motion was made to approve the April 24 FO minutes and passed with all in favor.

Dean's Report: Dr. Randy Lowell:

Dr. Lowell gave his report. His report is attached to these minutes.

Academic Dean's Report: Dr. Maggie Aziz:

Dr. Aziz gave her report. Her report is attached to these minutes. Of note:

- Dr. Lownes and Dr. Kettler received, respectively, the PC Teaching and PC Scholarship awards.
- No final grade of "NR" should be given.
- NJCA students need to take 9 hours of in-person classes each semester.

Dr. Lownes announced that all three GLD students passed.

Dr. Kettler added:

- A discussion on the coming cap for external employment.
- Thanks for the successful Literary Festival.
- The AI bot will be expanded upon next year. He called for volunteers to help with it. Prof. Rabanal volunteered to help.

Committee Reports:

Dr. Klik asked people to submit their reports to her. In interest of saving time, reports were not given during the meeting.

Other Business:

- Nominations for PC Faculty Awards – Plyler, Duffy, and Shaw.

Dr. Carter nominated Dr. Klik for the service award; Dr. Klik accepted.

Dr. Carter was nominated for the scholarship award. The nomination was accepted.

Dr. Schafer was nominated for the teaching award; Dr. Schafer accepted.

The nominations will be sent to Jean.

- Dr. Schafer asked Dr. Lowell if the Union social media presence could be changed to allow Nikki to post on it.
- Voting for local, PC, and system committee positions.

Nominations were made for the committee positions. The slate was voted upon and passed with all in favor. The slate is attached to these minutes.

- Review of PC Campuses' mission statements.

Dr. Klik led a discussion on the proposed changes to the mission statement. She will consult with Steve and others on the matter.

- Dr. Klik: T&P Timeline changes.

Dr. Klik brought to our attention that a T&P regulation states “[one] needs four years of service *before* applying for tenure”. This was not enforced previously but is now. A discussion was held regarding this.

Announcements:

- Prof. Stapleton detailed her proposed study abroad program at the Alicante school in Spain next Summer. Students will take a longer-term for credit course in June there. Another course can be taught the by Union faculty. Prof. Stapleton will team up with a colleague at Upstate.
A discussion was held regarding funding.
Dr. Lownes suggested other campuses might take part in the program.
The faculty approved (informally) the program.
- Dr. Klik suggested that the PC Faculty Survey should continue to be given.

The next FO meeting was scheduled for August 21 at 10 am.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 11:28 am.

Attachments:

Committee slate for next year
Dean’s report
Academic Dean’s report

Prepared by:

David Mitra
FO secretary

Revised August 21

USC Union Faculty Organization

Spring 2026 Election Slate – Call for Nominations

The following positions are up for election in Spring 2026. Please review the positions, terms, and number of seats available. Submit nominations accordingly.

Faculty Organization Leadership

- FO Chair (1-year term, elected annually) – 1 seat – Katie Klik
- Vice Chair (1-year term, elected annually) – 1 seat – Emily Schafer
- Secretary (1-year term, elected annually) – 1 seat – David Mitra

Standing Committees (Elected Positions)

- Peer Review Committee – 5 seats (elected annually) – Avery Fouts, Steve Lownes, Randy Ivey, Jenny Triplett, Sandy Phillips-Long
- USC Union Tenure & Promotion Committee – 5 seats (elected annually via secret ballot) – Katie Klik, Steve Lownes, Andrew Pisano, Avery Fouts
- Palmetto College Tenure & Promotion Committee – 2 seats (elected annually) – Emily Schafer, Steve Lowe
- Academic Affairs Committee – 4 seats – Steve Lownes, Ashley Rabanol, David Mitra, Sarah Heuss
- Scholarship Committee – 3 seats – Avery Fouts, Gale Ashmore, Sandy
- Faculty Welfare Committee – 3 seats – Courtney Pinnell, Andrew Pisano, Tekla Johnson

Access, Opportunity, and Engagement (AOE) Committee

- Vice Chair (1-year term) – 1 seat – Sarah Carter
- Secretary (1-year term) – 1 seat – Tracey Stapleton

System-Level and Other Positions

- PCC Faculty Senate – 2 Alternates (1-year term) – 1 seat – Gale Ashmore, Andrew Kettler
- PCC Grievance Committee (1-year term) – 1 seat – Christine Rhinehart
- PC Policy Advisory Committee (1-year term) – 1 seat – Steve Lownes
- PC Faculty Senate - Senator (3-year term) – 1 seat – Jenny Triplett (wants to be on Research and Productive Scholarship Committee; Systems)
- Move Tekla to Rights and Responsibilities

Randy Lowell, USC Union
Dean's Report
May 1, 2026

- Enrollment for the upcoming Fall semester is trending ahead of this time last year, with a headcount of 99 (up 17.9% from 84 year-to-date), and FTE of 95 (up 18.8% from 80 year-to-date). Summer numbers are also ahead of schedule, currently with a headcount of 119 (up 230.6% from 36 year-to-date), and FTE of 64 (up 178.3% from 23 year-to-date).
- The FY27 state budget process continues, as the Senate recently released its proposed version of the budget. While this version retains the slightly lower than requested new recurring tuition mitigation funding, it has added some funding in other areas that the House version didn't have. This includes about a fifth of our requested Maintenance, Renovation and Replacement one-time funding and some historic preservation funding for the Dawkins House. Also, the House's funding on the Civic Center line was replaced by a \$1 placeholder to be revisited and negotiated when the House/Senate conference committee convenes to hash out the final version that they'll push out this summer. Statewide, this Senate version also includes a 2% pay plan and brings back in the statewide lottery technology funding that would be helpful to have back in play after having not been included in recent years.
- The Columbia campus ended their contract with Uwill mental health services this semester, and in the process, this brought our USC Union contract to an end with that provider as well. They have replaced Uwill with a new provider, BetterMynd, which we will also be able to provide our students access to. As soon as we have information from BetterMynd on how to access those services, I will push that out to everyone. Also, as Quentin Wedderburn phases out this summer, his replacement for the upcoming school year from the Psychological Services Center in Columbia will phase in this summer, Peter Habib.
- USC Union was extremely well represented at Discover USC in Columbia last week with 10 students presenting with their mentors there to support them, and multiple faculty members judging posters at the event. Special shout out to Khloie Sims and her mentor Dr. Sarah Carter for earning First Place in her group; and to Eliza Petty and her mentor Dr. Jennifer Triplett for earning Second Place in her group.
- Research Club had a successful fundraiser yesterday, as we dodged the rain clouds for our Car Wash, raising \$215. Special thanks to those students who helped with the washing and to everyone who brought their cars through for us to wash!
- Some medical students from VCOM are working on a community-focused quality improvement project focused on STIs among college-aged students and young adults in the Union County area. This includes conducting a study involving pre- and post-educational intervention, and will be recruiting students from campus this summer and through August to help them out with this. They have created an interest link for students to use to indicate interest in participation, which they will use to identify different times to come to campus.

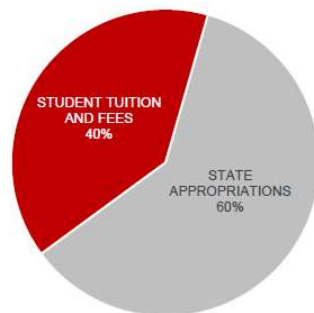
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc7W9L62bGyfaom_iFsacm4u6hLgxHieJemrBCvly7R94HBQ/viewform?usp=publish-editor

- Early College Parent Interest night at Union County High School went well last month, with a larger than usual crowd of 9th graders and their parents interested in applying to enter onto those tracks with us. Clinton High School also looks to have a substantial new cohort of early college students entering onto the track with us from their student body as well.
- Tanya McKay, from the Youth Biodiversity Collective non-profit organization, donated three persimmons trees to the campus. Shout out to Keith, Eddie, and Travis for working with her to get those in the ground along the fence line of Patron's Park here on campus.

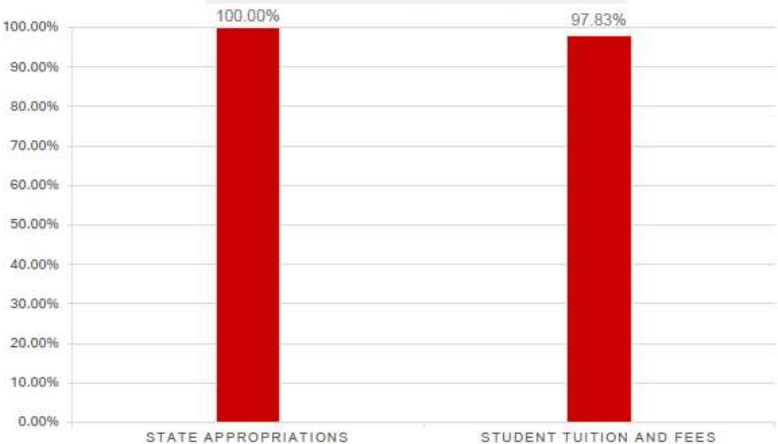
Facilities Updates:

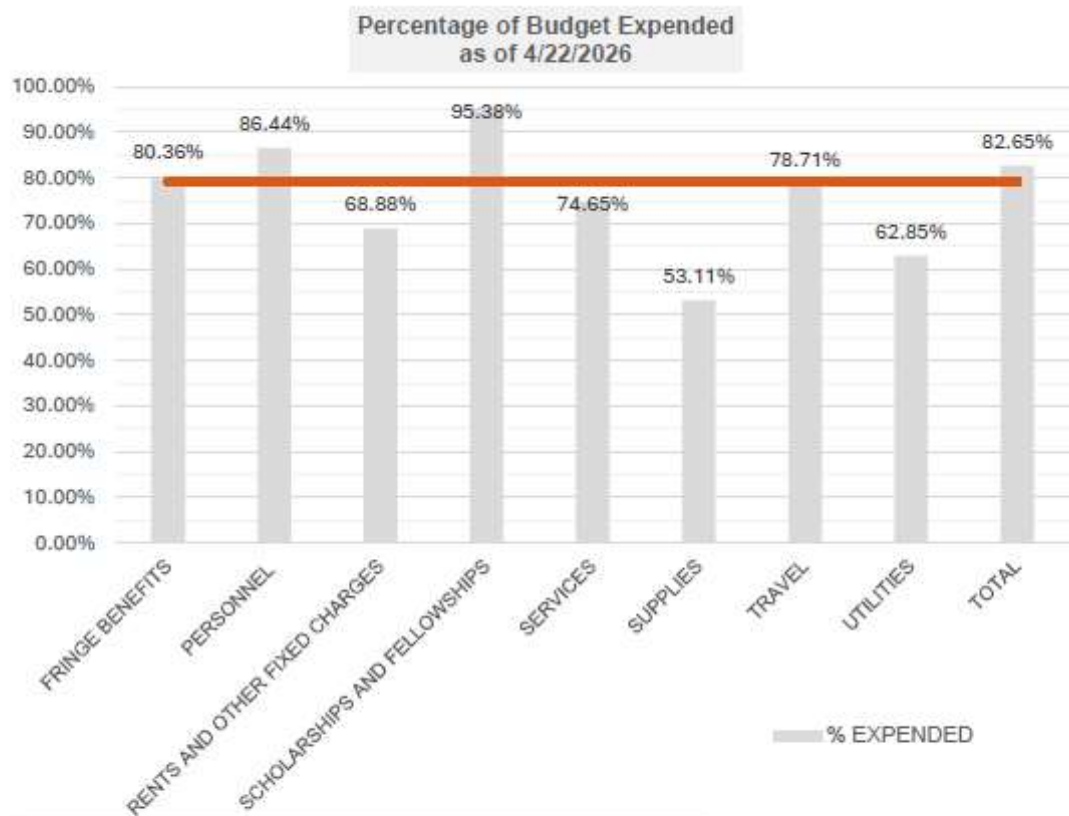
- o The Laurens Location in Clinton has had architect design updates and cost estimates for renovations to one of the old classroom hallways. The golf room and bass fishing areas at that location have also been completed.
- o Restroom work continues at the baseball field, as well as work in the Jonesville gym and its roof.
- o The Student Services Building has had its secondary ceiling removed and has been put back out to rebid for the roof replacement project there.
- o The Art building ceiling was sprayed for insulation, as that project moves forward with an anticipated completion ahead of the start of the Fall semester.

FY26 REVENUE BREAKDOWN



FY26 REVENUE - PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET
ACCRUED AS OF 04/22/2026



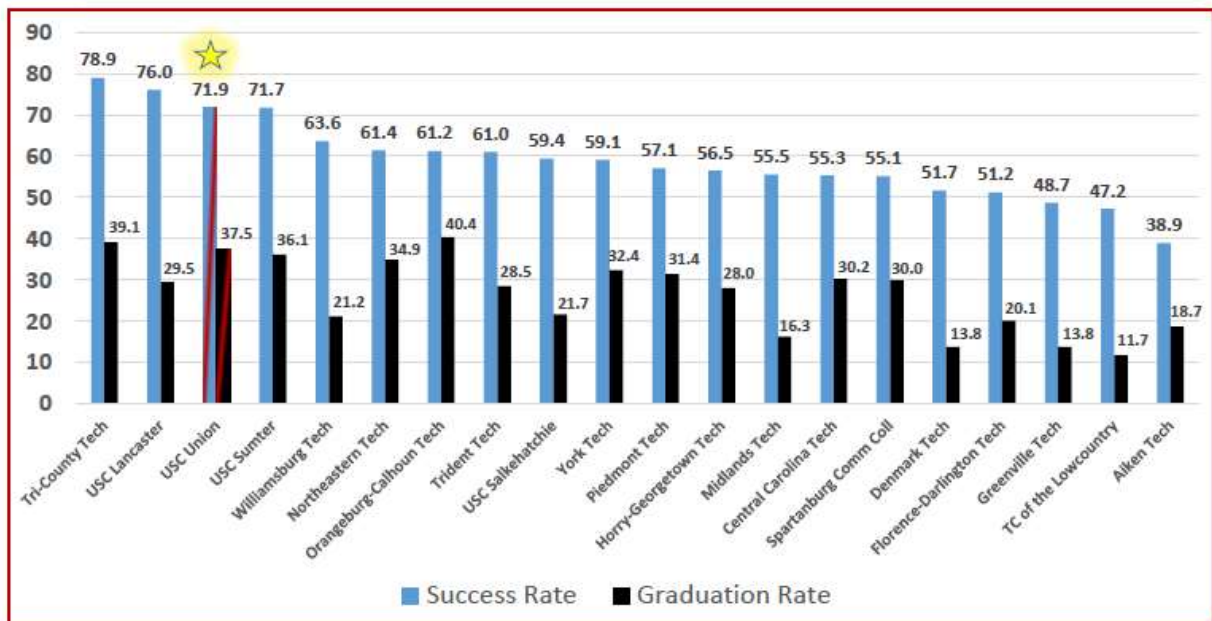


**Salary & Fringe tend to trend slightly above target due to more faculty salaries paid over 9 months rather than annualized over a full 12 months. The same is true with Scholarships & Fellowships as the major expenditures occur during Fall and Spring semester.*

— MID-APRIL TARGET
9.5/12 MONTHS
79.17%

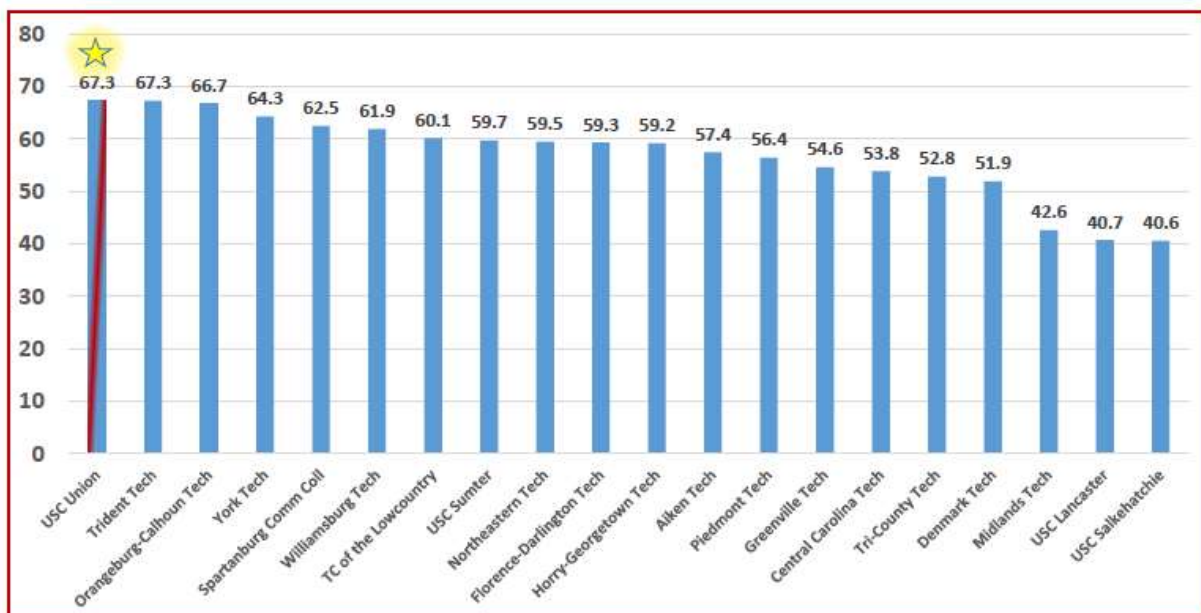
First-Time, Full-Time Undergraduates Entering in Fall 2020

Source: https://che.sc.gov/sites/che/files/Documents/CHE%20Data%20and%20Reports/Statistical%20Abstracts/2024_Statistical_Abstract-WEB.pdf



First-Time, Full-Time Undergraduates, Fall 2022 to Fall 2023

Source: https://che.sc.gov/sites/che/files/Documents/CHE%20Data%20and%20Reports/Statistical%20Abstracts/2024_Statistical_Abstract-WEB.pdf



**Academic Dean's Report
APRIL 2026**

Final Exams

- Final exams for full semester classes are to be given ONLY at the regularly scheduled time listed on the final exam schedule.
- In any course or laboratory that meets weekly, no quiz, test, or examination shall be given during the last class session before the regular examination period. In any course or laboratory that meets two or three times a week, no quiz, test, or examination shall be given during the last two class sessions before the regular examination period. In any course or laboratory that meets more than three times a week, no quiz, test, or examination shall be given during the last three sessions before the regular examination period.
- Beginning Fall 2025, all in-person classes must hold an in-person exam.

Final Grades

- When entering final grades in Self-Service, if a student had stopped attending that class at some point (or stopped logging in the case of an online class), you will need to enter a grade of "FN" (rather than just an "F"), as well as their last date of attendance/login for that student. Those unearned/walk-away FN's are tracked by Financial Aid to determine if the student owes additional money and that information needs to be as accurate as possible when those grades are entered.
- Final grades are submitted and posted to students' academic records using Self Service Carolina. Final grade rolls will be available 2-3 business days before the last day of class and are due no later than 72 hours after the date of the scheduled final exam. Grades submitted late may affect a student's academic standing, eligibility for financial aid, or ability to graduate.

Advising

- Summer and Fall 2026 schedules are live.
- Please be sure to review your courses in self-service and reach out to your advisees to schedule advising appointments.
- NJCAA student-athletes (Baseball, Golf, Men's Soccer, Softball, Volleyball, Women's soccer) are required to enroll in a minimum of 9 credit hours of face-to-face classes each semester to be eligible to play. We will conduct an audit to ensure that all NJCAA student-athletes meet this requirement. If they do not, they will not be eligible to play.

Summer and Fall 2026:

- Summer and fall final exam schedules have been emailed to all faculty.
- Syllabus templates will be updated and emailed to all faculty. Adjunct faculty will be required to use these templates. FTE faculty are strongly encouraged to use the templates.
- The Faculty Orientation Guide will be updated and emailed before the start of the fall semester.
- Faculty orientation will be held before the start of classes.

Course Materials and Syllabi:

- Be sure to get information about any required course materials for your summer and fall courses to Tanja Black as soon as possible, ideally using the online submission portal to submit

textbook information. If you are not requiring students to purchase any materials for your class, also let her know so they can convey that to the students as well.

- Always be sure to submit summer and fall syllabi (by the first day of each semester) to Amber Ivey as soon as you have them prepared.

PURE Grant Program Renewal

- The Palmetto Undergraduate Research Experience (PURE) has been renewed for this year.
- Provides students across the four Palmetto College campuses the opportunity to conduct summer research with faculty mentorship. It aims to strengthen student-faculty mentoring and support collaborative research efforts.
- Application period: April 27, 2026 – May 29, 2026
- Priority given to first-time applicants (faculty and students)
- Previous recipients are still encouraged to apply
- Applications must be completed by the student
- Faculty mentor signature and letter of recommendation required
- Incomplete applications will not be considered
- All materials should be submitted via email directly to me

Awards Night – April 17, 2026

- 21 academic awards presented
- 9 athletics awards presented
- 3 faculty and staff awards presented
- 2 employees recognized for years of service
- Successful event celebrating student, faculty, and staff achievements

Faculty Welfare Committee Reminder

- Coordinate with Tracy Stapleton regarding a potential fall presentation
- Event should be open to campus and community
- Begin identifying possible dates to recognize her Distinguished Teacher of the Year award

SACSCOC 5th Year Interim Report

- Currently working on the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) 5th Year Interim Report
- Report includes approximately 24 standards, with a little more than half requiring formal reporting
- Final report is due March 2027
- Preliminary drafts are being developed now per guidance from Columbia, and this work has been ongoing throughout the semester
- As drafts are reviewed, I may reach out to faculty for additional information related to specific standards or areas

HR Policies:

The maximum compensation an employee may receive for dual employment in a fiscal year may not exceed 30% of the employee's annualized salary for that fiscal year. In the summer of 2026, there are 65 workdays for 9-month faculty, so total compensation for 2026 summer employment may not exceed 33.33% of the faculty member's preceding academic year's salary.

- 10.5-month faculty, the limit is 15.55% (up to 35 workdays, depending on dates).

- 11 months, faculty are limited to 10.63% (up to 25 workdays, depending on dates).
- 12-month faculty are ineligible for summer compensation (internal dual or FOV, as applicable).

Effective immediately, the Chancellor will not approve any exceptions to the 33.33% limit on summer compensation or the 30% limit on dual employment for all Palmetto College faculty and staff.

Campus Description (PCCFM Requirement)

- The campus description has been submitted to Palmetto College and shared with the Faculty Advisory Committee
- Moving forward, in alignment with the Palmetto College Campuses Faculty Manual (PCCFM), the FO will be responsible for submitting the campus description annually to the Office of the Palmetto College Chancellor (Jean Carrano) by April 15
- The campus description will include: Normal teaching load per semester, Local funding and course release for research and scholarship, Description of facilities, Availability of mentors or colleagues with similar interests, Availability of students to participate in research and scholarship
- The FO will review, update, and approve the campus description annually through appropriate channels
- I am happy to share the most recently submitted version to support this process moving forward

Explorance Blue

- Previously, reports were not generated if fewer than 5 students completed the course survey
- Moving forward, some level of feedback will be available even when fewer than 5 students respond
- In these cases, instructors must request the report directly from Amber or Nikki

CCSSE

- The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) closed on April 10
- We had a strong response rate from students
- Results will be shared once they become available

Math Placement Testing Update

- University of South Carolina is transitioning to ALEKS for math placement testing
- Students may complete the exam either:
 - In person at the Student Academic Success Center (proctored by Brandon or Robert)
 - Online
- Testing requirements:
 - In person: LockDown Browser required
 - Online: LockDown Browser + Monitor required
- Students may attempt the exam up to five times
- Advisors will be able to view placement results in Self Service
- Our website is being updated to reflect this change, and students will access the test through the website