



Dr. Dwayne Smith
Interim President
Southern Connecticut State University
501 Crescent Street
New Haven, CT 06515-0901

Dear Dr. Smith:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 22, 2023 the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Southern Connecticut State University regarding its Ed.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision program as well as the report of the visiting team and took the following action:

that the report regarding Southern Connecticut State University's Ed.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision program be accepted and inclusion of the program within the institution's accreditation be confirmed;

that Southern Connecticut State University be granted general approval to offer professional doctoral-level programs within the scope of its mission;

that the interim (fifth-year) report scheduled for consideration in Fall 2026 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, as well as the matters specified in the Commission's letter of June 7, 2022, the Fall 2026 interim report give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. implementing its plans to provide financial assistance to doctoral students;
2. implementing planned changes to its website;
3. assuring the sufficiency of faculty to provide dissertation advising and implementing plans to enhance the effectiveness of communication and collaboration among faculty supporting doctoral programs;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2031 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission accepted the report submitted by Southern Connecticut State University and confirmed inclusion of the Ed.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision program within the institution's accreditation because the report was responsive to the concerns raised in our letter of April 28, 2021 and provided evidence that the University is implementing the program in a manner consistent with Commission standards and policies.

The Commission joins the visiting team in commending Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) on its successful implementation of its hybrid Ed.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) program. We concur with the team that the CES program is well-aligned with the mission of the University and that the hybrid modality is effective in serving the program's student population of working professionals. The program's three tracks (Counselor Education, Clinical Counseling and Supervision, and Leadership) provide pathways for graduates to pursue careers as professors, clinical supervisors, and district/agency managers, respectively. We are gratified to learn that SCSU has, to date, "met or exceeded" its enrollment and retention goals for the CES program, with an average of 8-10 students enrolling in each of the first three cohorts and retention rates of 90% for the first two cohorts. The Commission further notes with favor the mechanisms that are in place to provide students and faculty with an "effective voice" and the improvements to the program that have been made based on the feedback received. We understand that while "budgetary constraints" did not permit the anticipated hiring of a tenure-track faculty member for the program, the "temporary" faculty member hired to fill the position has been reappointed for an additional two years, the maximum allowed by University policy. Finally, faculty in the program evaluate CES students' "academic performance, professional disposition, and progression" through multiple "student developmental assessments" that include demographic data, outcomes data, field work evaluations, standardized tests, and surveys.

Southern Connecticut State University is granted general approval to offer professional doctoral-level programs within the scope of its mission because the institution has demonstrated its capacity to offer high-quality professional doctoral programs. We note with favor that the University has achieved "consistent and sustainable enrollments" in all of its doctoral programs (Nursing Education, Social Work, Education Leadership, and CES). We are gratified to learn from the report of the visiting team that SCSU has a "solid and well-articulated infrastructure" to support doctoral-level education and that the "strong and stable" faculty teaching in the University's doctoral programs possess appropriate credentials, training, and experience.

Commission policy requires an interim (fifth-year) report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. Its purpose is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution's current status in keeping with the Policy on Periodic Review. In addition to the information provided in all interim reports and the matters specified in our letter of June 7, 2022, we look forward, in Fall 2026, to learning of Southern Connecticut State University's continued success in offering doctoral programs, with emphasis on three matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation; Students; Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure; The Academic Program; and Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*.

The Commission concurs with the visiting team that Southern Connecticut State University would benefit from identifying additional resources for doctoral student financial support and establishing a "more transparent process" for students to request and receive available funds. We are, therefore, pleased to learn that SCSU is developing plans to "be more intentional" about dedicating funds to doctoral students and advertising their availability and is also developing a process through which doctoral students can request aid to support professional memberships and conference participation. Through the Fall 2026 interim report, we welcome an update on the success of these efforts as evidence of the University's "demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.5). Our standard on *Students* provides this additional guidance:

The institution ensures a systematic approach to providing accessible and effective

programs and services designed to provide opportunities for enrolled students to be successful in achieving their educational goals. The institution provides students with information and guidance regarding opportunities and experiences that may help ensure their educational success (5.7).

Student financial aid is provided through a well-organized program. Awards are based on the equitable application of clear and publicized criteria (5.13).

We understand from the report of the visiting team that, while SCSU's website is "adequate and sufficiently comprehensive," team members found the site "difficult to navigate" and noted that "pertinent information" such as the graduate student handbook, graduate program learning goals, and program coordinator contact information, could be challenging to locate. We note with favor that the University is "updating" its website, and we look forward, in Fall 2026, to learning of SCSU's success in assuring that its website "provides information, including information about student success, that is complete, accurate, timely, readily accessible, clear, and sufficient for intended audiences to make informed decisions about the institution (*Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*, statement of the standard).

Finally, the Commission understands that faculty in most of SCSU's doctoral programs are "at capacity for dissertation advising," which could impede the institution's plans to increase enrollment in those programs. We also share the judgment of the visiting team that the University's doctoral faculty, particularly program leaders, would benefit from opportunities to meet regularly to share best practices and explore opportunities to "synergize and collaborate more explicitly." We are, therefore, gratified to learn of the University's plans to increase the number of faculty involved in dissertation advising. We also note with favor that the SCSU Graduate Council is establishing bi-semester meetings for graduate program coordinators, and the University's Academic Deans will convene a meeting of all doctoral faculty to discuss "collaboration related to teaching assignments, dissertation committee support, and sharing of resources." The Fall 2026 interim report will afford Southern Connecticut State University an opportunity to apprise the Commission of the success of these efforts. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* (cited above); *The Academic Program*; and *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship* are relevant here:

Faculty responsible for graduate programs are sufficient by credentials, experience, number, and time commitment for the successful accomplishment of program objectives and program improvement (4.22).

The institution endeavors to enhance the quality of teaching and learning wherever and however courses and programs are offered. It encourages experimentation to improve instruction. The effectiveness of instruction is regularly and systematically assessed using valid procedures; the results are used to improve instruction. Faculty and academic staff accept their responsibility to improve instructional effectiveness. Adequate support is provided to accomplish this task (6.17).

The institution's system of academic advising meets student needs for information and advice compatible with its educational objectives. The quality of advising is assured regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery (6.19).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2031 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least

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once every ten years.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the reports prepared by Southern Connecticut State University and the visiting team and hopes that the evaluation process has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the institution's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board and the head of the system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to JoAnn Ryan and Terrence Cheng. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Carey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Russell Carey
RC/sjp

cc: JoAnn Ryan
Terrence Cheng
Visiting team

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions