



SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

January 10, 2017

The Honorable Dick Brewbaker, Chair
Senate Education and Youth Affairs Committee
The Honorable Terri Collins, Chair
House Education Policy Committee
Alabama Legislature
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Senator Brewbaker and Representative Collins:

I am writing to you at the suggestion of U.S. Representative Bradley Byrne to solicit your assistance in a matter that I believe will require action by the Alabama Legislature. I would appreciate meeting with you to discuss the details of the issue but I wanted to apprise you of the specifics of the issue prior to doing so.

Upon the establishment of the Alabama Community College System, a Substantive Change request for approval of a change in governance was made to our Commission on behalf of all of the Colleges in the System. This is a requirement by both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). Upon reviewing the request, it became obvious that the Governor of the State of Alabama is the Board Chair of the System Board. The SACSCOC Board perceives that this presents a conflict of interest in that the Governor also appoints the members of that Board, and has ultimate budget authority over all of the institutional budgets. Upon further review, it also became apparent that the Governor is the Chair of the Board of every state college or university in the State of Alabama. I am asking that the Alabama legislature enact legislation within the state removing the Governor from that position.

At its meeting in December 2016, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees voted to continue the accreditation of all of the institutions within the Alabama Community College System but there was concern expressed over the role of the Governor in the governance of the institutions within the State, hence, this letter. Please let me know your availability to discuss this issue. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 404.679.4512 or bwheelan@sacscoc.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW:rb

cc: Senator Del Marsh, President Pro Tempore of the Alabama Senate
Representative Mac McCutcheon, Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives
U.S. Representative Bradley Byrne
Mr. Jimmy Baker, Interim Chancellor, Alabama Community College System
Presidents of the Alabama Community Colleges