



Horry-Georgetown Technical College Academic Integrity Investigation Report

May 1, 2026

Purpose & Background

On February 5, 2026, the SC Technical College System Office (“System Office”) was notified by the Office of the State Inspector General (“SIG”) of a complaint alleging “mismanagement by employees of” Horry-Georgetown Technical College (“HGTC” or “College”). Specifically, the complainant alleged that members of the HGTC administration fraudulently changed grades of some of the complainant’s students. The SIG referred the complaint to the System Office for “appropriate action.”

Additionally, on February 18, 2026, a letter from the Chair of the Horry County legislative delegation was sent to the System Office concerning “allegations against the administration at Horry-Georgetown Technical College.” In this letter, the Horry County legislative delegation “encourage[d]” the System Office to “conduct a thorough investigation of these allegations” and report “findings” to them.

On February 19, 2026, Dr. Tim Hardee, System President, delegated responsibility to the System Office’s Division of Academics, Student Affairs and Research for conducting an academic integrity investigation related to allegations of student grade changes without appropriate approvals. This report summarizes the process and findings of the investigation.

Process

It was made clear to participants in this investigation that this investigation was focused exclusively on academic integrity, in part because grade change allegations had emerged peripherally during a prior personnel investigation at HGTC. Guiding questions were developed to ensure focus and scope remained consistent throughout the investigative process. These guiding questions were:

1. Were there any instances of students’ grades being changed without the appropriate approvals?
2. If yes, what were the circumstances behind the instances, including the number of occurrences and timeframe?

An interview protocol was developed. This protocol included a process for scheduling interviews, a general statement provided to persons for whom an interview was requested, a general statement read to interview participants at the start of each interview, a redirect

statement for use if participants asked questions beyond the scope of the investigation, interview questions, and a closing statement.

Due to the nature of these allegations, the investigation team's size was kept minimal. Team members included the System Office Vice President for Academics, Student Affairs and Research; Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Director of Academic and Program Compliance.

Timeline

Interviews began on February 24, 2026. On March 12, 2026, HGTC's President notified the System President that HGTC would be engaging different legal counsel to be present for all future interviews.¹ On March 16, 2026, the System Office was notified that HGTC's external legal counsel had been retained. HGTC's legal counsel and the System Office's legal counsel participated as observers in all interviews after March 16, 2026. Interviews concluded on April 15, 2026.

Interview participants were identified through HGTC organizational charts and additional participants were identified based on information shared during interviews. Table 1 provides a list of interview participants by position/role and date of interview. Names of participants are provided in Attachment A.

Table 1. Interview Participants by Position/Role and Interview Date

Position/Role	Interview Date
Faculty	February 24, 2026
Department Chair	March 5, 2026
Department Chair	March 5, 2026
Former Faculty	March 5, 2026
Faculty	March 6, 2026
Faculty	March 9, 2026
College External Legal Counsel (<i>at time of situation under investigation</i>)	April 3, 2026
Department Chair	April 3, 2026
Faculty	April 3, 2026
Vice President for Academic Affairs	April 6, 2026
President	April 8, 2026
Former Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Workforce Development	April 8, 2026
Department Chair	April 8, 2026
Registrar	April 8, 2026
Vice President for Student Affairs	April 15, 2026

¹ HGTC's external legal counsel during the time period relevant herein was interviewed during the investigation.

Position/Role	Interview Date
Assistant Registrar	April 15, 2026
Assistant Director for Human Resources	April 15, 2026
Former Dean/Assistant Vice President	Declined to participate – March 5, 2026
Faculty	Declined to participate (unaware of any information) – March 10, 2026

Two identified participants declined participation in interviews. A faculty member declined participation due to lacking information related to the allegations. A former Dean/Assistant Vice President declined participation based on unspecified fears of potential retaliation.

Findings

Interviews were conducted until there was data saturation (i.e., no new information emerged). In response to the first guiding question related to instances of student grades being changed without the appropriate approvals, the investigation team found this allegation to be substantiated. Details regarding these instances are provided in the summary below.

Course Grade Changes

All faculty interviewed shared similar recollections of being notified in March 2025 by the former Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Workforce Development that the final grades they issued had been changed. The grade changes impacted their Fall 2024 courses. Documentation shared by the HGTC Registrar provided details on these grade changes. An internal HGTC examination of course grade changes revealed that since Summer 2023, 60 grade changes had been initiated by individuals who were not the faculty of record. These changes were made via the HGTC grade change form. Of the 60 grade changes shared, the investigation team concluded that 52 grade changes were made under unauthorized or questionable circumstances. These changes impacted the Summer 2024 (8 changes) and Fall 2024 (44 changes) semesters.

Additionally, documentation showed 34 grade changes were made by a Department Chair directly in the Banner student information system. Overall, the investigation team found 86 documented grade changes made by individuals who were not the faculty of record for the applicable courses. These changes occurred across the Summer 2024 and Fall 2024 semesters.

Table 2 provides a summary of the 86 grade changes. Most changes were from a “C” to a “B” or a “D” to a “C.” There were 14 instances of failing grades that were converted to non-failing

grades. The investigation team was not provided individual student information in the documentation. Therefore, the number of unique students impacted could not be determined.

Table 2. Summary of Grade Changes

		New Grade				
		A	B	C	D	W
Original Grade	B	7	0	1	0	0
	C	0	23	0	0	0
	D	1	5	33	0	0
	F	0	0	5	7	0
	W	0	0	0	1	0
	WF	0	2	0	0	1

Courses confirmed to be impacted include:

- AST 101 - Solar System Astronomy
- BIO 211 - Anatomy & Physiology II
- ENG 101 - English Composition I
- MAT 101 - Beginning Algebra
- MUS 105 - Music Appreciation
- PHY 118 - Medical Imaging Science
- PHY 201 - Physics I
- SPA 101 - Elementary Spanish I

Ten faculty across these eight courses were impacted by the grade changes, at least four of whom were full-time during the relevant period. The individuals who made the grade changes admitted to doing so, and all shared that these changes were made under the direction of the now former Dean/Assistant Vice President. The College's Registrar conducted a three-year review of grade changes (AY2023-24, AY2024-2025, and AY2025-26) and maintained the grade changes that did not follow the College's published policy and procedure (HGTC Policy 8.6.5 and Procedure 8.6.5.1) occurred only during Fall 2024. However, documentation shared by the College and information gathered during interviews indicated the Summer 2024 semester grades were also impacted.

Rationale for Grade Changes

The second guiding question for this investigation related to circumstances surrounding the grade changes. The investigation confirmed that no one at HGTC ever restored the changed course grades to the original grades that had been assigned by the instructor. Faculty

expressed concern about their course grades being changed without their knowledge or consent. Most faculty shared that they did not receive closure on the issue, with some stating that they were not sure what other steps could have been taken or felt administration would do what was appropriate. Some faculty also shared feelings of “violation” that this was done to them.

Information shared by current and previous members of the administration emphasized the “unusualness” of the Fall 2024 semester. Specifically, the former Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Workforce Development stated several reasons why these grade changes occurred, and they were all centered around student concerns. Reasons noted included no early academic alerts being issued, issues with the learning management system (LMS) such as grades not consistently being posted, lack of communication or significant delays in the instructor communicating with the student, inappropriate communication tones with students, excessive number of assignments, synchronous/asynchronous inconsistencies in online courses, no substantive interaction by faculty, the inability for students to access third party websites and assignments, firewall issues for high school students, high course withdrawal rates, and low course completion rates. The investigation team was provided documentation that identified these issues in several communications between faculty and department chairs. Department chairs were delegated coaching responsibilities to the faculty to support improvements in teaching and pedagogy.

According to the HGTC President and the former Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Workforce Development, the decision to not change grades back to the original grade was determined through several discussions and guidance from the College’s external legal counsel during the relevant timeframe. As previously mentioned, administration members shared that Fall 2024 was an unusual semester for student concerns and faculty issues within the classroom. A second reason provided by the HGTC President was the philosophy of supporting students as best as possible. HGTC’s President further stated that when this issue was discovered, the Spring 2025 semester was well underway and changing grades back would have disrupted students’ academic progress. Additionally, some of the impacted students were dually enrolled and a change to their grade would have impacted graduation. The investigation team received documentation stating that judgment calls were made for PACE students (i.e., dual enrollment students) who would not graduate high school unless help was provided.

HGTC’s external legal counsel shared that there was no legal requirement for the College to change grades back to the original grades, but he advised the College to contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (“SACSCOC”) and

the System Office. The HGTC President and the former Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Workforce Development stated that SACSCOC was contacted about the situation and informed them that students should not be harmed by whatever decision the College made. In reaching their decision, the HGTC President and former Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Workforce Development emphasized that they had experience as SACSCOC reviewers.

The HGTC President and the former Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Workforce Development both emphasized having no advanced knowledge of these grade changes, not approving the changes at the time they were made, and not condoning the actions taken by HGTC staff.

Grade Change Policy

HGTC's "Changing Student Grades" policy ("Policy 8.6.5") that was in effect during the Fall 2024 semester provides "Faculty may request to change a grade(s) previously recorded on a student record. In cases where the College no longer employs a faculty member, the appropriate Department Chair or Academic Dean has the authority to initiate a grade change." This policy was last revised August 9, 2023, and this version is the current published policy (Attachment B).

HGTC's "Changing Student Grades" procedure ("Procedure 8.6.5.1") that was in effect during the Fall 2024 semester reiterates the language of the policy and specifies faculty as the originator of grade change requests, except in cases where a faculty member is no longer employed (Attachment C). The procedure further details the timeframe within which grade changes may be requested and outlines operational steps to process a grade change request. This procedure was last revised August 9, 2023, and this version is the current published procedure.

During interviews, several HGTC faculty and staff stated the College's grade change policy and/or procedure were revised during the Spring 2025 semester in response to the Fall 2024 grade changes. As described, the revisions retained faculty as the originators of grade changes, with exceptions for faculty who were no longer employed, and required additional signatures for approval. The appropriate additional signatures would be dependent upon who initiated the grade change—whether the instructor or a Department Chair or Academic Dean in the instructor's absence. However, there was no evidence that any policy and/or procedure revisions related to grade changes were formally implemented during the Spring 2025 semester.

HGTC's Registrar shared the current grade change request form and stated that the College was in the process of updating the form to include the Academic Dean's signature in addition

to the signature of the requesting faculty and Department Chair. The Registrar also shared that “if the grade change is for a dual enrollment student, then the assigned dual enrollment guidance counselor is notified of the grade change via secure email.”

Several HGTC faculty and staff stated that there are revisions to the College’s grade change policy and/or procedure currently moving through the internal approval process to reflect the current practice of requiring additional signatures. The current Vice President for Academic Affairs shared that these revisions will require the signatures of the Vice President, Department Chair, and Academic Dean for grade changes. Additionally, the instructor, Department Chair, and Academic Dean will be notified of the grade change. At the time of this report, it is unclear to the investigation team where the revisions stand in the approval process. It is also evident that current faculty and staff have different understandings or interpretations of where these changes are in the approval process. A review of the College’s [policies and procedures website](https://www.hgtc.edu/about_hgtc/administrativedepartments/humanresources/policiespracticesprocedures.html)

(https://www.hgtc.edu/about_hgtc/administrativedepartments/humanresources/policiespracticesprocedures.html) was conducted by the investigation team on April 24, 2026, and the Changing Student Grades policy and procedure reflect “last revision” dates of August 9, 2023. Figures 1 and 2 show screenshots of the policy and procedure from the College’s website.

Figure 1. HGTC Policy 8.6.5 as reflected on the Website as of April 24, 2026

HORRY-GEORGETOWN TECHNICAL COLLEGE	
POLICY	
Number:	8.6.5
Title:	Changing Student Grades
Authority:	Title 59, Chapter 53, Sections 810-860 of the 1976 Code of Laws of South Carolina, as Amended
Responsibility:	Executive Vice President for Academic and Workforce Development
Original Approval Date:	09-09-1993
Last Cabinet Review:	08-09-2023
Last Revision:	08-09-2023
Chairperson	

Figure 2. HGTC Procedure 8.6.5.1 as reflected on the Website as of April 24, 2026

HORRY-GEORGETOWN TECHNICAL COLLEGE	
PROCEDURE	
Number:	8.6.5.1
Related Policy:	8.6.5
Title:	Changing Student Grades
Responsibility:	Registrar
Original Approval Date:	08-01-1994
Last Cabinet Review:	08-09-2023
Last Revision:	08-09-2023
President	

Conclusion

The investigation into grade changes at HGTC revealed that during the Summer and Fall 2024 semesters, numerous course grades were changed by individuals other than the faculty of record, including by department chairs and an academic dean, without instructors' knowledge or approval. Although the College's official grade change procedure required faculty to initiate grade changes and outlined necessary signatures, these practices were not always followed. The investigation documented 86 such grade changes and noted ongoing efforts to update procedures and forms to include further oversight, but current practices are not consistently reflected in written policy/procedure. Additional revisions to the policy and procedure are still pending formal approval.

Attachment A – Interview List

Name	HGTC Role/Relationship to Investigation	Interview Date	Interviewers	Other Attendees
Valerie Falbo-Gasque	Faculty/Initiated Complaint	2/24/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Dr. Aimeé Carter	
Paul Crolley	Department Chair, Behavioral Sciences	3/5/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Dr. Aimeé Carter	
Minda Chuska	Department Chair, Communications	3/5/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	
Dr. Casey King	Former Faculty (Physics)	3/5/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Dr. Aimeé Carter	
Gabriela Greco	Faculty (English)	3/6/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	
Alyssa Johnson	Faculty (English)	3/9/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	
Randall Moser	Department Chair, Mathematics	4/3/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Dr. Chris Thompson	Faculty (Anatomy and Physiology)	4/3/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Charles Boykin	College External Legal Counsel (at time of situation under investigation)	4/3/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Dr. Lori Heafner	Current Chief Academic Officer	4/6/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Dr. Aimeé Carter	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Dr. Heather Hoppe	Registrar	4/8/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Dr. Aimeé Carter	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Dr. Jennifer Wilbanks	Chief Academic Officer during Fall 2024/Spring 2025 semesters	4/8/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Dr. Lauren Davis	Department Chair Natural and Physical Sciences	4/8/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani

Name	HGTC Role/Relationship to Investigation	Interview Date	Interviewers	Other Attendees
Dr. Marilyn 'Murph' Fore	President	4/8/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Dr. Aimeé Carter	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Bobbi Jo Oxendine	Assistant Director of Human Resources	4/15/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Dr. Aimeé Carter	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Christopher Ariail	Assistant Registrar	4/15/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Dr. Melissa Batten	Vice President for Student Affairs	4/15/2026	Dr. Rosline Sumpter, Lane Goodwin	Henrietta Golding, Warren Ganjehsani
Dr. Candace Howell	Assistant Vice President & Dean - School of Arts & Science (Dean) during Fall 2024 Semester	Declined Interview		
Greg Thompson	Faculty	Declined Interview		

ATTACHMENT B

HORRY-GEORGETOWN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

POLICY

Number:	8.6.5
Title:	Changing Student Grades
Authority:	Title 59, Chapter 53, Sections 810-860 of the 1976 Code of Laws of South Carolina, as Amended
Responsibility:	Executive Vice President for Academic and Workforce Development
Original Approval Date:	09-09-1993
Last Cabinet Review:	08-09-2023
Last Revision:	08-09-2023

Chairperson

Faculty may request to change a grade(s) previously recorded on a student record. In cases where the College no longer employs a faculty member, the appropriate Department Chair or Academic Dean has the authority to initiate a grade change.

ATTACHMENT C

HORRY-GEORGETOWN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PROCEDURE

Number: 8.6.5.1
Related Policy: 8.6.5
Title: Changing Student Grades
Responsibility: Registrar

Original Approval Date: 08-01-1994
Last Cabinet Review: 08-09-2023
Last Revision: 08-09-2023

President

When a faculty member wishes to change a grade previously reported, they must initiate a Grade Change Form. The faculty member of the course has the authority to initiate a grade change. In cases when the College no longer employs a faculty member, the appropriate Department Chair or Academic Dean has authority to initiate a grade change. Grade changes may be initiated no longer than two semesters after the last date of the term in which the grade was entered.

A grade of "I" (Incomplete) will automatically convert to an "F" at the end of the semester following the term in which the "I" was issued by the faculty member unless the following grade change process occurs:

1. Registrar's Office personnel receive completed Grade Change Form from the faculty member.
2. The new grade is keyed on the appropriate screen into the College's information system.
3. The Grade Change Form is signed by the Registrar's Office and attached to the student record.