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South Carolina
Commission on Higher Education
Commissioners' E-Alert
August 2009

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Commission Highlights - This E-Alert brings highlights from August meetings.

In August, the Commission kicked off two days of meetings beginning on August 5th with its monthly business meeting. Following the business meeting, Commissioners heard from presidents of the state's public colleges and universities. Later in the month, on August 19, the Commission held a press conference to release an exciting new study, "The Economic Return on Investment in South Carolina's Higher Education." See below for details!

The Commission meets each month on the first Thursday. The Commission meets next on September 3. An agenda and materials are typically posted online approximately one week in advance of the meeting. For copies, [CLICK HERE](#).

THE PAYOFF FOR REACHING THE ACTION PLAN GOALS - ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY RELEASED

On August 19, the Commission on Higher Education held a press conference to release the findings of researchers at USC's Darla Moore School of Business on the economic return on the state's investment in higher education. The study, "*The Economic Return on Investment in South Carolina's Higher Education*," was conducted to determine the impact for South Carolina if it reaches the goal of the recently released *Action Plan* for higher education to become one of the nation's top states in educational attainment – moving from approximately 23% of the working population with at least baccalaureate degrees to 29% by 2030.

According to the results, investment in higher education provides tremendous dividends not only to individual South Carolinians but also to the state's economic prosperity. It was revealed that benefits begin accruing to the state as it moves toward the goal over the next twenty years—the return on investment begins to be positive after eight years and then increases dramatically. After reaching the goal in 2030, the researchers project that each dollar the state spends on higher education boosts South Carolina's annual economic activity (as measured by gross state product) by \$25. The overall impact is sizeable -- an *annual* gain (in 2007 dollars) of \$6.9 billion in new annual personal income, \$7.8 billion in gross state product, and 44,514 additional permanent jobs per year.

In terms of benefits to individuals, the study finds that individuals in South Carolina with a bachelor's degree earn, on average over a typical career, at least \$1.2 million more than individuals with just a high school diploma. On average, these individuals earn in additional income 8.2 times what they invested in a four-year degree. Other key findings suggest that higher educational attainment for South Carolina relates to higher per capita income, lower levels of unemployment, lower percentages of the state's population in our prisons, and better access to affordable healthcare. The study and goal focus on bachelor's degree because consistent data are available for states. However, it is expected that other levels of educational attainment (associate, graduate, and professional degrees, along with certificates) would also provide similar economic returns.

Economist Dr. Doug Woodward, who along with economist Dr. Paulo Guimaraes led the research, reviewed the findings at the press conference. Also participating were Ken Wingate, the Commission's chairman, Daniel Ravenel, a Charleston realtor who chaired the Higher Education Study Committee, and Otis Rawl, president and CEO of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce. The press conference was aired around the state through a closed circuit SC ETV broadcast to nine counties. Local area chambers were on hand with educational partners and others to hear and discuss the findings.

For a copy of the full report, [CLICK HERE](#). A copy of the Action Plan report, *Leveraging Higher Education for a Stronger South Carolina: The Action Plan Implementation, March 2009*, and other details are also available on CHE's website – to access this information, [CLICK HERE](#)

PRESIDENTS PROVIDE STATUS REPORTS AND DISCUSS GOALS AND BUDGETS

Each August, the presidents of the state's public colleges and universities appear individually before the Commission to share with Commissioners information about recent achievements, challenges, priorities and funding needs. The hearings provide an opportunity for Commissioners to learn more about institutional priorities, opportunities to increase collaborative efforts, and to consider budget needs in developing the request for higher education.

On August 5 following the Commission's monthly business meeting, the Commissioners heard presentations from the presidents of the state's three research universities (Clemson, MUSC, and USC) and from the State Technical College System Office for the technical colleges. USC's president presented on behalf of the USC System including its three four-year regional campuses (USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, and USC Upstate) and its four two-year branches (USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter, and USC Union). The following day, presentations were made by the presidents of the state's four-year comprehensive colleges and universities (The Citadel, College of Charleston, Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, Lander, SC State, and Winthrop). For copies of presentations, [CLICK HERE](#).

The increase in student enrollment and the downturn in the economy have left each institution with a real budget crisis. The need for new facilities and ability to address maintenance needs has added to a difficult budget year. The presidents discussed with Commissioners actions taken to address the budget reductions that occurred during the year and that are being taken in the upcoming year. Each of the presidents also talked about the need for deregulation for higher education and how it could enable them to use more effectively and efficiently the limited state resources. For example, they noted that changes in the facilities construction process could retain necessary accountability while allowing for time to be saved when building or renovating facilities and that would translate to cost-savings for colleges and universities. Other changes which would enable improved use of limited resources were in the state's procurement process, finance and administrative areas, and human resources. Many of the needed reforms have been advanced in bills for higher education that were considered during the 2009 session of the General Assembly and await passage in the upcoming session. [House Bill 3365, The Higher Education Efficiency and Administrative Policies Act](#), is focused on reform in these areas for the research and four-year comprehensive institutions. This bill passed the House in 2009 and awaits consideration of the Senate in 2010. Another bill, [House Bill 3841, Technical College Administrative Efficiencies Act](#), which has also passed the House and awaits consideration of the Senate, focuses on similar reforms for the state's technical colleges.

Also key among priorities discussed was the need for bond funding for facilities, along with increased operating funding. A bond bill has not been considered for almost ten years and the lack of regular bond bills continues to increase pressure on institutional resources and tuition given the on-going need to keep up with infrastructure needs and increased enrollment demands. A focus on preparing for a bond bill was supported by the S.C. Commission on Higher Education and each of the presidents.

The statewide higher education *Action Plan*, which has been developed from the Higher Education Study Committee Report recommendations, was embraced and supported by all presidents in their individual presentations to the commission. For a copy of this plan which can be found on the Commission on Higher Education's website, [CLICK HERE](#).



Chairman Ken Wingate and Commissioners talk with President Jim Barker of Clemson University.

Chairman's Report: Mr. Ken Wingate, Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education, introduced the newest commissioner to the board, Dr. Charles Thomas of Greenville, South Carolina. Dr. Thomas was appointed by Governor Mark Sanford to represent the Research Sector. He replaces Dr. Louis Lynn, A Clemson Trustee, who had previously represented the research institutions.

Mr. Wingate, also announced the Annual Trustees' Conference to be held on September 29, 2009, at the Columbia Convention Center. This conference is sponsored by the SC Higher Education Foundation. This year's conference will feature Dr. Deno Curris as the keynote speaker, and sessions with key legislators, higher education experts, trustees, and individuals from the business community. (For additional details, call 803.737.2292.)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Finance & Facilities: Commissioner Jim Sanders, chair of the Finance and Facilities Committee, brought forward recommendations that were approved by the Commission for interim capital projects from Lander University concerning their Chipley Hall renovation and the Carnell Learning Center roof replacement. An informational report on capital projects and leases approved at the staff level in June and July was also provided.

Report of the Committee on Student Services and Access and Equity: Commissioner Cyndi Mosteller, chair of the Access and Equity and Student Services Committee, gave a brief report on recent activities but did not bring forward any items requiring action by the Commission.

Commissioner Mosteller, talked about the importance of the [GEAR UP program \(Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs\)](#) and the role it plays in access and equity issues in South Carolina. She noted recent research which shows that of those schools that have a GEAR-UP program, 90% of their students have knowledge of the college process (how to access scholarships, financial aid and etc.) as opposed to 77% in schools without GEAR UP.

She also reported eight new sites have been added for the upcoming college application week and noted that Midlands Technical College has been added as an additional site for the [College Goal Sunday program](#) which provides assistance in completing the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA). Also mentioned briefly was a marketing campaign for college access that was being developed as part of SC's participation in the federal College Access Challenge Grant program and work in conjunction with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to develop a counselor's course to better serve students in understanding the college application and financial aid processes. She indicated that additional funding available this year for the state's need-based aid program from dollars received from excess unclaimed prize funds in 2008-09 that were made available at the end of the fiscal year and additional non-recurring support received for the FY 2009-10 fiscal year will help in increasing access for students in our state who might not otherwise be able to afford higher education.

During her report, Commissioner Mosteller, also recognized and presented a recognition award to Randal Huges, one of thirty national GEAR UP Youth Leadership Scholars. Randal is a rising junior at C.E. Murray High School in Greeleyville, S.C. He was commended for his great work and outstanding essay, written as part of the competition for the award, in which he emphasized the importance of teacher quality as a significant factor impacting students.



From right to left: Commissioner Mosteller, Randal Huges, Randal's mother, Ms. Joanne Huges, and Ms. Latoya Davis, GEAR UP Coordinator.

For details on the items in this section, [CLICK HERE](#)

CALL TO INFORM AND WORK TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS

Higher Education for all our citizens has never been as important as it is today in the Knowledge Based Economy. To change our state we must make sure all our citizens have the work skills and education they need to compete with the world. They also must know how to access this education.

We are sharing this message with Chambers of Commerce, civic organizations, business organizations, parent and school organizations and others. If you are interested in a program, please call us today.

CONTACT: Rita Allison, Director of Communications, at 803-767-8352 or rallison@che.sc.gov.

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director of the CHE, Dr. Garrison Walters, provided an update on his calendar. He reported on a recent conference of the Education Commission of the States and visits around the state to rotary clubs and chambers of commerce where he speaks on the knowledge-based economy and higher education. Dr. Walters asked staff to report on several items they have been working on including: The New Front Door initiative and recent activity to develop a grant proposal; DegreeSC and the Graduate Professional Alliance, both of which are related to implementation of Action Plan recommendations, and the 2010 Campus Safety Conference. A status report on the Action Plan was provided to the Commissioners. Chairman Wingate has named an ad hoc committee of the Commission which includes the Commission's Executive Committee (Wingate, Horne, Sanders and Mosteller) and also Commissioners Scarborough and Temple. The Committee is expected to hold its first meeting in September and will assist in maintaining focus on successfully implementing recommendations of the Action Plan.