

**Executive Director's Report
Commission on Higher Education
3 October 2013**

Thank you, General Finan.

It's great to be in Charleston. Let me add my thanks to President Sothmann and MUSC for hosting us today in such gracious Charlestonian fashion.

This meeting was arranged and re-arranged several times over the last year to accommodate Ray Greenberg's schedule, and then he skipped town!

Let the minutes reflect that this meeting of the Commission will henceforth be known as "Greenberg's Revenge."

This is an exciting week in the world of sports, as well as the sport of higher education.

- Major League baseball playoffs have begun, and my hometown team, the Cincinnati Reds, has already departed the scene.
- The most exciting format in the so-called "profession" of guys knocking little white balls into holes in the ground starts today. The Presidents' Cup matches the best in the US against the best of the rest of the world (which, by the way, serves as a good proxy for our admissions policies—we need the best and brightest from around the country and around the world in our classrooms and labs to keep our competitive edge as sharp as it can be.)

There is always a temptation to see these battles as confrontations between the forces of good and the forces of evil. The Atlanta Braves are the heroes, the Boston Red Sox are the villains (or vice versa, depending upon your geographic location and loyalties). It makes for good drama and plays well among the political classes.

Higher education is more complicated than that. If educators can do one thing well, it is to take a simple problem and make it complex.

Many people warned me that trying to simplify the complex environment of higher education in this state, and in the Low Country in particular, would be a fool's errand.

My strategy was simply to invite you, the presidents, legislators, business leaders, and others to join in a forthright conversation about how we wanted to move higher education forward. How could anyone object to that?

Turns out, some people could. I was suddenly popular among agency heads and was invited to meet with leaders of the Senate and the House. Some people suggested I should make my permanent home in Charleston—at the bottom of the harbor, to be more precise.

As I said, it's great to be here.

Commissioner Vaughn sent us occasional missives during his road trip to Las Vegas. Despite what the visitors' bureau out there says in its ads, what happens there does not always stay there. We already have pictures! Commissioner Scarborough, as you know, went to the big biker rally in Sturgis, South Dakota last month. Pictures of him are all over Facebook now.

At our retreat next weekend I was planning to have a discussion about your stewardship of higher education, what qualities and standards we should expect of commissioners. I'm still working on the part about "being of sound moral character."

The federal government shut down this week, and we are monitoring its impact on our institutions as the days unfold. The immediate consequences in these first few days are limited, but they will grow as the shutdown continues. Some institutions are affected more than others.

We continue to receive information about the Charleston School of Law situation. As we have done for the past several months, we have included an update on CSOL as a separate agenda item that I'll address in a few minutes.

This is College Application Month in South Carolina. This annual event was inspired by the daughter of former Commissioner and local resident, Cindy Mosteller. Dr. Karen Woodfaulk and her staff are deployed daily across the state helping high school seniors navigate the often confusing process of applying to college and completing financial aid forms. This initiative is producing measurable results, with significant growth in applications each year.

As General Finan announced last month, the governor has asked that CHE prepare a report on the financial impact and viability of extending state-based scholarships to year-round eligibility. We have gathered key stakeholders to explore this issue, and we will be bringing a report to you in advance of the governor's December 1 deadline.

We applaud this and other creative approaches to making a college education in SC as affordable as possible. As you know, innovative practices to make higher education affordable for our students and their families is the centerpiece of our new budget initiative.

Our primary responsibility at this meeting, in fact, is to consider that FY15 Budget Plan and finalize our Request to the governor and legislature.

We had a good discussion last month in the Finance and Facilities Committee meeting about the shape and direction of our proposal. Over the past weeks I have been in regular communication with the presidents to help inform the initiative.

Later this morning in Agenda Item 8 we will ask you to consider the specific recommendations that the staff have developed during a vigorous, nay excruciating, series of discussions (also known as shouting matches). We hope you find them worthy of the effort we have invested in them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my report.