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**Contact: Rita Allison**  
**Director of Communications**  
**803-767-8352**  
[rallison@che.sc.gov](mailto:rallison@che.sc.gov)

### **Higher Education Study Releases Report to the General Assembly**

Today, a legislatively appointed higher education study committee presented its final report, ***Leveraging Higher Education for a Stronger South Carolina: The Action Plan Implementation***, to members of the General Assembly at a press conference at 11:00 a.m. on the first floor of the Statehouse.

Committee members who were appointed in 2007 by House and Senate leadership and the Governor included: Mr. Daniel Ravenel of Charleston who served as the committee's chairman; Mr. J. Boone Aiken, III, Esquire, of Florence; Colonel Claude Eichelberger of Camden; The Honorable Jerry N. Govan, Jr., House District 95, Orangeburg County; Dr. Doris R. Helms of Clemson; Mr. Scott Ludlow of Columbia; Mr. Robert W. Marlowe of Charleston; Layton McCurdy, M.D., of Charleston; and Dr. John E. Montgomery of Columbia.

Joining the study committee were members of the General Assembly, presidents of South Carolina's public and independent colleges and universities, business leaders, and members of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. Student body president, Meredith Ross of the University of South Carolina, and members of student government also attended.

In opening remarks, Mr. Otis Rawl, President and CEO of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, commented that the plan is strongly business-oriented, recognizing that advanced education and training are central to our state's competitiveness. He stated he was pleased that members of the business community were active partners in creating this plan. The Honorable John Courson, Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, and the Honorable Phillip Owens, Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee, accepted the report from the study committee and noted it demonstrates where South Carolina stands right now in higher education and provides some excellent ideas for making South Carolina more competitive.

According to Mr. Ravenel, the power of the report lies in its comprehensive outline of specific steps that can be taken to achieve results, about one-third of which can be implemented with little to no cost. Expressing a strong need for the state to increase significantly its education levels, Mr. Ravenel said, "I am proud that our committee, with the help of the business

community and leaders of our colleges and universities, has given attention and priority to things that can be done now with little or no additional funding and am optimistic that we can move forward even in these difficult times. However, we know that in the long run as the economy improves, South Carolina will have to invest more in higher education to get the return it needs to catch up and compete in the knowledge economy.”

Mr. Ken Wingate, Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education, applauded the study committee for providing a list of priorities commenting, “As we wait for economic recovery, the Action Plan shows us that there are many important things we can do right now to improve higher education and in doing so, improve the state. I know that our colleges and universities will follow through quickly and effectively.”

The committee’s work represents the culmination of efforts of dozens of committed citizens representing education, government, and business and industry who spent thousands of thoughtful hours considering what the collective goals of our higher education system should be and what strategies might be pursued to attain them. The final report builds on the earlier September 2008 report of the committee, *Leveraging Higher Education for a Stronger South Carolina: The Action Plan Framework*, which provided the context for the four goals for higher education advanced in the report. The four goals include:

*Goal 1: Making South Carolina One of the Most Education States;*

*Goal 2: Increasing Research and Innovation in South Carolina;*

*Goal 3: Increasing Workforce Training and Educational Services in South Carolina; and*

*Goal 4: Realizing South Carolina’s Potential Resources and Effectiveness.*

The committee’s final report provides clear direction for higher education in the Action Plan’s six-year timeframe by outlining over 100 recommendations and identifying priorities for achieving the goals.

As part of the report, the committee asked researchers at the University of South Carolina’s Moore School of Business to undertake a study of the return on education investment to the state if the goal of becoming one of the most educated states is reached.

The study, led by Dr. Doug Woodward, shows a striking payoff for South Carolina if we forge ahead to increase significantly the education levels of South Carolina citizens. The data indicate that for every dollar invested between 2010 and 2030, in reaching an aspirational goal of achieving at least 29% of the population with at least a baccalaureate degree, \$11.20 is added to the economy in higher gross state product. After reaching the goal in 2030, the gain in economic activity rises to \$25.20. If that is not impressive enough, we know that becoming a more educated state will mean improved health and lower healthcare costs, significantly lower unemployment, and additional benefit through lower expenditures for social services. The Moore School will have a more detailed report on these secondary benefits soon.

Information about the study committee and its work is available on the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education’s website at [www.che.sc.gov](http://www.che.sc.gov). The final report and copy of the Executive Summary are available online at [www.che.sc.gov/HigherEd\\_ActionPlan.htm](http://www.che.sc.gov/HigherEd_ActionPlan.htm).