

Executive Director's Report  
5 February 2015

Thank you, General Finan.

Last Wednesday I appeared before the House Ways and Means higher education subcommittee to present your FY 16 budget request.

A copy of our PowerPoint slides is at your place this morning. There is also an electronic version on the flash drive next to it.

Your chairman and my executive team were in attendance to support the conversation and provide reinforcement, as needed.

Like the college and university presidents who preceded me in the past three weeks, I received my fair share of reprimands, pointed questions, and follow-up requests.

We have a new subcommittee chair, only one legislator who has previously served in this capacity, and new committee staff.

There has been a learning curve for all of us, but I think that's a good thing.

We can begin the journey to transform higher education by asking old questions with new words, and by viewing our environment through fresh eyes.

The hearing was a much more structured, rigorous, and exhaustive process than we have experienced in past sessions.

There was a demand for data and a quest to understand the complex processes of the higher education enterprise. They each had copies of the new Statistical Abstract, like the ones at your places, that were well worn by the end.

There was evident frustration at the difficulty of reconciling different definitions, calculations, and numbers presented by each institution and agency.

The members expect CHE to clarify, simplify, and explain what they need to know in order to sort this all out and do their job. Our staff is striving mightily to meet these expectations.

I have reinforced with my directors the importance of speaking with one voice—clearly and consistently—in representing the Commission on these issues.

And that's particularly important now because there is a hopeful new tone in this discussion that may mean we might be entering a new phase of consideration and action on higher education in SC.

I wouldn't bet the farm on it, but I think there's a chance we could move this conversation to another level.

In addition to our budget hearing, I have had meetings with several other legislators and executive office personnel in the past couple of weeks, including:

- James Burns, the Governor's new chief of staff
- Sen. Nikki Setzler
- Sen. John Matthews
- Rep. Brian White, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee
- Rep. Rita Allison, newly appointed Chair of the House Education and Public Works Committee;
- Rep. Bill Taylor, newly appointed Chair of House Education's Subcommittee on Higher Education.

At each meeting I have given the members a copy of your 2014-15 strategic agenda. I point out that you have taken the first critical steps in the transformation process by uniting around a clear set of targeted objectives.

You have not shied away from mapping a bold course. You have demonstrated a commitment to face up to tough choices.

Legislators acknowledge this progress, but ask for more.

From both sides of the aisle in both chambers of the General Assembly, we are repeatedly hearing that CHE should step up and lead in recommending solutions, not simply framing problems.

It is not clear, however, whether we will continue to get their support for more aggressive leadership, depending on the recommendations we put forward.

But to continue this process, a meeting of the Council of Public University Presidents is tentatively scheduled for early March, where I will be asking the presidents to consider approaches to our core challenges.

These include seamless education within and across sectors, academic program review, and rational, sustainable funding models.

As we consider these challenges, we should be prepared to put everything on the table.

As your schedules permit, we hope that Commissioners will be able to attend this gathering and the presidents' dinner that will follow later that evening. Beth will be in touch soon with more details, once confirmed.

After the presidents' council, I would hope to bring some draft proposals for you to consider in subsequent planning sessions leading up to our August strategic planning retreat.

It's taken almost two years, but we are close to having a full planning process in place for you to act upon as we move forward.

Last week we hosted the second meeting of the new Council of P-20 Education Agency Heads.

I continue to be inspired by the spirit of collaboration and collegiality that infuses the conversations of this alliance.

We all recognize that if we can present a united front of six agencies in support of a bold initiative, that would be pretty powerful. We're now trying to figure out what that initiative might look like.

Also last week Governor Haley announced her new Task Force on Domestic Violence. I was asked to nominate two members representing both academic and practitioner perspectives on this challenging issue. Prof. Connie Best from MUSC and Chief Howard Cook from Columbia College have agreed to serve.

The state's Human Affairs Commission released its annual report this month ranking the state's performance in workplace diversity. We were one of five agencies tied for first place by achieving 100% of our affirmative action/equal opportunity targets for 2014.

Under our new 2015 calendar, our next scheduled meeting will be April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

We will meet on the campus of South Carolina State University. The Commission has never convened as a full body at that location, and it seems an appropriate time to do so.

We appreciate, as always, the hospitality of institutions in hosting our off-site gatherings.

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