

**Executive Director's Report  
Commission on Higher Education  
5 December 2013**

Thank you, Gen. Finan. I hope you and all Commissioners enjoyed a peaceful and relaxing Thanksgiving last week.

I gave thanks that I have the unexpected privilege to lead the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, and that I have such a strong board and such a dedicated staff to work with. This year I have much to be thankful for.

Linguistics professors like Dr. Horne will no doubt quickly remind me that one should not end a sentence with a preposition.

The proper grammatical phrasing is that "I have such a dedicated staff with which to work" and that "I have much for which to be thankful."

To which I would echo Winston Churchill's response, "That is criticism up with which I will not put."

It turns out that Dr. Horne's earned doctorate is apparently not recognized at Lander University, even though she taught there for many years.

So President Ball has decided to award her an honorary doctorate in humane letters at their commencement ceremonies later this month.

I personally think a degree in inhumane letters would be more appropriate.

More than once I have been the recipient of her caustic missives berating the atrocious judgment and questionable intelligence of higher education administrators, politicians, and other assorted scoundrels. From her vast experience in these realms, she knows whereof she speaks.

Please join me in congratulating the soon-to-be Commissioner Professor Doctor Doctor Bettie Rose Horne.

Commissioner Munns had asked recently about the status of our institutional enrollments this fall.

As you will recall, I had made brief comments at our September meeting about enrollment projections based on some very early survey data from our institutions.

I subsequently discovered that CHE does not receive fully verified enrollment data for the fall semester until the beginning of the spring semester. This is good for historical accuracy, but not so good for timely planning and decision-making.

Thanks to Camille Brown's extra efforts, we are able to present to you today a preliminary fall 2013 enrollment report. Please note that all of the numbers on the page at your places are unofficial.

I share them with you this morning because they may represent the start of an anticipated long-term trend toward flat or even declining enrollments.

The research universities continue to gradually but steadily expand. Up 2.3% this year, almost 12% in the last five.

Enrollments in the comprehensive university sector are virtually the same as they were five years ago.

The two-year institutions are enrolling fewer students this year. USC's branch campuses are down 3%, the technical college system is down almost 2%.

Few of our institutions are prospering from any major growth this year. Two technical colleges (Williamsburg and York) have seen one-year reversals of downward trends, but all other increases are below 3%.

One-fifth of our institutions are suffering from cautionary declines. SC State, USC-Beaufort, Lander, USC-Salkehatchie, Aiken Tech, OC Tech, and Piedmont Tech have all experienced enrollment drops of 5% or greater in the current year.

Higher education institutions are not corporations, and we should not measure their success or potential solely in terms of quarterly reports. These are only headcount numbers, and full-time equivalents may look different.

Still, the Commission must monitor these trends closely, prepare stress tests for struggling schools, and weigh strategies that will best serve the educational needs of our state, particularly in light of changing demographics.

A quick update on the Charleston School of Law.

- Later this month I will get a preliminary internal staff report on InfiLaw's application for a new license.
- Our review process will include a call for public input and a public hearing.
- We will select an external review team to then consider the relevant information.

- The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing (CAAL) will then review the reports and staff recommendations, with full Commission action occurring by May at the earliest, possibly later.
- Staff communications with the American Bar Association a few weeks ago revealed that InfiLaw had not yet filed its application for acquiescence of the proposed sale, so CHE is under no immediate time constraints on that end to make its determination.

Now I'd like to do something a bit different in my monthly report.

I was scheduled to make a presentation yesterday to the K-16 Facilities Need and Utilization Study Committee of the House Ways and Means Committee, and I was going to recap that discussion for you this morning.

However, Chairman Brian White cancelled our session at the last hour after a longer-than-expected Joint Bond Review Committee meeting earlier in the day.

So instead of a re-cap, you will get a pre-cap, after which you will probably want a nightcap.

The upside is that I will now have the benefit of your thoughts and advice as we prepare the next iteration of this presentation, whenever we are called upon to deliver it.

[Dr. Sutton then walked the Commissioners through the draft PowerPoint presentation on "Facilities Need and Utilization of SC Public Colleges and Universities." The final version of that presentation will be posted on the CHE website once the hearing before the study committee is completed.]