

Executive Director's Report
Commission on Higher Education
9 January 2014

Thank you, Gen. Finan.

I apologize that I do not have a full report to deliver today. As you will note on the agenda, I have three additional reports to share with you this morning. My opening comments will therefore be relatively brief.

First of all, happy new year. I hope you and all Commissioners enjoyed a restful and enjoyable holiday season.

As we begin the new year, I simply hope that it ends quickly. I don't think I can survive this level of celebration and re-birth much longer.

My enthusiasm for the new year was curtailed yesterday by two concurrent events: diving into the piranha tank of the House Ways and Means Higher Education Sub-Committee, and then discovering that my house was flooded with two broken water pipes.

Next Monday I compound my fun by trekking up to Greenville to meet with that legislative delegation collectively, as well as several individual meetings with senators and representatives in the Upstate.

I made the mistake of taking a brief reprieve to spend a week away over Christmas. I am now paying the price for that error of judgment.

We will soon be bringing to you new CHE personnel policies that eliminate recognition of any state, federal, or religious holidays, place all employees on rotating 12-hour shifts, and redefine weekends as "workends."

Your staff works extremely hard on your behalf. It is my privilege to lead them, but I must find a more humane, responsible way to help them do their jobs.

I had hoped that our recent reorganization would propel us in this direction, and it has set up a new dynamic, but we still have a ways to go.

But seriously, I am actually quite optimistic as we look ahead in 2014. We have a clear plan of action to guide us and keep us focused, a new mobilization of our staff talent and resources, and an environment in which the need for change is recognized, even if the proposed solutions vary widely. I believe that these next twelve months will mark a significant period in the Commission's history.

I am grateful that Craig Parks and Barry Bolen have been part of our meeting today. You need to hear less from me, and more from people who actually know stuff.

In the months ahead, we will continue to bring outside experts, presidents, political leaders, and others to help inform your conversations about the critical issues that you must confront.

This morning I have additional reports on yesterday's FY15 budget presentation, the Charleston School of Law update, and my monthly progress report on your strategic planning agenda. Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I will move directly to those agenda items.