

# SC CHE NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**February 16, 2021**

### **PRESS CONFERENCE:**

## **Governor McMaster and Higher Education Leaders Call for More Need-Based Student Funding**

### **Date & Time:**

**Wednesday, February 17 at 2:30 pm**

### **Location:**

**University of South Carolina Alumni Center  
(Ballroom1)  
900 Senate St, Columbia, SC 29201**

**Columbia, SC**—Governor McMaster, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and the state’s public and independent colleges and universities look forward to working with the General Assembly to adopt Governor McMaster’s recommendation of \$80 million in Lottery Funds to provide need-based grants directly to students for their postsecondary education. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a heavy financial and psychological toll on students and families. Some students opted for a “gap” year, during which they either worked or volunteered instead of enrolling in higher education after high school. Other students had no choice but to delay or stop their education after high school to help their families weather the crisis. With a unified voice, the governor, colleges, universities, and the CHE urge the expansion of need-based grants to ensure all South Carolinians have access to and can afford postsecondary education.

Education after high school is an essential investment in the state’s people and the state’s future. “The CHE is committed to increasing educational attainment by keeping college accessible and affordable for all South Carolinians,” said Dr. Rusty Monhollon, President and Executive Director of the CHE. “As more of the cost of higher education has been shifted to

students and their families the importance of expanding need-based financial aid has never been greater. Need-based grants, as part of a well-designed set of financial aid policies, increase access, persistence, and completion among low-income students. As such, they are a tremendous investment in our young people, and one we as a state must make.”

While South Carolina’s higher education system of two- and four-year colleges and universities have been hit hard by COVID-19, students and families have been impacted as hard or harder. Enrollment this past fall decreased by 13 percent among all the state’s institutions of higher education.

Part of this decline may also be attributed to students who struggle with virtual instruction, prefer not to learn remotely, or lack access to the network infrastructure so they can learn remotely. The most significant barrier students face remains affording higher education instruction. Students either do not have the money to enroll or must stop their studies to help support their families financially. “Increasing need-based grants will brighten the futures of thousands of students, including more than 12,000 South Carolina students attending independent colleges and universities in the state,” said South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities President Jeff Perez. “COVID-19 has had a deep and long-lasting impact on our students and their capacity to pay for college. Increasing students’ need-based aid could very well be the difference between staying enrolled and giving up on their dream of a college education.”

As Governor McMaster declared in submitting his Executive Budget: “No government function in South Carolina is more important than educating our children and young adults. Preparing young people for college, career and real life is the objective.” Access and affordability to higher education for every South Carolinian is fundamental to ensuring we have the workforce needed to compete in the twenty-first century economy. The state must invest to make all higher education – our colleges, universities, and technical colleges – accessible and affordable for the sons and daughter of South Carolina.

## **FOR IMMEDIATE CONTACT**

Office of the Governor Media Inquiries:

Brian Symmes, Director of Communications

[bsymmes@governor.sc.gov](mailto:bsymmes@governor.sc.gov)

CHE Media Inquiries:

Bunnie Lempeis Ward, Director of Governmental Affairs & Communications

(803) 737-1397 or [bward@che.sc.gov](mailto:bward@che.sc.gov)

CHE Office of the President:

Dr. Rusty Monhollon, President & Executive Director

(803) 737-2155 or [rmonhollon@che.sc.gov](mailto:rmonhollon@che.sc.gov)

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## **ABOUT CHE:**

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE), established in 1967, serves as the coordinating board for South Carolina's 33 public institutions of higher learning. It acts both as an oversight agency on behalf of the General Assembly and as an advocate for higher education. The CHE is responsible for assuring a balance between student and taxpayer interests and institutional policies, aspirations, and needs. The CHE is committed to access, affordability, and quality in the state system of higher education through coordination, regulation, advocacy and oversight, as directed by the General Assembly.



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### **Our Offices are located at**

1122 Lady Street, Suite 400

Columbia, SC 29201