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University of South Carolina  
Board of Trustees

University System Committee Meeting

March 12, 2021

The University System Committee of the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees met at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, March 12, 2021, in the Pastides Alumni Center Ballroom and by Microsoft Teams.

Committee members present were Ms. Leah B. Moody, Chair; Mr. Toney J. Lister; Mr. Miles Loadholt; Mr. Hubert F. Mobley; Mr. Robin D. Roberts; Dr. C. Dorn Smith III, Board Chair; and Mr. Thad H. Westbrook, Board Vice Chair. Mr. John C. von Lehe Jr. joined by Microsoft Teams. Mr. J. Egerton Burroughs was absent.

Other Trustees present were Mr. C. Dan Adams; Mr. Alex English; Dr. C. Edward Floyd; Mr. Brian C. Harlan; Mr. Richard A. Jones Jr.; Ms. Emma W. Morris; Ms. Rose Buyck Newton; Mr. Eugene P. Warr Jr.; Mr. Mack I. Whittle Jr.; and Mr. Charles H. Williams. Ms. Molly M. Spearman joined by Microsoft Teams.

Also present were USC Columbia Faculty Senate Chair Mark Cooper and USC Columbia Student Government President Issy Rushton. Board of Trustees Strategic Advisor David Seaton participated by Microsoft Teams.

Others present were President Robert L. Caslen, Jr.; Secretary J. Cantey Heath, Jr.; Assistant Secretary Cameron Howell; President's Chief of Staff Mark Bieger; Presidential Faculty Fellow and Executive Assistant to the President Susan Bon; University Foundations President and Chief Executive Officer Jason Caskey; Executive Director for Strategic

Initiatives Jack Claypoole; USC Upstate Interim Chancellor J. Derham Cole Jr.; Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Monica Delisa; Chief Audit Executive Pam Dunleavy; Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins; Chief Executive Officer, My Carolina Alumni Association Will Elliott; Associate Vice President of Finance and Budget Kelly Epting; Chief Information Officer Doug Foster; University Architect and Associate Vice President of Facilities Planning, Design and Construction Derek Gruner; USC Associate Vice President for Finance Kelly Epting; Columbia Student Government President-Elect Alex Harrell; Alumni Association Chief Executive Officer Wes Hickman; USC Aiken Chancellor Sandra Jordan; University Controller Mandy Kibler; Assistant to the President for System Affairs Eddie King; Columbia Faculty Senate Chair-Elect Audrey Koragaard; Director of Government Relations Derek Meggie; Senior Associate Provost for Social Innovation and eLearning Diana Mitchell; President of the Boudreaux Group Heather Mitchell; USC Beaufort Chancellor Al Panu; General Counsel and Executive Director of Compliance Programs Terry Parham; Chief Operating Officer Jeff Perkins; Vice President for Student Affairs Dennis Pruitt; Interim Director of Executive Communications Amy Rogers; Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Joel Samuels; Special Assistant to the President James Smith; Assistant Vice President and Chief of Staff for Division of Administration and Finance Joe Sobieralski; Assistant Vice President for Media and External Relations Jeff Stensland; Athletics Director Ray Tanner; Provost Bill Tate; Vice President for Communications Larry Thomas; Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Ed Walton; Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Julian Williams; and Board of Trustees' support staff.

## **OPEN SESSION**

### **I. Call to Order**

Chair Moody called the meeting to order, welcomed those in attendance, and asked Trustees and Board appointees in the room to introduce themselves. Secretary Heath confirmed those joining by Microsoft Teams.

Chair Moody called on Mr. Stensland to introduce members of the media. Mr. Stensland introduced Lucas Daprile with the *State* attending in person and Jessica Holdman with the *Post and Courier* joining by Microsoft Teams audio conference.

Chair Moody stated notice of the meeting and the agenda were posted and the press notified as required by the Freedom of Information Act; the agenda and supporting materials were circulated to the Committee; and a quorum was present to conduct business.

Chair Moody introduced USC Columbia Student Body President-elect Alex Harrell. She noted he will take office on March 25, 2021.

## **MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chair Moody stated there was a need to enter Executive Session for discussion of negotiations incident to a proposed contractual matter between Carolina Online and a major league sports organization. Mr. Mobley so moved, and Mr. Roberts seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. Chair Moody invited the following to remain: voting Trustees, President Caslen, Secretary Heath, Assistant Secretary Howell, Mr. Parham, Dr. Tate, Mr. Walton, Dr. Mitchell, Mr. Bieger, and Board of Trustees' support staff.

Chair Moody stated no action will be taken in Executive Session and asked those not invited to remain to please step out.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

– **Executive Session Removed** –

## **RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

### II. Accreditation Across the System

Chancellors Cole, Elkins, Jordan, and Panu participated in a panel discussion regarding accreditation across the System and provided updates on their schools' accreditation status. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the southern states. Accreditation by SACSCOC signifies that the institution has: 1) a mission appropriate to higher education; 2) resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that mission; and 3) maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission, appropriate to the degrees it offers, and indicates whether it is successful in achieving its stated objectives.

Interim Chancellor Derham Cole reported USC Upstate is currently undergoing its reaffirmation with SACSCOC. The reaccreditation process for 2022 has begun. Written narratives are being prepared in anticipation of the virtual advisory visit on June 8, 2021. An offsite review will be conducted in November 2021, followed by a full onsite review in March of 2022 leading up to a decision on reaffirmation in December 2022. Mr. Cole stated what he has learned with this process is there are many moving parts and a great deal of detail. More importantly, there are very critical consequences and considerations for failure to seek or maintain accreditation.

Chancellor Sandra Jordan reported USC Aiken is on the same accrediting schedule as USC Columbia. They have submitted their Quality Enhancement Plan and are preparing for their onsite review in two weeks. She provided highlights of the genesis of higher education

accreditation, which is a peer review process based on professional judgment against a set of standards that address accountability, quality assurance, continuous improvement, student learning, assessment of student learning, and viability of the institution. Regional accreditation is monitored through SACSCOC and accreditation at the federal level is through the Department of Education. Seven regional commissions were created in the 1880s. When Congress established the GI Bill after World War II, many new institutions were created across the United States; however, some of those institutions had low quality standards. The federal government intervened in 1952 and passed an act recognizing and empowering the regional accreditors. Institutions created after World War II that could not qualify for accreditation were no longer eligible for federal funding. As a result, those institutions folded.

Chancellor Al Panu reported USC Beaufort recently completed its decennial SACSCOC accreditation reaffirmation as part of the class of 2019, which was the first class to be evaluated using the newly revised standards established by a committee chaired by Chancellor Jordan. USC Beaufort, the youngest public comprehensive institution in the State of South Carolina, recently underwent substantive changes resulting from the addition of the Hilton Head Island campus and the addition of a master's degree program. Chancellor Panu stated accreditation came into existence to ensure the quality offering of higher education institutions and quickly emerged as the organizing principle around which the definition of what a higher education institution looks like is forged. As institutions merge and unmerge, requisite changes in accreditation status follow and help define new entities as either separate institutions or single institutions with branch campuses. In a large system a group of separately accredited institutions come together under one governing board and the chancellor or president has the single role of overseeing the system. With a smaller system, and to realize efficiencies, a dual president/chancellor oversees the flagship institution and the entire system

of institutions. Chancellor Panu noted he currently serves on the SACSCOC Board of Directors as a South Carolina delegate representing the four-year sector role previously occupied by Chancellor Jordan; he is in his second term of service.

Chancellor Susan Elkins reported Palmetto College is currently undergoing the 10-year reaccreditation process with USC Columbia and is preparing for the upcoming site visit later this month. She provided historical context for the Palmetto College accreditation. Prior to 1991, the campuses of Palmetto College, which included USC Beaufort, USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter, and USC Union, were accredited separately and independently. USC Aiken and USC Upstate were also accredited separately and independently. In 1991 the administration decided it was advantageous to both the Columbia and the regional campuses to be accredited as one and as branch campuses of Columbia. Palmetto College campuses use the Columbia course descriptions and have adopted its academic calendar. USC Beaufort left the branch campus status and became separately accredited in 2004 when it transitioned from associate degree granting to bachelor's degree granting. Some advantages of joint accreditation for the regional Palmetto College campuses with Columbia include: 1) development and maintenance of uniformity of policies and procedures; 2) reduction in the total number of separate and independent University of South Carolina accreditations from eight to four; 3) consolidation and consistency of required data used to satisfy accreditation; 4) savings of resources and staff time used to complete needed accreditation paperwork; 5) access to planning done in areas such as campus safety, business affairs, instructional technology, human resources, and those things discussed frequently in board meetings; 6) added prestige to the reputation of the regional Palmetto College campuses; and 7) less burden for students to move from a regional Palmetto College to USC Columbia. Accreditation requirements apply to all instructional programs and services wherever located and however delivered. This includes

programs offered through distancing correspondence education as well as off-campus sites and branch campuses. Palmetto College has the following: 1) four branch campuses of Columbia—USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter, and USC Union; 2) four approved off-campus sites where 50% or more of the credential can be obtained—USC Union at Laurens, USC Lancaster at Indian Land, USC Sumter at Ridgeview High School, and Fort Jackson Education Services Center; and 3) 29 approved off-campus sites where less than 50% of credentials can be obtained (those sites are primarily where high school dual credit courses are offered). Chancellor Jordan noted it has been her pleasure to serve as a SACSCOC reviewer for over 20 years.

Chair Moody thanked the Chancellors and stated the updates on accreditation across the System were received as information.

### III. Strategic Plan Update – Priority 5

#### A. Priority 5.1 – Develop Governance Structure

##### 1. Update on Goal, Objective Progress, and Budget

Mr. Eddie King briefed the Board on the status of development of a shared governance structure. The fundamental goal of Priority 5.1 is to create a shared governance across the University System. He, along with Strategic Planning Goal 5 co-chair Dr. Mitchell, has created 15 Expert Councils comprised of experts from each institution in the system that collaborate on developing programs that will leverage the University System. These Expert Councils include: Online Advisory Council, Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Military, System Policies, CIO Roundtable, Administration & Finance, Diversity & Inclusion, Development/Fundraising, Government Affairs, Research, Library Services, Communications, System Faculty

Leadership, and Human Resources. Their recommendations will flow through the System Leadership Council. Deans and individual representatives are part of the main working group that give breadth to the eyes on the whole process.

2. System Faculty Leadership Council

Mr. King advised one of the Expert Councils created is the System Faculty Leadership Council, which provides a representative voice in system affairs and facilitates collaboration among the faculty senates and faculty organizations. Membership is comprised of representatives of faculty organizations across the system who meet as a group twice per semester or as needed. At no time does the Council usurp authority previously delegated to campus faculties by the Board of Trustees.

Chair Moody thanked Mr. King and stated the Priority 5.1 update on development of a governance structure was received as information.

IV. System Commencement Presentation, Discussion and Decision

Mr. Mark Bieger provided an overview of the spring commencement schedule, key information, and Board attendance. Beginning Friday, April 30 there will be 18 in-person commencement ceremonies across the system, culminating on May 15 with a special celebration for the 2020 graduates. Ceremonies in Columbia will be held at Williams-Brice Stadium. While the School of Medicine will conduct its commencement ceremonies virtually, its hooding ceremonies will be in person. Per health and safety recommendations, the number of Trustees on the podium will be limited. The key priorities are maintaining the safety of graduates, their guests, and the community, while providing a memorable experience for graduates. A pre-commencement dinner is planned to honor guest speakers Governor Henry McMaster, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Judge Michelle Childs, and Representative



Murrell Smith. Student Government President Issy Rushton thanked everyone involved in the decision to conduct commencement ceremonies in person. She stated, “The opportunity to celebrate in person and celebrate an accomplishment of graduating college is something that is very, very special to all graduates.”

Chair Moody stated the system commencement briefing was received as information.

V. Review of Committee Matrix

Chair Moody stated the Committee Matrix was available as information.

VI. Other Matters

Chair Moody called for other matters to come before the Committee. There were none.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Chair Moody declared the meeting adjourned at 10:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Cantey Heath, Jr.  
Secretary