



Robert L. Caslen, Jr.
President

July 15, 2020

Dear Committee Members:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on this vitally important “Committee of 9.” Like most other institutions of higher education, the University of South Carolina faces the challenge of matching its academic strengths and ambitions to changes in the student body resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting demographics. Your committee will play a decisive role in helping the University meet those challenges.

The Faculty Manual specifies that this committee “must participate in the formulation of criteria for determining termination” of tenured faculty members for reasons of “financial exigency” and that the “decision to discontinue or reduce a program or instructional unit must be arrived at jointly by the President” and this committee. At present, a condition of financial exigency does not exist. Medium-term budget projections, however, do make it advisable to consider a reorganization of academic programs that may entail reductions. I am charging you to begin an exploration of options that may result in such a reorganization.

The University will retain an external consultant to assess cost-savings and revenue-generating opportunities through academic program realignments. Your first task as a committee will be to review the draft scope of work for this consultant and recommend any changes you feel necessary. You will also meet with the consultant as part of the engagement to inform the production of their report.

The committee will review the external consultant’s report and recommendations generated by the internal Future Opportunities Committee. Upon review, the committee will provide a written evaluation. It is not expected that the committee perform an independent audit of the quantitative or qualitative measures employed by the consultant or Future Opportunities Committee as a basis for their recommendations. Rather, the committee is asked to assess the reasonableness of the process followed and the feasibility of the recommendations generated, as well as to weigh comparatively any specific options proposed. The committee is further directed to balance any proposed restructuring against the priorities expressed in the University’s Strategic Plan.

The committee's written report, along with the consultant's report and recommendations of the Future Opportunities Committee will be submitted for review by a committee comprising the Chief Financial Officer, Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, Vice President for Diversity Equity and Inclusion, a representative of the Council of Academic Deans and the Chair of the Faculty Senate; this group of six will make final recommendations to me, the President of the University.

I hope that it will not be necessary to discontinue or reduce academic programs, but should that be among the recommendations, I will meet jointly with you to review any such decision and to confirm that the provisions of the Faculty Manual have been met.

You are charged, finally, to bring to this task your experience, reason, compassion and commitment to the common good. To serve with distinction as the state's flagship, the University of South Carolina must unflinchingly confront the challenges ahead. We must remain committed not only to the integrity of our University community but also to the long-term social and economic welfare of our state, nation, and world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Caslen, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Robert L. Caslen, Jr.