The commemoration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., has a rich history at the University of South Carolina. Even before the inception of the national holiday, commemorative activities were held at USC. In January 1983, the USC Black Alumni Caucus sponsored the first University program in honor of Dr. King’s birthday and continued to sponsor the event, held in Rutledge Chapel, until 1986.

In that same year, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, in conjunction with the Black Alumni Caucus and the Association of African-American Students, expanded the program and moved it to the Russell House Ballroom. Dr. King’s daughter, Ms. Yolanda King, was the 1986 keynote speaker. Since then, through the Office of the President, Division of Student Affairs, and the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, this commemorative program has evolved into a three day celebration. Nationally recognized speakers and native South Carolinians who have achieved success in religion, government, and politics have been past keynote speakers for the Annual Commemorative Breakfast which traditionally kicks off the MLK activities for the weekend leading up to the Monday birthday celebration.

The USC Chapter of the Black Law Students Association implemented their Commemorative Law School Program in 1989. The primary focus of this event has been on the legal aspects of Dr. King’s life and the Civil Rights Movement, and this event is open to the public. The Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Committee is pleased that these activities have evolved into a University-wide event. The committee, with the full support of President Harris Pastides, salutes those individuals and groups that have led the way in commemorating Dr. King’s birthday at this institution.

In 1999 then President John M. Palms cancelled classes and declared the day a University-wide Day of Service. This tradition continues today under the leadership of President Harris Pastides. USC’s Day of Service includes projects in which faculty, staff, and students devote a day to community service in the greater Columbia community and it continues to grow in scope. USC’s Day of Service celebrates Dr. King’s spirit and our commitment as a University to never forget his contributions to this nation and to the world.
SENATOR JOHN L. SCOTT, JR., is a member of the South Carolina State Senate and represents Richland County Senate District 19. Senator Scott previously served in the S.C. House of Representatives for 18 years and was elected to the Senate in November of 2008. In the Senate, he serves on the Judiciary Committee, Medical Affairs Committee, Corrections and Penology Committee, and the General Committee. Senator Scott is a graduate of South Carolina State University and is the president of J.L. Scott Realty Co. and president of C&S Consulting Group.

ATTORNEY TINA N. HERBERT is a senior associate with McAngus, Goudelock & Courie, LLC. She received her BS in accounting (magna cum laude) from St. Augustine’s College in Raleigh, N.C., in May 1996. She received her Juris Doctor and master’s in business administration (JD/MBA) degrees in May 2000 from North Carolina Central University in Durham, N.C. She was admitted to the South Carolina Bar in November 2000 and is admitted to practice before the United States District Court, Federal District of South Carolina. She was admitted to the United States Supreme Court in 2006. She is also a certified circuit court mediator. In March 2007, Ms. Herbert was named the South Carolina Bar Young Lawyer of the Year for her community service through the Bar. She has been actively involved in South Carolina Bar Young Lawyers Division since 2001. She has consistently been involved with the annual Minority Pre-Law Conference, which received the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division First Place Award of Achievement for Minority Projects for two years.

REPRESENTATIVE J. TODD RUTHERFORD is a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives and represents Richland County House District 74. Representative Rutherford serves on the Judiciary Committee in the S.C. House of Representatives and has served in the legislature since 1999. He is a graduate of the University of South Carolina School of Law and practices law in Columbia, S.C.

MR. JAMES T. MCLAWHORN, JR., has been the president and chief executive officer of the Columbia Urban League since 1979. He is recognized nationally as a leader in race and community relations. Currently, he is a featured blogger for The State newspaper, the largest newspaper in South Carolina, and a recipient of the National Urban League’s Whitney M. Young, Jr., Race Relations Award. Mr. McLawhorn was a chief planner of the King Day at the Dome march and rally held on January 17, 2000. One of the largest civil rights demonstrations in the history of South Carolina, the march and rally drew more than 50,000 people to downtown Columbia to protest the flying of the Confederate flag atop the South Carolina Statehouse. Mr. McLawhorn received his BS degree in political science from North Carolina A&T State University, a master’s degree in regional planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a master’s degree in business administration from the University of Miami at Coral Gables.

REPRESENTATIVE ANTON J. GUNN is a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives and represents Richland County House District 79. Representative Gunn is a University of South Carolina graduate, earning a BA in 1994 and a master’s in social work in 2001. He also played football for the Gamecocks from 1991 to 1994. He most recently served as the South Carolina political director for the Obama for President Campaign and serves on the Medical, Military, Public, and Municipal Affairs Committee in the S.C. House of Representatives. Representative Gunn is the president and CEO of Top Gunn Associates, LLC. In addition to his service in the legislature, he is also a professional motivational speaker and recently published his first book, The Audacity of Leadership.

MR. JAMES E. SMITH, JR., is a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives and represents Richland County House District 72. A member of the legislature since 1997, Representative Smith serves on the Judiciary Committee in the S.C. House of Representatives. He is a graduate of the University of South Carolina School of Law and most recently served on active duty in Afghanistan with the South Carolina Air National Guard. Representative Smith currently practices law in Columbia.

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