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University of South Carolina  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Student-Trustee Liaison Committee

November 18, 2016

The Student-Trustee Liaison Committee of the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees met at 11:15 p.m. Friday, November 18, 2016, in the Alumni Center's C. Edward Floyd Boardroom.

Members present were: Mr. A. C. "Bubba" Fennell, Chairman; Mr. Thomas C. Cofield; Dr. C. Edward Floyd; Ms. Leah B. Moody; Mr. Tommy Preston Jr.; Mr. Eugene P. Warr Jr.; and Mr. John C. von Lehe Jr., Board Chairman. Mr. J. Egerton Burroughs and Ms. Molly M. Spearman were absent.

Other Board members present were: Mr. Chuck Allen; Mr. Mark W. Buyck Jr.; Mr. William C. Hubbard; Mr. William W. Jones Jr.; Mr. Toney J. Lister; Mr. Miles Loadholt; Mr. Hubert F. Mobley; Dr. C. Dorn Smith III; Mr. Thad H. Westbrook; Mr. Mack I. Whittle Jr.; and Mr. Charles H. Williams.

Others present were: President Harris Pastides; Secretary Amy E. Stone; General Counsel Walter "Terry" H. Parham; Provost Joan T. A. Gabel; Chief Operating Officer Edward L. Walton; Vice President for Student Affairs Dennis A. Pruitt; Chief Communications Officer Wes Hickman; Executive Director of Audit & Advisory Services Pam Doran; Athletics Director Ray Tanner; Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School Cheryl L. Addy; USC Aiken Chancellor Sandra Jordan; USC Beaufort Chancellor Al Panu; Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins; Vice President for System Planning and USC Upstate Interim Chancellor Mary Anne Fitzpatrick; Director of Facilities Planning and Programming and University Architect Derek S. Gruner; Chief of Staff, President's Office, J. Cantey Heath Jr.; Director of Governmental and Community Relations and Legislative Liaison Shirley D. Mills; USC Aiken Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance Joe Sobieralski; USC Aiken Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Jeff Priest; Mrs. Ann Loadholt, wife of Trustee Miles Loadholt; University Technology Services Production Manager Matt Warthen; and Board staff members Terri Saxon and Ina Wilson.

Student Government Association (SGA) representatives present were: USC Aiken: President Shaquanda Ross-Simmons, Vice President Spencer LaMunion, Secretary Ariel Avana Alston, and Treasurer Cassie Torres; USC Beaufort: President Caroline Bowman, Vice President Poppie Miller, and Senator Abby Cantrell; USC Columbia: President Michael Parks, Vice President Ross Lordo, and Graduate Student Association President Mark VanDriel; USC Upstate: President Tia Green, Treasurer James

Parham III, Senator at Large Justin Dawkins, Chief of Staff Tyvon Moore, and Freshman Class President Tia Freeman.

The Student Government Association advisors present included: USC Aiken – Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Life Ahmed Samaha; USC Beaufort – Vice Chancellor of Student Development Doug Oblander; USC Columbia – Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support Jerry Brewer; and USC Upstate – Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Laura Puckett-Boler and Assistant Dean of Students Khrystal Smith.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Fennell called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and invited them to introduce themselves. He said that the agenda had been posted, the press notified as required by the Freedom of Information Act, the agenda had been circulated to committee members and a quorum was present to conduct business.

Chairman Fennell called on Mr. Hickman to introduce the media in attendance: Ella Bock with the *Daily Gamecock*; Avery Wilks with *The State*; and Chris Trainer with the *Free Times*.

II. Report of the Graduate Student Association

Chairman Fennell called on Dr. Cheryl Addy to introduce Graduate Student Association (GSA) President Mark VanDriel.

Dr. Addy said that Mr. VanDriel, a doctoral candidate in the department of history, was a former math and science high school teacher.

Mr. VanDriel began his report by thanking the Board for inviting him to speak on behalf of the graduate and professional student body. He said the one thing that unifies the diverse graduate student body population is their devotion to academic research. He discussed the impact of two competitive programs on the quality of graduate students and their ability to conduct gold-standard research: the Presidential Fellows Program and the Support to Promote Advancement of Research and Creativity (SPARC) Program. He said the SPARC Program empowers excellent research, often helping projects grow until they are successful candidates for external research grants.

Mr. VanDriel said that Provost Gabel's Blue Ribbon Commission on graduate student life was an excellent initiative that provided valuable information. Most important to him was that USC was significantly behind its peer and peer-aspirant universities, as well as SEC institutions, in the subsidies provided for graduate health insurance. He urged progress be made on this matter.

Mr. VanDriel concluded his report by saying that graduate students do much of the research and the academic work that makes USC a flagship university and that with such a diverse group, the best way to support graduate students and graduate student life was to engage in and encourage a culture of transparent, honest, and clear communication.

Chairman Fennell thanked Mr. VanDriel for his informative report and called on President Pastides to comment on the concern regarding health insurance subsidies. President Pastides responded that he instructs the University's Chief Operations Officer and Chief Financial Officer to increase graduate student health insurance subsidies in the annual budgets; however, the premiums continue to rise.

### III. Panel Discussion: Student Government Leaders

Chairman Fennell stated that the presidents of the Student Government Associations (SGA) of the USC four-year campuses (Aiken, Beaufort, Columbia and Upstate) had been invited to participate in a panel discussion related to topics of interest on their campuses.

Chairman Fennell called on Vice President for Student Affairs Dennis Pruitt to lead the panel discussion. Dr. Pruitt explained that SGA presidents, working with their advisors, had been asked to submit topics for the panel discussion. He said he appreciated the overwhelming response to the request and thanked the four SGA presidents for how they represent the University: Shaquanda Ross-Simmons, USC Aiken; Caroline Bowman, USC Beaufort; Micheal Parks, USC Columbia; and Tia Green, USC Upstate. He also welcomed other SGA officers who were seated in the gallery.

Dr. Pruitt asked each president to introduce themselves by sharing the following information: the campus they represent, their hometown, major, and one thing about themselves that few people know and that they would like others to appreciate. Each SGA president began by thanking the committee for the invitation to be part of the panel.

Mr. Parks, a senior from Columbia and a finance and risk management/political science double major at USC Columbia, said his flag football team had been eliminated in the playoffs the prior night, but he was proud the team had been in the semi-finals two years in a row. He commended the University's intramural sports program.

Ms. Shaquanda Ross-Simmons, a senior at USC Aiken majoring in biology and minoring in neuroscience, said she just celebrated her 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. She added that her hometown was Charleston, South Carolina.

Ms. Caroline Bowman shared that she was a senior biology major at USC Beaufort and planned to attend pharmacy school after graduation. She said she is originally from Charlotte, North Carolina, and is an avid ping-pong player.

Ms. Tia Green, a junior mass media communications major and marketing minor at USC Upstate, said in addition to being a full-time student she also was a licensed insurance agent in 17 states.

Dr. Pruitt stated that with more students using new forms of transportation on campus, new safety concerns have surfaced for student pedestrians – whether it be students texting or being self-absorbed in phone conversations while crossing busy intersections, smart cars parking on campus, or the increase in mopeds, bikes, and skateboards. He asked the USC Beaufort and USC Columbia presidents to share any safety concerns related to student vehicles and pedestrians on their campuses.

Ms. Bowman said the first safety step she recommended was for students to put their phones down when walking or driving. A big safety issue at USC Beaufort resulted from pedestrians and drivers not focusing when traveling on the two busiest campus roads beside the Hargray Building. She said the SGA was working with the administration to add motorcycle parking for commuter students and to increase the few spaces available for resident students. Also, she reported, skateboard spills had increased with the increased number of skateboard users.

Mr. Parks said that jaywalking was abundant on campus and he was appalled by how many students have a low IQ when it comes to “how to be a good pedestrian.” He said that although recent safety improvements had been made at the Assembly and Greene Street intersection, it still remained a safety concern because Assembly Street was so busy with drivers speeding through the intersection, and pedestrians rushing through crosswalks. Mr. Parks noted that many USC Columbia students were from rural communities and he suggested including the topic of pedestrian safety in freshman orientation.

Dr. Pruitt stated that obtaining a college education is the first step towards pursuing a first job, which may lead to a long-term career. He said that colleges can assist students in obtaining their first job by helping them become “workplace ready.” Campus career centers help by providing work experiences, internships, resume preparation assistance, practice interview and etiquette sessions, and clothes banks to borrow clothing for interviews. Dr. Pruitt asked Ms. Ross-Simmons, Ms. Bowman, and Ms. Green to discuss how their campuses provide students support in the job search, what each of them was doing to prepare themselves, and any recommendations for additional services.

Ms. Ross-Simmons said the Career Services Department assists students to become work place ready in ways described by Dr. Pruitt. She added that in addition to those services, USC Aiken offers several leadership and leadership certificate programs.

Ms. Bowman said that USC Beaufort's student career preparation services were similar to those offered by USC Aiken. In addition, she said that nursing students are provided clinical experience through an agreement with the local hospital and she hopes a similar agreement can be established for biology students to shadow doctors in order to explore medical areas of interest.

Ms. Green said that USC Upstate, in addition to its career services center that offers testing for undecided majors, and a career closet, hosts career fairs for students to meet prospective employers.

Dr. Pruitt said that the University campuses' career services departments do an excellent job preparing students for the job market. He noted that in his generation, college graduates were almost guaranteed a job. He asked the panelist to comment on whether students realize how competitive the job market is and how important it is to utilize career services in order to enter the job market.

Ms. Green said she did not think USC Upstate students utilized the available career services as much as they should. She relies on her older sister, a USC Columbia graduate, for career advice. Ms. Bowman agreed with Ms. Green in that she sees low student participation in career service events at USC Beaufort and did not think many students took their education as seriously as they should.

Ms. Ross-Simmons stated that USC Aiken has approximately 40% first-generation students, and as one of those students, she has relied on services provided by the campus career services. She encouraged additional transitional preparedness efforts to help students become informed about the steps towards obtaining a job after graduation.

Dr. Pruitt said that Veterans Day was celebrated last week and that South Carolina takes tremendous pride in the service and sacrifice of its veterans. He asked Ms. Ross-Simmons to talk about how USC Aiken honors its veterans, and provides a "Veteran Friendly" campus. Ms. Ross-Simmons said that *Military Times* named USC Aiken "#1 Best for Vets University" in South Carolina. She noted that Veterans represent approximately 10% of the student population and the Veterans Affairs Office does an excellent job assisting them in their educational pursuits. Recently, she reported, Trustees Fennell and Loadholt met with a USC Aiken student veteran about his experience enrolling in school after a tour of duty. She added that the hands-on approach of the faculty and staff results in the veterans considering USC Aiken home. A reception for all students to honor veterans was recently held on campus.

Mr. Parks said that this year veterans issues were a top priority of the Columbia SGA. He noted SGA Treasurer Stinson Rogers is a student veteran. Among the SGA projects is the establishment of priority registration and veteran specific orientations to help veterans integrate as students. Mr. Parks said that he was currently working with Secretary Stone to explore how to recognize veterans at commencement. Dr. Pruitt noted that My Carolina Alumni Association was scheduled to host the first Veteran Alumni Council meeting and reception that evening.

Dr. Pruitt said that whether it is fair to state or not – college students, growing up as a post 9/11 generation, raised in an era of economic and national insecurity, according to Time magazine, have been described as students in a “College of the Overwhelmed,” where college students are fragile, have limited coping skills and less skills of resiliency, and where mental health issue like anxiety, depression, and constant “angst,” fueled by social media and a hyper-connectivity, are constantly in play. Mental health issues can impact one’s physical health, which may delay or impede a student’s ability to complete a degree. He asked the panel what they as a student, aided by their campus, can do to address the mental health and physical needs of peer college students.

Ms. Bowman said she noticed the USC Beaufort Director of Student Life Kate T. Vermilyea wearing a safety pin and when she asked why, Ms. Vermilyea said the campus was considering starting a campaign, following the presidential election, whereby the safety pin would signify “safe with me.”

Ms. Green said that she researched the question the night before and found that Harvard University’s former Chief of Health Services Richard Kadison’s response to deal with the “overwhelmed” was through communication. Finding the article inspiring, she planned to work with the SGA to organize a program to provide students information and guidance to overcome the feeling of being overwhelmed.

Ms. Ross-Simmons said that USC Aiken’s efforts to assist students included the availability of a confidential campus counseling center, a commuter student lounge to provide the large commuter population a place to gather with other students, and weekly meditation sessions held in the campus library.

Dr. Pruitt said that one topic that received considerable attention during the recent presidential election was a proposal to provide students (with some income conditions) a tuition-free college education. He asked the panelist for their opinions about a free college education for students who met family income qualifications, and whether students and their families should have some “skin in the game?” In addition, he asked if they would be willing to accept higher standards for “academic progress” (like graduating in

four years and maintaining a 3.0 GPA) to retain a free tuition education; and how students felt about “income based loan repayments,” if free tuition did not come to fruition.

Ms. Ross-Simmons said that she felt free tuition devalued a college education. As a student from a low-income family, working to pay for her education had made it more valuable to her. Additionally, she felt that an income-based repayment system had room for error, and that a four-year graduation requirement would be detrimental, since many students are not able to finish their degree within that time period because of the need to work and class scheduling availability.

Ms. Green said that if free tuition became a reality, it should come with academic parameters to keep students driven to complete their education.

Mr. Parks said that he did not think most Columbia students know about the income-based repayment plan. He also agreed with Ms. Ross-Simmons in that students should have some “skin in the game.” He himself is responsible for the cost of his textbooks and it makes him value them more.

Dr. Pruitt said that many students graduate from high school already having taken a class online; and that many college students are “digital learners” who use online classes to fill a gap in a schedule, to take an extra class, to fit in an elective as a course overload, or even to meet a major requirement. He asked the panelists to respond to how they felt about using online courses to help graduate “On Your Time;” hybrid courses that do online assignments, but still meet periodically; or traditional courses that have a scheduled meeting time.

Ms. Bowman said that she had taken a few online courses and recognizes the benefits, but prefers in-class because of the commitment to attend at a scheduled time. She noted that online courses require strong self-discipline.

Ms. Ross-Simmons said she had taken online and hybrid classes and felt that they are important for USC Aiken’s non-traditional students who provide for family, while earning a degree. Also, she felt that hybrid classes were better for her than online, because of the opportunity to meet face-to-face with professors.

Ms. Green said she finished her senior year of high school online and loves online classes because she is self-disciplined and works full time. She recommends online classes only for the self-motivated and self-disciplined student.

Dr. Pruitt said that many pundits expect the country will enter into a period of activism on many topics important to various segments of citizenry. He asked the panel what important topics college students across the University system will be addressing; specific or unique topics the four-year campus

students should address; or what they would like to work on together in order to get state leaders to support higher education to a greater degree.

Ms. Green said that campus diversity and activism were the most important topics at USC Upstate. She said that marches had taken place on campus and students had led activism efforts.

Ms. Ross-Simmons said that USC Aiken had a very diverse student population and she agreed with Ms. Green. She noted that the campus had an inclusionary council to assist students with concerns.

Dr. Pruitt asked Mr. Parks to comment on the Columbia campus voter registration efforts. Mr. Parks said that the SGA was involved in a “Lead the Way” campaign, whereby 4,400 USC students registered to vote in the November general election. This number earned USC 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the country in college voter registration.

Dr. Pruitt asked the panel how they would use fundin, if each SGA was presented \$1 million to change something on their campus.

Ms. Ross-Simmons said the money should be used to provide students more research opportunities. Ms. Bowman said, as a student-athlete, she would use the money to establish campus venues for the USC Beaufort athletic teams, to encourage more attendance. Ms. Green said she would give the money to academic departments to provide assistance for students to attend research studies, required to obtain their degree. Mr. Parks responded that he would use the money to provide additional student space on campus.

Lastly, Dr. Pruitt asked each panelist to name their favorite teacher and what makes that teacher so special. Ms. Ross-Simmons responded that three dynamic women who challenge students and have an open door policy at USC Aiken were: Dr. Virginia Shervette (Biology); Dr. Michele Harmon (Environmental Toxicology); and Ms. Elizabeth Webb (Communications).

Ms. Bowman responded that her favorite teacher at USC Beaufort was Dr. Jennifer D’Antonio, because after failing her first organic chemistry test, Dr. D’Antonio reached out to help her, as she did for all students.

Ms. Green named Dr. Allison Ludwig (Journalism), because she had an open door policy, admits to her mistakes, and understands that everyone makes mistakes. She said that Dr. Lugwig, being a USC Upstate graduate herself, was a benefit to the students.

Mr. Park said that Don Fowler in the Department of Political Science on the Columbia campus was his favorite teacher.

Dr. Pruitt thanked panel members for their insightful discussion.

Chairman Fennell thanked the SGA presidents for their participation in an excellent panel discussion and invited the SGA officers in the gallery to stand and be recognized. He also thanked Dr. Pruitt for moderating the discussion.

Chairman Fennell stated that the SGA presidents of the two-year campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter and Union) would be invited to participate in a panel discussion at the next Student-Trustee Liaison Committee meeting scheduled for Friday, April 21, 2017.

IV. Other Matters

Chairman Fennell called on Secretary Stone. She reminded the students that they were invited to join Trustees for lunch immediately following the meeting. Secretary Stone announced that following the luncheon, there would be a called Board of Trustees meeting for Trustees only, at which they would consider a personnel matter in Executive Session and no action would be taken.

V. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the committee, Chairman Fennell declared the meeting adjourned at 2:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy E. Stone  
Secretary