



July 26, 2019

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Linda Thomas-Glover, Ph.D.
Vice President
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, GA 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Thomas-Glover:

Thank you for your letter dated July 15, 2019, in which you expressed concerns about the University of South Carolina's compliance with SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation* Standard 4.2.f in connection with its recent presidential search. I appreciate this opportunity to clarify the facts surrounding the presidential search and to confirm the University's continuing commitment to compliance with SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*.

First, it was my decision, as chairman, to call for a meeting of the Board of Trustees on July 12 to discuss and vote on the possible election of Robert L. Caslen as the 29th president of the University. Following the cancellation of the July 12 meeting due to an issue regarding proper notification to Board members, I then called for a meeting on July 19. In both cases, it was my decision – not the decision of Governor Henry McMaster – to schedule the meeting. I did so pursuant to the authority granted the chairman by Section 59-117-50 of the *South Carolina Code of Laws*, and Article IX, Section 3 of the Bylaws of Board of Trustees, both of which provide that chairman may call a special meeting of the Board and fix the time and place thereof. Further, I did so after consultation with other Board members who advised me that they desired a meeting to be scheduled to consider the election of Mr. Caslen¹.

As you know, Mr. Caslen was one of four finalists selected by the Presidential Candidate Search Committee – consisting of five members of the board, three faculty representatives, and representatives from student government, the alumni association and the University's support foundations – and invited to campus in late April to meet with all campus constituents and to be interviewed by the Board. Although the Board did not choose to elect a president at that time, Mr. Caslen was clearly the favored candidate from among the finalists. Additionally, Mr. Caslen was holding another job offer, which underscored the

¹ Article IX, Section 3 of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees provides in part: "any five Board members may call special meetings of the Board."

urgency for calling the meeting and the vote. I simply felt that the Board should have the opportunity to vote, either for or against him, and this opportunity would be eliminated if the Board delayed action on his candidacy further.

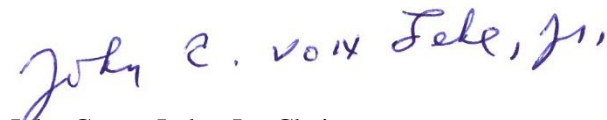
Pursuant to state law², Governor McMaster is an *ex officio* member and chairman of the Board of Trustees. I am aware that Governor McMaster spoke with Board members prior to the July 19 Board meeting regarding his support of Mr. Caslen's candidacy. There was, in fact, much conversation between all Board members about Mr. Caslen and whether to move forward with a vote. I am not aware, however, of a member of the Board being influenced by Governor McMaster's expression of support. Mr. Caslen was the favored candidate in April – prior to the Board receiving any communications from Governor McMaster – and a majority of the Board continued to support and ultimately vote for Mr. Caslen's election on July 19.

It remains my view that each member of the Board voted for or against Mr. Caslen based solely on their independent judgment of Mr. Caslen's qualifications to lead the University of South Carolina or their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the search process. I am not aware of Governor McMaster's support of Mr. Caslen – which he has the right to express – affecting the vote of the Board.

I hope this addresses your concerns regarding the University's and compliance with SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation* Standard 4.2.f. As a further expression of the Board's commitment to the *Principles of Accreditation* and good governance, the Board, in conjunction with its new president, intends to engage a governance consultant to review our processes to determine areas in which our governance practices may be strengthened. We would be happy to share the outcomes of that consultation with you.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for the opportunity to respond to your July 15 letter. Please let me know if you require additional information at this time.

Respectfully,



John C. von Lehe, Jr., Chairman
USC Board of Trustees

cc: Dr. Harris Pastides, President
Dr. Belle S. Wheelan, President, SACSCOC

² Section 59-117-10 of the *South Carolina Code of Laws*.