

For Immediate Release

**USC Lancaster Dean Walt Collins named executive vice chancellor
for USC Palmetto College**

Columbia, S.C. – Dr. Walter P. Collins III, campus dean of the University of South Carolina Lancaster, has been named executive vice chancellor for academic and student affairs and associate provost for the University of South Carolina Palmetto College. USC Lancaster is one of four University of South Carolina System campuses, along with Palmetto College Columbia, that comprise USC Palmetto College.

His appointment was announced on Wednesday, Dec. 13, by USC Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins, who cites his exemplary record of progressive leadership, teaching experience, community engagement, his commitment to encouraging excellence in the classroom and promoting scholarly achievement among our world-class faculty.

“As USC Palmetto College enters its second decade of service in providing accessible, affordable and flexible higher education degree opportunities to all South Carolinians, Dr. Collins is the ideal person to lead our collective academic and student affairs efforts at all of our Palmetto College campuses,” Chancellor Elkins said. “His track record of excellence as an academic and student affairs leader and scholar, particularly in his exemplary leadership of USC Lancaster for nearly eleven years, will be a strong asset in advancing Palmetto College’s mission into the future.”

USC Lancaster has seen many successes under Dean Collins’ leadership over the course of the past decade. The institution has achieved five semesters of historic enrollment since 2017, including this current Fall 2023 semester. The campus has also grown with the renovations and/or additions of major academic areas such as the high-fidelity nursing simulation laboratory, the Indian Land, S.C., location and Stevens Theatre, as well as multiple upgrades and renovations touching almost every area and building of the campus. Academic programming and initiatives have expanded, including the Native American Studies Center (museum and archival space) located on Main Street in downtown Lancaster and the collaboration to facilitate a highly successful BSN nursing program partnership between USC Lancaster and USC Columbia. USC Lancaster has been ranked as the No. 1 two-year campus in South Carolina by Niche.com for the past six consecutive years (2018-2023), and the No. 2 two-year campus in the nation for three straight years (2019-2021).

“I am grateful and honored to have been selected to serve Palmetto College in this capacity. As a first-generation college student, I am passionate about higher education accessibility and the overall mission of Palmetto College,” said Collins. “I look forward to working with fellow administrators, faculty and staff across Palmetto College as we serve students and help them progress toward their academic and personal goals.”

Collins was recommended for the position by a search committee led by USC Sumter Campus Dean Michael Sonntag, representing a cross-section of USC Palmetto College stakeholders from USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter, USC Union and Palmetto College Columbia.

Collins comes to his new role within USC Palmetto College with progressive experience and accomplishments as a campus administrator and faculty member. He holds the academic rank of Professor of French and English. He began his teaching career at the University of South Carolina in 1999, where he taught French. Collins joined the USC Lancaster faculty in 2002, teaching English and French. As an administrator, he served as dean of students for five years before he was selected to lead USC Lancaster as campus dean.

Collins earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature with emphases in French, English and philosophy from the University of South Carolina, a Master of Arts in French Literature from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Bachelor of Arts in French Literature from Wake Forest University. He has also completed the Crisis Leadership in Higher Education program through the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government's Executive Education Department.

Collins' tenure as executive vice chancellor for academic and student affairs and associate provost for USC Palmetto College will officially begin on January 2, 2024. A formal search committee will be organized to name a permanent campus dean to succeed Collins in 2024.

As that search begins, Dr. Courtney Catledge, director of the USC Lancaster Bachelor of Science in Nursing Collaborative Program, has been appointed interim campus dean. She earned a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) in community and public health, Master of Public Health (MPH) in public health administration, all from the University of South Carolina, and a B.S. in Nursing (BSN) from Clemson University.

Catledge settled in Lancaster, S.C., to build a home, family, career and community after completing her BSN. Her nursing experiences are varied and range from acute care to community and public health, and as a family nurse practitioner working in both urgent care and retail medicine. As a scholar, Catledge's published research focuses on community and public health, including asthma, Hepatitis B and risk reduction to diseases impacting rural communities. As a faculty member and campus administrator, she has worked to prepare nurses to serve rural communities in South Carolina.

"Dr. Catledge's administrative leadership, her track record for training nursing graduates who ably live and work in the USC Lancaster region, and her connection to internal and external stakeholders will benefit the campus' continued growth, development and community engagement," said Chancellor Elkins.

“I am honored to serve as the interim campus dean and support the work of the outstanding faculty and staff here at USC Lancaster in their efforts to advance our educational mission to the students, families and communities that we serve,” said Catledge.

The University of South Carolina Lancaster serves students from a campus in Lancaster, S.C., and a location in Indian Land, S.C., through online and hybrid courses, as well as dual credit courses for high school students. The institution will celebrate its 65th anniversary of service to its students and communities in 2024.

The University of South Carolina Palmetto College includes four two-year regional Palmetto College campuses – USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter and USC Union – and Palmetto College Columbia, and more than 30 online and on-campus bachelor’s degree completion programs in partnership with USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, USC Columbia and USC Upstate.

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