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Chairman Kline, distinguished members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor and a privilege for me personally and for the University of South Carolina to appear in front of your committee. I have been in higher education 21 years and I can tell you with a great degree of confidence that the changes we have experienced in the last decade, and more so in the last five years, are unprecedented. It is not only the operational and funding models that are changing drastically, but it is also the expectations – some may even say demands – of the public, our students, their parents and our overseers, that have shifted dramatically. Given this environment, some of my colleagues in academia – and many more of our friends in the press – are actually pessimistic about the future of our universities.

In contrast, I believe that the best days for our public research universities are ahead of us. I believe that the public's demand for transparency and accountability gives the majority of our institutions a wonderful vehicle to demonstrate the great success we have had in educating the sons and daughters of our country and preparing them for the workforce – and if a few institutions have not done so, then we are obligated to hold them accountable. I believe that the expectations of the students and parents for job skills and “employability” at the end of their studies have motivated us to reexamine and modernize our curricular and extracurricular programs. I believe that advances in technology are not a threat to our traditional campuses but provide great new tools for us to reach a new generation of learners and to improve their experience.

I believe that the current environment is ideal for the establishment of public-private partnerships to support critical functions of our universities and through these partnerships we can take advantage of the experience and efficiencies of the private sector, while maintaining the high quality standards and expectations of our academic communities. And finally, I believe that our American universities continue to represent the gold standard of higher education internationally, they can enter a period of even faster globalization in higher education from a position of strength and they can benefit from this position. And yes, all of these can be achieved while we continue to increase efficiencies and control costs so that we remain accessible and affordable.

There is no doubt that we will also continue to face significant challenges in higher education. Decreased funding both for instruction at the state level and for research at the federal agency level has resulted in significant financial pressures on the operation of our universities. An increasingly larger fraction of the cost of undergraduate instruction has been passed to the students and their families through increases in tuition. This has created a situation where we are “pricing out” even from our public universities a growing percentage of our high school graduates. In fact, we are “pricing out” those who need higher education the most in order to be able to break out from generational cycles of poverty. At the same time, it has become more

difficult for the research universities to sustain financially the efforts that have contributed to the world-leading technological position of our country in previous decades, thus, creating a situation that some of my colleagues are calling an “innovation deficit.”

Finally, we are experiencing a growing regulatory framework both at the state and federal levels. At the federal level in addition to the statutory requirements, the information dissemination requirements have extended in scope and grown significantly in volume in the recent past. I fully understand and support the role of government in monitoring and ensuring quality standards, safety of our students and good financial practices in our institutions and I embrace the obligation to be held accountable. However, there are numerous regulatory requirements and processes that can become “smarter” and save time and money. Specific examples include the verification of the information provided by students in their applications for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA forms), the state authorization requirements for distance education programs, as well as the discrepancies in crime reporting definitions between the Departments of Justice and Education. The amount of time and effort needed to satisfy report requirements has grown exponentially with clear cost consequences, estimated to vary between hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars per institution depending on size. And in some cases there is no apparent benefit either to the students or to the public at large.

In this environment of great opportunities but also significant challenges I believe that there are going to be universities that thrive, at the same time that others – even large public research universities – will struggle to maintain status quo. The key differentiator, in my opinion, will be the ability to come up with innovative ideas and to implement such ideas quickly. And I believe that I was selected by your staff to be here today because I can offer a few examples of such innovative programs created and implemented in recent years at the University of South Carolina that may also be applicable in other parts of the country.

Our Palmetto College for example, provides the opportunity to place-bound South Carolinians to complete their undergraduate degree online after they have studied for two years in a university, a community college or a technical college; it utilizes the expertise of all faculty across institutions and campuses in our University of South Carolina system of eight institutions to maintain high quality and to increase efficiencies; it allows students in degree programs such as nursing, education, business or criminal justice to develop the skills needed for available jobs in their communities; it provides local student advising and support, career counseling services and access to extra-curricular activities by utilizing the existing network of local campuses regardless of the student’s official institutional affiliation; and, most importantly, it reduces cost of attendance and student debt by maintaining affordable tuition.

Palmetto College was created after a system-wide study conducted in 2011-2012 identified the need for an on line program to serve non-traditional students juggling work and parenting or

facing socio-economic challenges that prevent them from completing their degrees in one of our campuses. The results of this study further indicated that students and future employers value the brand and quality of a University of South Carolina degree, but need accessible, affordable and flexible programs. Finally, the study showed that there are a large number of individuals with some college credit who are already in the workforce and who would benefit significantly by completing a University degree. The program has been enthusiastically supported by the South Carolina General Assembly and the Governor.

Palmetto College was initiated in 2013 with seven baccalaureate degree programs in vocationally-oriented majors. Since inception more than 1,000 students have enrolled in these degree programs and 200 of them have already received their degrees. Palmetto College students reside in 43 of the 46 South Carolina counties, while 48% of them are from underrepresented minority groups. While the initial efforts focused exclusively on South Carolina residents consideration is given now to expand to neighboring states.

Our On Your Time initiative utilizes the full calendar to give our students more flexibility in academic planning and to facilitate timely graduation; it expands the traditional two- or three-term summer program into eight sessions of varying length that function collectively as a full semester; it allows students to take advantage of internship, research, community service and study abroad opportunities year around without the risk of extending their time to graduation; it creates one-week time frames in January and May for lower-level science lab sections that create more flexibility in the students' weekly schedule during the regular semester, while extending the overall capacity of our laboratory courses without the cost of additional construction; and it creates summer immersion institutes in high demand foreign languages (e.g., Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese) as well as business fundamentals for non-business majors for students who want to enhance their marketable job skills in a short period of time.

The onset of the implementation efforts for this initiative in 2013 represented a massive structural and cultural change across our University. New definitions regarding full-time students were implemented; state – with the overwhelming support of the South Carolina General Assembly and the Governor – as well as university scholarship programs were modified to provide student financial aid during the summer; numerous new courses were either developed or offered for the first time – some in an online format; modified faculty workload and compensation models were introduced; and additional on-campus services, including summer housing, were provided for the increased class size.

Student demand was gauged through surveys of the student body before the program was initiated. Flexibility in course scheduling and a wider array of available courses were the main needs identified by the students. The On Your Time initiative addressed these needs and as a result, student enrollment for the summer of 2014 increased by more than 10%, while the

number of students enrolled for 12 or more credit hours increased by a 7-fold even before the state scholarships became available for the summer (to be implemented in 2015). Furthermore, the added flexibility allows for over 50% of the bachelor degrees offered by the University of South Carolina to be completed on an accelerated timeframe. This is consistent with the preference of over 40% of our freshmen and sophomores surveyed, who would like the opportunity to complete their baccalaureate degree in less than four years for obvious financial reasons. Accelerated options are also available in more than 20 Master's programs. Information about these opportunities is disseminated to our students and their families through our signature University 101 freshman gateway course, as well as a designated group of professional advisers tasked with overseeing the progress of students interested in graduating in less than four years.

Our USC Connect program integrates traditional in-the-classroom instruction with out-of-the-classroom learning experiences by assisting our students as they improve their skills and prepare to enter the workforce; it assists students in connecting their extracurricular activities in research, global engagement, community service and professional development with the content of their coursework; it documents and verifies for future employers the level of participation in such activities through the creation of university-reviewed electronic portfolios; it supports a culture of engagement on campus but also in local government, businesses and non-profit organizations; and finally, it recognizes hundreds of graduates – more than 250 in just the second year of the program – who have successfully surpassed expectations in and beyond the classroom and are therefore, graduating with leadership distinction in one of the four areas as stated in their official transcripts.

Finally, during the last six years our Gamecock Guarantee program has guaranteed full financial aid to approximately 900 academically qualified students with family incomes below the poverty level; it supports the academic and professional development of these students through the establishment of a living learning community; it identifies opportunities and covers the cost for their engagement in extracurricular activities; and it provides career counselling and financial literacy services for them. We have enough information by now to know that these students progress through their studies and graduate in significantly higher percentages than the average in our institution.

We pledge to continue developing such ideas, as I know many of our colleagues do across the country as well, but we also need your help. We need your help in continuing to support need-based federal funding for our students, so that we can avoid further segregation of higher education based on financial ability, and hopefully, enable even more academically qualified students to experience the benefits of a university degree. And if you do it year round for students who are making progress towards their degrees then you can help improve on-time

graduation and reduce debt. We need your help in continuing to provide federal support for academic research so that we close the innovation deficit and we ensure that this country will continue to be the world leader in new discoveries and applications of science and technology. And finally, we need your help in controlling a growing regulatory framework put in place in most cases in order to control a few “bad actors” – although the tools are already in place to do so – but having significant consequences for all of us.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to join you today, and on behalf of our students, their families and our faculty and staff members I thank you for your commitment to and support of higher education, and in particular, the public higher education sector that I come from.