Old School Values, New School Technology

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South Carolina State University is the Economic, Intellectual, and Cultural Heart of Orangeburg and its surrounding counties, with a heritage and legacy that must be preserved and enhanced. In a study conducted by the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina, SC State had a total impact on local economic activity of $152.5 million; a total impact on local household income of $69.5 million, and over 1,558 jobs supported in the Orangeburg area. The spending associated with University operations, construction and future projects, spending of SC State students in the local economy, and visitor spending associated with events on the SC State campus, combined for an annual economic impact of $181.5 million on the entire state of South Carolina, including the generation of $4.9 million in state-level taxes each year.

SC State has over 200 full-time faculty members of whom 81% have terminal degrees; outnumbering the percentage of terminal degreed faculty at USC-Columbia, College of Charleston, Francis Marion, Lander, USC-Aiken, USC-Beaufort, and USC-Upstate. Over the past 5 years, SC State was ranked #1 by Washington Monthly in Social Mobility. This means that our faculty and staff are the best in the country at transforming the life chances of our students, many of whom are disadvantaged, low income, first generation college attendees, and Pell Grant-eligible. SC State has a long history of providing the support systems that move our students to degree completion, laying the groundwork for upward economic mobility, adding value to students’ lives and advancing their entire family. Our faculty has accomplished these outcomes at a lower average salary than the faculty at 8 of the 13 four-year state supported universities.

SC State has opened its gates to the community through our award-winning athletic teams and nationally-recognized bands; our programs in music and the visual and performing arts; and our land-grant 1890 Research and Extension programs that impact the entire state. The I.P. Stanback Museum and Planetarium has one of the largest exhibition areas in the state and its forty-foot planetarium dome, has an auditorium capacity of eighty-two seats. This summer the museum received one of the largest Ancient African Art collections in the United States that will go on display to the public in the Fall.

With more than 30,000 living alumni, many who have gained national and international acclaim, SC State continues to remain a leader among colleges in producing graduates who have excelled as professionals in education, engineering, law, medicine, business, athletics, the military, and the arts. Sixteen college presidents and now 17 Army General Officers received their baccalaureate degree from SC State.

Like most universities today, the economic realities have made a significant impact on SC State’s growth. State funds are lower, and the families our students come from have been among
the hardest hit in this economic recession. This semester we awarded over $9 million in scholarships to deserving students (based on merit and need). That financial assistance to students represents 14.6% of the University’s total operating costs. Without it, many of our students would not have been able to continue their studies this semester. Funding from the State of South Carolina provides 17.6% of SC State’s annual budget and we are unlikely to see a return to the days when state funding accounted for over 50 percent of the institution’s total budget. Our present and our future require us to do more with less.

When I took the helm of the University on July 5, 2012, I embraced the great opportunity to serve this institution and the wonderful legacy that we must preserve and move forward. Leadership is about dealing with obstacles, standing tall in the face of negativity and challenging times. No, we will not meet the projections for Fall 2012 student enrollment, but we are taking the necessary measures to get on the path to fiscal responsibility and efficiency. I have made changes in my administrative leadership staff that resulted in downsizing in each area. My team is now a smaller group of highly effective and competent professionals who represent the highest levels of integrity and honesty. We are evaluating all areas on campus to determine where we can right-size, eliminate duplication, and strengthen our effectiveness and efficiency.

Our major goal is enhanced customer service. This is an area where many of our students and employees and persons who call or visit our campus want us to improve. We can and we shall do better. The new Office of Campus Relations is focused on getting SC State more involved in the community and getting the community involved in our campus. We want the community, region, state, and the world to know about the great things that are happening at SC State. We want to assure our stakeholders, our students, alumni, faculty and staff, that SC State is on the move. Embracing “New School” technology, while remaining true to “Old School” values, we will strengthen academics, improve our operations, and elevate our visibility to remain true to our heritage and enhance our legacy. More tough times are ahead and we can and we shall face the issues directly with our legendary Bulldog Tenacity, not allowing negativity to distract or limit our ascent. SC State is Moving on Up!