

**President's Address by Dr. George E. Cooper  
Spring 2012 Faculty Development Institute  
South Carolina State University  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium  
January 4, 2012**

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Good morning!

I take great pleasure in addressing you today as we prepare to begin another semester at South Carolina State University. As we begin this term, the Faculty Development Institute provides a framework to address issues important to our university. I commend the members of the planning committee led by Dr. Steplight-Johnson, for their work in outlining activities that will take place over the next two days. The theme – “Promoting a Climate of Scholarship and Collaboration” – is appropriate to begin the second term of the 2011-2012 academic year. The institute will also frame discussions for future faculty conversations. I hope that you will be engaged in the workshops and resulting discussions. The work of the faculty and staff lies at the heart of any institution of higher education. That's especially true at South Carolina State University.

This institution of higher education was established in 1896 as a land-grant college and as an obligatory nod to the aspirations of African Americans. The original intent was to provide a liberal arts education to prepare an

educated workforce to meet the needs of the Nation, to include training in agricultural and mechanical arts. Dedicated faculty fulfilled that intent, but also instilled a thirst for learning in their students, broadened their horizons beyond the mandated original intent, and set a standard of academic excellence and community responsibility. The academy and the community partnered for positive change and mutual success and well-being. Many of the accomplishments of people of color in segregated South Carolina during the mid-twentieth century civil rights movement and in the present day have been led by graduates of South Carolina State University. We haven't stopped there. We are moving forward. We are building and acting on our vision for the future. We are excited about where we are headed. We are excited about where SC State can go. We are excited about the future. And, the future is our focus.

We are asking ourselves, what should we be doing to interpret our mission in ways that will allow us to remain relevant, move our university into the future and allow us to achieve greatness? What do we aspire to be?

The notable and little known faculty members who preceded you laid the foundation for what South Carolina State University is and does today. And,

our present faculty and staff continue to build upon that foundation. I would like to congratulate and recognize a few of these individuals who accomplished so much in 2011.

- **Dr. Leonard McIntyre** and **Mr. Lammin Drammeh** for their continued work with the Textbooks and Learning Materials Program, including their official handing-over ceremony and recent official government visits to Tanzania. These efforts were significant because of the collaborative network of South Carolina State University faculty who assisted in the design of the curricula and textbooks.
- **Dr. David Karemera** for his work in creating a partnership between South Carolina State University and Ngozi University in Burundi, East Africa. Through this effort, students from Burundi are attending SC State University and enrolling in graduate degree programs.
- **Ms. Ellen Zisholtz** and **Ms. Ingrid Owens** for the I.P. Stanback Museum and Planetarium being awarded the 2011 Governor's Award for the Humanities, as well as for selection to serve on the District of

Columbia's host committee for the Dedication of the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial.

- **Dr. Ethel Jones** and **Mrs. Stephanie Felks** for the Child Development Learning Center's support of First Lady Michelle Obama's initiative on childhood obesity and healthy eating by planting a garden and teaching the importance of healthy eating to the children.
- **Dr. Judith Salley** and **Dr. James Myers** for their work in hosting the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual LS-SCAMP Science, Engineering and Research Conference, an undergraduate research conference which was held here on our campus.
- **Dr. Benedict Jua** for leading a student excursion to Washington, D.C., to promote experimental learning. Students visited law schools and attended a foreign policy association event.
- **Mr. Eddie Ellis** as he prepares the Marching 101 Band for a repeat engagement at the Tenth Annual Honda Battle of the Bands Competition, which will be held in just a few weeks in Atlanta.

- **Dr. Harriet Roland** for her presentation of a paper at the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council entitled “An HBCU Honors Case Study in Diversity: Strategies International and White Students Use to Negotiate Assimilation and Acceptance.”
- **Dr. Gloria Winkler** for the addition of an international component to the academic program at Felton Laboratory School. An international experience for Felton Students is planned for the spring of 2012.
- **Dr. Stephanie A. Johns on** for her role in the unveiling and open house for the Academic Success Academy.
- **Mr. Terrence Cummings** for his support of the Student Success and Retention Committee and generating ideas that will enhance retention and graduation rates.
- **Dr. M. Evelyn Fields** for her appointment to the Board of Directors of the National Association of African American Studies and Affiliates. And,

- **Dr. Larry Watson** for enlightening participants in the Black Males Project via his presentation, “Prophets of Optimism.” The presentation to students in the Student Success and Retention Program included biographies of distinguished African American men and women whose impacts have changed the world.

I would also like to share a few recent measures approved by the South Carolina State University Board of Trustees, based on recommendations from the Administration:

- The Office of Human Resources was moved from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to the Division of Business and Finance;
- The Office of Grants and Contracts was moved from the Division of Business and Finance to the Division of Research and aligned with the Office of Sponsored Programs;
- The Office of the Chief Information Officer was moved from the Division of Business and Finance and aligned as a staff office in the Office of the President;
- The Career Planning and Placement Office was moved from the Division of Student Affairs to the Division of Institutional Advancement; and

- The Silent Phase of a major Capital Campaign was approved. Within the next few months, a campaign will be launched to raise \$47 million to support a wellness/sports complex, endowed scholarships for students, support for faculty development and provide unrestricted funds to help build our endowment.

As we begin the second semester of our 116<sup>th</sup> academic year, I urge each of you to continue to build upon the foundation set by your faculty predecessors and peers. The challenges you face today are different from, but no less daunting than, those faced by your faculty predecessors.

We aspire to be one of the top universities among our peer institutions. In fact, we were recently recognized as being among top US research universities, and ranked among the top five public HBCU's nationally by *Forbes Magazine* and *U.S. News* respectively.

We no longer labor under the burden of *de jure* segregation or its accompanying cruel and demeaning residue. We do, however, labor under the burden of a difficult economy and of draconian budget cuts to higher education. We must now work in the harsh light of media scrutiny in an age

when dubious news travels at the speed of light. We aspire to increase fundraising to target programs, faculty development, enhancement of facilities and equipment, improving and upgrading technology and other ways to gain a competitive advantage in expressing our vision, mission and goals. We aspire to make continuous improvements to our infrastructure (i.e. planning for a new library; health and wellness center; computer science and engineering building; pedestrian crosswalk across Chestnut Street; a general education classroom building; initiating the next phase of the James E. Clyburn University Transportation Center; a student center; and upgrading existing buildings to allow technology to be used to improve teaching and to enhance student learning.

We aspire to brand our university using our top-tier programs (i.e. nuclear engineering, teacher education, transportation, business, speech pathology and audiology, the STEM disciplines, nursing and our historic ROTC program). We aspire to continue to provide a safe environment for our faculty, staff and students. We aspire to improve student retention and graduation rates. We aspire to maintain and seek program accreditations. We aspire to internationalize our curricula. We aspire to diversify our

student population. And, we will continue to make every effort to be open, transparent and accountable.

Those who preceded you in the academy laid a strong academic and social foundation. I challenge you to build walls of academic protection and security that enable students who in some cases have never been academically challenged to rise above societal aspirations, set a new standard of achievement, and prepare themselves to be your eventual successors. Install windows of educational diversity and clear inspiration in those walls so that your students will see possibilities in life beyond their present situations to aspire to greatness in a time when mediocrity has become acceptable in every arena of life.

Install new doors fabricated of the determination and confidence that come when willing young minds master new disciplines and meet academic challenges, doors that your students can walk through to prepare themselves for the challenges of this world and to compete and excel at any level in their chosen careers.

Erect roofs of the enlightened discipline and responsibility that will enable our students to maintain their focus, prepare for responsible living and to embrace the adage that to whom much is given, much is required.

Each new semester and each new academic year, our students bring their own triumphs and challenges, their own stories of successes and of trials, but as guardians and conveyors of knowledge, we must accept the challenges. We can then build new stories on a 116-year-old foundation of excellence and see that new generations of students know the full meaning in the words of the legendary Dr. Benjamin E. Mays: “It must be borne in mind that the tragedy of life does not lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy of life lies in having no goal to reach.”

Thank you, and have an excellent semester.