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University of South Carolina  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Student-Trustee Liaison Committee

November 21, 2014

The Student-Trustee Liaison Committee of the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees met at 1:15 p.m. Friday, November 21, 2014, in the 1600 Hampton Street Board Room.

Members present were: Mr. A. C. "Bubba" Fennell, Chairman; Ms. Paula Harper Bethea; Mr. J. Egerton Burroughs; Mr. Thomas C. Cofield; Ms. Leah B. Moody; Dr. C. Dorn Smith III; Mr. Eugene P. Warr, Board Chairman; and Mr. John C. von Lehe, Jr., Board Vice Chairman. Mr. Chuck Allen was absent.

Other Board members present were: Mr. William W. Jones, Jr.; Mr. Miles Loadholt; Mr. Thad H. Westbrook; Mr. Mack I. Whittle, Jr.; and Dr. Mitchell M. Zais.

Others present were: President Harris Pastides; Secretary Amy E. Stone; General Counsel Walter "Terry" H. Parham; Provost Michael D. Amiridis; Chief Operating Officer Edward L. Walton; Vice President for Student Affairs Dennis A. Pruitt; Chief Financial Officer Leslie Brunelli; Chief Communications Officer Wes Hickman; Athletics Director Ray Tanner; USC Upstate Chancellor Tom Moore; Senior Vice Provost and Dean for Graduate Studies Lacy Ford; Senior Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies Helen Doerpinghaus; Senior Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, Anne Bezuidenhout; Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School Jessica Elfenbein; Associate Director of Strategic Planning and Assessment Cameron Howell; Executive Director of Audit & Advisory Services Pam Doran; Chair of the Faculty Senate James H. Knapp; Chief of Staff, President's Office, J. Cantey Heath, Jr.; Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, USC Aiken, Jeff Priest; USC Columbia student David Leggett; USC Aiken student and former USC Salkahatchie SGA President, Rosie Curiel; USC Beaufort student Kelly Hatcher; University Technology Services Production Manager, Matt Warthen; and Board staff members Debra Allen and Terri Saxon.

Student Government Association (SGA) representatives present were: USC Aiken: President Alexander Oliver and Secretary/Treasurer Monica Martin; USC Beaufort: President Raechel Blakeney and Secretary/Treasurer Aarohi Vashi; USC Columbia: President Lindsay Richardson, Treasurer Ryan

Harmon, and Graduate Student Association President Brittany Walter; USC Upstate: President Alexander Dukes, Vice President Sandy Vang, Secretary Brittini Shannon and Chief of Staff Jonathan Wiley.

The Student Government Association advisors present included: Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Life, USC Aiken, Ahmed Samaha; Director of Housing and Judicial Affairs, USC Beaufort, Deonne Whaley; Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support, USC Columbia, Jerry Brewer; and Dean of Students, USC Upstate, Laura Puckett-Boler.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Fennell called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and invited them to introduce themselves. He said that the agenda had been posted, the press notified as required by the Freedom of Information Act, the agenda had been circulated to committee members and a quorum was present to conduct business.

Chairman Fennell called on Mr. Hickman, who introduced Hannah Jeffrey with the *Daily Gamecock* and Andy Shane with *The State*.

II. Report of the Graduate Student Association

Chairman Fennell called on Ms. Brittany Walter, Graduate Student Association (GSA) President. Ms. Walter began her report by thanking the Board for inviting her to speak on behalf of the graduate and professional student body. She said the GSA had come a long way since the Board of Trustees approved a resolution in 2011, endorsing the association's mission and goals in recognition of the need for an entity to advocate on behalf of all graduate students and provide support that was not yet present on campus.

From one active member to four elected executive officers and 16 proactive cabinet members, the GSA flourished in a very short time. In just the past two years the association went from hosting a handful of events a year, to hosting over 40 events ranging from networking and social events to valuable professional development workshops.

Ms. Walter said that the GSA, a student-run representative body, was dedicated to the advancement and development of graduate and professional students at the University. The foremost objective this year was to increase student involvement, which will increase the association's visibility on campus since graduate students represent about 25 percent of the student population and therefore should be recognized and well-represented in all University initiatives.

Ms. Walter said that even though graduate students represent a substantial part of the population, they often are overlooked when programs are developed and important events or activities advertised.

This year the GSA began working with several campus offices to offer certifications and trainings that were previously unavailable to graduate students. An example of this is intercultural which is particularly important since 31 percent of doctoral students are international. The Leadership and Services Programs Office is now working with the GSA to develop Professional Development Certification for graduate students. The GSA also has developed a Certification Series that enables graduate students to walk away with tangible certifications to help them acquire transferrable skills for “today’s employers.” Recently, Career Services provided several opportunities to graduate students and shifted its efforts to accommodate the unique needs of graduate students for securing a career.

Ms. Walter said that even though the GSA and the Graduate School were collaboratively and independently making headway to fill in the gaps for graduate student representation, there was still much to be done. She told President Pastides and the Board that in order to invoke a change there must be visible recognition by the administration that graduate students were being underrepresented in offices, initiatives, and even student-run programming. She said that University entities should be aware that their programs should benefit all students that comprise the student body.

One concern raised by Ms. Walter was the lack of health insurance literacy among graduate students. Although a University task force was created to remedy this problem for all students, initiatives by the task force focused largely on disseminating information through University 101 – an avenue not accessible by graduate students. The GSA hoped President Pastides and the Board would support graduate students being fully considered in future initiatives by the Health Literacy Task Force; and that they be included in discussions concerning health insurance and health literacy education.

Ms. Walter commended the Graduate School for its responsiveness to the needs articulated by the GSA on behalf of the graduate student body. She noted that upon visiting neighboring universities, members of the GSA were surprised to learn that the GSA’s relationship with the Graduate School was truly unique. The constant dialogue between the GSA and the Graduate School has facilitated numerous advantageous changes. Last year the GSA hosted its first semester Graduate Feedback Forum for graduate students to engage in informal discussion of current graduate student concerns. One of the biggest concerns voiced at the forum was a lack in opportunities for doctoral students to apply for travel funding to present research. Dr. Ford addressed this concern at the forum and within a matter of weeks the application cycle for travel funding was changed.

Ms. Walter said that the Graduate School contributed greatly to the quality of graduate students at the University. She reported that the nationally acclaimed Presidential Fellows Program, created four years

ago by the Graduate School, had made the University of South Carolina a front-running choice for highly-qualified graduate students with competitive offers from other universities. The fellowship offers a valuable professional development component usually lacking in university-wide fellowships. As a Presidential Fellow herself, Ms. Walter spoke to the importance of the fellowship in her decision to be a Gamecock and the excellence of the program. The Graduate School also helped establish the SPARC (Support to Promote Advancement of Research and Creativity) doctoral research grant, Smart Start financial literacy training, and several other opportunities that make the University of South Carolina an even more attractive choice for potential graduate students.

Ms. Walter thanked the committee for the opportunity to report on behalf of the GSA. Chairman Fennell thanked Ms. Walter for her informative presentation and noted that graduate students had an “able advocate” in her.

Chairman Fennell called for questions. Mr. von Lehe asked Ms. Walter to clarify the areas the GSA felt needed improvement. Ms. Walter responded that the GSA wanted graduate students’ unique needs to be considered in programming and university events. Ms. Moody asked Ms. Walter to provide the committee a list of the GSA concerns.

President Pastides commended Ms. Walter in her role as GSA president, noting that she had brought a renewed sense of commitment to graduate education. He also said that the Graduate School was fortunate to have great leaders and he called on Dr. Elfenbein to discuss her responsibilities as Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

Following Dr. Elfenbein’s presentation on the mission and goals of the Graduate School, Chairman Fennell stated that Ms. Walter’s report was received as information.

### III. Panel Discussion: Student Government Leaders

Chairman Fennell stated that this was the first committee meeting to operate under a new format in the hope of continuing to provide a meaningful experience for student government leaders. Having recognized that topics of interest varied from campus to campus, he explained that the presidents of the Student Government Associations of the four-year campuses (USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, USC Columbia and USC Upstate) had been invited to participate in a panel discussion related to topics of interest on their campuses.

Chairman Fennell invited the four Student Government Association presidents to join the committee at the board table: Alexander Oliver, USC Aiken; Raechel Blakeney, USC Beaufort; Lindsay Richardson, USC Columbia; and Alexander Dukes, USC Upstate

Chairman Fennell called on Dr. Pruitt to lead the panel discussion. Dr. Pruitt explained that SGA presidents were asked to submit topics for the panel discussion and he appreciated the overwhelming response to the request. He began the discussion by asking each president to address the following questions.

- Where did you attend high school, why you selected our USC campus, your major, and your plans after you earn your undergraduate degree.

Each SGA President began by thanking the committee for the invitation to be part of the discussion panel. Mr. Oliver, from Lexington, South Carolina, said he originally had selected USC Aiken as a stepping stone to USC Columbia. However, once he became involved in the campus life, he fell in love with USC Aiken and decided to remain to complete his undergraduate degree.

Ms. Richardson, from Lake Wiley, South Carolina, said that after touring campuses around the country, she instantly felt at home on the USC Columbia campus. Her next step is to attend Law School.

Ms. Blakeney, from Columbia, South Carolina, said that with her major in psychology she hoped to work in student affairs after graduation to utilize her degree to help “grow the next generation.”

Ms. Dukes, from Pickens, South Carolina, like Mr. Oliver selected her campus as a stepping stone, but soon fell in love with it and planned to complete her degree at USC Upstate.

- As an upper class student, what advice would you give to freshmen students who are just starting their college experience on your campus?

Ms. Richardson suggested students take advantage of their professors. She noted that some of the most honest and helpful conversations regarding her career path had been with her professors. Students also should take advantage of campus opportunities such as programs like “Study Abroad.” She also would remind students to take time for themselves.

Ms. Dukes said she would encourage freshman to network with students and professors who could contribute to their well-being. She also would tell them not to be afraid if they had to withdraw from a class or failed one, but to learn from the experience in order to move forward in their educational pursuits.

- What was the most valuable class (not necessarily the “favorite class”) you have taken to date, and what about it was so impactful?

Ms. Dukes cited University 101, noting that guest speakers provided invaluable information that enhanced her college experience.

Ms. Blakeney responded that her Lifespan Psychology class, where she learned how people develop mentally, helped her learn about her own development and how to work with people in varying stages of life.

Ms. Richardson cited her Strategic Management class because it focused on practical applications and real world experiences, which will enhance the value of her degree.

Mr. Oliver identified his most valuable classes as his First-Year Seminar class, which taught him what he could expect from his college experience, and his Emerging Leaders class, which taught him about different leadership styles and how to work with others.

- What was the most significant challenge you have faced during your collegiate career, and what university resources (office, service or person) helped you overcome it?

Ms. Richardson said the Student Success Center provided her educational and emotional help with her first college calculus class. Ms. Dukes said she had relied heavily on the Trio Program – Opportunity Network to help her through a hard freshman year. Mr. Oliver said that, like Ms. Richardson, he had to learn to ask for help and did so his freshman year through the University Writing Center.

Dr. Pruitt asked the presidents if students on their campuses generally knew about available resources and if they sought them out when needed. All responded that for the most part they felt the resources were well advertised and students did utilize them. However, it remained challenging to get students to ask for help.

- Many students work to help pay for their college education. How does working impact the college experience for the students on your campus?

Ms. Blakeney said that she was a working student and it was stressful to juggle her time between classes, study, and her job. However, she noted that by working her way through college, she had developed a greater appreciation of her degree and the overall college experience. The presidents all agreed that students who work to pay for college appreciated what they earned more than those who did not have to fund their education.

- How does social media impact the lives of students on your campus (as a tool for learning in the classroom, and as a fabric for social life)? Have you seen the negative impact of social media like Tinder or Yik Yak, and how can students address these negative impacts?

Dr. Pruitt noted that according to a study, 30 percent of college admissions officers and 65 percent of human resource officers look at student media pages. Therefore, students needed to be aware of the impact of their online communications.

Ms. Dukes said that although social media can provide helpful information, there was a negative side to it such as anonymous postings on the Yik Yak site. Mr. Oliver said Yik Yak could be used as a powerful way for students to communicate ideas and receive feedback; however, he did not see students on his campus using it in a positive way.

In response to questions from Trustees, Dr. Pruitt explained that Yik Yak, developed by Furman University students, only had a six-mile range and was therefore campus specific. It was essentially an anonymous “Twitter.”

The SGA presidents agreed that if used productively, social media could be a helpful tool for students to stay informed and communicate.

Following a discussion on the positive and negative impact of social media, Dr. Pruitt noted that according to a recent study, the average student spends three hours daily on what is referred to as “screen-sucking” activities.

- Nationally some state legislators suggest changing the law so students (and other members of a campus community) can carry concealed weapons on campus. What is your opinion about this possibility, and beyond this potential change in the law what can USC do across the system to ensure campus safety?

The SGA presidents agreed that concealed weapons should not be allowed on campuses, and that to do so would create greater safety risks.

- Have you utilized your campus “Career Services Office?” If so, how do you feel you were advantaged as you selected your major or sought to enter into the employment arena? Do you feel other students use the Career Services? If not, how might your campus leadership convince your peers to more fully utilize the Career Service Office?

Ms. Dukes said she used her campus career service office to develop her resume. She said that although she was aware of the office in her freshman year, she did not take advantage of it until her senior year. Ms. Richardson also used her campus’s career service office to help develop her resume. Ms. Blakenly who worked in her campus career service office was more aware of its services.

According to Mr. Oliver, the USC Aiken career service office did a great job of explaining how they could help students. Efforts were underway to encourage underclassmen to utilize the services prior to their senior year.

Dr. Pruitt said that data showed that students who utilized their career service offices were more likely to get jobs than those who did not.

- How is your campus attracting and graduating a diverse student body? What efforts would you suggest to your campus leadership to further a diverse student presence on your campus and in our system?

Ms. Richardson noted that she submitted this panel question because she felt that the efforts at USC Columbia to ensure attracting and graduating a diverse student body were effective. However, she said there was always room for improvement. One area to improve upon would be to better understand diversity, in that it was not just about race and culture, but identity and experience. Ms. Blakeney and Ms. Dukes agreed that diversity was not only about race, but sexual orientation, religion, nationality and financial status.

Since the panel discussion was an opportunity for the presidents to speak with Trustees, the last discussion point Dr. Pruitt posed to them was to tell Trustees the best thing about their campuses. Ms. Dukes immediately responded by recognizing Chancellor Moore for his extraordinary leadership and the amazing USC Upstate faculty.

Ms. Blakeney said the best thing about USC Beaufort was the family atmosphere and feeling of security. She noted that she had never felt more cultivated as a person, a student or a leader than through her campus experiences. She also commended Chancellor Upshaw for her leadership.

Ms. Richardson said that most significant were the numerous opportunities on campus that provided students “No Limits” to learning. In addition, the students, faculty and President were amazing; and the University’s school pride, rich history and culture were unsurpassed.

Mr. Oliver said that in addition to USC Aiken’s “family feeling” the 18 to 1 student/faculty ratio allowed for one-on-one time with professors.

Chairman Fennell thanked the SGA presidents for their participation in an excellent panel discussion. He then asked each one to note an area of concern they would like to express to the committee.

Ms. Dukes and Ms. Blakeney asked the committee to keep in mind that college funding and affordability was a huge concern for students. President Pastides responded by noting the advantages of Palmetto College, especially for students with financial hurdles.

Mr. Oliver asked for students from the system campuses to be able to sit in the Columbia student body section at home football games.

Ms. Richardson asked the committee, on behalf of her constituents, to keep three things in mind: affordability, student space, and to continue the excellence of the University.

Chairman Fennell stated that the SGA presidents of the two-year campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter and Union) would be invited to participate in a panel discussion at the next Student-Trustee Liaison Committee meeting scheduled for Friday, April 24, 2015.

IV. Other Matters

Chairman Fennell called for any other matters to come before the committee. Ms. Bethea commented that the meeting had been remarkable and an important reminder to the Board that the students are the reason the University exists. She said it was both exhilarating and promising to know what the University's future looks like through the SGA leadership. She thanked Chairman Fennell for his initiative to provide an informative panel discussion.

V. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the committee, Chairman Fennell declared the meeting adjourned at 2:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy E. Stone  
Secretary