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REMARKS TO THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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Chairman, Council of Public College Presidents

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First, on behalf of my colleagues let me express my appreciation to you and to your Executive Director, Dr. Howard Boozer, for the opportunity to meet with you. Let me also explain my role. I am the spokesman for the group because the Chairmanship of the Council rotates each year, and this is my year.

There are several concerns we want to share with you today. I will briefly outline these several items, and then we all stand ready to discuss them with you in any depth desired.

Let me begin with a confession: we, the presidents of the state colleges and universities of South Carolina, do feel ourselves to be a privileged group. The opportunity we each have to help to build, to preserve and to nurture institutions in which skills and intellects grow is a rare one. We have a chance to help to prepare each new generation in South Carolina for citizenship. Our graduates make out laws, strengthen our institutions, enrich

our culture, and enhance our economy. It is an awesome responsibility and an exciting one. Sometimes I feel that we lose sight of this large picture as we gather in this room to discuss how many full-time students we can balance on the head of a full-time professor.

What are we, as a group of Presidents, concerned about as many of the institutions we represent enter their second and third centuries of service to South Carolina? Let me outline our concerns for you, some of which are dealt with at greater length in the document which was circulated to you today and through the mail on December 31.

1. We are concerned about the growing tendency of many to assume that our institutions of higher education are overly funded. South Carolina has as good a chance as any state in the nation to make unusual economic and cultural gains during the next generation and we have simply got to do everything possible to prepare a generation to meet tomorrow's challenges. We have only recently reached a level of funding which will allow excellence to be nurtured in our colleges and universities and it would be a tragedy to see any kind of significant retreat from the gains made in the last ten years.

2. We are also concerned about the need for a sound Master Plan for the support and development of post-secondary education in South Carolina. We applaud the efforts of this Commission and of the 1202 Commission to develop such a plan, but it is our belief that the very nature of the legislation setting up this Commission renders it imperative that there be significant

legislative involvement in the evolution of a Master Plan. We want the plan to be enthusiastically supported by the colleges, the Commission and the legislature and it is essential that all important constituents be involved in its evolution. We urge this Commission to give special attention to getting appropriate members of the legislature involved in the development of the Master Plan.

3. Another of our concerns is the need we see for a vigorous voice in our State capital defending the cause of higher education, both public and private. It is our belief that the Commission on Higher Education could and should become such a voice. If the Commission on Higher Education does not accept this responsibility, much of the progress we have made stands to be lost.

4. We feel it to be important that the Commission act vigorously to urge the legislature to defer actions of any great magnitude of significance until the Master Plan is completed because any action affecting higher education in South Carolina needs to be based on careful and dispassionate study of all of the facts.

5. We urge that the Commission exercise leadership in asking the legislature to place a moratorium on the development of any additional two-year or four-year college programs until the Master Plan is completed.

6. We also want to express to the Commission our growing concern about the erosion during the last few months of the authority of our several Boards of Trustees and our own roles as presidents. Our special concerns are in the

areas of personnel and purchasing. We do not believe that greater efficiency is resulting from the many new rules and regulations which are moving important decisions from the campuses to central bureaucracies in Columbia.

7. A final general concern is our fear that the current economic situation will lead to proposal for a significant increase in tuition at our public colleges and universities. Study after study around the country have indicated that significant increases in tuition will drastically change the roles of our public colleges and will significantly decrease enrollment from middle class students, students whose parents earn between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per year. There is also evidence that such tuition increases in state colleges do not tend to increase the enrollment at private colleges. A tuition increase will simply decrease the number of students attending college in South Carolina, and we already have one of the nation's lowest going-to-college rates.

Those, ladies and gentlemen, are our major concerns. We stand ready to answer any questions. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to meet with you.

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