

December 15, 2015

Post Office Box 170922  
Spartanburg, South Carolina 29301

The Honorable Nikki Randhawa Haley  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

First and foremost, **thank you** for taking the time to read this letter, which I feel I have absolutely no choice but to write. I also feel as if I have absolutely no choice but to share this letter and its accompanying documents with as many individuals as possible (See List of Cc'd Recipients.) This is because the last time that I sought assistance, two years ago from the SC State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education (SBTCE), the major issues that I raised in a formal complaint with the board members, were never addressed (See Enclosed Formal Complaint to SBTCE.) In the complaint, I presented significant factual evidence of clear patterns of discrimination against current and former African American employees of Spartanburg Community College (SCC), one of the 16 technical and community colleges in the state system. I alleged that African American employees were disproportionately placed in low-wage, staff positions rather than faculty and administrative positions; were looked over for promotion opportunities within the college; and were systematically paid less than White employees even though many of these African American employees held higher credentials and more applicable job experience than their White counterparts. And since I wrote that letter dated September 20, 2013, and received a cursory response from the Board on January 10, 2014 (See Enclosed SBTCE Response.), I have not been able to secure full-time employment with a single public school district, two-year technical or community college, or four-year college or university in the state of South Carolina. In fact, of the **36 positions** posted at [www.jobs.sc.gov](http://www.jobs.sc.gov) that I have applied for from March 2013 through December 12, 2015, all of which I meet both the minimum and preferred qualifications for (See Enclosed Curriculum Vita.), I have been interviewed for **four**. And I have received no job offers.

As one of those African American former employees of Spartanburg Community College who believed I had been discriminated against, I thought that it was only right that I first take my concerns to the governing board of the 16 technical and community colleges in this state – the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education. I thought it was only right that I give the Board the chance to look into my claims and address my specific concerns, including most notably the fact that I had attempted to return to SCC after I resigned my full-time position with the college at the end of 2007 in order to pursue doctoral studies full time, spend time with my mother who was in the end stages of esophageal cancer, and raise my two young daughters. And while I was denied even so much as an interview, I was able to provide evidence of at least three White employees who had also left SCC for a period of time. The difference? These three White former employees were all re-hired by SCC and returned to the positions that they had held when they left the College. In one instance, one former employee was re-hired **and** promoted. But when I indirectly raised this issue when I met with current SCC President Mr. Henry C. Giles, Jr., in August 2013, what was his response? Mr. Giles said that at the time that I left SCC, “no plans had been put in place to hold your position.” Imagine my shock to learn that there apparently was such a policy for certain individuals. Clearly I and many others knew that SCC was in the habit of hiring back former employees, and that SCC was also in the habit of advancing employees from within the college – employees who had neither the educational background nor requisite skills set for the new position – but were promoted any way and with alarming regularity. But

in my case, it did not matter that I had a more than justifiable reason for needing to step away from SCC, or that I had served admirably in my role as director of three academic support service areas and as an adjunct instructor of the online English class that I had created – the first fully-online course my department had ever had. For some reason, in my case, I did not merit the same consideration given to other former employees of SCC, and the only discernible differences between myself and these other former employees were their skin color and their apparent connections to upper-level administrators who had put “plans...in place to hold [their] position[s].”

What makes my situation all the more devastating is the fact that I had been assured that I had already proven my value and worth to SCC in the almost six years that I was with the college in a full-time capacity. While I did not (and do not) know what factors SCC takes into account in deciding which former employees’ positions they elect to “hold,” I would have thought that someone who had done so many good things for SCC during my tenure would have merited the same consideration. Among other things, I created the first fully-online English course in the Transitional Studies department; at this time, not a single other English instructor in my department was willing to get our department on board with all the other departments that were creating online courses using Title III grants. Without our department’s participation, it would have significantly set back SCC’s forward momentum in the area of putting out fully-online degree programs. And after three years as a full-time English instructor, I applied for and was promoted to a middle-level management position, one for which I was paid significantly less than the retiring White woman who had held the position, even while an entirely new area of responsibility was added (tutoring, open computer lab, and testing). But I saw this as an opportunity for growth, and I took it. I was commended by both former SCC President Dr. Dan L. Terhune and former VP of Academic Affairs Sherry Vaughn for the excellent job that I did of positioning my three areas of responsibility – in Mrs. Vaughn’s words – “exactly where they needed to be.” In addition to presenting at the Virginia Master Teacher Seminar at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia in 2004, and later representing SCC by presenting online tutorial service development at a national conference in New Orleans in 2007, I had been selected as one of two individuals to represent SCC as a member of the 2005-2006 cohort of the Higher Education Leadership Certificate program offered through USC in Columbia. This program is the mainstay of USC’s Community College Leadership Alliance (CCLA) and its efforts to identify, nurture, and develop the next generation of senior-level leaders “as over the next decade many senior leadership professionals will retire from the SC Technical College System,” according to its website. And unlike the other SCC participants in this graduate leadership certificate program, I decided to do what Dr. Terhune said was essential for me to move to the next rung of the leadership ladder at SCC – I decided to apply to my alma mater – Clemson University’s doctoral program in higher educational leadership. It had always been a dream of mine to become the first PhD in my family. Now there was a practical, logical purpose to pursue a dream that often seemed unattainable.

So how much does a dream cost? **\$113,244.33 with a 6.8% interest rate.** That’s what my dream cost me in real dollars and cents, and it continues to grow day by day. When I started taking out state and federal student loans almost eight years ago, I was scared, but I wasn’t terrified. I was scared because I didn’t have any outstanding student loans when I decided to pursue the PhD. I didn’t have any loans because I had paid them all off from my undergraduate and master’s degree programs. When my sister passed away in 1999, she left money to me that I used to pay off my student loans, because I was in the first five years of my marriage, and I was also a first-time mom. I wanted to make sure that my new family was financially secure, and I knew that one of the best things I could do for us would be to pay off my student loan debt. So it was with quite a bit of hesitation almost a decade later that I decided to take out new student loans to pursue the terminal degree. And yet, I didn’t feel as if I had much choice. I had been told in no uncertain terms by Dr. Terhune that if I wanted to advance beyond my middle-level management position as the director of The Rita Allison Tutorial Learning Center, then I

would **have** to earn the terminal degree. SCC already knew that I was interested in advancing further into college leadership because I applied to and was chosen to represent SCC in the higher education leadership certificate program. I proved myself worthy of consideration for future leadership opportunities by excelling in this program, and earning 18 graduate credits in higher education administration. Those of us who went through the program watched as time and time again, announcements were posted of graduates of the program who were being promoted to advanced leadership positions at their respective colleges. That's why I wasn't terrified when I decided to apply to my alma mater's PhD program in higher education leadership. I wasn't terrified to take out tens of thousands of dollars in student loans, because I could see the end goal. I knew that I had the intellectual capacity to not only get accepted into the doctoral program, but I had the brains, the drive, and the determination to make it through the program successfully. What was driving me was the belief that the only thing that stood between me and a chance at an upper-level leadership position was the doctoral degree and a little more time. And given where I had come from in life and all that I had accomplished up to this point, I knew that borrowing this money to reach my professional dream would be worth it.

Nothing has ever come easy for me. I am the 12<sup>th</sup> child of a man with a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade education who worked as a janitor in a Whites only country club, and a woman with a 7<sup>th</sup> grade education, who served as a maid in the homes of some of the wealthiest White folks in my hometown of Orangeburg, South Carolina. I grew up working in the fields with my parents and my brothers and sisters, because this is what we needed to do to provide for ourselves. I grew up with a father who could not read or write and a mother who could do both quite well. I grew up with a father who was weighed down by alcoholism and a mother who never drank a day in her life. At the same time, I grew up with a father and a mother who were determined in spite of everything to give us the best that they knew how to give. Like comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory, I didn't know shame until I went to school. I remember being laughed at because I wore second-hand clothes and a home-made haircut and style my mother gave me. I remember being laughed at by the other kids on the school bus who marveled that utility poles existed so deep in the country where we lived on our farm with the roosters, hens, cows, pigs, and a vegetable patch. I remember being taken to Head Start, which was located in a brick house on Russell Street in downtown Orangeburg, when I was just about to turn five in 1974. And I remember how in the summer time, we would go to different locations to pick up government-provided lunch boxes, so we'd have something to eat now that the school year was over. I also remember watching my mother neatly fold and box up our gently-used hand-me-downs so we could take them to the Salvation Army on Saturday mornings, because Ma said there was always someone worse off than we were. I remember going to church on Sunday mornings, singing in the choir, and taking part in Bible Study some Wednesday evenings. I always *always* recall my mother saying that trouble don't last always and the best thing we children could do for ourselves was to get as much education in our heads as possible. I remember sitting around our pot-bellied, cast iron stove after Sunday dinners and hearing stories of how hard life was for my grandparents who were born only a couple of decades after slavery was officially ended. Growing up, I knew that we were a family of sharecroppers, part of a system that directly evolved out of slavery – even though I did not know that word or its history as a child.

I did know that I had been very fortunate in so many ways – even though nothing ever came easy for me. I knew that because of so many others, both those I knew and many I'd never know, that I had received so many more opportunities than my parents would ever see in their own lifetimes – and my mother and father lived to be 79 and 73 respectively. Mine was the first generation to attend college, and I was the first in my family to attend and graduate from Clemson University. I was also the first newspaper reporter and the first high school and college English instructor and eventually the first PhD in our immediate family. But none of these opportunities came to me because of who I was. They came to me because of who I had the potential to become. They came to me because of who I was born to be. I wasn't born to be a loser, a quitter, or a victim. I hadn't been graced with the God-given talents I

received just so that I would be blacklisted – deliberately and intentionally blocked from opportunities I had earned the right to receive – through the short-sighted animus of those riled because, like Shirley Chisholm, I refused to be bossed; I refused to be bought. Instead of doing what so many others had done and turning a blind eye to what appeared to be clear, blatant discrimination against a protected class of individuals, I decided to question the SBTCE about why it was that my college – Spartanburg Community College – had so few African American faculty and virtually no African American administrators, even though there were quite a few African Americans stacked in mostly entry-level, staff positions. These staffers were featured prominently in areas such as financial aid, student records, the registrar’s office, and other student services areas where they were on display for the public to see. But when it came to the classrooms, the board rooms, and conference rooms, one could literally count the number of Black faculty on both hands, and there was only a single African American man at the dean’s level or higher at the time that I left the college. Because of the focus of my doctoral research, I knew quite a bit about the leadership history of both the state and national community college systems, and I also knew that the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among community college faculty and administration was not a new problem. In fact, it was one that had plagued the community college system nationally for decades, with leading figures of the community college movement repeatedly warning colleges nationwide of the risk run by failure to engage in succession planning, particularly planning that deliberately took into consideration the necessity of the administrations of these 1200+ colleges reflecting the ethnic and racial diversity of the communities they served. Not just in terms of the bodies occupying classroom desks, but in the form of those at the head of those classrooms, and those who chaired various academic departments, and ultimately, those at the helms of these institutions. But just as is the case nationally, the numbers in South Carolina are abysmal. According to [www.sctechsystem.com](http://www.sctechsystem.com), 61% of students attending the 16 technical and community colleges are female, and 44% are minority. Conversely, 10 or 62.5% of the technical and community colleges are led by White men, two of whom do not hold the terminal degree; three (18.75%) are led by White women; three (18.75%) are led by Black men, including the system’s only recognized historically black technical college; and none are led by Black women. One of the three White women presidents (of Aiken Technical College) has announced her retirement as of July 2016. If history holds, more likely than not, the next president of Aiken Technical College will be a White man, just as the White woman president of the Technical College of the Lowcountry was replaced with a White man upon her retirement just over a year ago. These numbers simply do not lie. A system that is unequivocal in its pride that it serves the majority of South Carolina students who are pursuing higher education, according to the system’s website, is apparently equally as prideful that Black female students never get to see someone who looks like them standing at the ready to clasp their hand as they make their way across the stage at convocation. Similarly, while there are for now three White women presidents, there are only three women presidents, even though 61% of the system’s students are women.

And while these numbers are mind-numbing, they almost pale in comparison to the percentages of African American faculty in these colleges. According to data compiled by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE), for the fall semesters of the five reporting years of 2010-2014, the average percentage of African American faculty members ranged between 16% and 17%. At the same time, the average percentage of African American students at these 16 colleges ranged between 39% and 41%. At SCC, the percentage of African American faculty went from 11% in 2010 (18 out of 119 faculty total), to 8% in 2011 and 2012, to 7.5% in 2013, to 7% (8 Black faculty out of 119 faculty total) in 2014. The percentage of African American students at SCC has been on a decline from a high of 27% in 2010 (1,567 Black students of 5,871 total students), to 25% in 2011, and has held steady at 23% from 2012-2014. The diversity of faculty matters because research studies suggest that minority students perform better when there is a strong presence of minority faculty, staff, and administration on campus. As importantly, however, the literature also shows that college presidents historically have made their

way through the ranks of the academic affairs side of the house (as faculty, department chairs, deans, vice presidents, etc.). Very rarely do college presidents come up through the ranks of the student services/student affairs side of the institution, and yet, African Americans are disproportionately stacked on this side of the institution. Perhaps Flowers and Moore III (2008)<sup>i</sup> phrased it best when they cited an earlier researcher's contention that "in order to increase the number of underrepresented racial and ethnic academic leaders, institutions of higher learning need to increase the number of underrepresented racial and ethnic tenured faculty" (p. 76). For the community college system is uniquely distinctive for a number of reasons, but in South Carolina and other states, the community and technical college system disproportionately serves as the entry point to higher education for a majority of African American students. And the research literature is replete with studies that focus on the positive correlation between African American and other minority student success and the presence of African American personnel across the campus, and at all levels and in all areas – and not just in stereotypical positions such as maintenance, campus dining facilities, and in student services areas.

So I lodged a complaint with the State Tech System Board, as it is also known, and while they addressed the two specific positions I inquired about (See Enclosed SBTCE Response.), the Board definitely did not address my broader complaint that I have repeatedly been overlooked for opportunities to return to SCC in a leadership capacity, even as several White former employees were re-hired and returned to their former positions. They failed to address what appears to be a concerted effort to keep me out of any of the 16 colleges within this system. And they certainly did not respond directly to my complaint about the disparate treatment of White and Black employees at SCC in terms of hiring, promotion opportunities, salaries, and retention.

Governor Haley, you are probably wondering why I have come to you. What do I want from you? Well, first of all, let me tell you what is about to happen to me. For the first time in my 46 years, I am on the verge of filing bankruptcy, even though I realize that I cannot discharge my student loan debt. However, I am struggling to make ends meet, because I am listed as a temporary, non-permanent full-time employee by my current institution, but I am paid a part-time salary. My net take-home pay per month makes it nearly impossible to stay ahead of my creditors each month, even though my student loan payments are in hardship deferment and forbearance for now. However, I know that I am nearing the end of my deferment options, and I will soon have to make some sort of arrangements with the state and federal student loan agencies to avoid defaulting. But if I have to file bankruptcy, my credit rating – which has been quite good until very recently – will be destroyed. Literally, if I were not married, I would likely be on food stamps and other public assistance, and I would probably lose my home of almost 16 years, the only home my girls have ever known. All that I am going through would not be so bad, if I were the only one affected by what I am experiencing. However, I have a college freshman who is home on Christmas break. The only way she is able to attend college is because of my ability, for now, to secure a parent loan for her. However, if I have to file bankruptcy or default on my own student loans, then she will no longer be able to attend college. And I have a second daughter who is a freshman in high school. With a bankruptcy on my record, I will not be able to secure a loan for her to attend college just over three years from now. It is hard for me to express in words how devastated I would be if I were not able to help my own children to attend college, any more than my own parents – with their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade educations and low incomes – were able to help me to attend college.

I am coming to you, Governor, I am coming to **all** of you, actually, to help me figure out where I went wrong. I did what I was told it was necessary for me to do, and instead of being given the opportunity to put my leadership knowledge and skills to use, I am instead scrambling just to find a job that will allow me to put food on the table. I currently teach English at a university here in Upstate South Carolina. I teach four classes in the fall and spring, and I am paid \$18,000 net for the nine months (August through April) that I work. That's \$2,000 per month, paid out thankfully on the 15<sup>th</sup> and the last day of each month. In essence, I am teaching what would be considered a full-time load of classes for

students in terms of financial aid, and I am only being paid a part-time salary. When I started my first “real” job out of Clemson University 24 years ago, I was making a little more back then than I am making today. But every day that I have class, I walk in with a smile on my face, and I stand before my students, and I teach them how to write well. I teach them how to have confidence in their ability to critically wrestle with ideas and then articulate their own beliefs verbally and in writing. And without hubris, I am proud of the work that I do. In fact, I was nominated last spring (2015) for both Adjunct of the Year and Teacher of the Year. I am proud of the recognition from my students, including being named this semester as an Upstate volleyball player’s most honored faculty member for fall 2015.

I am coming to you Governor, because I need someone to explain why it is that a 300+ paged dissertation that I wrote and defended three years ago has been downloaded **176 times in 13 countries** around the globe, but its writer and her expertise in technical and community college leadership have been ostracized. I need someone to explain why it is that even though I have applied for **36 positions** through [www.jobs.sc.gov](http://www.jobs.sc.gov), between March 2013 and December 2015, I have only been interviewed for **four** (See Enclosed List of State Positions Applied For.) I need someone to explain why of the 19 positions with the state Department of Education, the two positions with the SC Commission on Higher Education, and the one position with the South Carolina Technical College System – all of which I meet the minimum and preferred qualifications for – I have never been contacted for an interview. And this includes positions that appeared to be written for me, given my qualifications by the SC Department of Education as a HQ (highly-qualified), AP-endorsed and certified public school teacher, not to mention my number of years of teaching and administrative experience at the two-year and four-year college levels. I am still trying to figure out what I have done that is preventing me from being interviewed and hired for a full-time position given that I hold a bachelor’s degree in English from Clemson University; a master’s degree in Secondary Education – English from Converse College; public school certification as a high school English teacher with endorsements in AP Language/Composition and AP Literature; and a PhD in Educational Leadership (Higher Education) from the #21 public, research university in the nation.

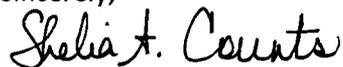
What I want from you, Governor Haley, is to help me to live my dream without having to lose what is left of my dignity. I want the opportunity to do the work that I have studied and trained to be able to do. I want to be able to hold my head high when I head out the door in the mornings to go to work, knowing that I am working a full-time job and being paid a full-time salary for the work that I do. I want the chance to sit down with you and discuss what I see as challenges for the future of South Carolina, in terms of authentically addressing the demographic changes that are affecting our state now and will affect it for the foreseeable future. I want the chance to impact higher educational leadership in my home state. I do not want to have to pack up and move to another state or country in order to find the fulfilling work that I know is available right here in my home state. What is happening to me is **wrong**. What is happening to my family because of what is being done to me is **wrong**. I had every right to file a complaint with the SBTCE, and I could just have easily taken my concerns and my documentation to other agencies immediately. And yet, I did not do this. Instead, I went to the Board with my concerns, and my evidence, and as a result, I believe that I have been blacklisted by the very system that I spent four years of doctoral studies learning more about, so that I could have a positive impact on this system’s future for the young people who truly are the future of the state of South Carolina. Nothing that I said was erroneous, and yet, I was within days of accepting a mall job when I was hired at the very last minute as an adjunct to teach four composition classes for very little pay. Everything that I said needed to be said, needed to be investigated, needed to be followed up on, and yet I was told that after “consultation with legal counsel,” the Board would only address the very narrow concerns I mentioned about two positions that I had been overlooked for by SCC. There were two positions that I didn’t even merit the courtesy of an interview for, even though, according to SCC President Giles, these were positions for which my “legacy with SCC” should have held me in good stead.

So how much does it **really** cost to dream? It has cost me my open and easy smile...my enthusiasm...my passionate loyalty and belief that right is right and wrong is wrong. It has cost me my belief in the altruism of man and woman. It has cost me my happiness, my joy, my self-confidence, my self-belief. And this is what really terrifies me. I have always lived a life of great expectations, a life of high standards for myself, and a life of belief that if I did good things, then good things would come back to me. I have always tried to make the right choices in life. I chose to marry before having children because I believed this was the right thing, the expected thing to do. I chose to go to college before marrying because I believed this was the right thing to do. I went back to college to get a master's degree in education, so that I could teach English because I believed it was important to have a professional job and to set an example for my young daughter to follow (I only had one at the time). I went back to college in pursuit of the PhD at the age of 38 because I knew that earning this degree would open up doors of opportunity that were closed to me but not necessarily to others with whom I worked. For at the same time that I was told I needed the PhD for advancement, other White men and White women (up to and including the current President), were being promoted over and above me and many other African American employees, and none of these men and women had earned the doctoral degree. So, once again, the playing field remains far from level. Once again, there are different sets of rules by which the game is played. And even when an individual decides to play the game with the hand she has been dealt, she can still be stopped. She can still be blocked from opportunities – simply because she stood up and spoke out about something that was unquestionably wrong.

As I said in my formal complaint to the SBTCE: "Even as I acknowledge that there are serious challenges to the System which need to be addressed at a minimum by those who govern the System, I continue to have hope for the future of the System. And I remain optimistic about the opportunity to serve the System as a forward-thinking leader who is willing to tackle some of the challenges like the ones I unearthed in my personal research and in the work that is currently underway at research universities like Clemson and USC. I remain hopeful because I believe that I am exceedingly qualified to serve as a leader within this very System, as I have demonstrated my commitment to its improvement by highlighting some of its most egregious shortfalls. And even though I did not attend a technical college, I have two sisters who went to Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College in the early 1970s. They were able to go from working in textile mills to securing good-paying clerical positions because of their associate's degrees. So I know first-hand the economic value of a technical college education."

Jack Canfield, co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, recently said, "You're not given a dream unless you have the power to fulfill it." I think he got that half right. I think you can be given a dream, but sometimes you have to rely on the power of others to help you fulfill it. I hope that at least one of the individuals on this list who are far more powerful than I will ever be will hear my desperate plea and please try to help me.

Sincerely,



Shelia Antley Counts, PhD

Physical Address: 145 Jameson Drive, Roebuck, SC 29376

Mobile Phone Number: (864) 303-4697

**Enclosures (4)**

**cc: President Barack Hussein Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama  
The Honorable James E. Clyburn, US House of Representatives**

**The Honorable Lindsey Graham, US Senate**  
**The Honorable Trey Gowdy, US House of Representatives**  
**The Honorable Tim Scott, US Senate**  
**Jenny R. Yang, Chair, US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**  
**Patricia B. Fuller, Director, Greenville Local Office, US EEOC**  
**Raymond Buxton, II, Commissioner, SC Human Affairs Commission**  
**Dr. James C. "Jimmie" Williamson, President, South Carolina Technical College System**  
**Ralph A. "Nick" Odom, Jr., Chairman, State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education**  
**Dr. Greg F. Rutherford, President, York Technical College**  
**Dr. Keith Miller, President, Greenville Technical College**  
**Dr. L. Ray Brooks, President, Piedmont Technical College**  
**Dr. Susan Winsor, President, Aiken Technical College**  
**Dr. Ben P. Dillard, III, President, Florence-Darlington Technical College**  
**Mr. H. Neyle Wilson, President, Horry-Georgetown Technical College**  
**Dr. Patricia A. "Patty" Lee, President, Williamsburg Technical College**  
**Dr. Mary Thornley, President, Trident Technical College**  
**Mr. Henry C. Giles, Jr., President, Spartanburg Community College**  
**Dr. Ronnie L. Booth, President, Tri-County Technical College**  
**Dr. Ronald L. Thames, President, Midlands Technical College**  
**Dr. Ron Bartley, President, Northeastern Technical College**  
**Dr. B. Tim Hardee, President, Central Carolina Technical College**  
**Dr. Walt Tobin, President, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College**  
**Dr. Leonard McIntyre, President, Denmark Technical College**  
**Dr. Richard J. Gough, President, Technical College of the Lowcountry**  
**Molly Spearman, Superintendent of Education, SC Department of Education**  
**Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education**  
**John B. King, Jr., US Deputy Secretary of Education**  
**Charlie C. Sanders, Jr., President and CEO, South Carolina Student Loan Corporation**  
**Frederick T. Himmelein, Esq., Chairman of Board, South Carolina Student Loan Corporation**  
**FSA Ombudsman, US Department of Education**  
**Sara Johnson Borton, Publisher and President, The State Newspaper**  
**Mark Lett, Vice President and Executive Editor, The State Newspaper**  
**Larry Riley, Publisher, The Spartanburg Herald-Journal Newspaper, GoUpstate.com**  
**Michael Smith, Executive Editor, The Spartanburg Herald-Journal Newspaper, GoUpstate.com**  
**Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., Chairman and Publisher, The New York Times Company**  
**Dean Baquet, Executive Editor, The New York Times Company**  
**Frederick J. Ryan, Jr., Publisher, The Washington Post**  
**Martin "Marty" Baron, Executive Editor, The Washington Post**  
**Eugene Robinson, Pulitzer-Prize Winning Syndicated Columnist (and Orangeburg, SC native)**  
**Rachel Maddow of The Rachel Maddow Show**  
**Cornell William Brooks, President and CEO, NAACP**  
**Rashad Robinson, Executive Director, ColorofChange.org**

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<sup>i</sup> Flowers, L.A., & Moore, III, J.L. (2008). Unraveling the composition of academic leadership in higher education: Exploring administrative diversity at 2-year and 4-year institutions. *Journal of Thought, Fall-Winter 2008*, 71-81.

September 20, 2013

Dr. Darrel Staat, South Carolina Technical College System President  
Mr. Ralph A. Odom, Jr., Chairman, and Board Members  
SC State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education  
South Carolina Technical College System  
111 Executive Center Drive  
Columbia, SC 29210

Dear Dr. Staat, Mr. Odom, and Board Members:

My name is Shelia Antley Counts, and I am a former employee of one of the state's technical colleges -- Spartanburg Community College. I am writing this letter to lodge a formal complaint against Spartanburg Community College (SCC) for repeatedly disregarding local, state, and federal laws regarding the hiring, promotion, and retention of qualified African American applicants and employees. I am coming to you as the governing authorities of the South Carolina Technical College System (SCTCS) to ask that you investigate this claim, and if deemed meritorious, take appropriate action to rectify this situation to the fullest extent of the law.

Dr. Staat, I realize that you are retiring from your position as System President as of September 30; however, I wanted to take this opportunity to make you aware of this situation because I believe you have served the System for three years with distinction (as well as during the 1980s as VP of Education Affairs and Development at Florence-Darlington Technical College), and I am certain you will continue to want what is best for the System. I want to bring to the attention of the SC State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education (SBTCE) and to you, ex-Officio and System President, what I believe to be discriminatory actions on the part of Spartanburg Community College with regards to recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of African American employees. Procedure 8-7-100.1 of the SBTCE places particular emphasis on the Board's and System's commitment to an effective affirmative action plan, stressing the importance of ensuring that underutilized race/gender groups be a "primary consideration" in the College's recruitment and hiring process. My first-hand knowledge and experience within the College as well as research I have conducted of SCC belies the Board's affirmed policy and procedure, which is of course, supported by state and federal mandates.

Last month, I applied for two positions with the College in the hopes of returning to the place where I was successfully employed for almost six years previously. I started employment with SCC in August of 2002 as a full-time English instructor. At the time of my hiring, I held a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Clemson University and a Master of Education degree in Secondary Education/English from Converse College. According to the credentialing requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), I was more than qualified to hold my position. In my third year of teaching, I applied for one of two slots the College had been allotted that year for participation in the Higher Education Leadership Certificate Program. This program was formed as part of the Community College Leadership Alliance under the direction of former System President Dr. Jim Hudgins and through the University of South Carolina to address the impending crisis of executive-level leadership facing community and technical colleges in South Carolina and nationwide. Many colleges in the System (including SCC) use successful completion of this program as part of the basis for promotion to leadership positions. In order to be chosen for participation, I had to demonstrate to

the College's selection committee not only my interest in leadership opportunities within the College but also that I had the requisite skills, educational background, ability, and leadership qualities and characteristics to take part in this program and succeed.

Around the same time that I started this program, I became aware of an impending leadership opportunity on campus as an academic support service area director was set to retire. Because I had prior retail managerial experience that required that I hire, train, promote, and dismiss staff; buy merchandise for my departments and oversee the efficient merchandising (advertising) of these items; run the day-to-day operations of my two areas; and work continually to ensure the departments' profitability versus last year's sales, I knew that I had the necessary skills set and could successfully manage these three academic support service areas for the College. So I applied and during my interview, I presented a five-year strategic plan that I developed based on environmental scanning I had conducted of these three areas. I was chosen unanimously by the search committee to serve as the director of these areas. My staff and I accomplished much in the time that I served as director, and I successfully led these areas for almost three years before making the difficult decision to leave my position.

I chose to leave my full-time position with the College at the end of 2007 for several reasons, principally to pursue doctoral studies full-time at my alma mater, Clemson University. I studied the community college system nationally and focused my dissertation on the history and development of our state's technical college system and the role of Black women leaders within the system. I am proud to say that this 335-paged qualitative dissertation is now available online to students of Villanova University. I earned the PhD in August 2012 and have been anxiously looking for an opportunity to return to the system that I have devoted so much of my professional career and education to advancing.

When I learned of two ideal leadership opportunities at SCC -- Dean of Arts and Sciences and Director of the Tyger River Campus -- (both of which I met the preferred qualifications for), I was elated. I promptly made application for both positions but did not receive an interview. And this happened after I had had a one-on-one meeting with President Henry Giles, whom I had worked with previously when he served as Executive VP of Business Affairs for the College. During this meeting, Mr. Giles stated that both my advanced degree and legacy with the College should serve in my stead. When I received notice that the Dean of Arts position had been filled just two weeks and three days after the closing date of the position, I e-mailed Mr. Giles and expressed my concern over not being asked to come in and interview. A day shy of two weeks later, I received the following response from Mr. Giles:

First, I am sorry that it has taken me so long to get back with you. The reason you were not included in the interviews for the Dean of the Arts and Sciences Division was that you did not meet the minimum requirement of "six (6) years of progressively responsible related work experience". Based on our records you taught in the TLC 3 years and was the director/instructor 2 years. After you left us, your application indicates that you have been teaching in high school. The only time that is related to the Job Duties of the Dean of Arts and Science is the 2 years that you supervised the TLC. Therefore you were not included for further consideration.

First of all, SCC's Human Resources Office did not follow protocol as outlined in "Section D: Interview Process" of SBTCE Procedure 8-7-100.1, which states that:

The Human Resource Officer should review all applications to determine which applicants possess the minimum qualifications for the position. Those not possessing the minimum qualifications should be notified by the Human Resource Office.

The only notice that I received from the Human Resources Office regarding this position was the following e-mail:

September 4, 2013

Shelia Counts  
145 Jameson Drive  
Roebuck, SC 29376

Dear Shelia:

Thank you for applying for the Dean of Arts and Sciences position at Spartanburg Community College. This letter is to advise you that we have filled the position. Please continue to visit our website at [www.jobs.sc.gov](http://www.jobs.sc.gov) for any future openings. Thank you for your interest in Spartanburg Community College. If the Human Resources Office may be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,  
Mary Whitener  
Employment/Training Manager

While I never received notification from Human Resources that I “did not meet the minimum requirement,” instead only receiving notice that the position had all ready been filled, I do know from “Section G: Release of Information” of Procedure 8-7-100.1 that it is SBTCE policy that the College or System Office may choose not to divulge materials gathered during a job search, but:

...that materials relating to the final pool of applicants under consideration comprised of at least three people for a position must be made available for public inspection and copying. In addition to making available for public inspection and copying the materials described in this item, the System Office/College must disclose, upon request, the number of applicants considered for a position.

Pursuant to this procedure, this is written notice that I would like to review and copy the materials relating to the final pool of applicants considered for the Dean of Arts and Sciences position at SCC. Further, I would like to know the number of applicants who were considered for this position.

Second, I must clarify Mr. Giles’ review of my curriculum vita. I taught in the Transitional Studies department, not the TLC, for three years as a full-time English Instructor. I then was promoted to the Director of the Rita Allison Tutorial Learning Center (TLC) position and held this position for two-and-a-half years. At the same time I served as director, I also continued to teach the online English course that I created for my former department – Transitional Studies – the first fully-online course in my

department. At the time, no other English instructor in my department was able or willing to learn how to teach English online; I was happy to continue teaching the course I created. More importantly, the College was moving frenetically forward with its plans to create whole programs that students would complete online. Therefore, it was essential that my department be a willing participant in this transition, given that many of our students start their education in our department taking remedial/developmental courses in English, reading, and math. Personally, I saw this as an opportunity to learn an entirely new skill set – online course development – a skill set that would not be going anywhere any time soon. Eventually, others in the department got on board. And in addition to “teaching in high school” after leaving the College, I also taught English as an adjunct for Greenville Technical College and Strayer University, where I further honed my online and face-to-face teaching abilities. While I was an English Instructor at SCC, I performed progressively-responsible duties, including the aforementioned online course development, course and curriculum development, SACS committee membership (principally as a documents editor), presentation of a training seminar on online course development, and I served as a participant and presenter at the Virginia Master Teacher Seminar.

Third, it appears that Mr. Giles has simplified my “progressively responsible related work experience” to “the 2 years that you supervised the TLC.” According to the posted job description, in addition to supervision, the Dean of Arts and Sciences also evaluates staff; coordinates development of academic schedules; administers departmental budgets; represents the College on state-wide peer groups; serves as articulation liaison with senior institutions; and acts as a motivator to create cooperation, trust, and teamwork. In my three years as an English instructor, I and other English instructors in the Transitional Studies department routinely assisted the Department Chair with the evaluation of adjunct faculty, sitting in on teaching demonstrations and observing classes. We also routinely coordinated and developed academic schedules for the English faculty in our department – full-time and part-time. I and other department faculty represented the Transitional Studies department by attending SCADE (South Carolina Association of Developmental Educators) state-wide peer group conferences. And I represented the College by serving as a graduate cohort member of the Higher Education Leadership Certificate Program for two years and participating in annual International Education Consortium conferences for three years.

And in my two-and-a-half year tenure as Director of the TLC, I supervised a staff of nearly 30 full-time and part-time employees on three campuses. In this capacity, I used EPMS to evaluate my full-time tutors and provided regular feedback to my part-timers. I developed the schedules of staffers of three academic support service areas – tutoring, testing, and open computer lab – and then extended tutoring and testing services to two branch campuses. I administered a six-figure budget for the three areas under my responsibility and also oversaw the extensive expansion and renovation of the testing center and implemented a more efficient layout of the computer lab.

I also represented the College on the national level by presenting “The Virtual Tutor: Cybersourcing Your College’s Learning Center” at the League for Innovation in the Community College conference in New Orleans. I would ably serve as articulation liaison with senior institutions, just as I created a TLC Advisory Committee of campus and community stakeholders (including high school counselors) to help us better meet the

needs of our students. And I daily worked with my staffers to help us to reach the missions, visions, and goals of our areas by encouraging cooperation, trust and teamwork. I created a handbook of policies and procedures to help our areas function more efficiently and sponsored an annual celebration recognizing exemplary staff with a "Distinguished Tutor Award." This was all accomplished in five-and-a-half years – six months shy of the minimum. And I certainly met the "Preferred Qualifications" of the position – "Doctorate Degree and experience in a community/technical college is preferred." To say that I am dumbfounded by Mr. Giles assessment of why I was not included in the recruiting pool for this position (and assumedly the Director of Tyger River Campus position as well, given the same minimum qualifications) is an understatement.

As you know, Dr. Staat, when you received my e-mail on the morning of Tuesday, Sept. 17th, you contacted President Giles, and he relayed the same information to you that he stated in his e-mail to me (See above.) And after speaking with Mr. Giles, you sent me the following e-mail Tuesday afternoon:

Dr. Counts, I contacted Mr. Giles and found he had already sent you an explanation as to why you were not considered for the position. I believe he took the right action with your application.

Dr. Staat and Mr. Odom, as I stated above, Mr. Giles was not quite clear in relaying what I had done for the College and for whom, nor does he provide a concrete justification for why the five-and-a-half years of progressively-responsible related experience that I have outlined above did not warrant me an interview – especially given that I also explicitly met the preferred qualifications for the position.

As a point of comparison, another college in the system, Tri-County Technical College in Pendleton, also currently has an Arts and Sciences Dean position available. The following are the general position description, as well as the minimum and preferred qualifications for this position:

#### **General Description of Position**

The Dean has direct responsibility for the programs of the Arts and Sciences Division. Primary leadership responsibilities include planning, developing, implementing and evaluating Arts and Sciences programs and collaboratively developing activities that lead to improved student learning. Primary management responsibilities focus on promoting student success through effective and proficient utilization of personnel, financial and material resources and the division's programs and activities. The Dean provides direct supervision of the division's department heads.

#### **Minimum Qualifications**

An earned doctorate, plus a master's degree in an arts and sciences discipline; or an earned doctorate in an arts and sciences discipline; or a terminal degree in an arts and sciences discipline that does not award the doctorate, and at least eighteen graduate semester hours in an arts and sciences discipline. College administrative and teaching experience.

## Preferred Qualifications

At least three years of experience as an academic department head in higher education. At least five years of college teaching experience. Experience developing and implementing outcomes-based curricula and instituting activities that improve student learning and success. Demonstrated leadership and management skills. (<https://jobs.tctc.edu/postings>)

While I understand that it is each individual College's right to an extent to create job descriptions for positions within certain parameters, according to "Section D: Interview Process" of Procedure 8-7-100.1, the SBTCE establishes the minimum requirements for positions and the "System President/College President may make an exception to the SBTCE Minimum Requirements provided that the minimum requirements are not less than that of the state." But clearly, the state's minimum requirements for the position of Dean of Arts and Sciences within any of the 16 technical and community colleges must be, "College administrative and teaching experience," as outlined above in the Tri-County Technical College position description. My point, of course, is that there is considerable variation among the technical colleges when it comes to the minimum requirements for any position *and* the college presidents have considerable discretion in meeting the dictates of the SBTCE. Again, one such dictate outlined in "Section E: Selection and Recommendation for Hire" of Procedure 8-7-100.1 (last revised May 12, 2011) details the SBTCE's firm declaration of its intent to "always be cognizant of commitments made in our Affirmative Action Plan...In keeping with commitments in our Affirmative Action Plan, the gender and race statistical balance of the College/System Office and/or the particular department or section in which a vacancy is to be filled should be a primary consideration in the selection process."

Dr. Staat and Mr. Odom, I committed myself fully to SCC during my former tenure -- advancing from an instructor to an instructor who developed the first fully-online course for my department and who was selected to present at the Virginia Master Teachers Seminar and represent the College in the Higher Education Leadership Certificate Program to the director of three academic support service areas of the College. I continually sought opportunities to do more for the College and to be more to the College, applying to and successfully completing the Higher Education Leadership Certificate Program through USC. When I completed this program, former SCC President Dr. Dan Terhune advised me to get the doctorate degree if I wanted to advance further with the College. I would have remained with the College while I pursued the terminal degree were it not for the fact that my mother was in Stage 4 of esophageal cancer and I was also raising two young girls. In my meeting with Mr. Giles, he said something that I was frankly amazed to hear. Mr. Giles said that at the time that I left SCC, "no plans had been put in place to hold your position." Of course, I (and many others) was aware that the College had hired back several individuals who had left. However, not once did I ever consider this as an option for me. And it was made quite clear that "hold[ing]...position[s]" was apparently an unspoken option reserved for certain individuals when I almost immediately re-applied for my position after realizing that I may have acted too hastily by leaving. When I re-applied, I was not even given an interview. It seemed obvious to me that I would be the most qualified person to re-gain the position I had just relinquished. I was especially shocked that I was not given due consideration after having received glowing praise from Dr. Terhune and then-VP for Academic

Affairs Sherry Vaughn who said I did an “excellent job” as director and “positioned the TLC exactly where we needed it to be.” Still, I was not considered. Meanwhile, there are at least three employees currently with SCC who also left the College, only to be hired back later. In addition, two of the three were also promoted after returning to the College.

Nancy Garmroth, current Director of Financial Aid, left the College and was hired back. She was then promoted to Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid. She has since been demoted to her former Director of Financial Aid position, but her salary continues to escalate from the pay increase she had received as of her earlier promotion (\$80,097 as of 7/1/13 – she is currently the 12<sup>th</sup> highest salary earner at the College). Leslie Cagle (formerly Leslie Kerr) left the College, ostensibly to pursue additional education. She was hired back by the College and returned to the same position she had formerly held – Student Event/Campus Life Coordinator. She received the very opportunity I sought – that of being allowed to return to the same position that I too had once held. Paul Turner, formerly an IRT/Mechatronics Instructor, left the College and was hired back. He is now Program Director of IRT/Mechatronics. Garmroth, Cagle, and Turner are White.

Separately, there are a number of current faculty and staff who have been hired into and/or promoted into positions for which their credentials and/or qualifications at the time of their appointments are questionable at best. Kim Best was hired by the College to serve as an Instructor in Health and Human Services even though she held only a diploma in Dental Assisting at the time. She was then promptly promoted to serve as Department Chair of four different programs: Expanded Duty Dental Assisting/Medical Assisting/Health Unit Coordinating/Surgical Technology. A review of Human Resources records will clearly show that Ms. Best was promoted years before she earned a bachelor’s degree in health management. Robin Bridges is a Media Resources Specialist in Information Technologies, but she holds no degree. Cynthia Champion and Susan Chastain are Accounting Technician and Human Resource Specialist respectively. Neither of these individuals holds a diploma, certificate, or a degree. Jay Coffey was promoted to Department Chair of Manufacturing Technologies; he holds two associate’s degrees. Patrick Cradit, Server Manager in Information Technologies, holds a single certification but no degree. Mark Cramer, Department Chair of Industrial Technologies, holds an associate’s degree. Shannon Daugherty (\$50,075), Network Manager in Information Technologies, holds an associate’s degree. P. Michael Forrester (\$90,808), Executive Assistant to the President, former Interim Director of Corporate and Community Education, and current Director of Economic Development, holds a bachelor’s degree in Liberal Arts. Pete Gallen (\$98,510), Director of Information Technologies, holds a bachelor’s degree. At the time that he was appointed Dean of Technologies, Jeff Hunt (\$81,889) held only a bachelor’s degree. Tina Reid (\$72,414), Manager of Computer Services, holds a bachelor’s degree. Sherri Mims and Tina Upton, Program Assistants in Corporate and Community Education, hold an associate’s degree and no degree, respectively. Francina Pack, a Math instructor in university transfer associate’s degree programs, holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English. And Rita Weeks, Academic Director and English Instructor in university transfer associate’s degree programs, holds a master’s degree in library and information studies. *Not a single one of these individuals who hold leadership positions as Department Chairs, Program Assistants, Directors, and Area Managers is African American.*

The discrepancies become even clearer when a closer look is taken at the Administrative Specialists and Administrative Assistants pools at SCC. Administrative Specialists make up a large number of the staff positions at SCC. Both pools are predominantly made up of women. Administrative Assistants are at a higher pay grade than Administrative Specialists, and a

disproportionate number of African American women are employed by SCC as Administrative Specialists even though more than a few of them possess more credentials than White women who hold the higher rank of Administrative Assistant or Administrative Coordinator. Of the staff members that I know by name (and there are no more than 15 Administrative Specialists on the most current employee directory whose names I do not recognize – I am in process of identifying.), only two African American women, Portia Gaffney and Shirley Cohen, do not hold degrees. However, Cohen is a Certified Professional Secretary. Janie Lindsey holds a diploma. And there is only a single African American woman Administrative Assistant – Marilyn Smith – who holds no degree. On the other hand, Administrative Specialists Anne Cooksey and Marilyn Hind – who are both White -- do not hold diplomas, certificates, or degrees. Meanwhile, Debbie Henderson, Leanne Burkhead, and Sheri Johnson, who are also White, are all higher paid Administrative Assistants, and none of these women holds diplomas, certificates, or degrees. Both Vickie Gray and Lynn Camp are also classified as Administrative Assistants, even though they hold only associate's degrees. At the same time, Gail Reeves and Jacqueline Byars (African American women) are both still classified as Administrative Specialists, even though both returned to school and earned their bachelor's degrees in Business Administration and Business Management, respectively. Clara Shell-Little, an African American woman, also remains an Administrative Specialist, even though she too holds a bachelor's degree. And while Robin Cochran (a White woman) serves as an Administrative Coordinator in the President's Office with only an associate's degree, Cassandra Meadows (a Black woman) is an Administrative Coordinator with a bachelor's degree. As an exception to the administrative specialists/assistants/coordinators pools, Savtri Parham was promoted to Printing Manager from Printing Specialist only after she had earned her bachelor's degree, not because she had been with the college for nearly two decades as a lesser-paid Printing Specialist – which she had been.

Of course, many of these faculty and staff members were hired when the College was not headed by President Giles; however, Mr. Giles personally told me he has been with the College for 44 years. Clearly he knows the College's history as it relates to hiring of faculty, staff, and administrators. As Executive VP of Business Affairs and Finance, he was known as being a central figure in all aspects of the running of the College.

During the same time period (since I left the College in 2008), a number of African American faculty and staff have left the College including Sheila Snoddy, Program Manager for Corporate and Community Education (departed in 2007); Frieda Byrd and Cindy Alexander, both long-time Health and Human Services faculty; and Phyllis Rogers and Geraldine Brantley, both long-time Student Services/Affairs staff members. Shunta Hailey, formerly assistant director of online learning resources, left the College when she was overlooked for promotion to director when her boss, Mark Roseveare (\$74,655) was promoted to Dean of Learning Resources upon completion of the Higher Education Leadership Certificate Program (Mark and I completed the program together.) So even as former President Dr. Terhune told *me* that I needed to earn the doctorate degree for further advancement within the College, Mark Roseveare – a White man – was promoted to Dean without the necessity of the terminal degree. Frederick Cooper, an African American man who had served as Academic Director of Math, left the College (and the state) this spring in search of advancement opportunities after having just earned the PhD in Educational Leadership from Clemson University in December 2012. His research focused specifically on SCC, and his dissertation entitled “A Case Study in Collaborative Efforts at Spartanburg Community College,” examined the College's efforts to establish articulation agreements with secondary institutions in its service areas. Given the amount of time and effort

that he dedicated to studying and writing about SCC, I can only speculate that Dr. Cooper had hoped to put his newly-acquired knowledge and educational leadership skills to use in service to the College. Instead, Dr. Cooper is now Associate Dean for the Math, Science, and Engineering divisions of a community college in Illinois. At the same time that other long-serving African American employees have been allowed to retire permanently from the College, other TERI-ed faculty and staff members have briefly retired only to be hired back to their former leadership posts. This includes former Human Resources Director Regina Eaker (a White woman who is now permanently retired), and far more recently, Marcia Schenck, a White woman who was just re-hired to her position as Department Chair of Computer and Engineering Technologies.

The exodus of the above African American faculty and staff speaks glaringly to the lack of sufficient numbers of African American men and women who remain in faculty/staff positions with SCC. It says nothing about the absolute dearth of African Americans who hold leadership positions in numbers that are commensurate to the racial diversity of the College's student population. An African American faculty member at SCC recently wrote a letter to Mr. Giles and pointedly detailed concerns about the lack of African Americans who are being hired and/or promoted into leadership positions both from outside and within the College. **Since I shared this updated letter with Ms. Kandy Peacock in October 2013, this African American faculty member has also resigned from the College. She stated to me that the reason she left the College was because she was told in no uncertain terms by Dr. Keith Pomakoy, who was promoted from Dean of Arts and Sciences to Associate Vice President of Instruction after only a year with the College, that if she wanted to be promoted, then she would “need to leave the College.” And that is exactly what she did. After having left SCC, this individual was promoted to an Associate Vice President of Curriculum and Instruction position at a local, small, Christian-affiliated college. That takes the number of Black faculty at SCC down from 10 individuals to nine. And the division this Black faculty member left (Business and Technologies) is now made up 100% of full-time White faculty. Of course, it is not the only department at SCC devoid of African Americans. With the exception of one African American nursing instructor, there are no Black faculty members in the allied and health sciences programs – one of the fastest growing divisions in the technical college system as a whole.** As in my own research, this faculty member cited research that shows a correlation between the academic success/matriculation of African American students and the presence of African American faculty, staff, and leaders on college campuses. In Spring 2011, thirty-three (33) percent of students enrolled at SCC were African American. But in 2010, only 40 out of 315 (or 13%) of faculty members were African American, according to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE). That falls two percentage points below the average for the System as a whole (744 out of 5,129 or 15%).

There is a clear shortage of African American faculty throughout the system. However, this trend worsens considerably at the senior and executive levels of the System's colleges, as illustrated in the research I conducted as part of my dissertation work. Of the 16 current college presidents, one is an African American woman who was brought out of retirement to serve as president again (of Denmark Technical College -- the system's only *designated* historically Black institution). In 2011, an African American man was named president of Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College (12.5%). The presidents of Aiken Technical College, Trident Technical College, and Williamsburg Technical College are White women. And the interim president of the Technical College of the Lowcountry is a White woman. Therefore, 25% of the colleges in the system are presently being led by White women. A resounding 62% (10 of 16) of

the colleges are headed by White men. This, even as women made up an overwhelming percentage of students in these colleges (62%) and minority students accounted for 40% of the students in the system during Fall 2012, according to the South Carolina Technical College System website ([www.sctechsystem.com](http://www.sctechsystem.com)). The women presidents and the lone African American male president all hold doctoral degrees; however, two of the White male presidents do not. SCC now has four branch campuses apart from the Central Campus – the Cherokee County Campus, the Tyger River Campus, the Evans Center Downtown Campus, and the Union County Advanced Technology Center. Cherokee's director is a White man. While a new director is being sought for the Tyger River Campus, the former director was a White woman. And the Evans Center Downtown Campus and the Union County center are both led by White women. Not a single one of the directors of these branch campuses is African American. Also, none of the campus directors/site coordinators holds a terminal degree, a preferred qualification of the new Tyger River Campus director.

The discrepancies in recruiting, hiring, promoting – and by extension, salaries – exist from the lower rungs of staff positions, such as the administrative specialists/assistants pools, and continue right up to the very top of the organization. The President's Cabinet at SCC has recently undergone re-organization. The Cabinet now consists of the President; Senior VP of Academic Affairs; VP of Student Affairs; VP of Business Affairs; VP of Planning and Information Resources; two newly-created Associate VP positions: Associate VP for Enrollment Management and Retention, and the Associate VP of Instruction; Director of Economic Development/Interim Director of Corporate and Community Education; and the Executive Director of Advancement and SCC Foundation. Of these nine positions, only a single one is held by an African American. And again, none of the four branch campus directors/site coordinators is African American. President Giles (\$154,365), a White man, holds a master's degree. The Senior VP of Academic Affairs is Cheryl Cox (\$126,919), a White woman who holds a doctorate and came to the College in 2011 from the System Office. Ron Jackson (\$110,490), a Black man, holds a master's degree and was hired in 2006 as VP of Student Affairs after having held the same post at the Technical College of the Lowcountry. The VP of Business Affairs position is held by Ray Switzer (\$110,490), a White man with a newly-earned master's degree, who was formerly supervisor of campus maintenance and just promoted to the VP post this year. The VP of Planning and Information Resources is Pat Abell (\$110,490), a White woman who holds a doctorate and came to the College seven years ago. Lynn Dale (\$87,767), a White woman who was appointed Executive Director of the Tyger River Campus at its inception in 2006, was just put into the newly-created position of Associate VP for Enrollment Management and Retention. Mrs. Dale holds a master's degree; her current salary does not reflect the pay increase she will receive in her new position. This Cabinet-level position was never advertised. Keith Pomakoy (\$77,000), a White man who holds a doctorate degree, was just promoted to Associate VP of Instruction this year after serving as Dean of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Pomakoy was hired to serve as Dean of Arts and Sciences from outside the College and was with the College for one year before being promoted to a VP position. And the Associate VP of Instruction position, which was upgraded from the former Dean of Instruction position, also was not advertised. And Dr. Pomakoy's current salary also does not reflect the pay increase he will receive in his new position. Michael Forrester (\$90,808), a White man with a bachelor's degree in liberal arts, once served as Interim Director of Corporate and Community Education. This was after Dr. David Just, a White man who had been VP of Corporate and Community Education, left the College. Mr. Forrester now serves both as Executive Assistant to the President and also Director of

✱

**Department Chair- English/Languages**

York Technical College

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 05/02/2013 07:59 PM Eastern  
History  
Application Received

**Vice President of Student Services #1341**

Trident Technical College

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 03/25/2013 05:09 PM Eastern  
History  
Application Received

**Director of Academic Affairs & Licensing**

Commission on Higher Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 03/13/2013 08:42 PM Eastern  
History  
Application Received

**Dean of The Learning Center #1339**

Trident Technical College

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 03/13/2013 11:02 AM Eastern  
History  
Application Received

✱ Positions for which I was interviewed (4)

Applied on 09/23/2013 09:15 PM Eastern

History

Application Received

**Director of Tyger River Campus**

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 08/22/2013 08:43 PM Eastern

History

Application Received

Spartanburg Community College

**Dean of Arts and Sciences**

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 08/19/2013 08:55 PM Eastern

History

Application Received

Spartanburg Community College

**Education Associate II - 60023931**

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 05/08/2013 11:02 AM Eastern

History

Application Received

Department of Education

**Education Associate (60023743)**

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 05/08/2013 11:00 AM Eastern

History

Application Received

Department of Education

**Curriculum Coordinator II**

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 05/08/2013 10:56 AM Eastern

History

Application Received

South Carolina Technical College System

✧

**Department Head of English and Journalism #1351**

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 05/03/2013 02:23 PM Eastern

History

Application Received

Trident Technical College

**English Instructor**

Midlands Technical College

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 12/31/2013 08:11 PM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Program Manager I**

Commission on Higher Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 12/07/2013 04:29 PM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Certified Teacher (English) - 60024556**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 12/07/2013 04:12 PM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Education Associate - 60023835, 60024029, 60024033**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 10/23/2013 07:26 AM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Education Associate II - 60024570**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 10/18/2013 08:39 AM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

\*

**English Instructor #1403**

Trident Technical College

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 10/13/2013 06:44 PM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Dean of Off-Campus Instruction**

Piedmont Technical College

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 07/08/2014 03:40 PM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Education Associate III - 60024566**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 05/20/2014 08:48 AM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Education Associate - 60024264**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 04/29/2014 08:19 AM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Education Associate - 60024770**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 03/04/2014 11:54 AM Eastern  
[History](#)

**Education Associate - 60024029**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 03/04/2014 11:48 AM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Program Manager II-60028555**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 02/08/2014 08:27 AM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Program Manager II - 60024144**

Department of Education

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 01/16/2014 09:23 AM Eastern  
[History](#)  
Application Received

**Student Success Center Director**

*Orangeburg- Calhoun Technical College*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 07/06/2015 03:03 PM Eastern

History

Application Received

**Dean of Arts and Science**

*Technical College of the Lowcountry*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 01/04/2015 02:22 PM Eastern

History

Application Received

**Education Associate - 60025051**

*Department of Education*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 08/28/2014 05:06 PM Eastern

History

Application Received

**Education Associate - 60028346**

*Department of Education*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 08/09/2014 09:49 AM Eastern

History

Application Received

**Education Associate - 60025257**

*Department of Education*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 08/09/2014 09:45 AM Eastern

History

Application Received

\* **English Instructor**

*Spartanburg Community College*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina  
Applied on 07/21/2014 06:01 PM Eastern

History

Application Received

**Education Associate III - 60024568**

*Department of Education*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina



Shelia Counts

[Help](#)

## Applications

- [Submitted](#)
- [Incomplete](#)

### Education Associate - 60025051 *Department of Education*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 12/12/2015 03:02 PM Eastern

[History](#)

Application Received

### Dean of Academic Support Services *Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 11/12/2015 09:37 AM Eastern

[History](#)

Application Received

### Education Associate - (Instructional Coach) - 60024450 *Department of Education*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 07/16/2015 08:41 PM Eastern

[History](#)

Application Received

### Student Services Program Manager (Academic Success Assistance Program) *Technical*

State of South Carolina, South Carolina

Applied on 07/10/2015 12:32 PM Eastern

[History](#)

Application Received

*College of the Lowcountry*

**Academic Support Services Overview**  
*SCC Area Commissioners Meeting**March 12, 2007*  
*Spartanburg, SC*

For the first time, these three academic support service areas' missions, services (including new online learning center), student use statistics, etc. were shared with the commissioners in this forum.

**Managing Your Success**  
*Summer Youth Leadership Institute, Piedmont Community Actions**June 14, 2007*  
*Una, SC*

As a representative of the SCC Speakers Bureau, I challenged this group of 14-17-year olds to take responsibility for themselves and their educational endeavors. I explained that each of us has a special purpose for our lives, and we have been entrusted with nurturing and growing our special gifts/talents. The task is to discover our talent and then work tirelessly to develop it to our fullest potential.

**The Secret to Being an A Student**  
*Cornerstone Baptist Church**July 25, 2007*  
*Spartanburg, SC*

I made this presentation to a group of 14 young people aged 10-14 as part of their Kingdom Kids Summer Youth Camp at Cornerstone Baptist Church. The focus of the presentation centered around recognizing our life's purpose, and then incorporating successful study skills, time management skills, and tutorial assistance to help us live our lives fully and richly.

**The Writer's World – Being a College English Instructor**  
*Spartanburg County Public Library (Headquarters)**March 22, 2008*  
*Spartanburg, SC*

This presentation was made to a group of approximately 20 young girls aged 11-14 who are members of the Dr. Betty Shabazz Delta Academy, a year-long mentoring program sponsored by the Spartanburg Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., in an effort to encourage these young ladies to pursue educational careers based on their talents and interests first rather than on the potential monetary rewards.

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS***South Carolina Women in Higher Education (SCWHE)**South Carolina Association of Developmental Education (former member)**NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (former member)**American Association for Women in Community Colleges (former member)**South Carolina Technical Education Association (former member)**Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society*

*Spartanburg County Elections Commission*      *City of Spartanburg “Dickens of a Christmas*  
*Piedmont Community Actions*                      *American Institute for Cancer Research*  
*Converse College Alumnae Mentoring Program*      *The Adult Learning Center*  
*Dorman Freshman Campus PTSO Board Member, 2011-2012*  
*NASPA – SC Chapter, Mentoring Program*

## **PRESENTATIONS**

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**The Virtual Tutor: Cybersourcing Your College’s Learning Center**      *March 5, 2007*  
*League for Innovations in the Community College*      *New Orleans, LA*

At this national conference, I gave a roundtable presentation of SCC’s in-house online tutorial services. Staffed by part-time tutors and lab technicians already serving the Tutorial Learning Center and Open Computer Lab, this program serves as an extension of the support services we provide to students who take classes on campus. What’s the difference? Students don’t have to leave home for help!

**Teaching the Article Summary Essay Effectively**      *July 2004*  
*Virginia Master Teacher Seminar*  
*Hampden-Sydney College*      *Hampden-Sydney, VA*

As a cohort of professional two-year college educators from across the Southeast, each of us was asked to share a teaching technique or method we have “mastered” with our fellow educators. Since summarizing others’ writing often poses special challenges for students, I offered my perspective on how to make this necessary evil less evil.

**Teaching Freshman Composition: A Nine-Week Intensive Writing Course**      *June 2000*  
*USC Upstate (formerly USC – Spartanburg)*

As part of the Spartanburg Writing Project for fellow public school educators, I demonstrated one way to develop a writing curriculum based on four rhetorical approaches – description, narration, cause/effect, and persuasion – for high school freshmen with a range of skill levels.

**The Charge of Future Administrators: Thinking Beyond Yourself**      *December 2006*  
*(Speech for 2006 Higher Educational Leadership Graduating Cohort)*

*University of South Carolina*      *Columbia, SC*

**Tech Talk: Academic Support Services**      *December 14, 2006*  
*Tech Talk Cable Program (Local Channel 99)*      *Spartanburg, SC*

In an effort to both showcase and market the academic support services provided by SCC, two student “ambassadors” and I appeared on an edition of the college’s cable program that airs three times a week for a month on local cable channel 99. This thirty-minute segment allowed us to highlight some of the quality support services we offer our students free of charge – services that are designed to improve student success, retention, and program completion.

Classroom management is critically necessary to maintain a positive learning environment for all students. Classroom management includes creating inviting learning spaces for students by establishing an environment that is built on teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher and student-to-student respect. I am particularly proud of the opportunities I took to expose students to various career paths by inviting speakers into the classroom. I also enjoyed taking upper level students on field trips to area coffeehouses for poetry open mic nights, and to learn more about the college experience by visiting Greenville Technical College and Clemson University.

**English Teacher**  
*Dorman High School*

January 2010 – May 2010  
*Roebuck, South Carolina*

This semester, I taught CP English 12 (British Literature) to a group of well-prepared graduating seniors. This course provides an overview of British history, culture, as well as literature, from the Anglo-Saxon period to the modern era. In addition, I taught two sections of CP Composition and Research, an elective course designed to assist students in grades 10-12 with the development of solid writing, grammar, and research skills. As part of this course, I also assisted these students in preparing for the HSAP exam – a requirement for high school graduation.

**English Teacher**  
*JL Mann Academy High School*

October 2012 – January 2013  
*Greenville, South Carolina*

In October, I was contacted by the high school, interviewed, and then hired by the board of trustees to replace an outgoing first-year teacher. I taught two sections of Creative Writing for the first time, two sections of English I CP, and a section of SAT-Prep. A principal challenge of this position was working with recalcitrant 9<sup>th</sup> graders who had not received the necessary structure, discipline, and consistency required so that they would smoothly transition from middle school to the high school environment. I also embraced the necessity of creating rigorous curricula for both Creative Writing and SAT-Prep. Preparations for revamping these two courses were made for Spring 2013. A major success of this semester was learning that four of the six creative writing students chosen to represent Mann at the state level of the National PTA's Reflections 2012 contest were my students, including the first and second-place winners!

## **RESEARCH**

Brewer, C.A., Lindle, J.C., Knoepfel, R.C., & Counts, S.A. (2010). Teacher frustration and political action: The role of policy content in the mobilization of teachers. Paper presented at the International Congress of Qualitative Research, Champagne, IL.

## **PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE**

I enjoy volunteering my time in service to various charities and organizations in the community. Reading, writing, political involvement, and mentoring of youth are passions of mine. I work with organizations whose missions match my passions. Some of the organizations that I have contributed my time and talents to include the following:

*Roebuck Elementary School PTO President (2009-2011)*  
*Scripps-Howard Regional Spelling Bee*

*LE Gable Middle SIC*  
*Spartanburg County Mobile Meals*

As full-time Developmental English faculty, I was responsible for instruction, student academic advisement, classroom management, assessment, curriculum development and realignment according to SACS and CAC-criteria, course revisions and updates, and new course development. I also served on a variety of committees, including the department's advisory committee, the Faculty Board (secretary), the college's course development subcommittee for SACS re-accreditation, and the editorial team that was responsible for revising and editing SACS-related documents for the college. It was during my tenure as a full-time instructor that I used a Title III grant to develop, design, and teach my department's first fully online course, ENG 100 -- Introduction to Composition.

**Adjunct English Instructor**  
*Greenville Technical College*

August 2008 – December 2008  
*Greenville, South Carolina*

As an instructor of both traditional and online courses, I was responsible for facilitating students' understanding of the course material set out as part of the standardized curricula of English 101 and 102 courses. Students learned to write according to four rhetorical approaches, reviewed major grammar skills, and received an introduction to research-based writing and MLA documentation in English 101. In English 102, students applied foundational writing skills from English 101 to their literary analysis of fiction (short stories), poetry, and both classical and modern dramas.

**Adjunct English Professor**  
*Strayer University*

February 2009 - April 2009  
*Greenville, South Carolina*

My goal as an instructor of Writing Fundamentals and English Composition courses for Strayer is principally to help students show development in their writing skills from the start of the term to the end. I stress to my adult learners in the basic writing course that it is not reasonable to expect that they will learn everything that they need to learn to write well in a single course; however, I give my students the guarantee that if they are willing and able to devote the time to their studies that is necessary, they *will* be more proficient at writing at the end of the course than they were at the beginning. My English Composition students build on the basic writing skills they learned in Writing Fundamentals or other writing classes. I teach the most common rhetorical patterns used in college writing, such as exemplification, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, process, and beginning literary analysis. In addition, I review some of the most important grammatical concepts that students need to know for writing mastery, including subject-verb agreement, comma splices, run-on sentences, and fragments.

## **HIGH SCHOOL TEACHING**

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**English Teacher**  
*James F. Byrnes High School*

August 1998- December 2000  
*Duncan, South Carolina*

As a high school English teacher, I taught grades 9-12. I especially enjoyed teaching a new nine-week-long freshman composition course that was created in an effort to improve students' performance on the writing portion of the Exit Exam. I also taught World Literature, American Literature and British Literature to college-prep and tech-prep students on a block schedule.

access. Effective leadership of these areas consisted of pulling together a talented team of mostly part-time employees committed to the common missions, goals, and objectives of each area. In order to facilitate the operation of these areas, a handbook of policies and procedures which covered all practical aspects of the functions of these areas was created for the first time. We also expanded our online tutorial service offerings and implemented the first-ever TLC newsletter, which was shared electronically with campus faculty, staff, and students to keep them abreast of our services, special hours, staffing changes, etc. An advisory committee was also formed so that the TLC could receive valuable input and direction from campus faculty and staff as well as local representatives from an area high school. During my tenure, the testing center was renovated and the open computer lab space was streamlined as well, and our services were extended to the Cherokee County Campus and Tyger River Campus. Also during this time, these areas charted a record number of student visits in a single semester. With a Fall 2006 student enrollment of 4,353 students, our areas netted 22,148 student visits. This was a 16% increase over the previous fall semester and the most student visits ever!

### **COLLEGE TEACHING**

#### **Adjunct Instructor of English**

*University of South Carolina Upstate*

August 2014-Present

*Spartanburg, South Carolina*

In the fall semester, I was hired to teach three sections of English 101 and one section of English 102 to university freshmen. Students in English 101 receive instruction in effective writing in a variety of genres using the stages of the writing process. Emphasis is placed on academic writing and discourse, critical reading and thinking, and research skills. Students in English 102 build on the writing skills learned in English 101, and according to the syllabus, they focus on "...reading and analyzing challenging texts from different genres, synthesizing academic sources in writing, and writing for specific audiences." In spring semester 2015, I taught four sections of English 102, and just slightly half of the students I taught chose to follow me from English 101! This was definitely a confidence booster for me, given that I am just returning to the classroom after a protracted period of unemployment. I also applied for and was selected to participate in a University wide active learning initiative as an inaugural Faculty Fellow. The University received a five-year, \$2.2 million Title III grant for the purpose of increasing student engagement, retention, and success through the incorporation of active learning strategies delivered through innovative integration of technology throughout the learning process. As a Faculty Fellow, I re-designed a course that I was also teaching at the time – English 102 – so that the strategies I used to teach this course in a technology-rich environment encouraged more actively involved and engaged students. I am very proud to say that during this first year with Upstate, I was nominated for recognition for the Bill Drake Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Member of the Year award as well as the 2014-2015 USC Upstate Excellence in Teaching & Advising Award! Unfortunately, my nomination could not move forward because I had only been with the University for one year. However, the chair of my department (Languages, Literature, and Composition) Dr. Peter Caster, counts these nominations as a tremendous honor for someone who has been with the University such a short time, and so do I! ☺

#### **English Instructor**

*Spartanburg Community College*

August 2002 - May 2008

*Spartanburg, South Carolina*

**CURRICULUM VITA**

**Shelia Antley Counts, Ph.D.**

Post Office Box 170922  
Spartanburg, SC 29301

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**Contact Information**

(864) 303-4697  
scounts@uscupstate.edu  
counts4@charter.net

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**ACADEMIC BACKGROUND**

**Clemson University**

*Clemson, South Carolina*

*Degree* **Ph.D.**, August 2012  
*Specializations* Educational Leadership (Higher Education)  
*Dissertation* Invisible woman? Narratives of Black women leaders in  
Southeastern two-year colleges  
*Committee Members* Russell A. Marion II (Chair), Curtis Brewer, James W.  
Satterfield Jr., Matteel D. Jones

**The University of South Carolina**

*Columbia, South Carolina*

*Degree* Certificate of Graduate Study, December 2006  
*Specialization* Higher Education Leadership and Administration

**Converse College**

*Spartanburg, South Carolina*

*Degree* **M.Ed.**, August, 1998  
*Specializations* Secondary Education, English  
*Certification* South Carolina HQ Professional Teaching Certificate in  
Secondary Education/English -- Advanced Placement English  
Language and Literature Certification-- No. 192169 --  
Expiration: June 30, 2018

**Clemson University**

*Clemson, South Carolina*

*Degree* **B.A.**, May, 1991  
*Specializations* English, Technical/Business Writing

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**LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Director – The Learning Center (TLC)**  
*Spartanburg Community College*

August 2005 - December 2007  
*Spartanburg, South Carolina*

As director of what is now *The Learning Center*, I managed the delivery of academic support services in three areas: tutoring, make-up testing, and supplemental computer instruction and

Dr. Shelia A. Counts

January 10, 2014

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- **Crite** - Ph.D. in Higher Education – Adult Learning; 9 months as Campus Director at Webster University; 8 years as Administrator at Vocational Rehabilitation; 9 years as a Supervisor at S.C. Dept. of Corrections
- **Sebastien** – Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration; 3 years as Director of Academic Programs with the Texas High Education Coordinating Board; 2 years as Asst. Commissioner of Education with U.S. Virgin Island schools; 7 years as Associate Provost at St. Petersburg College; 2 years as Executive Assistant to the President at Chicago State University; 5 years as Executive Assistant to the VP, Academic Affairs at Virgin Island University

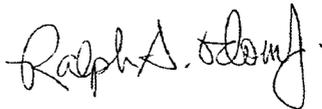
It was determined that the final candidates for the position had either “directly related experience” as a Campus Director/ Director of Academic programs or as a chief operational officer.

In summary, your application met the minimum qualifications for both positions and was referred among the qualified candidates to the hiring authorities. Additionally, in both cases, the applicant pools reflected a diverse population of candidates. However, please be advised that there is no requirement to interview all those who qualify.

In response to your request to review the materials relating to the final pool of applicants for the positions referenced above, please contact the Director of Human Resources at the College.

Thank you again for your letter.

Best Regards,



Nick Odom, Jr.

Chairman, State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education

cc: Board Members  
Ms. Kandy Peacock

The College received 27 applications; 13 were deemed qualified, having met the minimum requirements, and 14 were deemed non-qualified. The Human Resource Department referred all thirteen, including your application, to the hiring authorities for further consideration. The hiring authorities selected five applicants from among the 13 for interview.

From that group, three applicants were selected as finalist as listed below:

- **Stokely** – PhD. in Curriculum and Instruction with 28 years as a Math Department Chair
- **Harvey** – Master’s in Education, Secondary Education, Mathematics and 12 years of experience as a Transitional Department Chair
- **Brandon** – PhD. in English with 8 years of experience as an English Department Chair

While a Doctorate degree and experience in a community/technical college was listed as the “preferred qualification” each candidate interviewed met the minimum of a Master’s degree in a related field and six (6) years of progressively responsible related work experience. It was determined by the hiring authorities that each candidate interviewed had “directly related experience”. Each of the final candidates considered were serving as Department Chairs in institutions of higher learning at the time of interview.

The Director of the Tyger River Campus position was posted from August 7, 2013, thru August 23, 2013. The required qualification was a Master’s degree in a related discipline plus six (6) years of progressively responsible work experience. The College received 55 applications; 15 were deemed qualified, having met the minimum qualifications; and 40 were deemed non-qualified. The Human Resource Department referred all 15, including your application, to the hiring authorities for further consideration. The hiring authorities selected seven applicants from among the 15 for interview. From that group, four applicants were selected as finalist as listed below:

- **Peeler** – Bachelor’s in Business Management; 14 years as Manager of Peeler Limited Partnership; 25 years as VP of Administration at Peeler Jersey Farms
- **Cooper** – Master’s in Secondary Education-Social Sciences; 2 years, 7 months as Campus Administrator at Virginia College; 1 years as Program Director of General Education at Brown Mackie College; 4 years as Vice-President of two banks; 13 years as High School Teacher & Coach



January 10, 2014

**VIA U.S. MAIL**

Dr. Shelia A. Counts  
145 Jameson Drive  
Roebuck, South Carolina 29376

Dear Dr. Counts:

This is in response to your letter of October 14, 2013, addressed to Dr. Darrel Staat, me, as Chairman, and the State Board Members. The purpose of your letter was to "lodge a formal complaint against Spartanburg Community College (SCC) for repeatedly disregarding local, state and federal laws regarding the hiring, promotion and retention of qualified African American applicants and employees". With this complaint, you provided numerous examples of what you "believe to be discriminatory actions on the part of Spartanburg Community College with regards to recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention of African American employees." Further, you raised concern and questions regarding your recent personal experience associated with the application of two positions recently advertised at SCC; the Dean of Arts and Sciences position and the Director of the Tyger River Campus. Please know that the State Board takes seriously any allegations of non-compliance with local, state and federal law as well as allegations of discriminatory employment practices among any of our sixteen colleges. As such, your letter was forwarded to Ms. Kandy Peacock, Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer, for review.

After thorough review of your allegations and concerns as well as consultation with legal counsel, this letter will only address your personal concerns related to your experiences with positions recently advertised with Spartanburg Community College. We thank you for the professional manner in which your letter was written. The State Board and its representatives will take due diligence in reviewing the allegations of non-compliance and perceived discriminatory actions on the part of Spartanburg Community College and take whatever measures it deems appropriate.

In the analysis conducted by the Human Resource Services Division of the recent positions for which you applied, the following was determined. The Dean of Arts and Sciences vacancy was posted from August 5, 2013, thru August 19, 2013. The requirements were a Master's degree in a related discipline, plus six (6) years of progressively responsible related work experience.

Mr. W.M. Brantley Harvey, Jr.  
Mr. Robert M. Hitt, III  
Mr. Montez C. Martin, Jr.  
Mr. Bettis C. Rainsford  
Dr. Mick Zais

education, and in many instances, their only option. There remains much to be done to improve the success rates of all the students who attend our colleges.

Even as I acknowledge that there are serious challenges to the System which need to be addressed at a minimum by those who govern the System, I continue to have hope for the future of the System. And I remain optimistic about the opportunity to serve the System as a forward-thinking leader who is willing to tackle some of the challenges like the ones I unearthed in my personal research and in the work that is currently underway at research universities like Clemson and USC. I remain hopeful because I believe that I am exceedingly qualified to serve as a leader within this very System, as I have demonstrated my commitment to its improvement by highlighting some of its most egregious shortfalls. And even though I did not attend a technical college, I have two sisters who went to Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College in the early 1970s. They were able to go from working in textile mills to securing good-paying clerical positions because of their associate's degrees.

So I know first-hand the economic value of a technical college education. As the youngest of 12 children and a first-generation college student, I was charged with doing more and becoming more because so many others (including many I didn't know) did things to make it possible for me to become more. My father worked as a janitor in then Whites-only Orangeburg Country Club when I was small. Born in 1924, he only went to the 3rd grade and was functionally illiterate all his life. My mother worked as a maid and caretaker in the homes of some of the wealthiest White families in Orangeburg. Born in 1929, she only had a 7<sup>th</sup> grade education but uncommonly astute business acumen. Both my parents were sharecroppers, and my mother worked in the fields well into her 70s. My parents and my older brothers and sisters all instilled in me the belief that I could grow up materially poor in rural South Carolina, work in the fields to have money for school clothes, and *still* one day earn the PhD from a university like Clemson that had remained off limits to African American students until 1963, when Harvey Gantt opened the door for those of us who were to come along many years later. Because of my parents' unwavering support and belief in me, I did it. And even though my parents did not live to see me reach this milestone, their struggles and hardships were the impetus for my strivings. So I've always known and believed in the value of an education as an equalizer and leveler of the playing field. Frankly, this should be the fervent belief of all who work within the South Carolina Technical College System.

Dr. Staat and Mr. Odom, I look forward to meeting with the SBTCE and with you, hopefully, before the end of your tenure.

Sincerely,

*Shelia A. Counts*

Shelia Antley Counts, PhD

(864) 303-4697

Cc: Dr. Gwendolyn A. Bright  
Mr. Bruce Herbert Ellis  
Mr. Dan P. Gray

And given your individual response to my concerns on September 17 as System President, Dr. Staat, I believe I may have no other recourse than to seek assistance from these and other avenues.

When I was still in the System, on more than one occasion and in several different venues, the question would be posed: Why aren't there more African Americans in faculty and leadership positions throughout the South Carolina Technical College, especially given that so many African American students start their pursuit of higher education within this very system? These questions were posed in informal and more formal discussions among people representing a variety of racial and ethnic groups. Invariably, in conversations that included White men and women, the excuse, "There just don't seem to be any qualified minorities out there who want to work at the College" was recited. Some even went so far as to suggest that working at a technical college would be "beneath" some qualified minorities, particularly African Americans, who supposedly now have so many other options for employment. None of these arguments has ever proven to have merit. I and so many other qualified African Americans present a clear counter narrative to these oft-quoted but unfounded claims. Still, because I was so intrigued by what appeared to be an enigma, I decided that the sole focus of my doctoral studies and my dissertation research would be this very question – more narrowly focused. I determined before I even started my studies that I would devote the four years it took to complete Clemson's program to learning the history of Black women as leaders within higher education more broadly (going all the way back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and the community college system in South Carolina specifically. The experiences of the courageous women who served as the focus of my research were illuminating.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, I am bringing this complaint to the Board because I know that it is the right thing to do. It may not be the smart thing to do, but I do know that it is wrong to look the other way when something is happening (and has been happening for a long time) that is simply not right. One goal I still have is to be given an opportunity to return to work in a leadership capacity within the technical college system, because I have devoted so much effort to one college in particular and contributed important scholarship to educational leadership about the system as a whole. I believe in the value of the technical college system to the young and older men and women we serve, a disproportionate number of whom are African American. The research clearly shows that students from minority groups matriculate through their programs in greater numbers when there is a strong presence of minority faculty, staff, and administrators to serve as role models for what these students can become. And while there is no mention anywhere of any aspect of diversity in the twenty pages of the SCTCS Strategic Plan 2013-2020, I hope that it can be assumed that the System is considering these important issues as part of its long-range planning. According to a research brief entitled, "African American Students in South Carolina's Technical Colleges: An Overview of Critical Indicators," African Americans make up at least 40% of the student populations of just under half (seven of the 16) colleges in the system: Denmark Technical College (95%), Williamsburg Technical College (73%), Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College (59%), Central Carolina Technical College (49%), Florence-Darlington Technical College (44%), Northeastern Technical College (44%), and the Technical College of the Lowcountry (43%). This brief, which outlined an analysis of enrollment, retention, and completion data for African American students, was published in Summer 2010 by the Charles Hamilton Houston Center for the Study of the Black Experience in Education at Clemson University. Its data was culled from IPEDS and the SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE). For many of these students, our system is their first foray into higher

(including assistants and associates), directors and department heads (including assistants and associates).” Until quite recently this Fall 2013, there were four African Americans serving as executive-level staff at SCC. One is Ron Jackson, Vice President of Student Affairs. Another is Jay Jackson, Director of Planning/SACS Liaison. And Carlos Howard is Assistant Director of Success Network. Leila McKinney, Director of AIM Center, Perkins IV, is the only African American woman at the executive level at SCC. On September 19, 2013, she was joined by Ann Jones, an African American woman who completed the Higher Education Leadership Certificate program eight years ago. Mrs. Jones was promoted to Department Chair of Transitional Studies. Mrs. Jones is the first African American woman to serve as a Department Chair for the College in at least a decade. All five of these individuals held master’s degrees – the same level of education as the College’s president – at the time they were appointed to their positions.

At some point after my departure from SCC, the College created a new category of faculty – Academic Directors and Program Directors (for areas including allied health and industrial-related technologies). There are currently three African Americans serving as Academic Directors (one man and two women); however, according to IPEDS classification, these would not be considered executive-level, “managerial or administrative” staff since Academic Directors’ and Program Directors’ instructional duties exceed 50% of their workload. And none of the three Academic Directors is listed on the SC Salary Database as earning at least \$50,000.

Dr. Staat and Mr. Odom, in this letter to you and the Board, I have provided detailed, credible evidence regarding a College within the System, alleging a pervasive pattern of discrimination that I believe warrants examination by the Board. The evidence shows clearly that African American employees of Spartanburg Community College routinely occupy lower-level and lower-paying positions even though many of these individuals are more credentialed than their White counterparts. I have shown that SCC has “a pattern of hiring or promoting less qualified persons from a different race or gender [White men and White women],” which if established – is one of the most reliable methods of proving job discrimination based on race, according to the South Carolina Workers’ Rights Guide ([www.sclia.org](http://www.sclia.org)) – and that would clearly be a violation of Title VII of Public Law 88-352 (78 Stat. 241), more popularly known as the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

Section 703 (a) made it unlawful for an employer to “fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions or privileges or employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” (<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/>).

I also have illustrated that at a more fundamental level, there is very little racial diversity among faculty, staff, executive, and senior-level administration throughout the System as a whole. I am coming to you as System President, Board Chairman, and the entire Board as the governing entity of the SCTCS because I would like my concerns about the System to be addressed within the System, allowing the System to address alleged misdoings of a College within the System and hopefully to self-correct. My hope is to have my concerns addressed within the System rather than through other agencies including the SC Human Affairs Commission and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, but I do recognize that these entities are also possible alternatives should my complaint not receive a fair and balanced hearing by the entire Board.

Economic Development (another unadvertised and created post). Samuel Hook (\$84,872), Executive Director of Advancement and the SCC Foundation, is a White man who holds a master's degree. Daryl Smith (\$78,337), Executive Director of the Cherokee County Campus, is a White man with a master's degree. Kathy Jo Lancaster (\$51,000), a White woman with a master's degree, is Site Coordinator of the Union County Advanced Technology Center. And Judy Sieg (\$76,370), former Department Chair of Humanities and Languages, recently was appointed Director of the newest branch campus – Evans Center Downtown Campus. Mrs. Sieg is a White woman who holds a master's degree and who completed the Higher Education Leadership Certificate Program. She was succeeded in her former position of Department Chair by Jenny Williams, a White woman who both participated in the leadership certificate program and went on to earn a doctorate degree in higher education administration in 2011.

The creation of the two Associate of VP positions obviously left openings for the Director of the Tyger River Campus and Dean of Arts and Sciences positions. The director's salary has been downgraded from that earned by all of the other branch campus directors – including the most recently opened branch campus. Once selected, the Tyger River Campus director – a person who will serve as chief operational officer of an entire campus – will earn a salary of \$60,000-\$70,000 while the new Dean of Arts and Sciences will earn \$70,000-\$80,000. On September 4, 2013, it was announced that Kem Harvey, former Department Chair of Transitional Studies, had been named Dean of Arts and Sciences. Mrs. Harvey, a White woman, holds a master's degree. In her former position as Department Chair, Mrs. Harvey did not earn a salary of at least \$50,000, according to the SC Salary Database.

From the evidence cited above, it is quite clear that discrepancies in recruiting, hiring, and especially – promotion, factor prominently and most importantly in the salaries earned by the College's faculty, staff, and administration. Of its 350 employees (the number quoted by Robin Cochran, Administrative Coordinator in the President's Office), only 72 or 21% of SCC employees purportedly receive salaries of \$50,000 or more, according to data in the South Carolina Salary Database that is provided by state agencies under the auspices of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and published by The State newspaper (<http://www.thestate.com/sc-salary-database>). Of these 72 employees, I currently know the identities of 56. And of these 56, only two African American men and one African American woman are making a salary of more than \$50,000. In addition to the VP of Student Affairs Ron Jackson, there is Jay Jackson (\$56,758), Director of Planning/SACS Liaison. Mr. Jackson held a master's degree at the time of his promotion. Cassandra Meadows (\$57,695), who is listed as an Administrative Coordinator in the SCC Catalog and a Projects Manager in the SCC employee directory, holds a bachelor's degree. Therefore, 99.95% of the employees that I currently know on this list and who are making the highest salaries are White.

Throughout the System, African Americans are few in number except in the more highly and publicly visible areas of the colleges (Admissions, Enrollment, Student Recruiting, and Student Affairs/Services). They are certainly far less likely to be found in the positions that would allow them to earn salaries like those listed above. According to data taken from the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), in Fall 2009, ten (10) percent of executive-level staff members throughout the entire system were African American. That number was virtually zero at SCC; only two African Americans served at the executive level. IPEDS defines executive-level staff as “persons whose primary function within the institution is managerial or administrative, and less than 50% instructional. This category classification includes titles such as president, vice president (including assistants and associates), deans