

REMARKS TO SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

by

The Honorable Richard W. Riley
Governor of South Carolina

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We in South Carolina are at an important crossroads. Due to industrialization and increasing technological advances, almost all South Carolinians will need basic academic skills and some type of training in a trade, craft or profession to be productive citizens as we enter the 1980's. This means we will have to provide more and better opportunities in preschool programs, elementary and secondary schools, and vocational and technical schools.

Our colleges and universities will continue to play an important role. However, due to the high cost of programs in colleges and universities and the increasing likelihood of enrollment stabilizing at colleges and universities, I am asking you to provide for disciplined growth in higher education and a containment of the escalating costs in higher education.

We cannot afford costly and unnecessary duplication. We are going to have to get away from the notion that just because a particular college has a program or certain new building, its counterparts need the same program or building to be fair. A college or university should engage in a particular program or construct a new building because it is needed by the citizens of South Carolina and because it is cost-effective, not because some other college or university in the state has one.

Furthermore, starting new programs or expanding existing programs should be done because of a real need, not because of heavy recruiting of students by recruiters or lobbying by a special interest group. Some programs will need to be duplicated because of the large number of students needed in a particular field or subject area. However, to avoid duplication and reduce costs, we should explore the utilization of consortiums among colleges and universities in the state and region. In a time of changing student enrollments, limited resources and rising costs, new patterns of cooperative relationships have a great potential for providing better educational access and program development within South Carolina's available resources.

There appears to be a feeling among some that bigger is better . . . more students are better, more faculty is better, more buildings are better. We should keep in mind the need to contain cost, and bring a halt to the "bigger is better" syndrome.

One way that would help provide guidance to all of us, as we consider requests from higher education institutions, is the establishment of a specific mission for each institution. This mission should attempt to maximize the state's resources and yet build on the strength of a particular institution. The mission statement would help an institution focus on its primary role and keep it from drifting.

I realize that you as commissioners have been hard at work preparing the Master Plan in Higher Education, and I applaud you for your efforts. As you finalize and begin to implement the plan, please consider the delicate balance that must be maintained between our need for quality and the limits of our financial resources. We can have a disciplined approach to higher education, yet continue the high quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs that are critical to the future of our state.

You have a very important role to play. I look forward to working with you as you deliberate the future course and direction of higher education institutions in South Carolina.