

From: Soura, Christian  
To: Peters, Hal <HalPeters@gov.sc.gov>  
CC: Baker, Josh <JoshBaker@gov.sc.gov>  
Date: 9/9/2013 1:22:00 PM  
Subject: Oregon Higher Ed Letter

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Josh – can you fact-check please?

CLS

Thank you for your letter regarding the affordability of higher education in South Carolina. It is encouraging, etc.

In 2011, I signed the Higher Education Efficiency and Administrative Policies Act, which gives our public colleges and universities greater flexibility to streamline their operations and drive down the cost of attendance for their students.

This law also requires that these institutions publish detailed, online reports on their spending, giving South Carolinians an unprecedented level of visibility into higher education spending in our state.

I have also proposed a new Accountability-Based Funding (ABF) model of supporting our public colleges and universities. This new approach would appropriate funds to these institutions based upon the number of in-state undergraduate students they serve and would take into account the institution's performance in four main categories: graduation rates, affordability and access, educational quality, and economic development/institutional mission.

Although recent headlines have tended to focus on a university's "sticker price," meaning its published tuition rates, these reports often create a highly misleading impression of the true cost of attendance. Not only do these figures fail to account for need- and merit-based scholarships at both the state and federal levels, but they also commonly ignore room, board, and other related costs. Furthermore, the average student's cost of attendance is also rising because the average student is taking longer to complete his or her degree – this typically means more loans to repay after graduation. For these reasons, my ABF proposal calls for our colleges and universities to be evaluated based in part upon the average debt loads of their graduating students.

Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have taken steps in the past two years to further investigate my ABF proposal, but both drafts of the required legislation are currently trapped in the Senate. I agree that we must take action to ensure that South Carolina's public higher education system is as accountable, affordable, and effective as it can possibly be. I hope the General Assembly agrees when it returns to session next January.

Again, thank you, etc.

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