

Title: **S.C.State's debt rising: 'We're running out of time'**
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 Size: 58.43 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



S.C. State's debt rising: 'We're running out of time'

Audit says
Orangeburg
college's deficit
soon will hit
\$23.5 million

By ANDREW SHAIN
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S.C. State University is falling deeper in debt.

The school's deficit is expected to reach \$23.5 million by mid-year even if it pays back a state loan or receives all the extra state money that lawmakers approved giving the school last year, according to a new audit released Wednesday.

DEBT

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added to the amount it is owed, a provision in its state contract.

Roughly half of what S.C. State owes vendors has gone unpaid for at least four months or more, according to state data. A large chunk of the overdue bills — \$3.6 million — is owed to the school's food service provider.

The 119-year-old Orangeburg school ran into financial trouble because it did not shrink its budget to offset its falling enrollment. Instead, South Carolina's only historically black public college borrowed money from its

"This is worse than any of us thought it could be," Gov. Nikki Haley said Wednesday during a meeting of the S.C. State Budget and Control Board. "We're running out of time."

Meanwhile, vendors, owed more than \$10 million by the

school, have started to take legal action.

A maintenance contractor has filed a complaint with state procurement officials trying to collect \$4.2 million in unpaid bills, The State has learned. DTZ Inc. also wants 15 percent a year interest

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community service arm to help cover deficits.

That shortfall was about \$14 million when S.C. State first alerted state budget officials about a year ago. That deficit would grow to \$23.5 million by June 30, according to the state-paid audit released Wednesday.

To survive, S.C. State needs more money, and must cut its academic and athletics programs, Tom McNeish of the Elliott Davis Decosimo accounting firm told the budget board.

However, after the meeting, acting S.C. State President Franklin Evans said he heard McNeish say the

school needed more state money before the state's fiscal year ends June 30.

"What I heard Elliott Davis say is that cuts will not do it because we can only cut so much," said Evans, who has been in office for less than a month. "Clearly, we're needing the state to step in and to provide that funding so that we can eliminate that debt and pay our vendors."

That runs counter to what Haley expects of the school. The Republican governor said S.C. State is "on life support."

After the meeting, Haley said S.C. State administrators and trustees must work to make changes in

the next month. Meanwhile, the budget board will consider whether to extend the deadline on a \$6 million loan, due June 30, that the school owes the state. The board delayed voting Wednesday on S.C. State's request to extend the due date on that loan.

"If we see slow-walking and hands out — just wanting money for the sake of it — I don't think (the extension) makes it," Haley said.

The debate over S.C. State's deficit is crucial to the school's fight to keep its accreditation, placed on probation last year be-

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cause of concerns about its governance and financial issues. Students cannot get government financial aid to attend unaccredited colleges.

The audit presented Wednesday was part of an agreement for the \$6 million state loan last year from the State Budget and Control Board. That money was used to cover payroll, debt payments and some utility and vendor bills.

If S.C. State were to repay the loan this year, it could not pay its vendors through June 30, adding to its deficit, according to the Elliott Davis Decosimo audit.

The school could receive up to \$4.5 million by June 30 from a three-year, \$12 million infusion approved by a group of 10 state lawmakers late last year. S.C. State already has received \$1.5 million of that money.

But whether the school will get more of that money is unclear. The S.C. Executive Budget Office is unaware of any plans to release more money. Efforts to reach members of the group that reviews S.C. State's books — to determine whether future payments should be released to the school — were unsuccessful Wednesday.

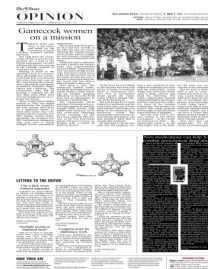
The Elliott Davis Decosimo audit lists that infu-

sion as a loan, which adds to S.C. State's deficit. But the \$12 million deal does not include any repayment requirements.

The bleak financial picture comes as lawmakers are trying to remove S.C. State's trustees.

The S.C. House passed a bill Tuesday to remove those trustees. The Senate already has approved its own sack-the-board proposal, now in a House committee.

Title: **New medications can help S.C. combat prescription drug abuse**
 Author:
 Size: 31.77 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



New medications can help S.C. combat prescription drug abuse

More South Carolinians die each year from prescription opioid misuse than from cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine combined. The number of state residents admitted into state rehab for opioid abuse has increased three-fold in the last decade alone.

I serve as an adviser to Gov. Nikki Haley's Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Council that has recommended that South Carolina physicians be required to verify their patients' prescription history using the statewide database, prior to writing opioid prescriptions.

While requiring physicians to check the database is a critical step toward keeping opioid prescriptions away from drug-seekers, we also need to consider ways of keeping these medications from falling into the wrong hands once they are prescribed.

More than 70 percent of Americans who abuse prescription painkillers get them from friends or relatives rather than directly from a physician, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Database monitoring can help physicians ensure that opioids are prescribed to patients who truly need them,

but we need other solutions to truly stem the tide of prescription drug abuse.

One way to prevent misuse is to encourage physicians to prescribe "abuse deterrent formulations" — new medications that still help patients manage pain, but lose their high when crushed, injected or manipulated by a potential abuser.

Abuse deterrent formulations are opioids approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat pain. The only difference is that they are much more difficult to use illicitly. Altering them in any way renders them useless for treating pain, and certainly for abusing.

The majority of people who take prescription painkillers are not drug abusers. Pain medication is essential for people living with chronic conditions or recovering from medical procedures.

Abuse deterrent formulations give physicians peace of mind when prescribing opioids because we know that they are less likely to fall into the wrong hands, be abused or cause an overdose.

The reality, however, is that South Carolina policymakers need to

actively encourage the adoption of abuse deterrent formulations in order for them to reach patients. These innovative medications are more expensive than traditional opioids, so many health insurers discourage physicians from prescribing them or refuse to cover them.

While health insurers may not see value in the price tag of an abuse deterrent formulation, the public health benefits are clear.

We've all heard stories of teenagers raiding their parents' medicine cabinets for opioids to snort or even inject. If more South Carolina physicians start prescribing abuse deterrent formulations, we'll see a decrease in the amount of painkillers that are vulnerable to such abuse. It won't be as easy for potential drug abusers to get high and much more difficult for them to overdose.

As the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Council and other statewide efforts move forward, we should help make abuse deterrent formulations the new standard in safe prescribing.

TODD WARRICK, MD
Sumter



Warrick

Title: **S.C. State to owe vendors \$23M**
 Author: BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN croldan@postandcourier.com
 Size: 53.63 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



S.C. State to owe vendors \$23M

Haley says university on 'life support'; auditor says cuts, another \$4.5M loan needed

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN

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COLUMBIA — South Carolina State University's debt will grow to \$23 million by June, twice what lawmakers had been told the Orangeburg school owed its vendors, an auditor told state officials Wednesday.

Reducing what the school owes its vendors would require an additional \$4.5 million on top of the \$18 million in loans it's already received from the state and cuts in programs and faculty, Tom McNeish, who was hired to examine the university's finances, told

the state Budget and Control Board.

"This is worse than I think any of us thought it was going to be," Gov. Nikki Haley said at the meeting, later adding, "Right now, without question, South Carolina State is on life support."

Haley said that the trustees of the state's only historically public black

university will have to make a lot of "uncomfortable" changes "none of us want." She also voiced frustration over the school's failure to adjust its

spending to account for the drop in enrollment since 2012.

Interim S.C. State President Franklin Evans said the school acknowledged

and agreed with the audit, which further validated the need for additional state support. However, he said that the university could not continue to cut without risking putting "ourselves out of business."

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S.C. State to owe vendors \$23M by June

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"We've already reduced some staff," Evans said. "There are only so many cuts that we can do."

Rep. Jim Merrill, R-Charleston, whose committee introduced a measure in February that called for the temporary closure of S.C. State to get a handle on the spiraling debt, said the audit confirmed what he already suspected about the school's finances.

"We took some criticism for stepping out on a limb and calling for reform that nobody else had," Merrill said. "And I think we've been vindicated. There needs to be total change in the way S.C. State does business so that they can be back to being

"There needs to be total change in the way S.C. State does business so that they can be back to being a solvent institution."

Rep. Jim Merrill, R-Charleston

a solvent institution."

Merrill said it was discouraging that the school's debts continue to grow. Previously, lawmakers had been told the school owed vendors \$11.5 million. The school's total debt, including outstanding bonds, exceeds \$80 million.

That amount includes loans the state has given to the university, including one of \$6 million. S.C. State requested an extension on paying back that loan, which is due June 30, but the board delayed taking a vote. Haley said the board likely will meet before its scheduled April 28 meeting to discuss the loan.

Last month, the school nearly had its power cut off for failing to pay its utility

bill. In an email sent Feb. 16, the Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities warned a school staffer that the accounts "are now delinquent and subject to disconnection." The school paid on that day, according to an email.

Meanwhile, the House on Wednesday approved firing the trustees, although who would replace them differs with the bill passed by the Senate and will have to be reconciled before action can be taken. Earlier this week, the trustees fired President Thomas Elzey, who is suing them and the school for breach of contract.

Elzey, who came to S.C. State from The Citadel, would be due more than \$400,000 for

the remaining two years of his four-year contract if he is fired without cause. After firing him, the trustees cited a lack of communication and respect toward the school's trustees as the reason for his firing.

In a Feb. 25 letter to Elzey, board Chairman William Small said "communications have been a serious problem, which many board members believe is fundamentally the result of your attitude towards the board and a lack of respect on your part towards the board and its proper functions."

The Times and Democrat contributed to this story. Reach **Cynthia Roldan** at 708-5891.

Title: **Bill would give Haley more power over transportation spending**
 Author: BY JEREMY BORDEN jborden@postandcourier.com
 Size: 15.5 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



Bill would give Haley more power over transportation spending

BY JEREMY BORDEN
jborden@postandcourier.com

COLUMBIA — A measure giving Gov. Nikki Haley more power over how the state spends its transportation dollars passed muster Wednesday with a S.C. Senate panel.

The bill, S. 561, allows the governor to appoint members to the Department of Transportation's commission, which is now picked by the Legislature.

The Senate would still need to confirm the governor's appointees to the nine-member board, which would represent each of the state's congressional districts with two at-large members.

"This is a significant change in the Department of Transportation," said Sen. Paul Campbell, R-Goose Creek, the transportation subcommittee chairman.

The bill is aimed at concentrating power under the gov-

ernor so that the state's chief executive can be held accountable for the state of the roads and transportation priorities, senators said.

Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Charleston, said the bill furthers reforms made to the Transportation Department in 2007. Improving roads will take more money, and proposals to increase transportation funding, including raising taxes on gasoline, have foundered in the

House and Senate so far.

"We can reform DOT every other year," said Grooms, the bill's sponsor. "Unless we adequately fund the agency, we'll never be able to maintain, much less expand, our road network."

The bill moves to the full Senate Transportation Committee for consideration.

Reach **Jeremy Borden** at 708-5837.

Title: **Tickets available for Wis. Gov. Walker appearance in Charleston on Friday**
 Author: BY SCHUYLER KROPF skropf@postandcourier.com
 Size: 11.93 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



Tickets available for Wis. Gov. Walker appearance in Charleston on Friday

BY SCHUYLER KROPF
 skropf@postandcourier.com

Tickets are still available for Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's appearance Friday in Charleston, where he'll stop as part of his first swing through South Carolina while considering running for president.

Walker will be in Greenville and Columbia on Thursday with stops that will include a meeting with Gov. Nikki Haley and local leaders.

Walker's Friday appearance



Walker

in Charleston is part of a noon fundraising luncheon for the state Republican Party at the Francis Marion Hotel. Tickets start at \$50 a person and can be purchased by going to SCGOP.com. About 150 people are expected to attend.

Later Friday, Walker will at-

tend a private gathering hosted by the National Rifle Association at the Planter's Inn & Peninsula Grill.

Title: **Audit: SC State debt to reach \$23.5M**
 Author: By SEANNA ADCOX The Associated Press
 Size: 25.88 square inch
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



Audit: SC State debt to reach \$23.5M

By SEANNA ADCOX
 The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina State University's escalating debt is expected to reach \$23.5 million by the end of this school year, accountants said Wednesday, adding to calls for an immediate overhaul.

An accounting firm presented a financial forecast Wednesday that's even worse than lawmakers expected. South Carolina's only public historically black university cannot reduce its unpaid bills without additional aid from the state, Tom McNeish of Elliott Davis Decosimo told the Budget and Control Board, which hired his firm last year.

Gov. Nikki Haley said the school's survival depends on its leaders being willing to make

THE DEBT

More than 40 percent of its bills, or \$4.4 million worth, are more than four months old. Roughly \$100,000 is owed on invoices past a year old. The oldest dates to August 2012, according to a Feb. 28 breakdown the school provided state budget officials.

deep cuts.

"South Carolina State is on life support," she said. "Something has to be done now. We've got to see action yesterday."

The financial oversight board she chairs postponed deciding

whether to extend SC State's loan repayment plan. A \$6 million loan approved last spring is supposed to be paid back by June 30. But if it is repaid, the school won't be able to pay any of its vendors, and overdue bills will climb to \$22 million, McNeish said.

The accruing debt also includes \$1.5 million the school received as part of a second bailout approved last December.

According to university officials, the school's unpaid bills amounted to \$10.3 million at the end of February.

The board delayed action after House Ways and Means Chairman Brian White, a board member, criticized the lack of written repayment terms on which to vote.

The five-member panel will revisit the issue next month.

The presentation came two days after SC State's trustees fired President Thomas Elzey.

Also on Wednesday, the House approved a bill firing all trustees, as well as Elzey. The proposal matches what the House put in its budget plan last week. But a budget clause can't take effect until July 1, and lawmakers want trustees replaced much sooner. How soon will depend on the House and Senate working out differences in their separate plans — chiefly, who appoints the takeover board.

"Time is of the essence," said Rep. Jerry Govan, D-Orangeburg, an SC State graduate. "I don't believe we have a margin for error."

Title: **Bush: 'I'll be here a lot'**
 Author: By ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
 Size: 63.24 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL FIELD

Bush: 'I'll be here a lot'

'I'm kind of tired seeing the food fight, the constant crisis' in Washington

By ANDREW SHAIN
 ashain@thestate.com

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush talked up conservative leadership during his first swing through South Carolina since formally expressing interest in the Republican nomination for president in 2016.

"I'm kind of tired seeing the food fight, the constant crisis, never solving problems," Bush told S.C. House Republicans at a reception in Columbia Tuesday. "In my mind, if we fix a

few, big, complicated things we've let linger for too long, we're on the verge of the greatest time of your lives."

Bush told GOP political leaders in the early presidential primary state that Washington needs conservative leaders to simplify federal tax codes and regulations.

"We see what happens when we allow the pro-

gressive liberals to run success."

wild," Bush said. "They create massive complexity in our health care system ... (and) higher taxes for people that are making higher income. It's not solving the chance of someone who is living in poverty ... to divide the country and say that people who are successful are the problem. The way to do it is from bottom up, where we build capacity so people can achieve earned

Bush promised if he decides to run for president, "I'll be here a lot."

During a breakfast with Upstate chambers of commerce leaders earlier Tuesday, Bush defended his support of Common Core's education standards and

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Video of Jeb Bush's visit to Columbia

BUSH

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creating a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, saying it would help the economy.

Those issues pose a threat to Bush winning support from some S.C. Republican voters, who question his conservative credentials.

Before meeting with House Republicans later, Bush visited a domestic-violence safe house, run by

West Columbia-based Sistercare, with GOP Gov. Nikki Haley.

Haley told reporters she has asked Bush for advice on curbing domestic violence, just as she had before on education issues. Haley started a domestic-violence task force this year. Bush said he and his wife have supported a private foundation that aids shelters, while Florida lawmakers have stiffened that state's laws.

S.C. Democrats criticized Haley for using Sistercare as a political backdrop, when she has not included money in her proposed state budget for shelters. They called the term-limited governor's visit with Bush an audition for her next job.

That is unlikely to deter Haley from her ongoing role, as she said, of being the "sweet host" for all GOP presidential hopefuls touring the state.

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker arrives Thursday for his first S.C. visit since attending Haley's re-election announcement in August 2013. They have a meeting planned at the Governor's Mansion.

Haley repeated Tuesday she has no plans to endorse a candidate until closer to the 2016 primary. Political experts expect she will endorse Bush or Walker.

The Associated Press contributed.

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Size: 63.24 square inch
Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



TIM DOMINICK/TDOMINICK@THESTATE.COM

Jeb Bush, former governor of Florida, speaks Tuesday before South Carolina House Republicans at a reception in Columbia. He is considering a White House bid.

Title: **State workers deserve decent salary**

Author:

Size: 36.89 square inch

Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688

**Our view**

State workers deserve a decent salary

S.C. lawmakers probably are justified in voting to spend \$300,000 on a study to determine if state employees' salaries are too low. But they shouldn't waste the money if the study will just end up on a shelf collecting dust.

The House has approved funding for a comprehensive study of employee's salaries. It would be the first such study in 20 years.

Even without a study, it appears safe to assume that many categories of state workers are underpaid, some woefully underpaid. For example, probation officers – who are required to hold a college degree – earn starting salaries of only \$26,000.

Try paying off student loans on a salary like that.

State troopers start out making \$31,000 a year.

"We have police officers out there now working two or three jobs to feed their families," said state Rep. Mike Pitts, R-Laurens, who is chairman of the Ways and Means subcommittee that writes state law enforcement agencies' budgets.

The study would provide necessary information about what employees across the Southeast make in both the public and private sector in jobs similar to those of state workers. Those who conduct the study also would be expected to provide recommendations for adjusting pay.

But will lawmakers listen? State Rep. Ralph Norman, R-Rock Hill, doubts they will, saying the study would only confirm the obvious, leaving

the Legislature to figure out how to fund increases.

"Let's give the money directly. ... We're just not willing to make the hard cuts," he said.

Some lawmakers suggested that the study might point out duplicated jobs that could be cut to pay for salary increases for other employees. But it would be naive to assume that the state can pay for raises simply by finding unnecessary workers to fire.

As Pitts noted, the staff levels of state agencies have yet to return to the levels they were before the Great Recession hit. And the population has grown since then, increasing the need for state services.

In other words, will state lawmakers have the fore-

sight, the compassion and the guts to pay state workers what they deserve even if they have to find a new source of revenue to do it? The odds of our legislators doing the right thing instead of what they believe is the politically expedient thing are not good.

The House already has rejected a 3 percent cost-of-living wage proposed by Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, D-Orangeburg, which would cost \$46 million.

Lawmakers also recently backtracked on a plan to borrow \$500 million in state bond money to help pay for a variety of crucial state needs. That move came after Gov. Nikki Haley strenuously opposed it, claiming the taxpayers wouldn't stand for it.

She threatened to post the names of lawmakers online who voted in favor of the proposal.

Last week the House also refused to distribute up to \$10 million to 22 counties to cover part of their cleanup costs from the 2014 ice storm, saying it would throw the proposed budget out of balance. The affected counties include some of the state's poorest and rural counties.

So, what are the chances lawmakers will do what's necessary to bring salaries for state workers in line with their Southeastern counterparts? Is it likely the salary study will be received and ignored? We're afraid so.

South Carolina needs to attract qualified state employees. It needs to be able to retain qualified employees so that it doesn't have to pay the cost of retraining new ones. And it needs to pay enough to ensure that workers don't have to resort to working second jobs or applying for food stamps to support themselves and their families.

To have a well run, smoothly functioning state work force, the state will have to pay employees a decent salary. If lawmakers aren't going to pay attention to a study that inevitably will tell them that, why bother?

In summary

Study of state workers' salaries might be justified, but lawmakers must act on the results.

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 Author: By Seanna Adcox Associated Press
 Size: 35.65 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



S.C. State debt will rise to \$23.5M

**Audit finds
finances worse
than lawmakers
expected**

By SEANNA ADCOX
Associated Press

COLUMBIA South Carolina State University's escalating debt is expected to reach \$23.5 million by the end of this school year, adding to calls for an immediate overhaul.

An accounting firm presented a financial forecast Wednesday that's even worse than lawmakers expected. South Carolina's only public historically black university cannot reduce its unpaid bills without additional aid from the state, Tom McNeish of Elliott Davis Decosimo told the Budget and Control Board, which hired his firm last year.

Gov. Nikki Haley said the school's survival depends on leadership being willing to make deep cuts.

"South Carolina State is on life support," she said. "Something has to be done

now. We've got to see action yesterday."

The financial oversight board she chairs postponed deciding whether to extend S.C. State's loan repayment plan. A \$6 million loan approved last spring is supposed to be paid back by June 30. But if it is repaid, the school won't be able to pay any of its vendors, and unpaid bills will climb to \$22 million, McNeish said.

The accruing debt also includes \$1.5 million the school received as part of a second bailout approved last December.

The board delayed action after House Ways and Means Chairman Brian White, a board member, criticized the lack of written repayment terms on which

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S.C. STATE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

to vote. The five-member panel will revisit the issue next month.

Support for an extension will require noticeable action by the school's leaders, Haley said.

"There has to be a team that goes into this school and makes serious decisions. ... It's going to need to cut regardless of how long an employee's been there," she said. "If we see that in a 30-day window, you can see some success. If you see slow-walking and hands out just wanting money for the sake of it, I don't think it makes it."

The presentation came two days after S.C. State's trustees fired President Thomas Elzey.

House OKs bill to fire trustees

Also on Wednesday, the House approved a bill firing all trustees, as well as Elzey. The proposal matches what the House put in its budget plan last week. But a budget clause can't take effect until July 1, and lawmakers want trustees replaced much sooner. How soon will depend on the House and Senate working out differences in their separate plans – chiefly, who appoints the takeover board. "Time is of the essence," said Rep. Jerry Govan, D-

Orangeburg, an S.C. State graduate. "I don't believe we have a margin for error."

The House's budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year includes \$4 million to pay off some of S.C. State's oldest bills.

More than 40 percent of its bills, or \$4.4 million worth, are more than four months past due, according to a Feb. 28 breakdown from the oversight board.

The school's fiscal woes stem from a yearslong decline in enrollment, partly due to students losing federal aid amid the recession and federal changes over the past six years in eligibility for Pell grants and PLUS loans. Meanwhile, spending continued as if revenues hadn't changed.

A subcommittee of S.C. State's board recently recommended \$3 million in cuts by trimming programs and staff. The plan is similar to one Elzey proposed earlier this year.

S.C. State's acting president, W. Franklin Evans, said school leaders recognize "we can't continue to be everything to everyone," but the school can't cut itself out of business.

"Clearly, we're needing the state to step in and provide the funding so that we can eliminate that debt and pay our vendors," he said. "Really, that's the only way."

Title: **Trustees release letters to justify Elzey's firing**
 Author: By JEFFREY COLLINS The Associated Press
 Size: 31.93 square inch
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



Trustees release letters to justify Elzey's firing

By JEFFREY COLLINS
 The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina State University trustees wrote a letter to President Thomas Elzey less than a month before they suspended him, saying they were worried he wasn't communicating with them and was out of state when a utility threatened to cut off power to the school.

A lawyer for the trustees released two letters Tuesday, one day after the board cited them when they fired Elzey.

"Many of the Board members are troubled by your attitude toward the Board and a perceived lack of respect for the Board's function," trustees chairman William Small wrote in a letter two days after Elzey was placed on administrative leave.

Elzey's lawyer filed an amended breach of trust lawsuit Tuesday, saying Elzey addressed the concerns in the January letter, while the February letter was written after Elzey was suspended with pay as an attempt to justify their decision after the fact. Attorney Nancy Bloodgood also said in the papers that the university did not pay Elzey while he was supposed to be suspended with pay.

SC State owes at least \$11 mil-

lion in unpaid bills. Its total debt, when outstanding bonds are included, exceeds \$83 million, legislators have said. Lawmakers are trying to hash out differences in bills from each chamber that would fire all the trustees.

Elzey joins five other presidents in 23 years who did not leave the school on their own terms. Firing Elzey without cause would cost the financially strapped university around \$425,000, according to an estimate from state economic advisers.

The tone of the January letter from trustees to Elzey was polite, pointing out that the trustees had to postpone a meeting because Elzey needed to be at Gov. Nikki Haley's inauguration, and they were being asked questions from people who lost jobs or were afraid of being out of work before Elzey had discussed his plans to cut staff with them.

It also contained a brief complaint without specifics that Elzey was in Atlanta when the power was being threatened to be turned off.

"As crisis conditions heighten at the university, it is impera-

tive from our perspective that this information be known as we seek to plan our activities or respond and (sic) emergent or emerging situations," Smalls wrote, ending the letter with "Be safe and Be Well."

The Feb. 25 letter — two days after the board suspended Elzey — had a much different tone. Elzey told lawmakers the university needs significantly more money without telling trustees first, and he failed to tell them about personnel changes or fundraising goals, according to the letter.

The trustees said Elzey's failure to keep a professional relationship with his trustees also threatened SC State's accreditation. The university is currently on probation and will have its accreditation reviewed later this year. If the school loses that, it can't stay open because students can't get financial aid.

"Most Board members are seriously troubled that the Board does not believe it has received from you a clear plan for the University to emerge from its current financial crisis, accreditation issues and the University's public image problems," trustees wrote.