

March 3, 2015

VIA US Mail and FAX TO: 803-734-5167

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

This letter concerns the proposed closure of South Carolina State University (SCSU), which was founded in 1896, and is the state's only publicly funded historically Black university. Like many states, South Carolina has been systematically disinvesting in public higher education. In 2002, state appropriations per student at public four-year universities in South Carolina were \$7,213, but by 2013 that number had plummeted to \$3,694.

According to data collected by the US Department of Education, comparing 2004 to 2014, the state appropriation to SCSU has declined by 37 percent. At the same time, tuition has increased more than 58 percent, at an institution where 71 percent of the students receive Pell grants. In other words, the state has already closed the door to many worthy low income students by reducing support for this historic institution, and now the state proposes closing the institution altogether.

Institutions like SCSU came into being as a result of the discrimination and racism that prevented Black students from attending existing white institutions. They have a history fraught with pain and struggle and a legacy of courage and triumph in the face of overwhelming adversity. That this racism and discrimination is still pervasive in our society is demonstrated by recent incidents of young unarmed Black men being killed by police in our streets, the disproportionate number of school suspensions and expulsions of African American children, and the ravaging effects of mass incarceration on African Americans, who make up about 14 percent of the nation's population and use drugs at rates similar to whites, yet make up 57 percent of people in state prisons for drug offenses.

Historically black institutions (HBIs) graduate more than 50 percent of African American professionals and public school teachers. They were created to support African American students, but these institutions of higher learning are no longer exclusively for African American students. Today, HBIs have a significant percentage of African American students, but also serve Asian, Hispanic, international and white students. Unfortunately, most HBIs have been starved of the necessary funding since their inception and now find themselves caught in the cross-hairs of an austerity movement aimed at defunding higher education as part of a larger push to dismantle and privatize public services.

Whatever the financial problems are at SCSU, including administrative bloat, the faculty and staff who serve the students did not cause them. The main victims of a closing would be the students at SCSU who would be forced to attend other institutions, many of which do not have a record of serving

and welcoming African American students. HBIs represent 3 percent of the nation's institutions of higher education but account for 20 percent of African Americans who receive an undergraduate degree.

If SCSU is closed, it may never reopen and even if it does reopen it will have lost forever the spirit, history, and traditions embodied in its dedicated faculty and staff.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) was founded in 1915 and has helped to shape American higher education by developing the standards and procedures that maintain quality in education and academic freedom in this country's colleges and universities. Our mission is to advance academic freedom and shared governance; to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education; to promote the economic security of faculty, academic professionals, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education; to help the higher education community organize to make our goals a reality; and to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good.

The AAUP supports HBIs and their mission to provide an equal opportunity for a quality educational experience. We stand with the faculty and academic professionals who work to protect the role of education in creating an informed citizenry for a democratic society. We support the students who struggle to gain a place at the nation's table for a piece of the American Dream.

Therefore, the AAUP urges the South Carolina Legislature to keep SCSU open and provide adequate and appropriate financial support for the state's only publicly funded HBI, to protect and sustain its legacy for future generations of South Carolinians.

Sincerely,



Rudy Fichtenbaum, President, AAUP



Cecil E. Canton, Chair, AAUP Committee on
Historically Black Institutions and Scholars of Color

CC: (Via US Mail and Online E-Mail Form)

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South Carolina Speaker of the House

Senator Harvey S. Peeler, Jr.
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