

**Remarks by Chancellor Al M. Panu, Ph.D.
the State of the Schools Address
to the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce
Nov. 1, 2017**

Good morning. I am honored today to share with you the events leading up to this State of the Schools address. The past year has been one of momentous occasions for USCB. We created new academic programs. We received grants from federal, state and other sources that total more than 1 million dollars to support our academic research. And we attained the highest enrollment in our history, a fact that was acknowledged by the academic and mainstream media alike.

We reached the highest enrollment in our history—2,077 students this year, an increase of 3.6 percent over last year. Part of our success is that we have improved our ability to retain students from year to year.

The Chronicle of Higher Education recognized our achievement and pronounced USCB the fifth fastest growing public undergraduate university in the United States from 2005 to 2015. *U.S. News & World Report* ranked us as number seven on its list of top public schools among regional colleges in the South.

I measure our growth in terms of three “esses:” size, stature and stance. “Size” refers to growth in enrollment, which we attribute to recruitment, expansion and retention. “Stature” refers to the quality of our growth. Our graduates are fully prepared to succeed when they leave the university and enter the workforce. “Stance,” refers to our mindset, our willingness to accomplish the goals we set for ourselves. This speaks to our readiness to collaborate with our partners to meet the regional needs of the Lowcountry.

The success we have enjoyed over the past year is due largely to the quality of our faculty. We are extremely fortunate in that we have been able to attract a first-class faculty. As proof of that, consider the level of financial support we have received from federal and state grants, and from ASPIRE grants awarded by the University of South Carolina System.

Our Computational Science program is collaborating with nine other academic institutions on a 20-million-dollar statewide initiative to boost advanced materials research and production. Subject to approval by the state Commission on Higher Education, we will use a National Science Foundation grant of 900,000 dollars to create a Master of Science program in Computational Science and to establish a Computational Engineering track in the undergraduate Computational Science program.

This is the second NSF award we have received. We used the first grant to create the Bachelor of Science degree program in Computational Science and to hire four faculty members.

Dr. Yiming Ji, interim chair of the Department of Math and Computational Science, served as program manager then and now. Dr. Ji was honored in 2016 with the Governor’s Award for Excellence in Scientific Research at a Predominantly Undergraduate Institution.

Dr. Kasia Pawelek received a 50,000-dollar grant from the National Institutes of Health and an affiliate at the University of South Carolina System to fund her research on mathematical modeling of infectious diseases, including the influenza virus. Her research team at USCB collaborated with Beaufort County Mosquito Control not long ago on a study intended to help curtail the spread of West Nile virus by developing methods of controlling the mosquito population.

Dr. Kim Ritchie received a grant of more than 219,000 dollars from the Dart Foundation to continue her work on analyzing the genetic composition and gene expression of bacteria in various coral species. Dr. Ritchie's research has shown that bacteria in coral reefs produce antibiotics that create an immune system for the coral. She is also analyzing beneficial bacterial species found on stingrays and sharks. Her research on this project is funded by a 23,000-dollar grant from the Munson Foundation.

Dr. Alan Warren, who specializes in environmental science, received a 120,000-dollar grant for the first year of a five-year contract from the Town of Bluffton Water Quality Laboratory.

USCB shared the coveted 2017 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award for the Arts with the City of Beaufort. The award recognizes outstanding achievement and contributions to the arts in South Carolina.

These accomplishments are part of what I call "growth in stature." They represent a sampling of the valuable work our faculty is engaged in here at the university.

We made major strides in academic progress over the past year. We announced the Beaufort College Scholars Program this fall. The program will bring together talented first-year students and form them into residential learning cohorts based on subject matter. The first two cohorts, the Biology Honors Residential Learning Community and the Nursing Honors Residential Learning Community, will be formed next fall. They will be located here on the Beaufort campus.

In terms of new academic programs, we added a third education-related major last year. Our bachelor's degree in Secondary Mathematics joins two existing programs—a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education/grades three through four-K, and a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education/grades two through six. We have just received approval for two additional programs, one in Secondary English, the other in Secondary Science. We hope to offer both programs next year.

We have seen steady improvement in the academic scores of our students year after year. The number of students receiving state scholarships and the amount of state scholarship funding virtually doubled over the last 10 years. Consider: In 2007, 227 students received nearly 525,000 dollars in Palmetto Fellows, Life and Hope scholarships. In 2016, 580 students received nearly 1.4 million dollars in scholarships.

The percentage of students earning state scholarships increased from 16 percent in 2007 to 29 percent in 2016. The 2017 numbers are even better. Some 669 scholarship recipients earned 1.5 million dollars in scholarship funding this year.

One of the more significant methods we use to enhance and ensure student success is to engage our students in experiential learning through undergraduate research and service-learning opportunities gained through on-the-job practice.

Meanwhile, we continue to work closely with local municipalities, our county leadership and with other organizations to advance projects that benefit economic development in the Lowcountry and sustain our growth. Over the past year, we received more than 1.1 million dollars in total external financial support from federal, state, local government and foundation sources.

At USCB, we remain true to our mission statement, our pledge to work cooperatively with select partners in health care, education, the hospitality industry and other fields of service to provide our students with experiential learning as a means of affording them a comprehensive education in their chosen field.

We support the Beaufort County School District by preparing the teachers and administrators who will educate the next generation of students.

We have formed a partnership with the Beaufort County School District to support its Teacher Cadet Program, which encourages local high school students to enroll in dual-credit courses at USCB. One of them is Dr. Bruce Marlowe's course, Clinical Observation & Analysis.

The need for qualified teachers in Beaufort County is so pronounced that our teacher interns have jobs waiting for them when they graduate. Consider: Every graduating student who entered the teaching profession over the last three years was offered a position in the classroom.

We work with area hospitals, clinics and health care providers to prepare the nurses of tomorrow. Every student who completes our rigorous nursing program will receive a job offer upon graduation.

The students in our Hospitality Management Program gain on-the-job experience as interns, working with skilled hospitality professionals at some of the finest hotels and resorts on Hilton Head Island. By the time they graduate, our students are fully prepared to step into full-time positions.

Our Computational Science graduates find jobs in their field immediately upon graduation. They earn entry-level salaries that average 70,000 dollars annually, followed by advancement to a position that can pay twice that amount with the first promotion.

Before we close, let us pause for a moment and reflect on the words of Mark Twain. "No sinner is ever saved after the first 20 minutes of a sermon." And so it is with speeches.

Let us take the last minute of our address today and consider how the University of South Carolina Beaufort has helped to drive the economic engine of the Lowcountry and the surrounding region. The latest estimates compiled by the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina, in August, point to an annual economic impact of nearly 84 million dollars and the creation of 1,033 jobs.

Our economic impact includes the ripple effect of USCB's employment and payroll as well as additional ripples generated by USCB alumni living in Beaufort County. Our 84-million-dollar contribution to the Lowcountry economy represents a significant return on investment, especially when you consider that we receive less than 10 percent of our annual budget from the state.

There are multiple advantages to embracing the university as a community partner. USCB alumni teach our children. They heal and comfort the sick. They help to birth and nurture new startup tech ventures. They bolster Hilton Head Island's reputation for providing a world-class resort experience. They broaden the region's economic base while enhancing our sense of community. They reflect the very best qualities of the faculty and staff that supported them so well during their academic journey. They represent the best in all of us.

Thank you.

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