Graduating from college with a four-year degree is growing more critical for individuals who desire personal financial stability, satisfying careers, and intellectual gains. Obtaining a four-year degree provides graduates with more professional opportunities, results in higher life-time earnings, and affords graduates with more job security. Universities care about student graduation because producing graduates is central to our mission. But, beyond that fundamental reason, institutions recognize that their reputations and funding are increasingly linked to retention and graduation metrics. States are anxious for institutions to attract more students and increase the number of college graduates. Research clearly indicates that college graduates contribute significantly to the economic and civic growth of their communities and states. Businesses making decisions about where to locate look for assurances that there will be a steady stream of college graduates to populate their workforce needs. In South Carolina alone, there is a growing critical workforce shortage and a need to increase the number of individuals with baccalaureate degrees who are ready to enter jobs. Thus, retention and graduation of students is a key concern of individual families, universities, businesses and industry, and state legislatures.

Despite all the advantages that are achieved through college completion, graduation from U.S. colleges remains low. At public four-year institutions, only 52.4% graduate within six years at the institution where they began as First-Time-in-College (FTIC) students. Institutions of higher education, including USC Aiken, are increasingly focused on improving the retention and graduation rates of their students through a variety of programs and services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>Graduation rates*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citadel Military College</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Charleston</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winthrop University</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal Carolina U</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USC Aiken</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Marion U</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* based on total cohort for 2013

How to read the numbers: 42% of students who begin with USC Aiken as freshmen graduated within six (6) years. Conversely, 58% of students who began at USC Aiken did not complete their degree at USC Aiken.
Today’s wealth of technology has introduced extraordinary convenience and efficiency to our campus. It is important for us to remember that this same technology introduces many threats as well. Modern cyber threats can jeopardize our financial health, our children’s safety or even the future of our University.

It is our duty as computer users to learn more about the threats of computing. It is also our responsibility to take that knowledge and use it to better protect ourselves, those we care about, and those whose information we safeguard here at USC Aiken.

I am pleased to announce a new resource that will allow us to learn about these topics and how to incorporate security awareness knowledge into our daily lives. The University has made SANS’ Securing the Human awareness training available to all full-time faculty and staff. The training consists of a series of short video modules. The library of videos covers various topics, from safe use of social networks to protecting your children online. There are 44 short video modules to choose from.

To take advantage of this service, visit http://usc.securingthehuman.org and login. You will need to know your USC Columbia network username and password. If you have any problems or questions in general, please do not hesitate to contact our Help desk. From an on-campus phone, simply dial HELP. From off-campus, dial (803) 641-3391. The Help desk can also be reached by e-mail at help@usca.edu.

I hope you will take advantage of this time to review some of the modules that are the most pertinent to you.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities has published their 2015-16 policy priorities for public higher education. AASCU is a Washington-based higher education association of nearly 420 public colleges, universities and systems whose members share a learning and teaching centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions’ economic progress and cultural development. AASCU is seen as an important voice and advocate for the nation’s public comprehensive university sector. Below is a brief list of the Association’s priorities for this legislative session and 2016 budgets.

State Role:
The top priority is to ask states to provide “sufficient, consistent, and sustained state funding in order to keep college affordable for all students, especially those from modest economic circumstances.” Their request has several policy action implications, including the following:

- Advocate for state reinvestment in public higher education,
- Encourage and promote strategies that leverage federal resources,
- Encourage state policymakers to recognize issues of institution/system governance, equity and academic quality,
- Support state funding systems that involve public comprehensive university leaders in system design,
- Promote investment in need-based student aid programs,
- Support collaborative efforts to address federal regulations involving state authorization of online programs,
- Oppose state legislation that seeks to strip institutional and/or system authority to regulate concealed weapons on campus,
- Oppose political interference with constitutionally valid campus admissions practices intended to promote diversity.

As the state of South Carolina’s legislative sessions continue to unfold this year, the Chancellor will share her impressions of the potential outcomes at Faculty and Staff Assemblies.
The Campus Citizen of the Month award is given in recognition of good citizenship. All faculty, classified and unclassified staff, and university partners who have been with the University for one year and are in good standing are eligible. The nomination remains active indefinitely in the pool of candidates. The nomination form must be signed by the nominee’s supervisor and sent to the nominee’s Vice Chancellor in that unit. The criteria to be used in the nomination are:

- **Initiative/Creativity:** Exhibits ingenuity and resourcefulness. Examples: Improved work methods, efficiency within the department.
- **Loyalty/Dedication:** Willing to go the “extra mile” without being asked.
- **Positive Attitude:** Maintains effective relationships with others both on and off campus; serves as role model. Example: Consistently delivers prompt, friendly service.
- **Leadership:** Acknowledge those whose efforts have inspired and supported the performance and achievement of others.

Christopher Clark
Applications Analyst II in Computer Services

Congratulations Christopher Clark, Applications Analyst II in Computer Services, USC Aiken’s Campus Citizen of the Month for February. Thanks to his efforts, he will receive a $20 gift card, a sign for his desk, and a parking spot.

In his nomination, his work with University Police was praised saying he is instrumental in assisting them with two critical components of the campus: issuing IDs to all faculty, staff, students, and visitors and issuing parking decals to all students, faculty and staff. He ensures the ID software and printer is functioning properly and monitors the parking database. He responds quickly to any calls and works to get any problems resolved as quickly as possible.

It was also stated that Chris is always pleasant and attentive, and works in a timely manner to resolve any problems.

In recognition of his helpful spirit, constant availability, and attentive nature, Chris Clark has been named the February Campus Citizen of the Month. Congratulations Chris!

Monday Group will review the nominations and select each month’s winner.

Contact Maria Chandler at MariaC@USCA.edu for more information.
The recently released publication, Inside Higher Education’s 2015 Survey of College and University Chief Academic Officers, indicates that the majority of provosts surveyed are concerned about declining faculty civility in American higher education. Discussions about the issue of campus civility have been ongoing at professional meetings and professional journals for several years. An often cited book on the topic published in 2008 by Jossey-Bass and entitled, *Faculty Incivility: The Rise of the Academic Bully Culture and What to Do About It*, stimulated a number of research studies, articles and blogs. Sociologists and members of the academic community have tried to make sense of this phenomenon. David Yamada, a respected blogger writing for The New Workplace Institute, explained it this way: “Academicians are adept at intellectual analysis, manipulation, and argumentation. When applied to the tasks of teaching, scholarship, and service, these skills reinforce the most socially useful aspects of the academy. But many of us who have worked in academe have seen what happens when they are applied in hurtful or even malicious ways.” In 2014, the Higher Education Network began a discussion on the topic of bullying which stimulated a flood of responses on the subject and the appearance of the topic at national conferences. Now, in 2015, we find the topic is still one that raises concern. According to the Inside Higher Education survey, a large majority of provosts believe that civility is a legitimate criterion in hiring, evaluating and promoting faculty members. Generally, the provosts are confident that faculty members show civility in their treatment of students, but have mixed views on whether professors show civility in dealings with faculty colleagues, and interactions with campus staff and administrators. Representing every sector of higher education, the provosts expressed general concern about civility. Asked if they were worried about “declining civility among higher education faculty,” 27 percent said that they were very concerned and 44 percent were somewhat concerned. Only 5 percent were not concerned at all.

Following the national discussion on civility may suggest a series of questions for campuses to consider: Does growing incivility on college campuses simply reflect a larger social trend in America? Should universities who reportedly value mutual respect, diversity, and the importance of civil debate tolerate incivility among and between employees? How might campuses go about encouraging civil discourse and basic civility?

**COMMENCEMENT 2015**

USC Aiken’s Spring commencement has moved to Wednesday, May 6th. This year, USC Aiken welcomes as the commencement speaker Judge Ken Starr. Judge Starr is a distinguished academician, lawyer, and public servant and currently serves as Baylor University’s President. Judge Starr also serves on the faculty of Baylor Law School as The Louise L. Morrison Chair of Constitutional Law and teaches a seminar on current Constitutional issues. Judge Starr is a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) and currently serves as President of the Southern University Conference. This past year, Chancellor Sandra Jordan was pleased to have an opportunity to work closely with President Starr as she served in the capacity of Vice President and President-Elect of the Southern University Conference.

Judge Starr has argued 36 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, including 25 cases during his service as Solicitor General of the United States from 1989-93. He also served as United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit from 1983 to 1989, as law clerk to Chief Justice Warren E. Burger from 1975 to 1977 and as law clerk to Fifth Circuit Judge David W. Dyer from 1973 to 1974. Starr was appointed to serve as Independent Counsel for five investigations, including Whitewater, from 1994 to 1999. Prior to coming to Baylor, Judge Starr served for six years as The Duane and Kelly Roberts Dean and Professor of Law at Pepperdine, where he taught current constitutional issues and civil procedure. He has also been of counsel to the law firm of Kirkland & Ellis LLP, where he was a partner from 1993 to 2004, specializing in appellate work, antitrust, federal courts, federal jurisdiction and constitutional law. Judge Starr previously taught constitutional law as an adjunct professor at New York University School of Law and was a distinguished visiting professor at George Mason University School of Law and Chapman Law School. He is admitted to practice in California, the District of Columbia, Virginia and the U.S. Supreme Court. Judge Starr is the author of more than 25 publications, and his book, *First Among Equals: The Supreme Court in American Life*, was published in 2002 and received positive critical review.
USC Aiken Pedestrian Bridge Update

Bids were received and were not within the funded amount. 3rd party estimators confirmed that current budget is not sufficient to construct a bridge. To make this project viable we will need to request additional funding authorization from the State. Indications are that the project needs approximately $1-1.5M of additional funding to build a bridge that USC Aiken had envisioned. USC Aiken and USC Columbia are working together to submit a budget request to the USC BOT’s Building & Grounds Committee later this spring. We are initially targeting sending the project back out to bid would be June 2015. USC Columbia is performing a traffic study and Aiken has prepared a report to highlight again the safety significance and need for the bridge. The A/E will also be engaged to revise the drawings with input from USC Aiken.

Penland Restroom Upgrades

Construction is completed on the south wing 1st and 2nd floor restrooms. North wing restrooms are in progress and are moving at a fast pace. Plumbing rough-ins, tile and counter tops are complete. Goal is to complete these restrooms by early March.

He&SS Elevator Refurbishment

Project was awarded to MAR contractor. Expected to start construction in May 2015. This project will take the elevator out of service for approximately 3 weeks.

COMING SUMMER 2015

Penland Mechanical Upgrades

Engineering Firm, ING Consulting, is preparing construction documents to replace the 225-ton chiller, primary pump, expansion tank, water heater, chilled water valves. Plan is to have construction drawings completed in February.

Ruth Patrick Science and Education Center Mechanical and Roof Repairs

This project will replace the original HVAC condensers, water heater, and boilers on the “old side” of RPSEC. Roof repairs will be made at the glass curtain wall and other areas to address leaks in the roof. Contract provided to engineering firms and are currently in design. Design is expected to be complete in February.
WOMEN’S SOCCER NEWS

Women’s Soccer Coach Sue Vodicka has accepted a head coaching job at Shattuck St. Mary’s in Faribault, Minn. “I’d like to thank Dr. Jordan, Dr. Kladivko and Randy Warrick for the opportunity to be a part of the USC Aiken family,” Vodicka said. “It has been a wonderful 10 years, where I have grown not only professionally, but personally. The warmth of the USC Aiken community was what attracted and sustained me during my time here. I am especially grateful to the other members of the athletic department who have supported me and the women’s soccer program. Most of all, I am honored to have been able to coach so many outstanding young women.”

“Our women’s soccer program has moved forward in many different ways because of Coach Vodicka,” Athletic Director Randy Warrick said. “She has made a positive difference in the competitiveness of our program, in the caliber of student-athlete being recruited and in the overall well-being of our women’s soccer players. You will not find many coaches that care about their student-athletes more, on the soccer field and off, than Coach Vodicka. We will all miss her and her enthusiasm, but wish her continued success as she pursues other career goals.” Vodicka recently wrapped up her 10th year at the helm of the Pacers’ program. During her time, she guided USC Aiken to 51 wins and two Peach Belt Conference Tournaments, including one at the 2014 campaign.

CHANCELLOR’S REMARKS CONTINUED

USC Aiken’s RPG committee took a year to become familiar with the RPG trends on our campus, analyze the data, look at national best practices, and submit a report which recommends areas of attention to help USC Aiken improve both retention and graduation.

In a recent report issued by the Florida system, the author noted that, “The action steps needed to improve graduation rates are relatively simple but can be difficult to implement...” unless four elements are in place.

1. **Someone to drive the process.** The institution needs to have someone in place that has the authority, skill, and passion to work across the campus to initiate needed changes.
2. **A plan for improvement in place that is based on reliable data.**
3. **Long term institutional commitment.** Committing to work on RPG for five or more years, and recognizing that little change can be made in retention and graduation numbers over a shorter time frame.
4. **There must be a team of individuals from across campus who are committed to student success and who meet frequently to assess progress and recommend ways to move forward.**

USC Aiken takes pride in being attentive to student success. The next steps for USC Aiken include focusing on removing obstacles that unintentionally and unnecessarily impede graduation; and implementing practices, programs, and co-curricular activities that enhance retention and graduation. Helping students complete a college degree may be one of the most meaningful ways an institution can be “student focused.”

Thanks to the members of the taskforce for their excellent work: Dr. Charmaine Wilson (co-chair), Dr. Allen Dennis, Ms. Heidi DiFranco, Professor Karl Fornes, Professor Patrick Gelinas, Mr. Tim Hall, Dean Clifton Jones, Dr. Deb Kladivko (co-chair), Dr. Lynne Rhodes, Dr. Michael Ritchie, Dr. Gerard Rowe, Dr. Windy Schweder, Professor Lisa Simmons, Professor Kari Weaver, and Dr. Stacie Williams.

Please take time to read the RPG Committee Report which is available at: http://web.usca.edu/forwardtogether/rpg.dot.
The USC Aiken Children’s Center just received re-accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This is a major accomplishment and the professionals staffing the USC Aiken Children’s Center, under the leadership of Lynn Williams are to be commended. More information about the accreditation process can be found here: http://www.naeyc.org/academy/primary/standardsintro

The 7th Annual Aiken’s Premier Wedding Expo will be held February 22 from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm at the USC Aiken Convocation Center. Sponsored by Global Spectrum and AllStar Tents & Events, the Convocation Center will be transformed into a one stop shop for all your wedding needs. A fashion show of the latest styles in wedding fashion will be at 2:30 with gowns from David’s Bridal and tuxedos from M’s Finest Tuxedos. At 3:30, we will have the Diamond Dash & Dig contest where two lucky contestants will be able to dig in a cake to find a ring. Once they find the ring, they will win a $5000 diamond ring from Floyd & Green. Clues start for the contest this Sunday and run through the 21st. Make plans to attend now. Tickets are only $10 and can be purchased at the box office the day of the event.

The iconic Harlem Globetrotters are coming to town with their unrivaled family show, featuring some of the greatest athletes on the planet. With incredible ball handling wizardry, amazing rim-rattling dunks and trick shots, side-splitting comedy and unequaled on-court fan interaction, this must-see event is guaranteed to entertain the whole family – creating memories that will last a lifetime. The Globetrotters will face a great challenge this year, as the infamous Washington Generals are more determined than ever to beat the Globetrotters. The Generals, the last team to beat the Globetrotters, are now coached by a former member of that 1971 team. They are on a mission and will do whatever it takes to win, with a new strategy that’s sure to give the Globetrotters a run for their money. Tickets start at $26 and are on sale now.