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2024 Report from the Board Chair

February 5, 2025

To Members of the University of South Carolina Community:

The 2024 calendar year was literally monumental for the University of South Carolina (“USC”) Board of Trustees, the USC System, and the USC flagship campus in Columbia. This report highlights many accomplishments that spanned the USC System and the state, noting important actions recorded by the Board to further USC’s mission and to better the lives of all South Carolinians.

On April 19, USC commemorated the desegregation of the flagship campus by [unveiling a monument that portrays the three Black students who integrated the student body when they enrolled at the University on September 11, 1963](#). Commissioned by the Board of Trustees in 2022, the monument depicts Robert G. Anderson, Henrie Monteith Treadwell, and James L. Solomon Jr. in bronze atop a base of black granite. Treadwell, Solomon, and their respective families attended the ceremonial unveiling. Anderson, who died in 2009, was represented at the ceremony by his sister and extended family.

The monument stands to the side of the grand steps leading up to McKissick Museum, at the perimeter of the historic Horseshoe. Students, faculty, and staff now observe the monument every day, and the monument is seen also by the 38,000+ annual visitors to the University who begin their tours of USC in front of McKissick.

Now that the Board’s vision for this monument is complete, Trustees look forward to a future in which generations of Gamecocks and visitors will pause before the figures of Anderson, Treadwell, and Solomon to contemplate the role that those determined students played in ensuring a better future for USC and its students.

[Sadly, the Board placed flowers at the feet of the figure of Solomon at the monument on November 30, to memorialize his death on the](#)

[previous day](#). Trustees and the entire USC community gave thanks for Solomon's lifetime of service to the State of South Carolina. An Air Force veteran, Solomon held multiple state offices after studying at USC, serving the State Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Social Services, the Richland One School Board, and the Sumter District 17 School Board. He was awarded the Order of the Palmetto for his government service, and he was named an Honorary Life Member of the USC Alumni Association.

Trustees and the USC community were thankful for much more in 2024, including record enrollment, a new name for the College of Engineering and Computing, a new facilities master plan, a new Athletics Director, a record fiscal year for both sponsored research and fundraising, another national championship for women's basketball, and many other innovations at USC Columbia and across the USC System:

- Accepting [a \\$30M gift from Alex Molinaroli and his family to name the Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing](#), to create new programs within the college, to support recruitment of students and faculty, to purchase new equipment, to construct new facilities, to fund start-ups, and to position the college as a beacon of excellence in the Mid-Atlantic for engineering and economic engagement.
- Voting to implement [USC Next, a new facilities master plan for USC Columbia](#), which will restore the historic campus, innovate student living and learning spaces, introduce improved research buildings, and foster USC's new health sciences campus.
- Cutting the ceremonial ribbon to open [a new nursing facility in partnership with the Lexington Medical Center](#), to train new generations of nurses through cutting-edge technology and curricula.
- Enrolling more students and educating more South Carolinians than ever at USC Columbia, with [a record student body of 38,300 and a freshman class of 7,290](#), while implementing [a new statewide transfer agreement for students from the state's technical colleges](#).
- Supporting Admissions and Enrollment Management as the unit's professional staff enacted innovations to improve recruitment of new students: 1) [guaranteeing admission to S.C. residents ranked within the top 10 percent of their graduating classes](#); 2) [covering tuition and academic fees across the USC System for S.C. students within the top 10 percent of their graduating classes who live in households with incomes below \\$80,000](#); and 3) [joining the STARS](#)

[College Network](#) of 32 U.S. institutions of higher education who recruit high school students from small towns and rural localities.

- Conferring approximately 12,516 [undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees across the USC System during April, May, and December](#).
- Setting [a budget for 2024-25](#) that, for the sixth consecutive year, does not increase in-state tuition prices, thanks to the investment made by the South Carolina General Assembly.
- Submitting a budget request for 2025-26 that forecasts no increase for in-state tuition prices for the seventh consecutive year and that introduces [a University hospital that will specialize in neurological care](#).
- Reviewing and approving [architectural renderings for the USC Brain Health Center](#) and [opening a brain health clinic in Sumter](#).
- [Meeting with Southeastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey](#) to discuss the future of intercollegiate athletics.
- Celebrating in Cleveland as [Coach Dawn Staley and her women's basketball team won a third national championship](#); then attending a [White House ceremony to honor Coach Staley and her team](#).
- Approving an employment contract for [USC's 31st Director of Athletics, Jeremiah Donati](#), welcoming him and his family to Columbia during a special press conference at Williams-Brice Stadium; and thanking Coach Ray Tanner for his leadership as USC's 30th Director of Athletics and for his two national championships as head coach of the USC baseball team, through [the naming of Ray Tanner Field at Founders Park](#).
- Issuing [a request for proposals for new development on properties surrounding Williams-Brice Stadium](#) and then approving [an additional request for proposals for substantial renovations to Williams-Brice itself](#).
- Approving an employment contract for [new Vice President for Marketing Dan Dillon](#), who brings to Columbia his previous experiences at both the University of Florida and Arizona State University.
- Approving an employment contract for [new Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer John "Brice" Bible Jr.](#), who worked

previously in similar capacities at both the University of Buffalo and Ohio University.

- Selecting three tenured faculty members to receive [2024 Carolina Trustees Professorships](#), funded by donations from the USC Board of Trustees.
- Launching [new academic programs, new interprofessional programs and collaborations, cooperative agreements to enable medical education, a new innovation center, and other academic initiatives](#) – all intended to strengthen academic, research, and workforce opportunities for USC students.
- Recording a [27-percent annual increase in sponsored awards received by USC Columbia faculty and researchers](#), bringing the total for the fiscal year to \$309M.
- Receiving an all-time-high \$130.7M in gifts from donors and friends, also increasing the size of USC Columbia’s endowments to all-time highs.
- Congratulating the USC academic programs, colleges, and schools featured in the [newest U.S. News & World Report rankings](#), including #1 rankings for the Darla Moore School of Business’s International MBA program and the College of Nursing’s online master’s program.
- Applauding [USC Columbia’s “green light” rating for free speech](#), as determined by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (“FIRE”), and applauding again as [USC Columbia’s position in the FIRE free speech rankings of colleges and universities climbed from #246 to #34](#), after USC Columbia revised relevant institutional policies and witnessed improved student opinions regarding the campus climate.
- Publishing [a first op-ed that highlights USC’s successes in the midst of unrest among other U.S. colleges and universities](#) and [a second op-ed differentiating lawful student dissent from unlawful violence](#).
- Sending four Trustees and the Board Secretary to the [2024 Annual Conference on Trusteeship sponsored by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges \(“AGB”\)](#), so that they could bring back to the full Board useful lessons about Trustees’ fiduciary work; and administering [the AGB Board Performance Survey](#) to document the Board’s improvements to its own practices and culture.
- [Conferring honorary degrees](#) on alumna and Fox News journalist Ainsley Earhardt, pastor and philanthropist Solomon Jackson Jr., S.C. Secretary of

Commerce Harry McKinley Lightsey III, retired Judge Clifton Newman, beloved former USC President Harris Pastides and former First Lady Patricia Moore-Pastides, and health policy expert Dr. Willie Underwood III.

- Thanking Scott Moïse for completing her two-year term on the Board of Trustees in her capacity as President of the [USC Alumni Association's Board of Governors](#) and then orienting her successor, Michael Bond, to his Trustee role.
- Congratulating Student Body President Emmie Thompson as she completed her advisory service to the Board and then earned her undergraduate degree; and welcoming new Student Body President Patton Byars as he joins us at the Board table for meetings of the Trustees.
- Mourning the [death of Trustee Miles Loadholt](#), who earned two degrees at USC, sat on the executive committee of the Gamecock Club for 25 years, was first elected to the Board in 1996, and served as Board Chair and a member of two presidential search committees during his tenure as Trustee.
- [Saluting Dr. Eddie Floyd for his 42 years of service to the USC Board of Trustees as he retired from the Board](#) and then welcoming Dr. Coleman Floyd Buckhouse to the Board.

These accomplishments for 2024 signal promising momentum for 2025; and – as of this writing – the 2025 calendar year is off to a fantastic start: Results of a new economic impact study demonstrate that [the USC System contributes \\$7.4B annually to the South Carolina economy](#). [The Board of Trustees approved a contract extension for Coach Dawn Staley](#), making her the highest-paid coach in women's basketball in the nation. A few days later, [the Board approved a contract extension for head football coach Shane Beamer](#).

As the USC Board of Trustees continues its service to the University and to the State of South Carolina in 2025, the USC System's academic excellence will further propel economic prosperity and lives of fulfillment.

Forever To Thee,



Thad H. Westbrook, Board Chair