Dear Colleagues,

The campus visioning and strategic planning initiative, *Forward Together*, culminated in the creation of four institutional goals developed through a highly collaborative and participatory process. Strategy 3.1 of Goal 3 states that the institution will “Provide additional support to faculty and staff that promotes job satisfaction and offers opportunities to better serve our constituents.” One action step associated with this goal is the implementation of a plan to address those staff and faculty salaries that are below expected ranges. These salaries may be lower than the regional averages because individuals were hired at a lower than average salary, or they may be lower than expected because the salary lost ground during years of state or institutional financial hardships. Nonetheless, this initiative is designed to address, over time, those salaries that are lower than the regional average for similar positions at other institutions for reasons other than performance (earned inequities).

As you may remember, a task force of faculty and staff was formed to recommend a plan to address this issue. Of course, if the university magically received an additional 3 million in recurring dollars (that was available today and guaranteed into the future), we could address all the salaries that are below expectations at one time. However, that is not the reality for USC Aiken (nor, in all honesty, for most public institutions). Thus, we need an equitable plan that allows us to address this issue in a reasonable timeframe, based on the belief that we will continue to recruit and retain students, and continue to find financial efficiencies that will allow us to prioritize employee salaries while also addressing our current operating budget and meeting our current financial commitments.

The plan presented here as the Fair Wage Adjustment Plan offers a way forward to address these lower than expected salaries, using dollars generated through student growth and retention and careful stewardship of our resources. The plan represents a major financial commitment by the university and makes salaries, rather than other institutional needs, a priority. Thus, it is important that you take the time to review the plan and have an opportunity to respond with questions or comments. The original
message to campus, sharing of the plan and requesting comments, is repeated below. Please note the comment period continues until January 16th. Once everyone who desires to provide feedback has done so, responses to questions will be provided and the process of tweaking the proposal, if necessary, will take place. More detailed information about implementation will be shared, and the implementation will begin during this semester.

Sandra J. Jordan
Chancellor

Email sent to Faculty and Staff on 12-16-14
Attached you will find the review DRAFT of the Fair Wage Adjustment Plan as promised. Once we have heard from the campus, we will finalize our plan and begin to implement the plan over the next five years. We believe that the proposed plan will have a positive impact on a significant number of our employees with this first year of implementation.

It is important to remember that this first year of implementation will not fully address all of our salary issues, such as compression, but is a first step to move the campus forward in providing a fair wage for our faculty and staff. As we hire new faculty and staff, we are working hard to hire them in at a fair wage to ensure they will not be part of the inequity pool which will allow us to address the existing needs that have been identified. This may create some compression issues in the short term but in the long term it will allow us to avoid creating more inequities. The Fair Wage Adjustment Plan will be re-evaluated in five years and adjusted if needed. Since the implementation of this plan will be a budgetary priority for USC Aiken, our salary enhancement initiative will take priority over other funding requests. The full implementation of this plan over the next five years is also tied to continued enrollment growth and changes in state funding levels/mandates. With that in mind, it is important to remember that enrollment is not the sole duty of one office, but of everyone on our campus.

While this plan is designed to focus on issues of inequity, a separate salary plan designed to address merit is under discussion for FY 2016 because rewarding outstanding work performance is important as well. More information on the merit plan will be shared with the campus as it develops.

I would again like to acknowledge the thoughtful work of the Salary Enhancement Committee. No plan will be perfect and there are many ways to calculate inequity adjustments, but I believe the plan presented to you allows us to begin addressing this problem in a meaningful way.

We welcome your questions, comments, and concerns which may be submitted via the following online survey link: https://lime.usca.edu/limesurvey/index.php?sid=32934&lang=en. Please do so by no later than January 16, 2015, so that we can move towards implementation in the spring semester.

Thank you and all the best wishes for the holiday season!

Chancellor Sandra Jordan