Dear Colleagues,

Planning for Fiscal Year 2016-17 has begun. As you know, USC Aiken utilizes a “bottom up” approach to budget development that begins with discussions and recommendations at the unit level. The unit level recommendations are entered into TracDat by the unit heads and requests for resources are included with the program reviews. From there, the requests go to the next level of review and prioritization until it ultimately comes to the members of the Cabinet, who look holistically at all requests in relation to expected increases in operational costs and any changes in revenue.

In order to “close the loop” and provide a greater level of transparency, USC Aiken began the practice of hosting a Campus Budget Forum to share the draft budget with the University before it is submitted to me. This is an opportunity for the Cabinet to respond to questions and discuss their funding priorities and a chance for me to hear the discussions. During the upcoming Forum, the campus will receive a brief overview of the University’s budget process and all divisional budget requests that were submitted by units via TracDat will be presented. Each Vice Chancellor will share their current priorities from this list (and rationales) with the campus. The purpose of the Forum is to increase campus awareness of the requests from across all units on campus. The Forum concludes with a time for questions and answers. Based on the positive feedback received, the Cabinet and I have decided to make this an annual event. This year, the Budget Forum is scheduled for Wednesday, March 30, 2016, at 3:30 p.m. in the Business and Education Building Room 124.

This Forum will again help highlight how we are working to employ our strategic plan strategy 3.2.2 “Ensure sustainable and optimal utilization of campus resources that link the budget to strategic goals.” The priorities outlined by each Vice Chancellor (and feedback offered by the campus) will assist the Chancellor, the Cabinet, and the Campus Budget & Planning Committee as the budget process for Fiscal Year 2016-17 continues.

Please keep in mind that the discussion at this Forum will focus on divisional budget requests. Clearly there are important “university-wide” items such as possible unfunded mandates from Federal and State Government and inflation on utilities and other contracts that the University will also need to consider as the FY2016-17 budget process continues to develop. Please be aware that we are continuing with our plan to implement the second round of the Fair Wage Plan later this semester. Rest assured, continued implementation of a Fair Wage Plan remains a top priority for me and the Cabinet, but this Forum is not intended to be a discussion of salaries, tuition rates, or what the role of the State should (or shouldn’t) be. This Forum is about helping the campus to understand the breadth of campus requests and ultimately be more transparent and help build understanding of how and why budget decisions occur.

I hope to see you and your departmental/divisional colleagues at the Forum. Thank you for all that you do to keep USC Aiken moving forward!

Sincerely,

Sandra J. Jordan
Chancellor