USC Aiken Bridge Update

After significant efforts to overcome various logistical and budgetary challenges related to its pedestrian bridge project, the University of South Carolina Aiken is proud to announce that significant progress has been made, and we are now poised to move the project forward.

The project, which includes the bridge itself, ADA accessible sidewalks and lighting, now has an authorized total budget of $1.8M. Approximately $700,000 of this amount is budgeted from State and County Transportation funds, and the remaining funding is coming from the University. Mr. Joe Sobieralski shares, “We are proud to say that there were no tuition or fee increases to students for this project. The University portion of the budget is made up of facilities related funding that has been set aside annually from existing tuition/fees as well as funding from enrollment growth and efficiencies found by the University.”

Past delays were mainly due to a property dispute among the University and outside parties who have rights to the land that our bridge will cross over. It took a significant amount of time to resolve this issue and, in that same period of time, the costs for the project continued to escalate. The University realized it had to spend a considerable amount of time negotiating and resolving budget issues, and it is now believed all issues are resolved so that this project can move forward.

The University plans to award the contract to build the bridge within the next few weeks. Although this is a very significant step in the process, once that happens, the University might not immediately see a lot of activity on campus. According to Mr. Sobieralski, “Most of the bridge construction will occur off campus, so we likely won’t see activity until next spring. However, when activity commences on campus, we expect it to move quickly, and our hope is that we will see the bridge open in the fall of 2016.”

Chancellor Jordan reminds everyone, “The bridge project has always been a priority about safety of our students, faculty, staff, and visitors. The USC Aiken
Convocation Center and Roberto Hernandez Stadium currently host many University events. Additionally, much of the University’s future facility growth, per the University’s Masterplan, is expected to take place on the west side of the campus.” The Robert M. Bell Parkway is already a busy road with a 55 mph speed limit, and although the timeframe has not been determined, there are future plans to widen the space for additional lanes. All of these current and future factors make for less than ideal conditions for pedestrians. Transportation professionals have agreed that a pedestrian bridge is our best solution to provide an appropriate and safe passage-way for individuals crossing from one side of the campus to another.

Dr. Jordan continues, “I truly commend Joe for his leadership and persistence with this project. He helped me push this topic, along with the assistance of our Aiken County Commission for Higher Education, the support of President Pastides, and our colleagues within the USC System. I also want to extend thanks to Mr. Brian Enter for providing local engineering expertise, and I know there are many other faculty and staff who lent their support and expertise.”

Make plans to celebrate the opening of the bridge in fall, 2016!

**Energy Reduction Milestone Achievement**

The University of South Carolina Aiken received an “Energy Reduction Milestone Achievement Award” by the Association of South Carolina Energy Managers and the Office of Regulatory Staff, (O.R.S.).

The original goal set by the state was to reduce the University’s energy consumption by 20% between the years 2000-2020. As Mr. Brian Enter states, “USC Aiken has actually reduced its energy consumption by 50% by 2015, five years earlier than the anticipated date of 2020.”

Much of the energy efficiencies were realized by replacing old energy hog-systems that were outdated. These included replacing old chillers and HVAC systems. Many older lighting systems, both inside and outside, were replaced by new LED lighting, and this includes automatic lighting sensors in many of our classrooms. Most classrooms and offices are now regulated by automatic heating and cooling systems as well.

The water from the natatorium is solar heated, and the University also invested in a pool cover. The air within the natatorium is pre-heated through the boiler, so the air itself is warmer and more efficient when entering the pool area. And while the University achieved this award earlier than its 2020 goal, the committee will not
rest on its laurels these next five years. There are still efficiencies to achieve, including more LED light replacements as well as newer HVAC systems.

The Chancellor extends her appreciation to the Department of Operations, Maintenance and Fleet Staff, for spearheading this achievement. They, along with our faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to continue sending in energy efficient ideas as the University celebrates this accomplishment.

Please continue to turn off your lights and computers when not in use to help conserve the energy at USC Aiken.