January 11, 2016

Dear USC Aiken Colleagues and Friends,

Happy New Year and welcome back to USC Aiken! As we embark on a new semester, I want to thank you and our campus community for continuing to distinguish this University as a great place to live, work, and learn. I look forward to a successful and productive new year!

As we begin this new calendar year and spring semester, I’d like to share a few highlights:

- We welcome Mr. James Raby to USC Aiken as the new Director of Marketing and Communications. Reporting to Ms. Mary Driscoll, Mr. Raby will manage the public relations, branding, and marketing for the University. During the fall semester, many of you participated in one of several focus groups that discussed the institution’s uniqueness, relevance, strengths, and impact. The result of those focus groups, led by Stewart and Associates, Inc., will be the foundation upon which Mr. Raby’s marketing work will be built.

- The Martin Luther King (MLK) holiday will be marked at USC Aiken with an event in the Convocation Center on Sunday, January 24th. Our special MLK event speaker is Judge Glenda Hatchett. Judge Hatchett was born in Atlanta, Georgia, earned her B.A. in political science from Mount Holyoke College and received her juris doctor degree from Emory University School of Law. She practiced law and served as Chief Presiding Judge in Fulton County before leaving to preside over the nationally syndicated television show, Judge Hatchett, which is currently running in its sixth year of national syndication. In 2014, Judge Hatchett returned to Atlanta and opened a law firm that bears her name. In addition to practicing law, Hatchett is a popular motivational speaker and speaks at conferences and events across the United States. The MLK event at the Convocation Center will begin at 2:30 pm and all are welcome to attend.

- The contract for construction of USC Aiken’s pedestrian bridge was awarded before the break, and we should see signs of construction by March. With good weather and barring any unforeseen issues, the bridge project should be completed sometime next fall. The project includes sidewalks on both sides of the bridge. Preparations have begun with the clearing of underbrush in the pine grove between the Pickens-Salley House and Residential Housing.
• Kudos to Enrollment Management and all who assist with prospective visits! Spring 2015 to spring 2016 enrollment is up, and we are optimistic that the final result after the completion of the drop dates will be a net increase in both headcount and FTE.

• The University will continue to work on effective internal communications throughout this year. A survey is being developed to solicit faculty and staff feedback on internal communications, and an action plan will be developed by the Extended Cabinet.

• Healthy 4 Life continues as a campus focus with numerous activities and initiatives planned throughout the semester to promote healthy choices and habits.

• Following up on the recommendations of a faculty task force charged with helping USC Aiken capitalize on our new COPLAC affiliation, Dr. Tim Lintner organized the first annual symposium on Engaged Teaching on January 7th. Congratulations to Dr. Lintner and all involved for pulling together a content rich event and for the successful launch of this new initiative.

• An advisory task force on summer work hours will be formed this month to consider the pros and cons of continuing special hours of operations in the summer. In the past, the institution has granted more flexibility around summer office hours, but this practice is not without its critics and challenges. The task force will be charged with soliciting feedback and proposing a way forward. Ms. Angel Miano, CEA Chair, has been asked to establish and chair the task force. Advice to the Chancellor is due by February 15th.

• The USC Aiken Signature Speakers Series returns this year with noted scholar Dr. Elaine Pagels as our special guest. Dr. Pagels is the Harrington Spear Paine Professor of Religion at Princeton University. She is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and is known for her landmark studies and writing on the Gnostic Gospels. Her popular books include The Gnostic Gospels (1979), Adam, Eve, and the Serpent (1988), The Origin of Satan (1995), Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas (2003), Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity (2007), and Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation (2012). On February 11th at the Etherredge Center, Dr. Pagels will speak about her scholarly research into the Book of Revelation which places this controversial Book of The Bible into its historic context and explores where the book's apocalyptic vision of the end of the world may have originated.

These, of course, are but a few of the many initiatives and upcoming events that enrich our campus and the greater community and make USC Aiken a great place to live, work, and learn. The Office of the Chancellor newsletter will be posted soon with additional information.

I wish everyone a Happy New Year and send my best wishes for a wonderful semester. This is an exceptional community of dedicated faculty, staff, and administrators whose collective effort propels us forward in the areas of teaching, research, student support, and public service. Thank you for making this an academic home to which I am always happy to return. Have a great semester!

Sincerely yours,

Sandra J. Jordan
Chancellor