

COLLEGE of  
CHARLESTON  
FOUNDED 1770

P. George Benson, President

June 10, 2010

**MEMORANDUM TO:** All Members of the College of Charleston Community

**FROM:** P. George Benson, President PGB

**SUBJECT:** President's Commission on Diversity, Access, Equity and Inclusion

Effective immediately, I am establishing a *Commission on Diversity, Access, Equity and Inclusion* to be comprised of those members of the College Community listed in the attachment to this memorandum. I am appointing Associate Vice President John Bello-Ogunu, Ph.D., and Joe Kelly, Professor of English to serve as co-Chair of the new Commission.

As you know, the *Strategic Plan* approved by the Board of Trustees last October calls for significant improvement in the College's recruitment, hire, and retention of a diverse faculty and staff. These efforts are to parallel a similar commitment to recruit, retain and graduate a diverse student body. The *Strategic Plan* also recognizes that all individuals who come to the College as students, faculty, or staff deserve a welcoming, inviting, and supportive campus environment where human differences are celebrated and where success is based on merit and not on appearance, or speech patterns, sexual orientation, or any other human difference.

The purpose of these diversity initiatives is to enhance the value of a College of Charleston education and to contribute to the personal growth of each of us as educators and administrators. As a community of scholars, we must constantly strive to expand and inform our personal perspectives, to increase our understanding of the national and global issues that surround us, and to increase our tolerance for the unfamiliar or the unconventional. There is no better way to achieve these objectives than to live, work, and learn in an environment enriched by the diverse personal experiences of people from many different geographic areas who bring with them a wide array of different cultures and religious, social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Diversity is a compelling academic interest of the College of Charleston and as such must be pursued with sustained institutional efforts.

It is, of course, difficult to change the culture of any university campus and to challenge practices that have grown over the years to become accepted as the norm. Nevertheless, when it comes to diversity, the college's past stands as a stubborn reminder of what we have neglected to do, and what remains to be done.

The initial work of this Commission will be the formulation of an *Institutional Diversity Strategic Plan* that will be submitted to me and the College's Senior Leadership Team for review. After the Team completes its review, the final draft of the Plan will be presented to the Board of Trustees for its approval. In addition to this effort, I am asking the Commission to continuously review and investigate the state of diversity on our campus and to make recommendations to me on how we can best improve that state. This Commission is a *working* group that will produce *work products* for dissemination to the campus community. There will be complete transparency of what the Commission has found and what it recommends for improvement. In the near future, Dr. Bello-Ogunu will announce the first meeting of the Commission and will distribute to its members my specific charge for action. All meetings of the Commission will be publically announced and open to the public.

I want to thank everyone who previously served on the President's diversity committee. Their efforts are greatly appreciated. As stated above, however, because this new Commission is now established, all previously established Presidential committees having the same or similar purposes are officially dissolved as of this date.

In addition to the members of the Commission who are listed on the attachment, I am asking the Office of Legal Affairs to provide the Commission such legal advice and counsel as may, from time to time, be necessary or appropriate.

Each member of the Executive Team is directed to circulate this memorandum among all employees in their respective divisions. Further, the Executive Vice President for Marketing and Communications will publish this memorandum on an appropriate page of the College's web site to facilitate public distribution.

Thank you.