April 23, 2013

Dear MUSC Colleagues:

This past week much publicity has occurred highlighting the need for Charleston to have the equivalent of a comprehensive research university. Recent articles in the Post & Courier have accentuated interest in local government and the business community. President Greenberg’s April 16th letter to the MUSC community noted that we currently have a somewhat fragmented cluster of specialized colleges and universities that could better serve Charleston through stronger integration. While much of the publicity in the news media has been about a merger with the College of Charleston (CofC), there are many ways to promote stronger integration, among them institutionally formalized collaborations.

To that end, selected members of the CoFC and MUSC boards of trustees, their provosts, and vice presidents for administration and finance have been asked to initiate preliminary discussions pertaining to existing and potential future collaborations, both academically and structurally. We appreciate that there is likely much curiosity at MUSC about the inherent benefit to MUSC and how these discussions will come forth. First of all, while we already have a number of successful collaborations in such areas as neuroscience, marine biology, and ethics, there is necessity to expand partnerships in other key areas. Recent advances in learning technologies will transform undergraduate and graduate education nationally and we should be addressing those issues together, the transformation of health care has implications for new educational initiatives at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, our university’s strategic focus on entrepreneurialism requires business engagement, there is a regional need to expand training in numerous areas related to information technology, of which biomedical informatics is one, and advances in biotechnology, by necessity, must draw from such disciplines as chemistry, computational biology and physics, to name just a few potential areas for our universities to plan our respective futures together.

Second, it has been demonstrated at other cities that through structured collaborations demonstrating value-added to the economic and cultural development of the region, higher education institutions have been the recipients of expanded resources through a combination of governmental, corporate, and philanthropic initiatives.

While we are very early in the dialogue, we also write to assure you that in-depth consideration will be given to how we can best engage the necessary MUSC constituencies. We will initiate that process by sponsoring information sessions with such groups as the deans and department chairs, the faculty senate, center directors, and key administrative units. This will be just the first step in what will likely be an extended process of planning and communication.

We look forward to engaging you in this process and would be most pleased to respond to any requests for information.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Sothmann, Ph.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

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