

**PALMETTO
COLLEGE**



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
PALMETTO COLLEGE

USC Palmetto College

Celebrating Five Years of Success

Academic Year 2013-14 through Academic Year 2017-18
Launch – Fall 2013

Committed to Access, Affordability and Flexibility in Education

IN HONOR OF USC PRESIDENT AND FIRST LADY HARRIS AND PATRICIA MOORE PASTIDES

We dedicate this Five-Year Report to you for your outstanding leadership in the creation of Palmetto College.



FROM THE DAY HE TOOK OFFICE, Harris Pastides has envisioned South Carolina's flagship university providing a better educated workforce and a higher standard of living throughout the state. As the 2011-12 academic year began, he was gladdened to welcome a freshman class that was not only the largest ever, at 4,569 students, but also among the most accomplished. He was also pleased that of the 45,774 students enrolled throughout the university system, about three-quarters were South Carolina residents.

Even so, President Pastides felt strongly that the university could do more to reach more South Carolinians. He asked his team several exploratory questions: How could the university improve access and affordability statewide? How could USC bring higher education to those who are place-bound in the small towns and rural corners of South Carolina? How could USC increase the number of baccalaureate degree holders in the state?

In January 2012, with these questions in mind, he announced the most significant reorganization in the university's modern history – a new initiative called Palmetto College. By offering online baccalaureate completion courses to students who had earned associate degrees but

could not relocate to attend a four-year college, USC was now expanding access to higher education and to the quality and prestige of a USC degree. Within a year, Palmetto College would have its first chancellor, Susan Elkins, as well as resources from the entire USC system and recurring funding from the state legislature. Palmetto College officially launched in January 2013 and would provide an affordable and convenient way for South Carolinians to pursue a bachelor's degree, new jobs and promotions.

President Pastides spent his fourth year as president successfully connecting the dots between the needs of a growing student body and those of the statewide community. His reflective plan included growing a dynamic and well-educated workforce while creating programs that would directly and positively impact community needs. From Palmetto College to the USC School of Medicine-Greenville to USC Connect, his team began to raise the standard for all South Carolinians.

Excerpt from the President's Ten-Year Report (2018)



USC Palmetto College Five-Year Report

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Executive Council



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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About USC Palmetto College

Palmetto College Launch

April 18, 2013

*Accessible, Affordable and Flexible Degrees
for all South Carolinians!*



USC Palmetto College is launched and includes:

- *Seven new online bachelor's degree completion programs*
- *Four regional USC campuses—
USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie,
USC Sumter, USC Union—become
USC Palmetto College Campuses*
- *Extended University/Ft. Jackson*
- *Continuing Education*

Grand Opening announcement at S.C. State House

Recruitment begins for USC Palmetto College Online
bachelor's degree completion programs



Dirk "D.J." Bron Jr.

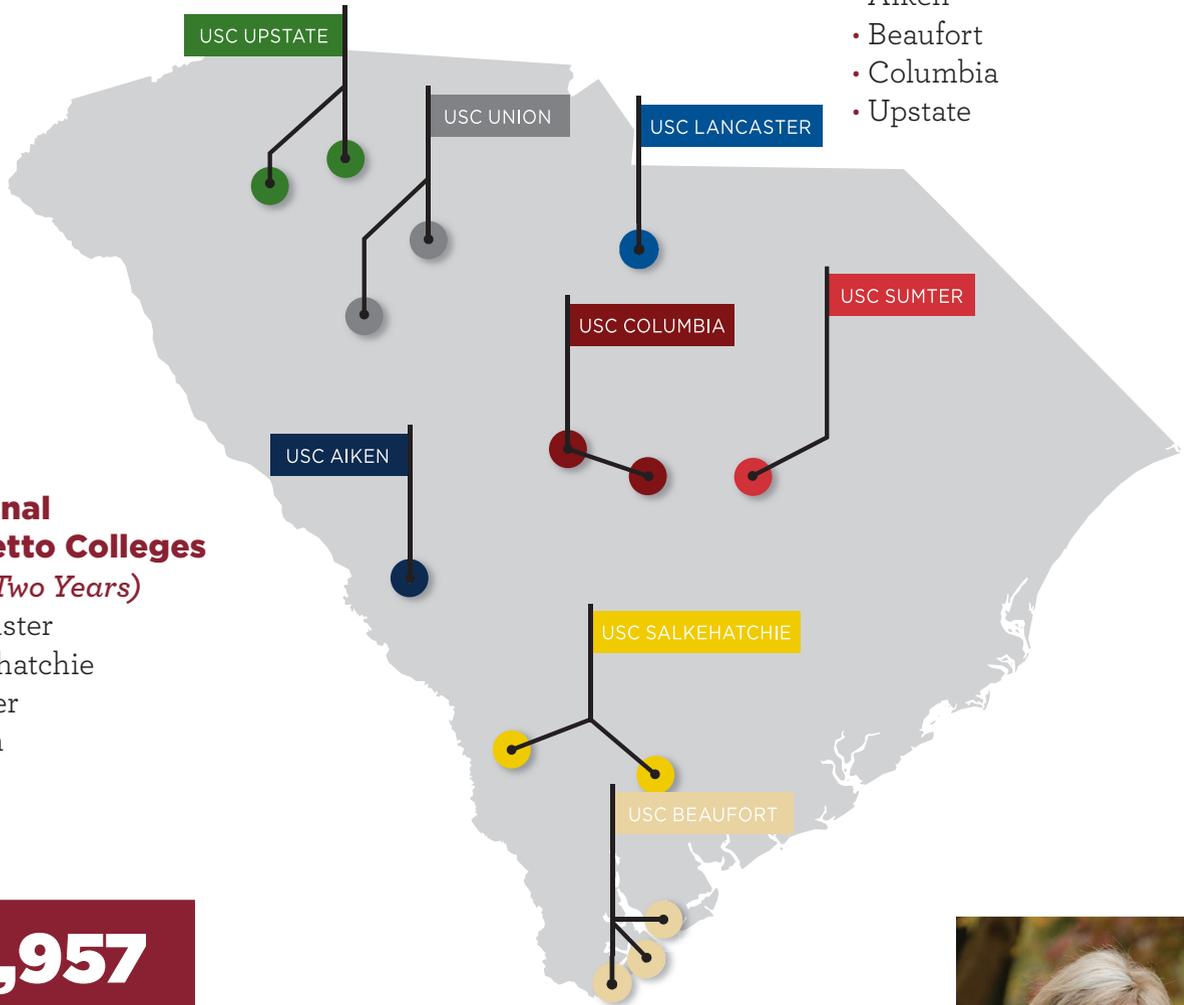
- Served as student spokesman at 2013 Palmetto College launch ceremony
- Worked as a S.C. Highway Patrol Trooper with multiple shifts and locations across the state
- Started associate degree at USC Salkehatchie when stationed in the Lowcountry
- Finished associate degree at USC Union's Laurens location while serving in the Upstate
- Earned a B.S. in Criminal Justice in 2016 from USC Upstate through Palmetto College Online
- Sworn in as an associate magistrate in Laurens County in 2017 – after earning the requisite bachelor's degree

Palmetto College Structure

A USC System Approach

Online Degree Completion Programs Four-Year Institutions (Second Two Years)

- Aiken
- Beaufort
- Columbia
- Upstate



Regional Palmetto Colleges (First Two Years)

- Lancaster
- Salkehatchie
- Sumter
- Union

5,957

Students
Enrolled in
Palmetto
College
Fall 2017

“So many people from all eight institutions across the USC system have worked tirelessly as one USC Palmetto College team, resulting in many successes over the past five years for students across this great state.”

Susan Elkins
Chancellor,
USC Palmetto College



USC Palmetto College Strategic Plan



Goal 1 Enrollment Growth

PALMETTO COLLEGE OVERALL

Fall 2013 4,919
Fall 2017 5,957

Up 21%

ASSOCIATE DEGREE REGIONAL PALMETTO COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Fall 2013 4,240
Fall 2017 4,826

Up 13.8%

PALMETTO COLLEGE ONLINE MAJORS

Fall 2013 503
Fall 2017 984

Up 95.6%



ASSOCIATE DEGREE GRADUATES

Fall 2013 490
Fall 2017 550

5-Year Total 2,484

Up 12.25%

ONLINE BACHELOR'S DEGREE GRADUATES

Fall 2013 181
Fall 2017 395

5-Year Total 1,234

Up 118%



Goal 2 Student Success



Goal 3 Faculty Excellence

REGIONAL PALMETTO COLLEGE CAMPUSES 2013-2017

New Faculty Hired: **34**
Tenured/Promoted
Faculty: **44**

PALMETTO COLLEGE ONLINE

Doubled the number of
programs offered since
2013, resulting in more
faculty positions

FACULTY AWARDS

Created awards to
include **Service** and
Scholarship alongside
Teaching



Since May 2014,
37
 Palmetto College Bachelor's Degree
 completion students have
 earned **Graduation with
 Leadership Distinction**

Students, faculty and staff
 across Palmetto College are
 heavily involved in
**Community Service
 Professional Service
 University Service
 Other Service Activities**



**PALMETTO COLLEGE
 CAMPUSES**

Enrollment/Revenue Growth
 Balanced Budgets
 Increased Fund Balances
 Shared Resource Model/Cost Savings

**PALMETTO COLLEGE
 ONLINE**

Enrollment/Revenue Growth
 Tuition Revenue Share Model
 New funding for all eight campuses
 Shared Resource Model/Cost Savings

OVER \$6 MILLION DEVELOPMENT DOLLARS RAISED

**PALMETTO COLLEGE
 CAMPUSES**

Palmetto College *Blueprint
 for Academic Excellence*
 aligns with *Focus Carolina
 Strategic Plan*

**PALMETTO COLLEGE
 ONLINE**

5-Year Plan to align with
 USC Aiken, USC Beaufort,
 USC Columbia and USC Upstate
 Strategic Plans





2011–2013

- **July 2011**—USC President Harris Pastides begins planning process for Palmetto College, seeking to expand delivery of online education, increase enrollment, and deliver a low-cost degree to South Carolina residents
- **February 2012**—USC’s Board of Trustees approves Palmetto College and USC pushes for state funding to launch the enterprise
- **Summer 2012**—The S.C. legislature approves a \$5 Million state appropriation to fund the creation of Palmetto College
- **February 2013**—Arrival of Inaugural Chancellor Dr. Susan Elkins

- **April 2013**—USC Palmetto College is launched and includes:
 - Seven new online bachelor’s degree completion programs offered by USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, USC Columbia, and USC Upstate
 - Four regional USC campuses—USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter, USC Union—become USC Palmetto College Campuses
 - Extended University/Fort Jackson
 - Continuing Education



Grand Opening announcement at S.C. State House

Recruitment begins for USC Palmetto College Online bachelor’s degree completion programs

2013–2014

- **August 2013**—**4,919** students enrolled in Palmetto College
 - 4,259** on Palmetto College Campuses
 - Associate Degree programs
 - 157** in On-Site Bachelor’s Degree Completion Programs
 - 503** in PC Online Degree Completion programs, with students from 43 of 46 counties
- **September 2013**—USC Salkehatchie reopens historic Carolina Theatre in Allendale, S.C.
- **October 2013**—USC Lancaster opens Native American Studies Center and nursing simulation lab



503

*students enrolled
in USC Palmetto
College Online Degree
Completion Programs*

- **October 2013**—USC Palmetto College Board of Visitors established
- **December 2013**—First bachelor’s degrees conferred to Palmetto College Online majors

2014–2015

- **August 2014**—Palmetto College enrollment tops 5,000 for first time, at **5,208**
4,372 at Palmetto College Campuses
147 On-Site Bachelor’s Degree Completion Programs
689 Online Bachelor’s Degree Completion Programs
37% increase in PC Online Bachelor’s Degree Completion program enrollment from **503** to **689**
- **August 2014** – USC Salkehatchie engages in public/private partnership to open The Reserve, a residential hall on the Allendale campus



- **December 2014**—Topped 1,000 total students enrolled in PC Online with **1,015 enrolled** from Fall 2013 through Fall 2014
241 Bachelor’s degrees conferred through PC Online in first year from Fall 2013 through Fall 2014

2015–2016

- **Summer 2015**—Recognized as one of the **100 Best Online Colleges** by Affordable Colleges Online
- **September 2015**—Received prestigious **Telly Award** for first Palmetto College television commercial campaign
- **October 2015**—Both USC Salkehatchie and USC Union celebrated their **50th Anniversary**



2016–2017

- **August 2016**—Doubled number of PC Online bachelor’s degree completion programs from 7 to 14, adding 4 new programs in Fall 2016 and 3 new programs in Spring 2017.
- **September 2016**—USC Sumter celebrates 50th Anniversary
- **October 2016**—USC Union becomes NJCAA affiliate institution with baseball, softball and men’s and women’s soccer
- **November 2016**—Palmetto College Received top award from the Association of Continuing Higher Education International for Palmetto College Online as ACHE Outstanding Credit Program

14 Online Degree Completion Programs

- Accounting
- Business Administration Management
- Criminal Justice
- Elementary Education
- Health Informatics
- Health Promotion
- Hospitality Management
- Human Services
- Information Management & Systems
- Information Science
- Liberal Studies
- Organizational Leadership
- RN to BSN
- Special Education



2017–2018

- **October 2017**—Record headcount enrollment at two PC Campuses:
1,910 at USC Lancaster
959 at USC Union, nearly **doubling enrollment** in five years
USC Sumter had its **largest freshman class** in 25 years
USC Salkehatchie awarded **largest percentage of associate degrees** from any two-year institution in South Carolina
- **January 2018**—Launched **University of Possibilities** program for middle school students to inspire college attendance
- **March 2018**—Topped **1,000 enrolled** in PC Online in a single semester, with 1,002 enrolled



Success Stories

Teena Gooding

USC Upstate



Alumna Teena Gooding earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from USC Upstate through USC Palmetto College Online in August 2015.

She began a career in law enforcement in 1999, and joined the USC Police Department in 2003.

Gooding started work toward a bachelor's degree in 2005; however, as she worked her way up the ranks of the USCPD, it became more difficult to leave work to attend on-campus classes in Columbia.

She appreciates how the online degree completion program launched in 2013 complemented her hectic and unpredictable work schedule by providing flexibility to take coursework.

And she really found value in having an opportunity to learn with students from all walks of life.

Today, Gooding applies much of what she has learned in training new officers at the Columbia campus.

- **April 2018**—Celebrated 5th Anniversary along with inaugural USC Giving Day

Topped the **\$6 million** mark in philanthropic fundraising since launch

Established **Palmetto College Endowed Scholarship** of **\$50,000** in celebration of 5-year anniversary with leadership from the Palmetto College Board of Visitors



\$6 Million
philanthropic funds raised since launch

- **May 2018**—Exceeded the 1,000 mark in degrees conferred by Palmetto College Online, with **1,234 degrees** awarded since launch

- **July 2018**—**29,567 enrollment** (seats filled) and **100,798 student credit hours** generated in 1,169 Palmetto College online courses between Fall 2013 and Summer 2018

- **July 2018**—**3,055 majors** served from Fall 2013 through Summer 2018

High School Dual Credit offerings and enrollment doubled over five-year period, resulting in savings for students and their families of **over \$50 million dollars** in college costs

2018–2019

- **October 2018**—Honored in Washington, D.C., by the nation's leading continuing and professional education organization, University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) with the Credit Program of Excellence Award from UPCEA South

- **November 2018**—Palmetto College Online recognized as the Best Online College in South Carolina by TheBestSchools.org



USC Palmetto College Online

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM LEADERSHIP



**University of
South Carolina**
Harris Pastides
President
USC System
USC Columbia



USC Aiken
Sandra Jordan
Chancellor



USC Beaufort
Al M. Panu
Chancellor



**USC Palmetto
College**
Susan Elkins
Chancellor



USC Upstate
Brendan Kelly
Chancellor



USC Palmetto College earns 2016 ACHE Distinguished Credit Program Award

The University of South Carolina Palmetto College received the 2016 ACHE Distinguished Credit Program Award at the 78th Annual Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE) Conference, held October 2016 in New Orleans, La., in the French Quarter's historic Hotel Monteleone.

USC Palmetto College earned the award for the collaborative nature of its online degree programs from USC Aiken, USC Beaufort, USC Columbia and USC Upstate to provide an accessible, affordable and flexible USC education to those seeking to complete a bachelor's degree online.

The ACHE conference theme was "Innovation, Transformation and Service in Continuing Higher Education: Creating Pathways to the Future." Conference attendees included 127 universities, colleges, exhibitors, related associations and other organizations.

ACHE bills itself on its website as a "dynamic network of diverse professionals who are dedicated to promoting excellence in continuing higher education and to sharing their expertise and experience with one another."

USC Palmetto College National Honors





Associate Provost Chris Nesmith and USC Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins receive the 2016 ACHE Distinguished Credit Program Award at 78th annual ACHE Conference in New Orleans, La.

USC Palmetto College commercial campaign earns high honors at 35th Annual Telly Awards

The commercial production company Dust of the Ground, in conjunction with creative minds within USC Palmetto College and University Communications, earned a 2015 Telly Award for the USC Palmetto College commercial campaign at the 35th Annual Telly Awards.

The Telly Award is the premier award honoring the finest film and video productions, groundbreaking web commercials, videos and films, and outstanding local, regional and cable TV commercials and programs.

Specifically, Dust of the Ground, the University of South Carolina and USC Palmetto College earned the Silver Telly Award in the category of “Regional TV & Multi-Market Cable – Campaign – Business-to-Consumer.”



The Silver Telly Award is the highest level of achievement given for commercial work; the Gold is only given as lifetime achievement work to individuals.

The USC Palmetto College Online commercial campaign was chosen for a Silver Telly Award from among 12,000 entries from all 50 states and numerous countries.

The team from Dust of the Ground (a group of young USC alumni filmmakers) delivered the official Telly trophies to Palmetto College and University Communications personally after the win.

“We’re proud of the accomplishment and the impact that our commercials have in the markets in which they air,” said USC Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins.

“In fact, there are recorded spikes for inquiries and enrollments during the periods in which our commercials air on broadcast and cable television, as well as in the form of digital online pre-roll video.”



USC Palmetto College

Sher Downing
*Vice Chancellor
for eLearning,*

USC Aiken

Jamie Edwards
*Director of
Distance Learning*

USC Beaufort

Lori Vargo
Director of eLearning

USC Upstate

David S. McCurry
*Director of
Distance Education*

Palmetto College Implementation Team

Academic and administrative
leaders from all eight
campuses provide systemwide
leadership as one Palmetto
College team.

from Program Launch to Fall 2017

USC Aiken

Business Administration Management
launched 2013

STUDENTS ENROLLED
2013 28
2017 **135**



382%
increase

Accounting
launched 2017

STUDENTS ENROLLED
2017 **43**

NEW PROGRAM

Special Education
launched 2017

STUDENTS ENROLLED
2017 **4**

NEW PROGRAM



USC Beaufort

Human Services
launched 2013

STUDENTS ENROLLED
2013 6
2017 **86**



1,333%
increase

Hospitality Management
launched 2016

STUDENTS ENROLLED
2016 1
2017 **12**

Health Promotion
launched 2016

STUDENTS ENROLLED
2016 5
2017 **19**



 **1,002**

majors enrolled in Bachelor's Degree Completion Programs, Spring 2018

USC Columbia

Elementary Education
STUDENTS ENROLLED

2013 12

2017 **43**

Liberal Studies

launched 2013

STUDENTS ENROLLED

2013 184

2017 **193**

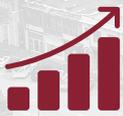
Organizational Leadership

launched 2013

STUDENTS ENROLLED

2013 119

2017 **144**



258%
increase



USC Upstate

Information Management & Systems
STUDENTS ENROLLED

2016 5

2017 **33**

Criminal Justice
STUDENTS ENROLLED

2013 17

2017 **92**

Health Informatics
STUDENTS ENROLLED

2017 **13**

NEW PROGRAM



560%
increase

Nursing (RN-BSN)
STUDENTS ENROLLED

2013 137

2017 **168**



USC Palmetto College Online: By the Numbers

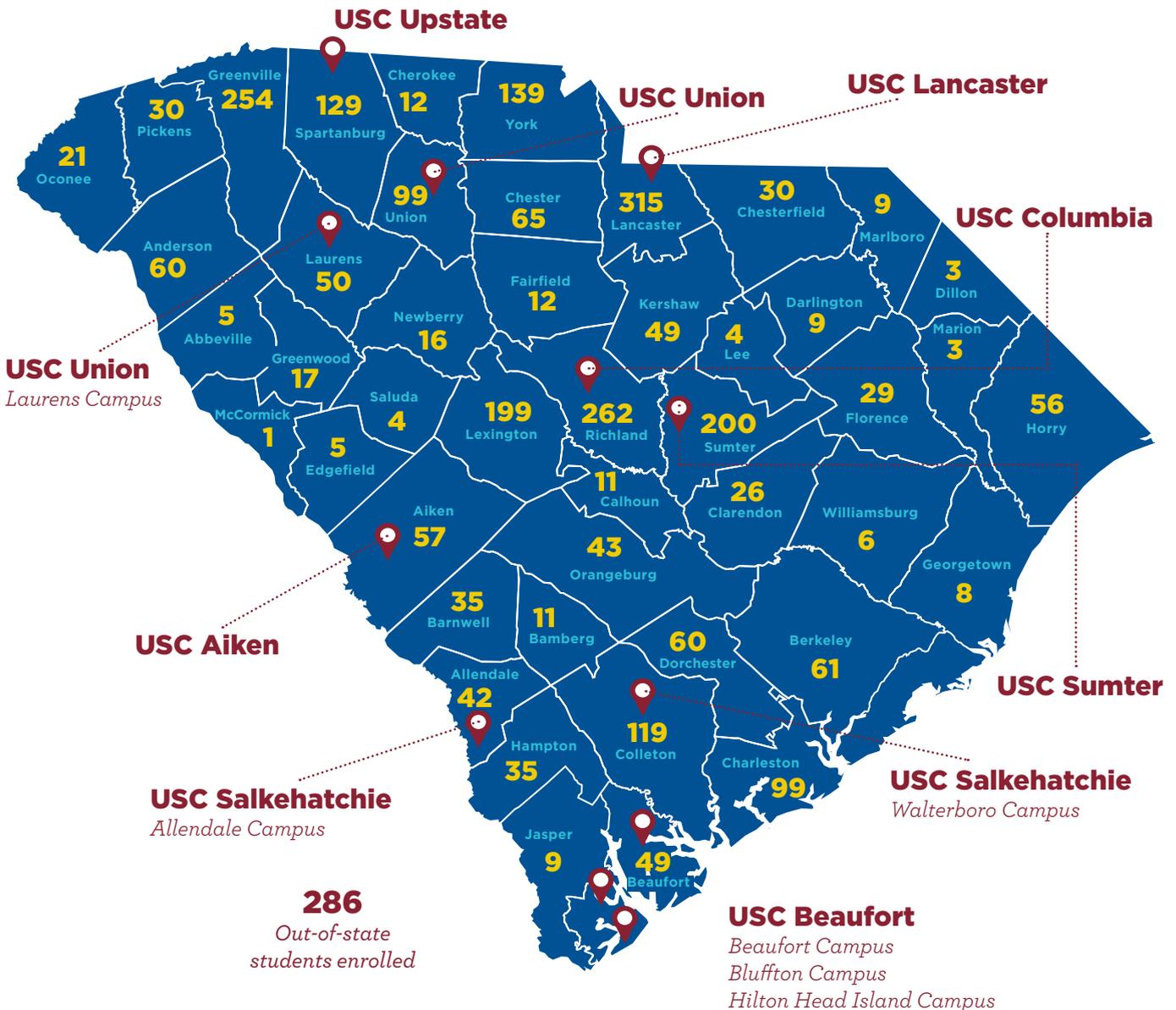
FALL 2013 - SUMMER 2018

3,055 Students (Majors)

Served by County

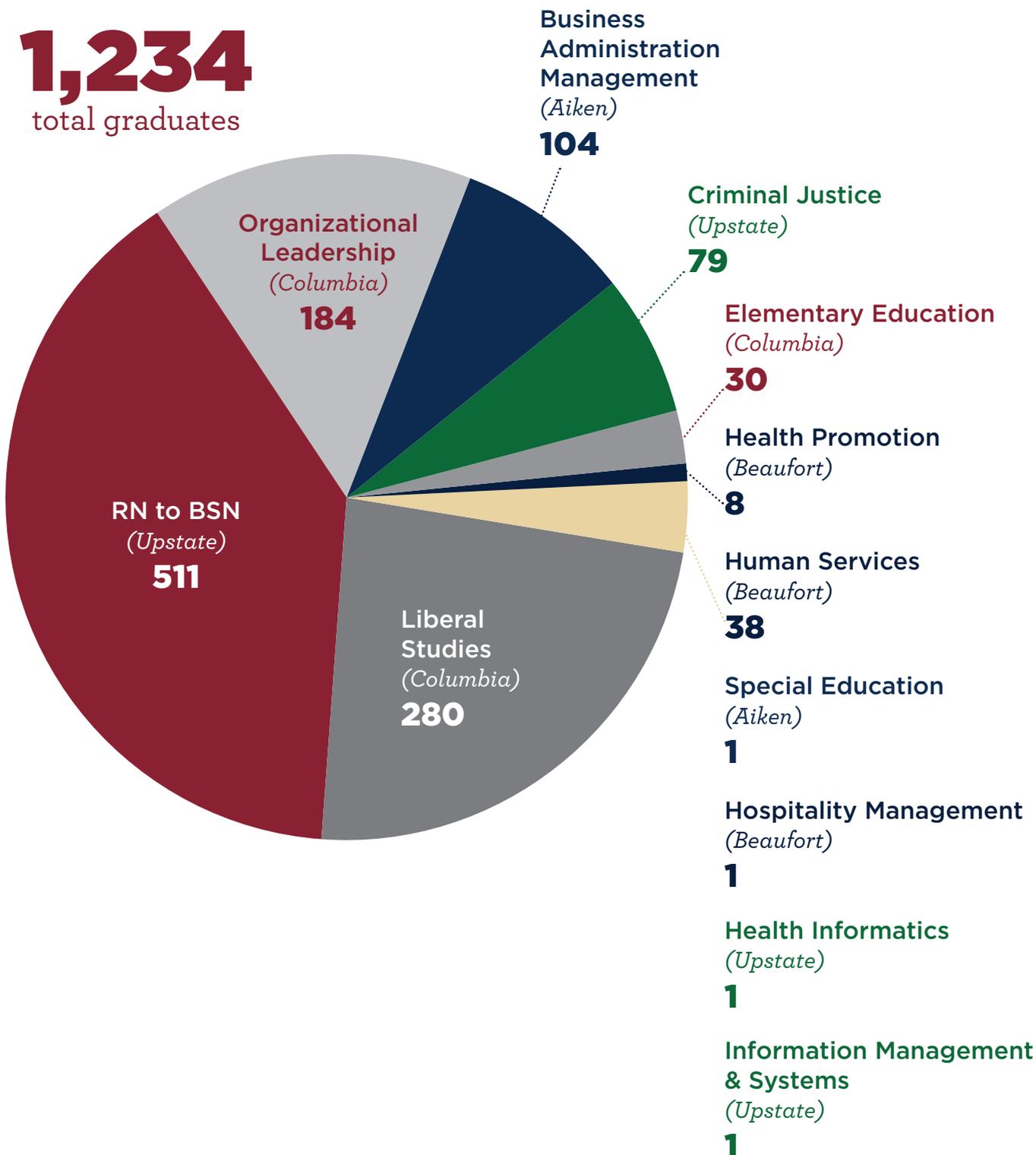
In all 46 Counties of South Carolina

As of July 12, 2018



Online Bachelor's Degree Completion Programs and Graduates, Fall 2013–Summer 2018

1,234
total graduates



From custodian to teacher

An unlikely path leads Palmetto College education graduate to his dream job



*by Kathryn McPhail
College of Education
USC Columbia*

His is not an uncommon story — Pennsylvania native David Dutka went to community college after graduating from high school. In his freshman year, financial and family obstacles led him to drop out. The uncommon part is what Dutka accomplished 14 years later.

In May 2018, Dutka was one of 17 students who earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education through Palmetto College, the University of South Carolina's online degree completion program. He is the first person in his family to earn a college degree. In August, he will begin his first year as a fifth-grade teacher at Midway Elementary School in Lexington, South Carolina — the same school where he repaired pipes and buffed floors as a custodian for several years.

"I've always considered myself a lifelong learner," Dutka says. "Whether I was working with the maintenance crew learning about plumbing or in my university courses learning about teaching strategies, I just really enjoy learning new things."

His passion for learning impressed the principal of Midway Elementary School, Janet Fickling, who encouraged him to consider elementary education when he decided to complete his degree.

"I knew from talking to him that he was well-read and very smart," Fickling says. "He mentioned that he was thinking about teaching at the high school level because teenagers are, of course, more advanced in their studies. But I encouraged him to stay open-minded about teaching young children."

While attending Midlands Technical College, Dutka worked as a substitute teacher at Midway Elementary.

"As a substitute, I learned so much from working with the kids," Dutka says. "They challenged me to think differently. They ask such thought-provoking questions. You have to be ready for anything. They are capable of learning advanced concepts just like older students."

After earning an associate degree from Midlands Tech, Dutka enrolled in the elementary education program through Palmetto College. During this time, he joined the custodial staff at Midway elementary full-time.

"I liked working with the custodial crew in the summer and needed full-time pay and benefits. The online learning environment of Palmetto College allowed me the flexibility to continue working, which was imperative for me and my family," Dutka says.

Like all College of Education students, Dutka was taught by experienced education professors and spent weeks in the classroom alongside veteran public-school educators during his clinical experiences.

Fickling, who also worked full-time while earning her own degrees from Carolina, gave Dutka the flexibility with his job to complete coursework and student teaching. She then welcomed him back with open arms when he graduated in May.

"He is a role model for our children," Fickling says. "He is proof that if you continue to pursue your dreams no matter the obstacles, you can find success."

"His experiences will help him be a better teacher. We teach our students to set goals, persevere and work hard to obtain them. David did just that."

When Dutka walked through the doors of Midway Elementary in Fall 2018, he wasn't carrying a broom or hammer. Instead, he brought the tools of an educator — a heart for service, a skill for inspiring children to learn and a No. 2 pencil, of course.

Success Stories

Alycia Roach

USC Beaufort



Alycia Roach is busy.

She currently works full-time at BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, and she is pursuing a B.S. degree in Human Services full-time through USC Beaufort.

Roach entered the program after completing an associate degree at a local technical college. She's found that the flexibility of USC Palmetto College has allowed her to more easily manage a work/life balance. After she earns her bachelor's degree, Roach plans to transition into the MSW program at USC Columbia to become a licensed practitioner. She would like to pursue a career working with military veterans.

Success Stories

Ryan West

**USC Palmetto College
Extended University**



Ryan West has served in the military for the past 18 years, traveling the world. He presently serves in the S.C. National Guard, and he was recently inspired by his then pre-teen son to complete his bachelor's degree. The quality of the USC education, flexibility and affordability brought West to USC Palmetto College's Extended University. He excelled in the online degree completion program every semester and has even encouraged some of his colleagues to continue their education by following his path. West earned his B.A. in Organizational Leadership, with honors, in December 2016.

Success Stories

Angela Lanier

USC Upstate



Angela Lanier is a graduate of the USC Palmetto College RN-BSN program at USC Upstate's Mary Black School of Nursing. She has worked for more than ten years with Greer Memorial Hospital in the post-op unit on the night shift. In 2017, she earned a Master of Science in Nursing/Clinical Nurse Leader (MSN-CNL) from USC Upstate. She currently serves as an adjunct clinical instructor in USC Upstate's Mary Black School of Nursing.





UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
LANCASTER

A Palmetto College Campus

USC Lancaster



Walter Collins
Dean



Fall 2017
Record Head Count
1,910

10
NEW SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS
added since 2013

USC Lancaster

- Opened nursing simulation lab in 2015 in support of the BSN degree collaborative with USC Columbia's College of Nursing
- Designated as a "Mother-Friendly Employer in South Carolina" in 2017
- Native American Studies Program moved to Main Street in 2012. The 15,000 sq. ft. facility houses Native American archival materials and the world's largest collection of Catawba Indian Pottery
- Ranked the No. 1 two-year campus in the state and No. 4 in the nation by Niche.com in 2017-18
- Notched significant growth in endowed scholarship funds during the past five years with 140 scholarship funds managed by the Educational Foundation of USC Lancaster
- Transitioned operation and management of its Gregory Health and Wellness Center to the Upper Palmetto YMCA in 2017, renamed the Gregory Family YMCA. USC Lancaster is the only Palmetto College campus to feature a full-service health and wellness center serving the campus and community
- An additional site in Indian Land, S.C., was approved and launched in Fall 2018

USC Lancaster Honors



- #1 in South Carolina
- #4 in the Nation



Student Enrollment

Associate Degree

Fall 20171,910

Bachelor's Degree

Fall 2017169





UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
SALKEHATCHIE

A Palmetto College Campus

USC Salkehatchie



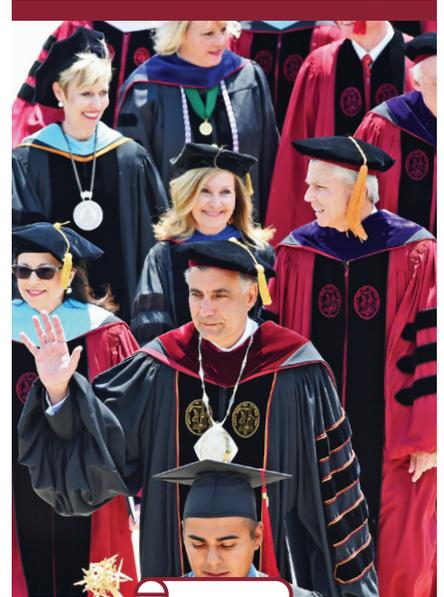
Ann Carmichael
Dean



USC Salkehatchie

- Celebrated 50th anniversary of service to Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Hampton and Colleton counties in 2015
- Reopened the historic Carolina Theatre in Allendale for campus and community performances after extensive renovations in 2014
- Recorded largest percentage enrollment increase of any public college in South Carolina from 2007 through 2013 and awarded the largest percentage of associate degrees from any two-year institution in South Carolina in 2017
- Engaged in a public/private partnership to open The Reserve, a residential hall on the Allendale campus, in 2014. In 2018, two residential housing complexes opened near the Walterboro campus, Salk Place and Salk Manor
- The men's basketball team earned a spot in the 2013 National Junior College Athletic Association tournament. NJCAA campus sports offerings will expand to include women's basketball in 2018
- Partnered with Savannah River Site and Department of Energy to offer a "2+2" bachelor's degree in Industrial Process Engineering through USC Aiken





Student Enrollment

Associate Degree

Fall 2017 1,011

Bachelor's Degree

Fall 2017 123

USC Salkehatchie Rural Nursing Initiative

USC Salkehatchie’s nursing initiative is providing real solutions to the nursing shortage in the rural Lowcountry. Teaming with the USC Columbia College of Nursing to offer the Bachelor of Science degree on the USC Salkehatchie campuses, this program has been widely recognized by health professionals for its innovation and quality. Students can now train in the brand new state-of-the-art high-fidelity simulation lab, thanks to the support of regional, state and national sponsors. Graduates have earned a 100% pass rate on state nursing board examinations for the past two consecutive years and have been touted as some of the best nurses in the business by local physicians. And, the program is keeping the majority of graduates in the area to live and work.





UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
SUMTER

A Palmetto College Campus

USC Sumter



Michael Sonntag
Dean



11.5%

*Record Enrollment
Growth*

Fall 2017

Highest Head Count

(25.47%)

and Full Time Enrollment

(23.40%)

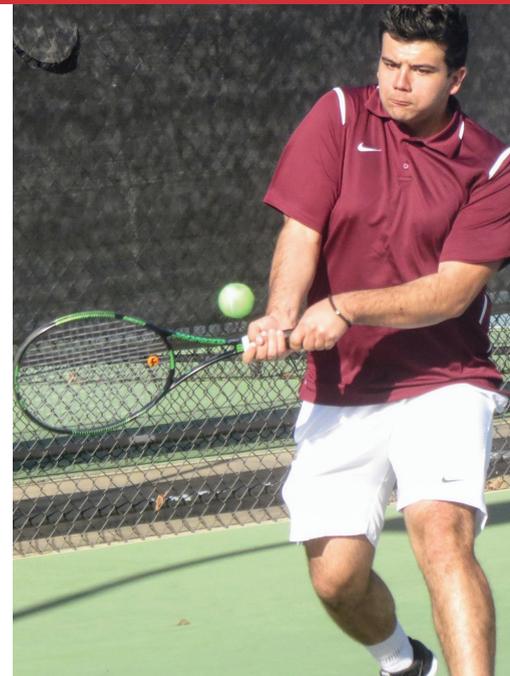
since 2011

USC Sumter

- Ranked the No. 2 two-year campus in South Carolina by Niche.com in 2017-18
- First university campus in the state with a varsity team in the National Association of Collegiate eSports
- Fall 2017 freshman class enrollment was third-largest in 25 years
- Received \$1.3 million grant from U.S. Departments of Education to launch an Upward Bound program for Clarendon County District 2
- Received private gifts and state and local funding totaling \$3.1 million to renovate science building
- Designated a military-friendly and military-friendly spouse institution of higher education
- Relaunched men's and women's tennis in 2016 and women's golf and men's soccer in 2017

USC Sumter Honors





Student Enrollment

Associate Degree

Fall 20171,002

Bachelor's Degree

Fall 2017106



Williams-Brice-Edwards Charitable Trust

The **Williams-Brice-Edwards Charitable Trust** has given over \$1.3 Million to USC Sumter. Their most recent gift came in December 2017 when they provided \$450,000 for the renovation of the STEM education building, and a \$50,000 provision to replenish their existing scholarship matching fund. The WBE Trust was originally established by the late **Philip and Flora Edwards** as part of an earlier \$1M gift to encourage others in the community to be philanthropic in support of higher education. Frank Edwards, their nephew, has continued the tradition that they established.



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
UNION

A Palmetto College Campus

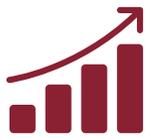
USC Union



John Catalano
Dean

USC Union

- Enrollment nearly doubled between the 2013-14 and 2017-18 academic years
- New student clubs formed, including a bass fishing team
- USC Union is now affiliated with the National Junior College Association and competitive NJCAA Bantam athletic teams include baseball, softball and men's and women's soccer
- Acquired county building on Main Street to accommodate future growth
- Courses in USC Aiken's BSN program to be offered at USC Union in Fall 2018
- Housing developed near campus through public/private partnerships and occupied in Fall 2018



90.1%
over 6 years
*Record Enrollment
Growth*

Head Count
nearly doubled
from 2013 to 2017



INNOVATION + COLLABORATION + TEAMWORK = TRANSFORMATION



Barbara Rippy

Barbara Rippy has provided two recent significant gifts to USC Union. A 2013 gift provided for the naming of the student recreation area behind the campus bookstore. A later gift provided for the naming of the courtyard behind the building. Rippy Courtyard was completed and dedicated in September 2017. Barbara honored her late husband, **Dr. Bobby Rippy**, with both gifts. He passed away in 2012 and had been a prominent pharmacist in Union for many years. Today, she is considered one of the most philanthropic and beloved citizens in the Union community. In four years of giving, she has gifted a total of \$127,000 to USC Union.



Student Enrollment

Associate Degree

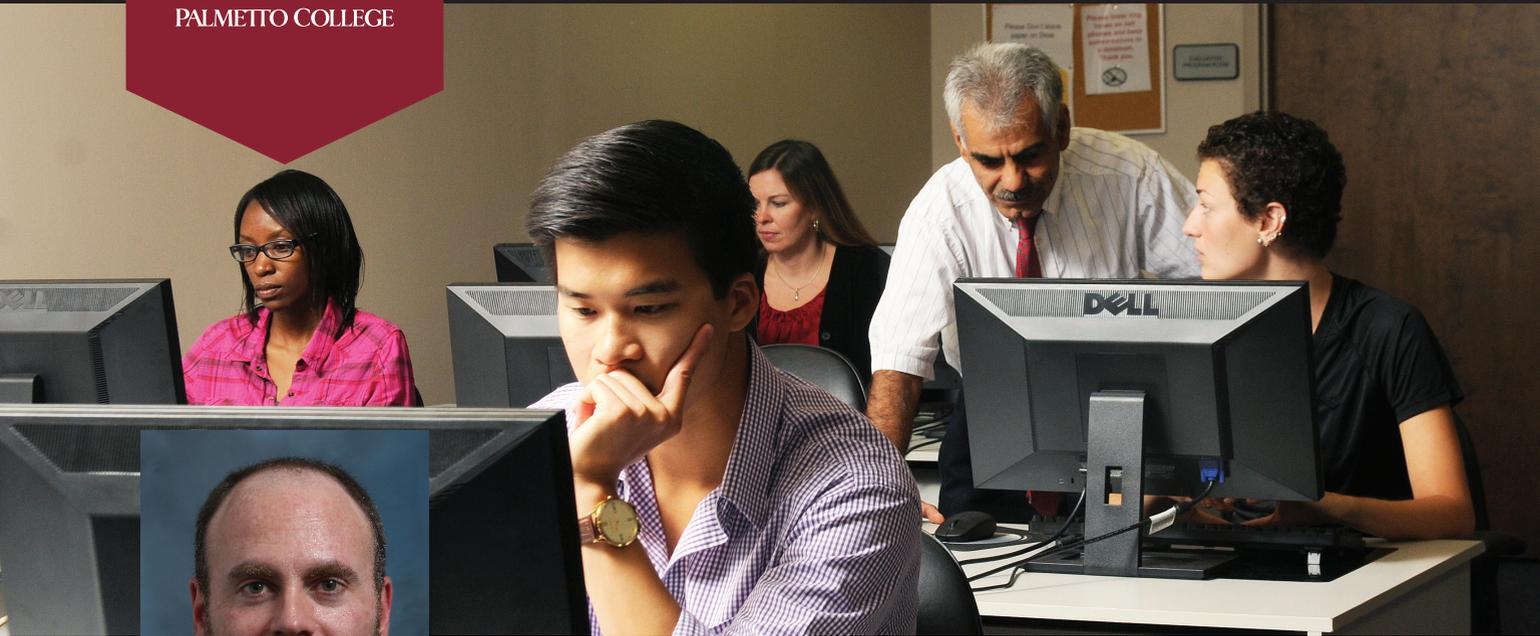
Fall 2017 903

Bachelor's Degree

Fall 2017 102



Extended University/ Fort Jackson



Chris Nesmith
Associate Provost

Extended University/Fort Jackson

- Doubled percentage of military students enrolled in classes at Fort Jackson since 2013
- Established Robert V. Phillips Palmetto College Military Endowed Scholarship in 2017, with seven students awarded scholarships so far
- Concluded an agreement with the United States Army Chaplain Center and School to provide credit in University of South Carolina Religious Studies courses for Religious Advisors, a unique collaborative program nationwide
- Since 2013, over 235 students have graduated with a B.A. degree in Liberal Studies, and over 175 have graduated with a B.A. degree in Organizational Leadership
- Enrollment in the Liberal Studies and Organizational Leadership programs combined is up 6.3% since 2013
- A USC Palmetto College Transfer Center in the Town of Lexington, S.C., was approved and launched in Fall 2018
- Doubled percentage of military students enrolled in classes at Fort Jackson since 2013



FROM 2015 TO 2017:

Number of military students enrolled increased from

28 to 59

Online students enrolled increased from

539 to 769

Phillips Military Endowed Scholarship meets “last-dollar” need for active duty USC Palmetto College students

At an October 2017 scholarship luncheon, four students were awarded scholarships as the inaugural recipients of the Robert V. Phillips Palmetto College Military Endowed Scholarship. Named for decorated WWII veteran Bob Phillips, the scholarship was established by his family to ensure that veterans and active duty personnel would have additional financial support to complete their degrees.

Four of the inaugural recipients are enrolled in the Fort Jackson associate degree program and include: Staff Sergeant Oscar Ortega, Staff Sergeant Tarevea Baskett, Sergeant First Class Danyale Howard and Sergeant Nicole Lawas. A fifth recipient, Sergeant Angela Vinasco, is enrolled in USC Palmetto College’s Liberal Studies bachelor’s degree completion program.

All five are active duty soldiers. To be eligible for the scholarship, the recipients were required to be active duty service members, National Guard or reserve members, veterans or spouses of active duty service members. They were also required to be enrolled in the Fort Jackson Associate Degree program or one of the USC Palmetto College online degree completion programs. A “last-dollar” scholarship, the Phillips fund pays the remaining balance of their tuition and fees after Federal Tuition Assistance or veterans benefits are applied.

Bob Phillips was born on Oct. 8, 1920, in Spartanburg, S.C. He graduated from Spartanburg High School with honors in 1938. Knowing it would be a financial burden on his parents to pay for him to attend college, he applied for and accepted a railroad position which had been recommended to him by his father.

After World War II began, Robert V. (Bob) Phillips was drafted on Oct. 5, 1942. He rode a bus to Fort Jackson and began his active duty service in the United States Army on Oct. 19, 1942. He was promoted several times and rose to the rank of Technician Fifth Grade. After training at several bases, his unit, the 377th Infantry Regiment (part of the 95th Infantry Division), was ordered to deploy to England. They traveled aboard the USS West Point departing on Aug. 9, 1944.



Above: Sergeant First Class Danyale Howard and Staff Sergeant Tarevea Baskett were awarded the Robert V. Phillips Palmetto College Military Endowed Scholarship by USC

Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins in an October luncheon. The students are two of the five inaugural recipients scholarship, which provides additional financial support to veterans and active duty personnel to complete their degrees. Inset: Bob Phillips, his daughter Jean Phillips and son-in-law Joel Collins, who established the scholarship in his name.



They arrived at Liverpool Harbor and were transported to Southampton, England, where they were loaded onto Liberty cargo ships. The regiment landed at Omaha Beach on Sept. 13, 1944. Phillips’ unit fought in Northern France, the Rhineland and Central Europe. After the war was over, they were assigned to and assumed occupational control of Recklinghausen, Germany. The regiment departed the battered port of Le Havre, France, on June 20, 1945, aboard the USS William H. Gordon arriving in Newport News, Va., on June 28, 1945.

Phillips was awarded the American Campaign Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Combat Infantryman’s Badge, Army of Occupation of Germany Medal, Honorable Service Lapel Button, the Good Conduct Medal and the Bronze Star.

Phillips was honorably discharged from

the Army on Nov. 19, 1945. He returned to Spartanburg where he resumed his position at the railroad company and retired from what is now known as CSX after 45 years of service. Even though Bob Phillips did not have the opportunity to obtain a college education, he strongly encouraged his two daughters to pursue college degrees, and they did. He even encouraged—and ultimately convinced—his wife to obtain a college education, and she did.

Bob Phillips would be honored and proud to know a scholarship bearing his name will provide soldiers at Fort Jackson and other veterans of the United States Army the help they need to achieve a college education through USC Palmetto College.

Melonee Hayes capitalizes on Palmetto College chance



by Melinda Waldrop
USC Columbia

People have always told their problems to Melonee Hayes, but she never thought she would make a career out of her instinct for empathy.

“People would say, ‘You know what? You should be a counselor. You give some pretty good advice,’” Hayes says. “I was like, ‘Nah, I want to go into the medical field.’”

That perspective changed as Hayes earned a medical office administration certificate at Midlands Tech, where she also worked in the college’s counseling office.

“After I really knew the counselors and how important they were to the students here, I thought, ‘I want to do that,’” she says. “I think I have the knack and the skill set. I think I can make a difference.”

At first, Hayes wasn’t sure how to make that happen. She completed her associate degree while working and providing for her 11-year-old daughter, Jamerica. The thought of obtaining a bachelor’s degree seemed daunting.

Then a classmate told her about Palmetto College, the University of South Carolina’s online bachelor’s degree completion program. Intrigued by the flexible schedule, Hayes enrolled.

Two years later, she’ll graduate from USC Beaufort with a degree in human services.

“I’m the first in my family to ever get any degree,” says Hayes, 35. “I have my daughter looking up to me, and my nieces and nephews. I have some trying days, but I can’t give up.”

Hayes has always been determined, even when her future wasn’t as clear. With no family history of higher education, college wasn’t foremost on her radar as she worked a series of jobs after high school in the Lowcountry.

“I had so many different careers,” she says. “I was doing 911 dispatch for the sheriff’s office, and I realized, ‘I can’t do this anymore. This cannot be it.’”

Hayes’ father owned his own construction business, and she says she never went without growing up. But seeing the seasonal ups and downs of her dad’s career further motivated her to take the first steps toward greater security at Midlands Tech.

“I just knew there had to be something more out there,” she says. “I knew my calling had to be something else.”

Najmah Thomas, an assistant professor of human services at USCB, sensed Hayes’ drive through the computer screen. Thomas says Hayes was always willing to ask for help – a key component of being a successful online student.

“She would send an email and say, ‘I know you’re very busy, but I just wanted to get clarification,’” Thomas says. “I had to tell her one time, ‘That’s what we’re here for. You email anytime.’ It can feel very lonely there at your computer. You can feel like no one is with you.”

Thomas, who is looking forward to meeting Hayes in-person at graduation, has a first-hand understanding of such struggles.

“My son was three when I started my educational career, and it took a really long time,” Thomas says. “I can understand what [nontraditional students] are going through. They’re not just doing school. They’ve got work, their kid got sick. Trying to manage the responsibility of full-time work, full-time parenting and full-time school — I understand that from a personal perspective, so it’s extremely rewarding to

see our students, especially if they’re first-generation, reach that milestone.

“Children see mommy’s always doing her homework, and now they can see her walk across the stage.”

Hayes says Thomas’ teaching included helpful real-world examples and frequent encouragement. In addition to the support of family, friends and co-workers, Hayes credits Palmetto College adviser Tara Dakolios with helping her manage her class load and stay on track with her schedule.

“Melonee was very conscientious about making sure that she was balancing everything so that she could be as successful as she could be in her classes along with her personal life,” Dakolios says. “She’s always very enjoyable and easy to talk to. She’s just got a great personality.”

“She stayed on top of everything. She came in and she took care of business. I’m excited to see what her next steps are.”

Hayes’ immediate future includes starting graduate school in August, a month before Jamerica’s baby brother is due to arrive on Sept. 22. She doesn’t intend to take five classes a semester this time, though.

“I know my limitations,” Hayes says. “I’m not Superwoman.”

Some of Hayes’ family members, including a niece who has started to talk about following in her educational footsteps, might disagree.

“I’m happy that I have little ones looking up to me now,” Hayes says. “I have to keep on going, no matter what.”

Success Stories

Savannah Crosby USC Lancaster



Savannah Crosby chose to attend USC Lancaster for the smaller class size and proximity to her home community. A first-generation college student, her academic successes have resulted in her selection as a Lancer Scholar; she has also been awarded the Trina McFadden and Jim and Jane Bradley Scholarships. Once the freshman psychology major completes her degree at USC Lancaster, Crosby intends to pursue bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology at USC Columbia. She ideally would like to pursue a career as a clinical psychologist, specializing in child psychology, within her home community.

Success Stories

Mary Scarborough USC Union



Mary Scarborough, a sophomore at USC Union, is heavily involved on campus as a work-study student in the Financial Aid department, as the USC Union SGA president, and as a member of the drama club. Mary also waitresses at a local restaurant, volunteers at the Spartanburg Little Theater and is the assistant choreographer for the Union County High School's theater department in her spare time. After she graduates, she plans to transfer to USC Upstate to enter their nursing program.



Success Stories

Janelle Buniel USC Sumter



Janelle Buniel enjoyed the smaller classes and personal attention she got from her professors at USC Sumter, and plans to transfer to USC Columbia to finish her bachelor's degree.

"I was going to play soccer at another university, but even with scholarship money it wasn't enough to take care of \$20,000 a year.

A lot of people in Sumter see it as a stepping stone. But I got to know my professors in smaller classes, and I got to know a lot of students. It was easier to get involved, and because of that I was able to see all the benefits of attending USC Sumter.

So I decided I wanted to make a difference. I am SGA president of USC Sumter, and I'm an ambassador, and I'm graduating with leadership distinction. Because it's so small, it's helped me to get involved, and now I hope for a seamless transition to USC Columbia."

The John J. Duffy Excellence in Teaching Award for USC Palmetto College Campuses

The Duffy teaching award is presented annually to a faculty member who exemplifies excellence in and out of the classroom.



2013
Wei-Kai (Bryan) Lai
USC Salkehatchie



2014
Eran Kilpatrick
USC Salkehatchie



2015
Kajal Ghoshroy
USC Sumter



2016
Jill Castiglia
USC Lancaster



2017
Shelley Jones
Extended University

The Chris P. Plyler Excellence in Service Award for Palmetto College Campuses

The Plyler service award, established in 2015, is presented to a faculty member who personifies excellence in service to the campus, university, community and profession.



2015
Sarah Miller
USC Salkehatchie



2016
Melody Lehn
Extended University

The Denise R. Shaw Excellence in Scholarship Award for USC Palmetto College Campuses

The Shaw scholarship award, established in 2016, is presented to a faculty member who exhibits outstanding scholarly activity.



2016
Julia Elliott
Extended University



2017
Christine Sixta Rinehart
USC Union



2017
Ray McManus
USC Sumter



The 2017 recipients of the USC Palmetto College Campuses Excellence Awards included: Shelley Jones (teaching), Ray McManus (service) and Christine Sixta Rinehart (scholarship).



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
PALMETTO COLLEGE

Palmetto College Giving

Palmetto College Endowed Scholarship Fund

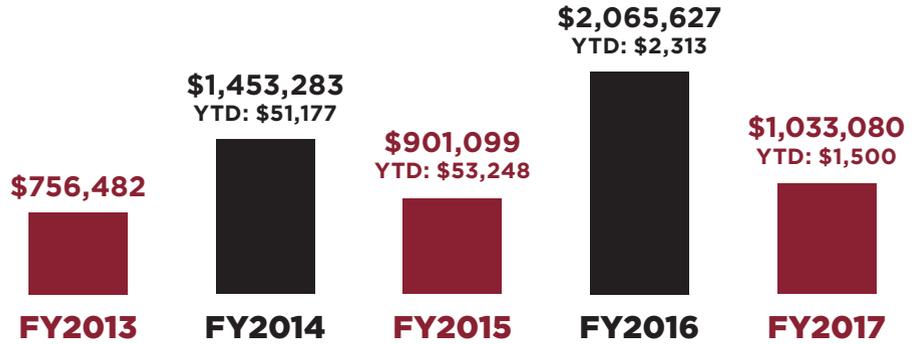
John and Gale Peek



John Peek, an adjunct professor of criminal justice at USC Salkehatchie, and his wife **Gale** recently committed a \$30,000 planned gift that will be split between the Palmetto College Endowed Scholarship Fund and Salkehatchie Athletics.

He also teaches criminal justice for Palmetto College Online. This gift will enable students transitioning from the Salkehatchie campus to continue their studies at the baccalaureate degree level. Separate from USC Salk, Peek is a football referee and big sports fan which bolsters his support of Salk Athletics.

Palmetto College Giving over 5 Years



Overall total: \$6 Million



Palmetto College Chancellor, Deans and the Board of Visitors make check presentations to the INnersole Foundation. INnersole is a nonprofit organization that provides new sneakers to children who are homeless and children who are in need. The national (and international) initiative makes a difference in the lives of children by starting the school year off with a new pair of sneakers. The organization was established by USC Columbia Head Women's Basketball Coach Dawn Staley and Rene McCall Flint. The checks were presented to INnersole Operations Director Angela O'Neal and will provide shoes for children in the communities in which the Palmetto College Campuses serve.

The road less taken

Scholarship for nontraditional students honors former student adviser

by Page Ivey
USC Columbia

Heather Coleman might be the perfect student to receive the inaugural Harriett Hurt scholarship.

Coleman, 49, is working on a bachelor's degree in liberal studies with concentrations in sociology and psychology, with plans to graduate in 2020, the same year her youngest child will finish high school.

"The classes have helped me understand people in a way I had never understood them before," she says. "My interest is where conservative religions and women intersect. I want to try to help women at that intersection."

Years ago, Coleman had planned a career in a nursing specialty, but life got in the way and she decided to return to school after her three children were mostly grown.

"I transferred deliberately to Palmetto College to protect my education from life circumstances," says Coleman, who has worked the past 10 years as a legal assistant.

Coleman says after she completes her degree, she would like to do something to help women who want to grow personally. That may be as a counselor, a sociological researcher or even as an adult education advocate.

"I will decide on a path while I finish my undergraduate degree, then go to graduate school," she says.

Nearly 30 years ago, Harriett Hurt took a similar path as Coleman, when, at age 47, she applied to the University of South Carolina as a nontraditional undergraduate student. Hurt had been through a personal tragedy and had told a friend that she needed to do something with her life that mattered.

Hurt was, by all accounts, an excellent student and was engaged in many activities on campus — fully embracing the college experience. That's when she met Sally Boyd, whose office included Adult Student Services and who told Hurt that if she went to graduate school, she would have a job in Boyd's office. After Hurt completed graduate school, her assistantship became a

full-time job and she became the best friend adult students had at Carolina.

"Harriett made such a difference for so many people," says Boyd, who retired in 2013 as assistant vice provost of Extended University after more than 40 years in the university system. "There are so many stories of 'I never would have had the guts to try this without Harriett.'"

Hurt died unexpectedly in 2013, leaving her colleagues and those she helped devastated.

"When I came to USC, I was afraid and nervous and thought I was too old to return to college," Earnestine Walker Culler says.

"Ms. Hurt talked with me as an adviser and shared her story with me. I was working at the time, but she reassured me that I could do it and said I would not be sorry when I graduated. 'And you will graduate!' she told me, with that wonderful smile on her face.

"I did not have a chance to thank her for her encouragement and patience that she showed me when I constantly returned to her office for advice and assistance."

Boyd says she started the Harriett Hurt Endowed Scholarship Fund for Nontraditional Students to continue both Hurt's legacy and her own. Students older than 25 in either the Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership or Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies program in Palmetto College are eligible. Hurt was adviser to those students.

"A scholarship named for Harriett would be the best way to memorialize the kind of work I was involved in at USC — providing opportunities and access for those students who are not on the typical path," Boyd says.

Coleman never met Hurt, but she says she appreciates all that Hurt accomplished, and she is trying to embrace her college experience like Hurt did, including being inducted into the adult honor society Alpha Sigma Lambda.

"I love school," she says. "And I am so grateful for the scholarship and the opportunity to pursue my education."



*Above: Heather Coleman
Left: Harriett Hurt
Right: Sally Boyd*



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

PALMETTO COLLEGE

Success Stories

Lashinda Demus, '15



Lashinda Demus is a world-class athlete and an excellent student who had to withdraw from the University of South Carolina to fully pursue her dream of earning an Olympic medal.

A decorated track-and-field athlete, Demus won a silver medal at the 2012 London Olympics in the 400-meter hurdles with a time of 52.77, the fastest second-place Olympic time in history.

As a Gamecock Track-and-Field athlete, she won the 2002 World Junior Championship, the 2004 NCAA Indoor Championship 400-meters (the first of three National Championships) and a silver medal in the 2005 World Championships. She was also a member of USC's first NCAA team national championship when the women's track and field team won the 2002 NCAA outdoor national championship.

Demus medaled at several IAAF World Championships, including gold medals for the 4x400-meter relay at the 2009 Berlin championship and the 400-meter hurdles at the 2011 Daegu Championship. Her race final time of 52.47 seconds set a new American record and the third fastest time in history. She earned silver medals for the 400-meter hurdles in Helsinki (2005) and Berlin (2009).

After she won the women's 400-meter hurdle bronze medal at the 2013 IAAF World Championship in Moscow, Demus returned to USC. She completed her bachelor's degree in 2015 through Palmetto College Online. She is pictured here with USC President Harris Pastides, USC First Lady Patricia Moore-Pastides, Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins and her family.

Success Stories

Tarevea Baskett Extended University



Tarevea Baskett currently serves as a drill sergeant at Fort Jackson, S.C. She is also a student in the USC Fort Jackson Program and earned her Associate of Arts degree in December 2017. She finds most of her motivation from her four-year-old daughter. Staff Sergeant Baskett was an inaugural recipient of the Robert V. Philips Military Endowed Scholarship. She will continue with USC Palmetto College and hopes to attain her bachelor's degree in hospitality management through USC Beaufort. USC has allowed SSG Baskett the flexibility to continue her education regardless of the countless hours needed to train our future soldier/leaders.

Success Stories

Wayne Bruner USC Columbia



Wayne Bruner chose the online Elementary Education program because he knew that while he wanted to complete his degree, he had to continue working to support his family. A traditional college campus setting with daytime classes would not work with his full-time job responsibilities in his family business. Palmetto College offered him a local University of South Carolina affiliation, with the space and opportunity to customize his own schedule.

According to the veteran Marine, "Palmetto College has been very military-friendly; they have a great VA program at USC that helped me through the process of going back to school."

He continued, "I liked the idea that if I had a question there would be someone that I could meet with personally and talk with. This could not happen if I were taking online courses through an out-of-state university."

Wayne works as a teacher at Forts Pond Elementary School in Pelion.

Success Stories

Dan Brown USC Palmetto College



University of South Carolina President Harris Pastides presented a Commerce degree to 89-year-old Dan Brown – just a few days shy of his 90th birthday – at the 2015 summer commencement exercises.

Brown left USC in the 1940s to serve in the military during World War II, and at the time he was three credits short of graduation requirements; however, completing his degree was an important goal.

That goal was set aside as Brown returned from the war, got married and began working. After Ada, his wife of 68 years, passed in May 2015, Brown decided to fulfill their collective desire for him to complete his degree. He contacted Palmetto College Online to take the final course.

Chancellor Elkins, working with the Moore School of Business, helped Mr. Brown achieve that goal. It was determined that he met the current criteria to earn the business degree that he began decades ago.

"Regardless of your age, it's never too late to graduate," Brown said.



Herbert C. Adams

(Union-Laurens)

Danny R. Black

(Salkehatchie)

Lisa T. Bridges

(Lancaster)

Phyllis Bunkley

(Lancaster)

Melinda A. Carr

(Sumter)

Michael Cassels

(Union)

Mike N. Couick

(Columbia)

Beverly A. Gagne

(Sumter)

Lee E. Harley-Fitts

(Salkehatchie)

Cindy Hurst

(Salkehatchie)

Robert O. Hutchens

(Sumter)

Bobby Legg

(Lancaster)

Reena Lichtenfeld

(Columbia)

Fred Lilikes

(Online)

Debbie H. Littlejohn

(Union)

Cindy Roenfeldt

(Columbia)

Col. Kevin A. Shwedo

(Columbia)

Terrill N. Tuten

(Salkehatchie)

Eugene M. Varn

(Salkehatchie)

Ryan West

(Columbia)

The Honorable Bill T. Young

(Salkehatchie)

Joel Collins

(Extended University/Fort Jackson)

Tommy Preston

(Palmetto College Online)

Executive Council

Chancellor

Dr. Susan Elkins

USC Sumter Shaw Air Force Base

Mr. Ricky Boyd

USC Salkehatchie Dean

Dr. Ann Carmichael

USC Union Acting Dean

Dr. John Catalano

USC Lancaster Dean

Dr. Walt Collins

Palmetto College Associate Dean
for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Dr. Ron Cox

Marketing and

Communications Director

Mr. Jason Darby

Development Director

Mr. Chris DeWolf

Vice Chancellor, e-Learning

Dr. Sher Downing

Information Technology

Director

Mr. Bob Dyer

Palmetto College Campuses

Faculty Senate Chair

Dr. Ernest Jenkins

Director of Finance and
Institutional Effectiveness

Ms. Janis Hoffman

Human Resources

Ms. Victoria Hollins

Associate Chancellor, Academic
and Student Support Services

Dr. David Hunter

Director, Liberal Studies and
Organizational Leadership Programs

Dr. Steve Lowe

Associate Chancellor,
Student Enrollment Services

Dr. Tabatha McAllister

Associate Vice Provost,
Extended University Dean

Dr. Chris Nesmith

USC Sumter Dean

Dr. Michael Sonntag

Director of Innovation

Dr. Alice Taylor-Colbert

USC Fort Jackson Director

Ms. Connie Vise

Executive Vice Chancellor

Dr. Elliot Vittes

Executive Assistant
to the Chancellor

Ms. Summer Yarborough

Andrew Verma USC Aiken



Andrew Verma works in the banking industry and needed a bachelor's degree to advance his career. Completing a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from USC Aiken through USC Palmetto College Online provided him with the flexibility he needed to balance his career and education.

Andrew works at Wells Fargo, and needed a bachelor's degree to advance his career.

"I wanted to really advance my career at Wells Fargo, but at the same time I wanted to get my undergraduate degree. I couldn't do that because you usually have a set class schedule, and at work I have to be flexible.

I wanted to have the best of both worlds: go to school to get a degree and also progress with Wells Fargo. When Palmetto College was launched, I was really happy — ecstatic — because I graduated in May (2015) with the business administration degree, and that wouldn't have been possible if Palmetto College wasn't there.

It has really been a blessing. I can get a quality degree from a school with a good reputation."

From trooper to magistrate, with help from Palmetto College

by Megan Sexton
USC Columbia

With his newly earned degree from the University of South Carolina Upstate, Dirk "D.J." Bron Jr. traded in his S.C. Highway Patrol uniform for a magistrate's robe in the summer of 2017.

It's a career move he couldn't have imagined when he graduated from high school in 1995. Back then, college wasn't anywhere near the top of his priority list. Instead it was a job, then basic training at Fort Jackson and active duty in the Army National Guard before becoming a trooper with the state Highway Patrol.

"In high school, I didn't hang out with scholars. We didn't look at life past high school," Bron says. "That's part of my past I regret. I had colleges looking at me for football. I thought I was so good at football that my grades didn't matter. I found out the hard way."

Soon after he finished Highway Patrol school in 1998, Bron started thinking about his future. Stationed in rural Allendale County, he rode past the USC Salkehatchie campus every day. He knew he would need a college education to advance in his career, so he decided to enroll and take a few classes at Salkehatchie.

In 2000, the Highway Patrol transferred him to Newberry County, and although it was closer to home, the busy job and long hours made it tougher to squeeze in classes. Eventually, he enrolled at USC Union in Laurens, S.C., and earned an associate degree.

And then it was time for Palmetto College — part of the University of South Carolina system that offers online bachelor's degree completion programs for students who have 45 to 60 hours of college credit. The goal of Palmetto College is to make a Carolina education convenient and accessible through online learning programs and campuses throughout the state. Bron

was the "student spokesman" for Palmetto College at its initial launch announcement at the South Carolina Statehouse in 2013.

"D.J. Bron is exactly the type of student that Palmetto College was created to serve," says Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins. "As he worked to keep our state safe, he was able to pursue an associate degree at two Palmetto College campuses. And completing a bachelor's degree from USC Upstate through Palmetto College Online provided a bachelor's degree opportunity and professional advancement that might not otherwise have been available."

He was promoted to corporal with the S.C. Highway Patrol in 2012, so he estimates he completed 80 percent of his Palmetto College classes while he was a supervisor.

"They created this program to help people in my position who can't go to classes. In the patrol, I was bouncing between three counties. This program allowed me to take classes at home, even at 3 in the morning," Bron says. "It was stressful. My schedule was 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. or 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., but it doesn't mean I'm home by that time. I'd come in, take a shower and jump on the computer and do what I could."

He found himself wondering whether the time and money were worth it. "I thought, 'It's going to take me forever. I'll be 40 by the time I finish,'" he says. "Then somebody told me, 'Well, you're going to be 40 either way, and whether you have a degree or not is up to you.' An education is one thing they can't ever take away from you if you get it."

There were setbacks along the way. In 2015, when the Columbia area suffered historic flooding, he worked 18-hour days with the Highway Patrol. In 2016, he was deployed four times to the coast for hurricane duty.

He pushed ahead, and in December 2016, Bron earned his bachelor's degree in



criminal justice from USC Upstate through Palmetto College.

"When I finished my degree, it opened more doors to me. There were a lot of occupations out there that were adamant you had to have a four-year degree," he said.

One of those doors opened in his home of Laurens County, where he learned the magistrate planned to retire early in 2017. "Now that I had a four-year degree, I threw my name in the hat."

He was offered the job and confirmed on the Senate floor last spring. He was sworn in June 30 and will preside over low-level offenses in magistrate's court.

"It was kind of unexpected. I wouldn't have been able to even consider this position without a degree," Bron says.

Now he says he works to convince others of the importance of a college degree, including one of his friends on the Highway Patrol who has an associate degree.

"I talk to him every chance I get. I tell him you're stuck right now. It's just 30 more credits, and they can't take it from you once you get it," he says. "It's better to do it now than wait 10 years and say I should have done that. I hate to study. I hate writing papers. I'm not good in math. But I did it. It will better prepare you for life. Don't stop short now."

Creating a new path

Palmetto College helps Upstate man find his niche in logistics management

by Page Ivey
USC Columbia

When Bob Johnston found himself out of work during the economic downturn of 2008, he hired on with a temp agency.

He was sent to a logistics company in his hometown of Laurens where he did such a good job, the company offered him a salaried management position — his first. He knew he was going to need to up his game to succeed.

“I knew I had to do something to continue my education and get that bachelor’s degree in some business-related field,” Johnston says.

Enter the University of South Carolina Palmetto College.

“One day, I went over to the USC campus location in Laurens, and I found out they had this organizational leadership degree through Palmetto College,” Johnston, 46, says. “I think the biggest thing that helped me was that I was already in the field that I was studying. I was able to take concepts learned in my classes and assignments and immediately put them to use in the workplace.

“I think that a big part of my education is the fact that it was an education that I was using on the spot.”

Johnston had moved to a job at Walmart’s distribution center in the Upstate and had earned his associate degree from Piedmont Technical College in the Upstate, but that wasn’t going to get him where he wanted to be.

“I knew I was going to have to do something more,” he says.

The location in Laurens is part of USC Union, which is a part of the larger statewide Palmetto College.

“The location of the campus was a huge help,” he says. “But it was that academic major that sold me.”

Johnston took psychology classes and



others that he never would have thought about. “It allowed me to experience a lot of new things. But the focus of the major is you are dealing with things that are going to be applicable in the workplace.”

Johnston says Matthew Dean, director of facilities, maintenance and student affairs in Laurens, and political science professor and director of academic affairs Christine Rinehart, who also was Johnston’s adviser, helped him navigate college as a nontraditional student.

Rinehart says Johnston, who worked full-time during his studies, owes his success largely to his own work ethic.

“He is extremely hardworking and very proactive,” Rinehart says. “He was dedicated to getting his degree, but he also was good at helping other students if they needed it.”

For a nontraditional student, Johnston immersed himself in the full student experience. During his two-and-a-half years as a Carolina student, he took most of his classes at the Laurens location, but drove to Union to get one last class so he could graduate in December 2016. He participated in winter commencement exercises in Columbia and even got his Carolina ring at a ring ceremony on the Columbia campus.

“I participated in all of it,” Johnston says. “I did the ring ceremony. I got my cap and gown and I walked. My dad had surgery Dec. 6 and I graduated on Dec. 12, and he was able to get there,” Johnston says. “That meant a lot to me.”

Johnston has considered continuing his education, but now finds himself a dual-career professional.

He’s still in management at Walmart’s logistics center in Laurens County, but he’s also a buyer agent with Keller Williams Realty in Greenville — a job he pursued to help him pay for his education.

That second job brought him back recently to the Laurens campus location where he gave a presentation to students about buying their first home.

“My real estate career gives me a professional brand to expand my horizons, but leadership and management will always be my passion,” he says. “The University of South Carolina has made a huge impact in preparing me personally and professionally for the next chapters of my life.”



USC Palmetto College Implementation Team, March 9, 2018

THANK YOU

- President Pastides
- Board of Trustees
- University Administration
- State Legislators
- Community Leaders

**... for creating
this innovative,
transformative model
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PalmettoCollege



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