OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

Faculty, Staff, Students:

Welcome back for the 2013-14 academic year. We are well into the semester, but are still confirming our final enrollment numbers. We do know that this semester has been successful with the dramatic increase in First-Year Students. This year's freshman class consists of over 1,100 students. This growth represents a 40 percent increase in our freshman enrollment over Fall 2012! Congratulations to the Divisions of Student Success and Student Affairs for their joint effort in reaching out to students interested in Southern University. We firmly believe the potential is there to continue at this level of first year student enrollment. Next year, however, will be a little more difficult as we face increased admissions criteria.

Our overall enrollment is up approximately 1%. Without the dramatic increase in first time freshmen, we would have continued the trend of enrollment declines of several hundred students a year.

The answer is obvious: RETENTION. For many years this University has given little more than lip service to the issue of retention. If we are to grow, we have to face the issue of retention head on. In January, 2013, we created the Division of Student Success within Academic Affairs. This new entity combined the offices of Recruiting and Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, Student Success, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, and the SUSLA Connect program. The objective of this move was to offer a more cohesive and cooperative effort from those offices most closely aligned with tracking a student's progress from recruitment to graduation. As we move forward this year, the Division of Student Success will take the lead in student retention, but the effort will, and must be, a University-wide effort. Faculty must be an integral component of any retention initiative. We must identify early in each semester those students who are experiencing academic and financial difficulties. Individualized action plans must be developed to address and resolve those issues in order to ensure a student's satisfactory progress toward a degree. Communication at all levels is paramount. We cannot solve a problem unless we are made aware of it in a timely manner. Please be prepared to focus on retention and on adhering to the forthcoming retention plan this year.

Administratively, we must address customer service as this can impact retention in a positive or negative manner. We will be working with Human Resources to provide training for all personnel in customer relations. Secondly, as we proceed with the implementation of electronically-based processes, we will become more efficient and productive. Finally, I have directed Mr. Flandus McClinton, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration to begin anew the policy of identification badges for all administrators and staff. However, the bottom line will be how we respond personally to those whom we serve--students, faculty, staff and the public.

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The 2013-14 academic year is a critical year in our academic reorganization plan. Our need is to implement an academic structure that is effective, efficient, productive, adaptive, flexible, and responsive to the needs of our students and the demands of an increasingly competitive and global workforce. The new colleges must establish a culture of cooperation and collaboration within and across disciplines and other colleges. No longer can we afford to remain in isolated educational silos, safely ensconced in our ignorance of other disciplines.

We will be asking the colleges to reassess their curricula and explore opportunities for new courses and new collaborative degree offerings. Some colleges and departments can prepare themselves to implement revenue-generating initiatives such as certificate programs, contractual services, and training programs. Administratively, we will be developing and revising policies that create revenue- sharing incentives for those colleges and departments responding to this challenge. We know that this transition will not occur overnight and that we will likely encounter obstacles and setbacks. But if we are all of one accord and with one objective: a New SU, we can prove all skeptics wrong.

The characteristics and needs of our students are dynamic. The impact of technological changes in how we communicate, how we teach and how students learn demands that we respond to this dynamic. Even as we begin to slowly recover from our fiscal crisis, we must be creative in developing a University that responds effectively to this new student. We will also work closely with student leadership to solicit input and request their assistance in communicating to students their very personal benefit in committing to a strong work ethic towards their studies. A college education is an investment: financially and emotionally. This is an opportunity that should not and must not be wasted.

I commit to you that we will listen, we will respond, we will communicate. I know that it will require commitment on your part and confidence that your commitment will be rewarded. We all know that without this collective effort, we will continue to struggle. Together we can continue our journey towards a New SU.

Thank you.

James L. Llorens, Ph.D.
Chancellor

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