

FOUR QUESTIONS

A discussion about higher education in South Carolina

Below are the full answers from four of the state's premier institutions of higher learning on four questions about higher education:

1. What's your institution's position on tuition caps, and why?

- **Clemson Chief Public Affairs Officer Cathy Sams:** We are philosophically opposed to arbitrary caps that don't make any distinctions for academic quality or cost of programs. Because we are a science and technology oriented research university, and the #22 ranked public university in America, students come here with high expectations about the quality of the faculty, programs, and equipment. Our concern is that a tuition cap can easily become a quality cap. Our students agree. They tell us that they didn't choose Clemson because of the price. They chose it because of the quality.
- **College of Charleston spokesman Mike Robertson:** The College is against tuition caps. With the decrease in state money to higher education, the college needs the flexibility to determine tuition increases on a regular basis with flexibility to meet budgetary needs.
- **University of South Carolina spokeswoman Margaret Lamb:** The University does not favor caps because caps limit flexibility and, in essence, risk constraining quality. Having said that, I emphasize that the University of South Carolina has tried to keep tuition increases to a modest level so we can maintain accessibility and affordability for our students while providing the highest quality education. Across the University system, there are different

opportunities for students at different tuition levels – each campus provides a different experience with the quality of a University of South Carolina degree.

- **Jeff Perez, vice president for external affairs at The Citadel:** This is an era of declining state resources and limited state capacity to support higher education. The state's share of The Citadel's budget is down from about 40 percent in 1994 to only about 13 percent. We need flexibility with tuition to strike the balance between maintaining the quality our students and their families expect and the cost to attend. Caps would take away that flexibility.

2. What's your institution's position on caps on out-of-state enrollment, and why?

- **Clemson's Sams:** We believe institutions and their board should establish enrollment policies that serve the needs of the state and the students. We have maintained a consistent in-state/out-of-state enrollment ratio of 65/35 for decades.
- **CofC's Robertson:** For many years, the College has placed a cap on out-of-state enrollment. Our board of trustees wants to assure that in-state students have the opportunity to come to the College of Charleston.
- **USC's Lamb:** We are not in favor of our-state enrollment caps for several reasons. Out-of-state students

strengthen and diversify our student body, and that benefits every student at the University. Our pool of qualified in-state applicants is limited, so, as we have increased the size of the entering class, we have admitted more out-of-state students. However, let me emphasize that **no qualified in-state students have been denied admission in favor of out-of-state students. We have not diminished access for our in-state students.** In fact we continue to enroll as many in-state students as we always have. It's also important to note that a significant number of out-of-state students have ties to SC, i.e. they have family (grandparents) in state, and many have grown up vacationing here.

- **Citadel's Perez:** Caps on out-of-state enrollment would limit our ability to create the diversity in the Corps of Cadets that we believe is an essential part of educating principled leaders. We have cadets from 48 states and 19 foreign countries.

3. Is it harder today for an in-state student to get into your institution than five years ago?

- **Clemson Director of Admissions Robert Barkley:** There are actually more opportunities for a student from South Carolina to attend Clemson. For the fall semester of 2009, we have offered admission to 3,530 in-state applicants, compared to 3,205 in 2004. This does not include the Bridge to Clemson Program, which offers a Clemson-like freshman experience with access to on-campus services and programs. Almost 1,400 in-state students were offered the opportunity to participate in the Bridge Program.

- **CofC's Robertson:** It is more competitive to get into the College of Charleston now than in years past. Seven years ago, then President Lee Higdon placed a cap on the total amount of students enrolled at the College. Because of the smaller amount of enrolled students, the competition for admission into the College is greater.
- **USC's Lamb:** Absolutely not. Those numbers can reflect a change in our demographics, such as a reduction in the number of college-going students in our state, but admissions standards have not been raised. However, the quality of the applicants has increased, i.e. higher SAT scores, GPA, and, of course, that impacts the profile of the class being admitted. It is important to note that we offer students numerous alternatives to entering the university, i.e. spring admission, slots on our other campuses and through the Bridge Program with the state's Technical College System.
- **Citadel's Perez:** No. I'm not sure where you got your numbers but they're off. Going back to 2003 in the Corps of Cadets, there were 866 in-state cadets (44.6%) and 1,076 out-of-state (55.4%). In fall 2008 there were 938 in-state cadets (44.7%) and 1,076 out-of-state (55.3%). And it's important to note that 92 percent of approximately 1,000 students enrolled in The Citadel Graduate College are in-state. With the CGC factored in, 60 percent of students at The Citadel are in-state.

[Statehouse Report note: Enrollment numbers used for this story came from the S.C. Commission on Higher Education. On 5/29/09, we reported The Citadel had 40.4 percent of out-of-state students based on CHE numbers, which mirrors the combined numbers mentioned by Perez above.]

4. Does the institution have a strategy to seek more out of state students, which it charges much higher tuition, to be able to generate revenue to replace shrinking state dollars?

- **Clemson's Barkley:** The University does have a coordinated effort to attract more applicants from out-of-state. It is important to note, however, that the intended outcomes of these efforts are not only financial. The academic profile of the out-of-state students is higher than those from South Carolina, and they also contribute to the geographic diversity of the student body.
- **CofC's Robertson:** The College doesn't expect to change the strategy for seeking more out of state students. In past years, we have seen a substantial increase in the amount of out-of-state students applying to the College. We expect that trend to continue.
- **USC's Lamb:** We do have a strategy for recruiting outstanding non-resident students, as well as instate students, to attend the University of South Carolina. But again, the point is to bring geographic diversity and an intellectual synergy. That strategy includes direct-mail pieces and visits to high schools. We also have our McNair Scholar

Program, started by alumnus Bob McNair, a North Carolina native. Most flagship institutions do recruit students from outside the state. We recruit out of state because we are the flagship school and we spread the reach and the impact of the University beyond our state borders by carrying our message to other states. We want to recruit intellectual capital and diversity for the benefit of our students, so they can interact with students from around the country and learn from them and with them. We also recognized that in the current financial situation, non-resident students are the most volatile segment of our enrollment. The current media indicate that non-resident students attending colleges across the country may be more likely to stay home and attend local institutions.

- **Citadel's Perez:** We recruit qualified undergraduate students who are in-state, out-of-state and international for that matter, and who seek to become principled leaders. These students want the leadership opportunities, academic quality, personal challenges and discipline that are unique to the military college environment at The Citadel. The CGC is deeply tied to the Lowcountry as it provides advanced education for those looking to advance their careers and contribute to the future of the region.

More on higher education:

- 5/29: **Higher education funding on roller coaster**, SC Statehouse Report
<http://www.statehousereport.com/CurrentIssue.aspx?ID=27#Commentary>
- 6/5: **Solutions difficult for higher education funding flux**, SC Statehouse Report
<http://www.statehousereport.com/CurrentIssue.aspx?ID=28#Commentary>