

Public Hearing on Senate Finance and Education, September 21, 2010, 105 Gressette Building

Remarks by Dr. Bruce Halverson, President, SC Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities

Thank you for your commitment to the young people of our state, and in particular, to the talented young artists who attend the residential and summer programs at the **South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities**.

As you consider the funding needs for public education, I am here to encourage you also to make a commitment to strong funding for our state's special schools, and, of course, the South Carolina School for the Arts and Humanities is one of these special schools. The special schools play an essential role in the education of our state's young people and our school, as well as our sister school for Science and Math, is nationally recognized as an exceptional program. We are a national model and I ask your support in order for us to maintain our required level of excellence.

As you face the challenges of developing appropriate funding for K-12 education, I am here today to paint a clear picture of the challenges we face at our school, and I know the other special schools face similar challenges. For the past three years we have worked diligently to preserve the level of academic and artistic excellence that is our standard and to meet the health and safety standards that are required. With the continuing reductions in our budget, that now amount to approximately \$2 million or over 25% of our state appropriated funding, (\$7.3 million to \$5.3 million), we face 2012 with truly deep concern. In 2010 and again this year, our expenses are \$500,000 above our state funding. Last year, we received an additional \$500,000 in Federal stimulus funds and we are projected to receive \$500,000 this year from the Increased Enforcement Collection.

In the 2010-11 school year, in order to avoid a deficit budget and also prepare for the future, we have reduced our student body in the residential school by 20%. 40 fewer students were unable to attend. Over the past two years, we have significantly reduced the staffing in every area, including part-time teachers and, and now this year, we have reduced the full-time teaching faculty as well. The salaries of everyone on our faculty and staff are less this year, once again, than they were three years ago. For three straight years we have required everyone to take unpaid furloughs, always being careful not to miss any teaching days. With fewer faculty and especially staff, the demands of maintaining high standards in all areas are tremendously challenging.

Our wonderful staff is not complaining. They continue to meet the requirements, but how long can this last? We have stripped our school of its assistants and secretaries, reduced the maintenance and cleaning staff, left positions open in student and residence life, added to the faculty loads, reduced the number of teachers, staff, and administrators, and the list goes on.

We have been a model for Ebenezer Scrooge. We have hoarded and saved in order to protect our school and prepare it for the future. We can offer an exceptional education this year because we have been so careful, but if we do not get the additional \$500,000 that you so kindly provided by overriding the governor's veto of funds in the "special collections" category, we will face next year with no

carryover to help support some basic expenses and, quite frankly, if this happened, all of our options would be disastrous.

What do we need? We understand the terrible dilemma the legislature faces. In the recent Governor's budget request, we asked for \$900,000 to be added to our 2011 base budget. This is less than half of what has been eliminated in the past three years, and incidentally in 2001, the first fully enrolled year of the school, the budget was \$7.3 million, the same amount as when I arrived in the fall of 2007. We are seeking to return to full capacity of 242 students, fill several key staff and faculty positions, slightly enhance our daily operating fund, and ensure that our facilities are maintained at a level that will sustain them.

In closing let me turn away from the pain we all experience from these budget struggles to the good news of the success of wonderful South Carolina young people. This past year at the Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities was typical in that both our school and many of our students were recognized for their success. Examples include:

--100% of our graduates received financial assistance to attend colleges and universities or a professional training program.

--108 graduates received more than \$18 million in scholarship and financial assistance offers.

--Two students were selected as Presidential Scholars in the Arts out of a total of 40 drawn from over 2 million high school graduates.

--We ranked, once again, in the top three of the state's public high schools for SAT scores (and the two schools with higher rankings both require exceptional grades and scores to enter, we do not).

--Newsweek Magazine ranked our school in the top 2% nationally based on academics (506 out of more than 27,000 high schools).

--Our dance program was selected for the Outstanding School Award by the highly respected Youth American Grand Prix.

--One of our music seniors won first place in the national brass competition out of thousands of high school musicians.

--Our visual arts students captured 1st place in 7 of the 8 categories in the 20th Annual Upstate High School Art Exhibit.

This list could continue, but you can see that despite our challenges we have upheld the expectations for excellence. A strong artistic environment is necessary for South Carolina to have a promising future. We must have well educated artists if we are to have the economic engine of an excellent arts and culture industry. The seeds for this future are imbedded in the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. If we nourish young artists, they will thrive, and, in turn, the fortunes of the towns and cities of our state will be enriched and we will prosper. I am asking for your help to ensure that this

funding crisis does not extinguish the life of a school that creates unparalleled opportunity for the young people of our state.