



# Garber

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### **COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS**

*March 02, 2026*

**College and University Trustee Screening Commission**

REPORTER: Jennifer Nottle

1 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )

2 COUNTY OF RICHLAND )

3

4 \* \* \* \* \*

5 COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TRUSTEE SCREENING Commission

6 \* \* \* \* \*

7 BEFORE: REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM R. WHITMIRE, CHAIRMAN

8 SENATOR SEAN M. BENNETT, VICE-CHAIRMAN

9 SENATOR A. SHANE MASSEY

10 SENATOR TAMEIKA ISSAC DEVINE

11 SENATOR MICHAEL JOHNSON

12 REPRESENTATIVE JOHN KING

13 REPRESENTATIVE SETH ROSE

14 REPRESENTATIVE TIMOTHY A. "TIM" MCGINNIS

15 MACEY WEBB, STAFF COUNSEL

16 ELLIE CARRIGAN, RESEARCH ANALYST

16 \* \* \* \* \*

17 DATE: MARCH 2, 2026

18 TIME: 11:12 a.m.

19 LOCATION: Blatt Building

20 1101 Pendleton Street

21 Columbia, South Carolina 29201

22 REPORTED BY: JENNIFER NOTTLE, COURT REPORTER

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1 CALL TO ORDER:

2 REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: We're going to get started  
3 today. I'm going to say a short prayer to try to get us  
4 through the day. Heavenly Father, thank you for letting us  
5 have the opportunity to serve the people of South Carolina.  
6 Please watch over us as we make decisions that will affect  
7 our colleges and universities and their trustees for years  
8 to come. Thank you, in your name, Amen. First, I'd like  
9 to introduce all the members. We've got four new senators  
10 we'd like to welcome onto the Commission. Senator Massey,  
11 Senator Bennett, Senator Johnson, and Senator Isaac Devine.  
12 Welcome to the Commission. On the representative side, we  
13 have my good friend Representative King, who we've served  
14 together quite a few years, Representative McGinnis, and  
15 Representative Seth Rose. We also have our Chief Counsel,  
16 Macey Webb, and Research Analyst, Ellie Carrigan. Macey  
17 will be asking some standard questions of each candidate  
18 today, and Ellie will be taking the roll for us. Before we  
19 begin with the screening of candidates, we have a few  
20 housekeeping items, the first being the election of the  
21 chairman. Do I have someone making that motion? I  
22 recognize Representative McGinnis.

23 REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: I would like to nominate  
24 you, Representative Bill Whitmire, to be chairman, and I  
25 move that nominations be closed, and that, by unanimous

1 consent, Representative Whitmire be elected chairman by  
2 acclamation.

3 REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: All those in favor, say --  
4 oh, I need a second.

5 SENATOR BENNETT: Second.

6 REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: All those in favor signify  
7 by saying aye.

8 (Ayes are heard.)

9 REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Opposed?

10 (No replies are heard.)

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Representative McGinnis.  
12 Second being the election of the vice chairman.  
13 Senator Massey.

14 SENATOR MASSEY: Mr. Chairman, I nominate Senator  
15 Bennett to serve as vice chair, and do the nominations be  
16 closed, and that he be elected vice chair by unanimous  
17 consent, with acclamation.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Is there a second?

19 REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second, sir.

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor signify by saying  
21 aye.

22 (Ayes are heard.)

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, no.

24 (No replies are heard.)

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: So, Senator Bennett, you will be our

1 vice chairman. Congratulations. Sorry, no extra money.  
2 All right. As you know, we have not had a trustee  
3 screening in quite some time. However, today is our first  
4 step in resuming our trustee screening and getting back on  
5 track with consistent yearly screening, hopefully. We have  
6 two days today and this Thursday to conduct screenings.  
7 Today, we will be screening seats on the Citadel Board,  
8 Coastal Carolina University Board, Landry University Board,  
9 Medical University of South Carolina Board, Winthrop  
10 University Board, and Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School  
11 Board. Thursday, we will screen seats on the Citadel  
12 Board, Lander University Board, South Carolina State  
13 University Board, and University of South Carolina Board.  
14 The purpose of the screening today is to give each  
15 candidate the opportunity to explain to us why they want to  
16 be on the board of trustees for a university and give  
17 Commission members the opportunity to ask these candidates  
18 any questions they may have. Ultimately, at the end of  
19 each candidate testifying, we as a Commission will vote on  
20 whether to find an individual candidate qualified and  
21 nominated and send them to the floor for the Joint  
22 Assembly. Today's screening is being broadcast live and  
23 also recorded. You can find today's screening on the State  
24 House website. In addition, we have a court reporter here  
25 who will be transcribing everything we get on the record

1 today. Since it has been quite a while since we have  
2 conducted our last screening, I want to take a moment to  
3 remind all current candidates and any future candidates  
4 that it is the job of this Screening Commission to consider  
5 all the qualifications of the candidates that appear before  
6 us and make nominations to the General Assembly.  
7 Therefore, we conduct thorough investigations of all  
8 candidates that appear before us. During our  
9 investigation, we look at many factors that are laid out in  
10 statute. We look at candidates' knowledge of the  
11 institution, their ethical fitness, their professional and  
12 academic ability, their character, reputation, physical  
13 health, mental stability, experience, and demonstrated  
14 support of and involvement with the institution to which  
15 they have applied. In addition, we must determine the  
16 residency of each candidate to the seat to which they are  
17 applying. When determining residency, we look at various  
18 factors such as the address of your driver's license, the  
19 location of your voter registration. And for candidates  
20 who own their homes, your residency is determined by the  
21 location of where you pay your 4% tax assessment during the  
22 year when you apply. The 4% property tax assessment must  
23 be paid at this location for the term of office. It's come  
24 to my attention that there has been some confusion around  
25 the above requirements and therefore I wanted to ensure

1 everyone could hear the same message today. We take your  
2 residency requirements very seriously as a Screening  
3 Commission. With that in mind, I want to remind you all,  
4 and any future candidates that might be screening, that you  
5 as a candidate have an ongoing obligation and duty to  
6 notify the Screening Commission when any changes might  
7 occur that would affect your application and overall  
8 eligibility for serving on a board. Please contact our  
9 staff immediately if there are any substantial and  
10 significant changes that occur during your application  
11 period, screening period, or period serving as a trustee on  
12 a college board. It is paramount that you understand that  
13 as a candidate, and even as a seating board member, you  
14 have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the  
15 Commission any and all changes that would affect your  
16 overall eligibility to serve in the seat in which you have  
17 applied. Since this is our first meeting and since we have  
18 several new Commission members, I would ask that we go into  
19 executive session to start this screening day. There are a  
20 few orders of business that we need to address and have the  
21 opportunity to hear from our chief counsel on. I would  
22 make a motion to go into executive session at this time.  
23 Is there a second?

24 SENATOR BENNETT: Second.

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor signify by saying

1 aye.

2 (Ayes are heard.)

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, no.

4 (No replies are heard.)

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. If you would please leave  
6 and close the door, we'll get started on this.

7 EXECUTIVE SESSION

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: I need a motion to go back into regular  
9 session. All in favor say aye.

10 (Ayes are heard.)

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, no.

12 (No replies are heard.)

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Back in regular session and we will let  
14 the candidates come back in and we will start.

15 OFF THE RECORD

16 MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to welcome all of you to our  
17 Screening Commission today.

18 THE CITADEL:

19 KRISTOPHER DANIEL CLARK:

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: First person up will be from the  
21 Citadel, running for one at-large seat. Term will expire  
22 in June 2023. That's not quite right, is it? Yes, it  
23 expired then. All right, first up is Kristopher Daniel  
24 Clark. Come on up, sir, if you'll just stand right here.  
25 And if you'll raise your right hand and let me swear you

1 in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
2 nothing but the truth, so help you God?

3 MR. CLARK: I do.

4 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'd state your name and -- yeah,  
5 is your mic on? Is it on?

6 MR. CLARK: It's on.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, good. If you would just state  
8 your name and the board seat that you're running for, and  
9 then if you'd like to make a brief opening statement.

10 MR. CLARK: Sure. My name is Kristopher Clark, and  
11 I'm currently running for the at-large seat that expired.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KING: Could you talk up?

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, just a little bit louder, please.  
14 Just pull that toward you.

15 MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,  
16 thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I know I'm  
17 the first of many, and you'll have a full agenda, so my  
18 comments will be brief. Outside of my faith, the Citadel  
19 experience has had the greatest impact in my life. It  
20 changed my trajectory in my life, gave me self-confidence,  
21 gave others confidence, allowed them to invest in me over  
22 the years, which opened doors that I would not have been  
23 able to open myself. The discipline I gained there became  
24 the foundation for raising my four boys, my career and  
25 certainly my marriage. The Citadel teaches people to

1 overcome adversity, and with a world of all the modern  
2 conveniences, I think that's what we need today. And I  
3 like to use my gifts to make sure that men and women from  
4 all different backgrounds have the opportunity that I had  
5 if they choose that path. It's a demanding place, but it's  
6 a place where people thrive, so I'm honored to be here  
7 today and look forward to answering questions.

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey, questions from you?

9 MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

10 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All right, and Mr.**  
11 **Clark, can you please state your current address?**

12 A. 228 Dalton Road, Marietta, South Carolina 29661.

13 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay**  
14 **your 4% property tax?**

15 A. That's correct.

16 **Q. Thank you. All right. And then, do you**  
17 **currently serve on any local or state board,**  
18 **commission, committee, or elected office?**

19 A. I do, Santee Cooper.

20 **Q. Okay. And can you explain your role with them?**

21 A. Absolutely. So I serve as a board member on the  
22 Santee Cooper Board. I'm in holdover status, so  
23 if I get elected to this board, I will resign  
24 from Santee Cooper.

25 **Q. Okay. Thank you. And I just want to let you**

1 know that we do have an Attorney General's office  
2 precedent on this issue, and that if you are  
3 elected to the institution's board of trustees to  
4 which you have applied, you, at the time of being  
5 officially elected to the board, will no longer  
6 be eligible to serve in your initial position  
7 with the other entity, in this case, Santee  
8 Cooper. And based on prior Attorney General  
9 opinions, the public office you currently hold  
10 will be vacated upon you being elected to a new  
11 public office. Do you understand that?

12 A. I do.

13 Q. Thank you. All right. And do you understand the  
14 obligations and responsibilities of serving on a  
15 public institution's board of trustees?

16 A. I do.

17 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
18 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
19 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
20 after the Commission's report has been released?

21 A. I do.

22 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
23 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
24 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
25 intervene in this process on your behalf?

1 A. I am not.

2 Q. Thank you. And are you aware that you have an  
3 ongoing obligation and duty to report to the  
4 Commission any changes that might occur that  
5 would affect your application and overall  
6 eligibility for serving on a college board?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Clark and Mr.  
9 Chairman. I have no further questions.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions from members of the  
11 Commission? Senator Bennett.

12 MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNET:

13 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Clark.  
14 Thank you for being here. I appreciate your  
15 willingness to serve on the board. I'm just  
16 curious with respect to Santee Cooper. Santee  
17 Cooper is probably one of the more important  
18 boards that we have in South Carolina that affect  
19 a lot of people. And not to minimize the  
20 importance of the Citadel, I'm just curious as  
21 your decision to seek an appointment to a college  
22 trustee as opposed to continuing to serve, or  
23 potentially serve, Santee Cooper.

24 A. Sure. So my term has expired at Santee Cooper.  
25 I've served on the Santee Cooper Board since

1           2011. So I've served a few terms there, actually  
2           two, and then been in holdover status. It became  
3           obvious -- well, I should say I thought it was  
4           obvious this time last year that there would be  
5           someone appointed to my seat, so I was committed  
6           to stay in that seat until someone had been  
7           appointed. The person that was appointed before  
8           they went through the process withdrew, so  
9           there's not currently someone who's appointed to  
10          that seat. But I do understand the difference,  
11          and I do understand the importance of Santee  
12          Cooper to the state. And I could probably be  
13          here all day talking about that for sure.

14          **Q. Sure, sure. Thank you.**

15          MR. CHAIRMAN: Any others?

16          SENATOR MASSEY: Mr. Chairman.

17          MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Massey.

18          MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

19          **Q. So under the reorganization legislation that we**  
20          **passed for Santee Cooper, you're going to be out.**

21          A. Absolutely.

22          **Q. Right. You have to be replaced.**

23          A. That's correct.

24          **Q. Yeah. Okay, I understand. You thought that was**  
25          **going to happen last year, and all right, I'm**

1           **with you. Talk to me a little bit about the**  
2           **Citadel and about why -- why do you want to be on**  
3           **the Citadel Board?**

4       A.    So I think higher education in America is at an  
5           inflection point with the cost of tuition  
6           increasing, with parents figuring out if college  
7           is worth the investment, and then also employers  
8           really figuring out and demanding work-ready  
9           graduates. I think the Citadel is a unique place  
10          because it's always produced and been a leader  
11          ahead of its time in producing leaders of  
12          character. But I do think there's changes that  
13          need to be made. I think there's a lot of  
14          opportunities with AI technology. The current  
15          Board has done a great job with their plan to  
16          improve a lot of facilities. But I think along  
17          with that, there needs to be a lot of technology  
18          changes. I think that you can't teach a class on  
19          technology and AI. I think everything we do,  
20          technology has to be the foundation of it. And I  
21          think as we deploy graduates into the workforce,  
22          they'll be faced with that opportunity, and we  
23          have to prepare them for that. So I want to be  
24          sure that the institution that's done great  
25          things in the past, that's one example of a way

1 it needs to change to move it forward, sir.

2 **Q. I noticed one of the responses in your PDQ**  
3 **addressed the in-state tuition. Do you have a**  
4 **child that attends the Citadel now?**

5 A. I do.

6 **Q. So you know those figures intimately?**

7 A. Very well, sir.

8 **Q. Right. I don't think I appreciated, until**  
9 **reading this, that the in-state tuition for a**  
10 **freshman is nearly \$35,000. And then for**  
11 **upperclassmen, just over \$28,000, the information**  
12 **that you provided. How do you think the Board**  
13 **should look at that?**

14 A. Well, I think there's different opportunities.  
15 The Citadel does a pretty good job with  
16 scholarships, so I think there's scholarship  
17 opportunities. But I also think that there's a  
18 cost of service, so obviously you have to  
19 accommodate and you have to pay for the budget,  
20 the cost associated with that. So it has to  
21 cover that. I know that the state supports the  
22 school on a small level. So I think there's  
23 different opportunities. But the main thing is  
24 that the Citadel stay competitive as it looks at  
25 what it's providing as far as graduates, their

1 employment rate, what they're able to do after  
2 they graduate, and for the parents to see what  
3 their return on investment is. And that was a  
4 decision we made as a parent. We feel like it's  
5 a great return on investment, so we need to make  
6 it available to all those that it has value to.

7 **Q. And I would add to that, not just being**  
8 **career-ready or work-ready, but this is**  
9 **especially the case at the Citadel. It applies**  
10 **to all of our universities, but especially the**  
11 **Citadel. Teach them how to be good citizens.**

12 A. Absolutely.

13 **Q. Right. But I'm concerned about that tuition**  
14 **number. You're going to keep a lot of people --**  
15 **I mean, of course, The Citadel is different**  
16 **anyway, right? So you've got to really want to**  
17 **get it.**

18 A. Right.

19 **Q. \$35,000 for in-state tuition, that's problematic.**

20 A. I feel the pain.

21 **Q. I understand.**

22 MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

23 MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

24 **Q. Thank you for being here, and thank you for**  
25 **putting your name out there to be a board member.**

1           **What does equal opportunity in higher education**  
2           **mean to you in practice?**

3           A.    So my son obviously had a lot of experience with  
4           The Citadel, having been raised by me and visited  
5           the college at least once a year.  And when he  
6           was recruited locally in the high school, he was  
7           recruited by a minority gentleman that he,  
8           frankly, looked up to.  It drew him to the  
9           college, because I didn't make an assertive  
10          effort to push him in that direction.  As Senator  
11          Massey said, you know, it takes a certain kind of  
12          person to go, and I certainly didn't want to be  
13          involved in that.  What The Citadel has done is  
14          made an effort to get different minorities  
15          represented and doing their recruiting efforts.  
16          I think that is one step.  I think another step  
17          is a broad net, you know, getting exposure out to  
18          a lot of different demographics, and then  
19          ultimately, you know, offering something that  
20          will improve the quality of life for those folks.

21          **Q.    You may be aware that the State has taken a**  
22          **position opposing diversity, equity, and**  
23          **inclusion initiatives.  What lawful strategies**  
24          **would you use to ensure campus remains welcoming**  
25          **and accessible to students from historically**

1           **unrepresented communities?**

2           A.    Again, I think the key is exposing what The  
3           Citadel offers to a lot of different groups,  
4           under-represented groups, different diverse  
5           backgrounds. The key is getting it out there,  
6           attracting them, and through scholarships and  
7           other opportunities, I think you can still  
8           attract a large group of folks, sir.

9           **Q.    Thank you.**

10          SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

11          MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

12          MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

13          **Q.    Thank you. And it's not a gotcha question, but**  
14          **you all know what I'm saying. Do you know what**  
15          **the four-year graduation rate is at The Citadel?**

16          A.    I believe it's 64%.

17          **Q.    I've got it at 56, based on the research that**  
18          **I've been given, and a 66% six-year graduation**  
19          **rate. When I think that a state school, after**  
20          **six years, is still only graduating about**  
21          **two-thirds of its incoming class, it concerns me.**  
22          **I'm curious, as a board member, what are your**  
23          **thoughts about how to get the graduation rate up**  
24          **higher? Because it's \$35,000 a year to go. You**  
25          **ought to have a return on that investment.**

1 A. Absolutely. I'll have to check those numbers.

2 **Q. And your number may be right, but even at 64%,**  
3 **it's not right.**

4 A. It's not 100, right?

5 **Q. No.**

6 A. I think one major thing is for people to  
7 understand what the Citadel experience is. I  
8 know, again, back to my experience, I, as well as  
9 my son, visited The Citadel, did an  
10 inside-the-gates experience, so he could  
11 understand what the Citadel offered. And the  
12 staff there does an incredible job articulating  
13 what that is. I think the percentage of dropout  
14 for freshmen that did not have that experience is  
15 significantly higher than the ones that did.  
16 They were able to visit the college before. So I  
17 think that's the major thing, helping people  
18 understand what The Citadel has to offer and  
19 getting them exposed to it so they can make an  
20 educated decision.

21 **Q. Well, The Citadel's not for everybody. I'll**  
22 **agree with that. But you're talking about AI and**  
23 **getting the next generation ready for the**  
24 **workforce. But if they can't matriculate in four**  
25 **or five years, especially at the tuition levels**

1           **that we're charging, it becomes very difficult to**  
2           **move on and get that job, right?**

3           A.   Absolutely. I think that's a great example. AI,  
4           you can use a lot of predictive analytics with  
5           students to see if they're prone to fail. And I  
6           think if we incorporate that as well, I hope that  
7           will give us early signs so that they can be  
8           offered assistance.

9           **Q.   Thank you, sir.**

10          MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other others? Mr. Clark, this term  
11          ends in 2029, so we're talking three years. I see you're  
12          from Marietta, which is kind of near where I live. Do you  
13          think you'll have any problems attending all of the trustee  
14          meetings over that three-year period?

15          MR. CLARK: No, sir.

16          MR. CHAIRMAN: I always ask that of everyone. All  
17          right. If there are no more questions, is there a motion  
18          to move for approval?

19          SENATOR MASSEY: So moved.

20          MR. CHAIRMAN: Second?

21          REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

22          MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by  
23          raising your right hand so we can get a count.

24   (All hands are raised.)

25          MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, obviously none. All right.

1 Congratulations, and make sure you pay close attention to  
2 when you are asked for any commitments and stuff like that.

3 MR. CLARK: Yes, sir.

4 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you, sir. Thank you for  
5 your willingness to serve. Next up, we have James E.  
6 Nicholson, Jr. of Charleston, also running for the Citadel  
7 at large seat.

8 JAMES E. NICHOLSON, JR.:

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you would, just raise your right  
10 hand, please, sir. All right. You swear to tell the  
11 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help  
12 you God?

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Yes, sir, I do.

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. If you would just give us  
15 your name and also your brief opening statement.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Yes, sir.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: Why you want to run for the board.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Yes, sir. My name is James E.  
19 Nicholson, Jr. I go by Jimmy, and I reside at 2 Wharfside  
20 Street, Unit 2B in Charleston, South Carolina. In 2018,  
21 late 2018, a classmate of mine who graduated in 1985, Gene  
22 Hogan. You all probably know Gene Hogan. Works for  
23 Senator -- mentioned to me about considering running for  
24 the Board of Visitors. And over a couple, three months, I  
25 thought about it, and my initial reaction was no. I never

1 had a goal. Never one time had a goal of being on The  
2 Citadel Board of Visitors. So I say that to say that when  
3 I was appointed, and when I did stay in the race and stuck  
4 it out and was appointed by the legislature, I was doing it  
5 for the right reasons. My heart was in the right place.  
6 My heart's still in the right place. Sure, there's  
7 opportunities we've got at The Citadel. Some of the things  
8 have already been discussed. I can elaborate on those and  
9 talk about them, and glad to do so. But again, I'm three  
10 years into this term. I just as soon stay around. You all  
11 pass me through and see if I can get appointed again. But  
12 I appreciate the opportunity to be on The Citadel Board.  
13 I've had the pleasure. We have four committees on the  
14 Board, and I've served as the Operations and Risk  
15 Management Committee Chair under Chairman Dellaney and  
16 Chairman Goff. Chairman Dellaney also let us set up another  
17 committee, the Athletic Committee, and I'm chairing that as  
18 well. So I'm in Charleston. I'm on campus a lot. I know  
19 what's going on. And again, I'm doing it for the right  
20 reasons.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey?

22 MR. NICHOLSON - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

23 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Nicholson, can**  
24 **you please state your current address?**

25 A. Yes, 2 Wharfside Street, Unit 2-D, Charleston

1 29401.

2 Q. Thank you. And is this where you pay your 4%  
3 property tax?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any  
6 local or state board, commission, committee, or  
7 elected office other than The Citadel?

8 A. I do not.

9 Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations  
10 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
11 institution's Board of Trustees?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
14 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
15 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
16 after the Commission's report has been released?

17 A. Yes, I do.

18 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
19 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
20 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
21 intervene in this process on your behalf?

22 A. No.

23 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
24 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
25 any changes that might occur that would affect

1           **your application and overall eligibility for**  
2           **serving on a college board?**

3           A.    Yes.

4           **Q.    Thank you.  Thank you, Mr. Nicholson and Mr.**  
5           **Chairman.  I have no further questions.**

6           MR. CHAIRMAN:  Questions from the Commission members?  
7           All right.  Representative King.

8           MR. NICHOLSON - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

9           **Q.    Thank you, Mr. Chair.  Mr. Nicholson, thank you**  
10           **for your willingness to serve.  I just have a**  
11           **question for you.  How would you balance**  
12           **protecting academic freedom with responding to**  
13           **political or public backlash?**

14           A.    Well, I think that's a tough balancing act, but  
15           we are certainly committed to academic freedom  
16           with our faculty and administration.  And we  
17           certainly will follow the law and do the things  
18           we need to in order to ensure that that's done.

19           **Q.    Should trustees ever discipline a faculty member**  
20           **for speech that is lawful but politically**  
21           **unpopular?**

22           A.    No.

23           **Q.    Thank you.**

24           MR. CHAIRMAN:  That it?  Senator Massey.

25           MR. NICHOLSON - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

1 Q. Mr. Nicholson, thank you for being here, and  
2 thanks for your service.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Do you have a military background?

5 A. I do not. My father was in for 35 years, and so  
6 I learned plenty of stuff about the military, but  
7 did not serve.

8 Q. It's curious to me that when I look on the -- The  
9 Citadel Board of Visitors website, all the board  
10 members are given the title of colonel. Do you  
11 know why that is?

12 A. No idea. It's with the South Carolina militia,  
13 so.

14 Q. Are you, by virtue of being a member of The  
15 Citadel Board of Visitors, is everyone  
16 conscripted into the militia?

17 A. I don't remember doing that, sir, but I did get  
18 something from Governor McMaster, a plaque,  
19 saying I'm in. So I guess I could be called if  
20 needed.

21 Q. Okay. All right. That's interesting. I -- I'll  
22 leave the questions about the graduation rate to  
23 Senator Johnson, because I know he has some  
24 questions about that. And I noticed you made a  
25 response about that in your PDQ responses. But I

1           **am curious, how does -- during your time there,**  
2           **tell me how does the Board evaluate decisions on**  
3           **tuition and fees as well?**

4       A.    Okay.  So as chair of operations and risk  
5           management committee, tuition, budget, risk  
6           management, HR things come up through the  
7           committee, so I'm pretty well versed on what's  
8           going on with that.  But we continually have  
9           meetings on campus, on Zoom.  I actually go, and  
10          the vice chairman of that committee, actually go  
11          and spend time with the vice president of finance  
12          prior to our monthly and quarterly calls to try  
13          to understand what's going on.  Tuition is  
14          certainly higher than we wanted.  I can tell you  
15          that General Walters, in his tenure, he's gone  
16          through the entire school in four or five  
17          different big groups, like the administration,  
18          the commandant's office, things like that, and we  
19          have actually given back FTE positions to the  
20          State.  We have asked for a few along the way,  
21          but net-net, we are way down on employees.  Every  
22          year, he's trying to do everything he can to not  
23          fill open positions and pick up the work from  
24          others.  But tuition is obviously, and the  
25          finances of the school are obviously of very big

1 concern to The Citadel and to the Board.

2 Q. So, you know, we've -- the General Assembly has,  
3 for the last several years, provided sufficient  
4 funding for the universities across the state to  
5 hold tuition flat. But in so doing, the  
6 universities have, while they've done that,  
7 they've also significantly increased mandatory  
8 cost of attendance fees, particularly housing  
9 costs. And then if you stay on campus, in many  
10 cases, you're required to have a dining plan, and  
11 they've increased those fees as well. And from  
12 the information provided in your responses, it  
13 looks like that the fees, the room and board  
14 fees, are substantially more than tuition itself.  
15 And so I'm curious. I mean, is this something  
16 you all talk about? Because I'm curious how you  
17 would get to an in-state total cost of attendance  
18 at around \$35,000 if people are actually paying  
19 attention to this.

20 A. It's tough, sir, and we do pay attention to it.  
21 As you well know, if you're at The Citadel,  
22 you're staying in the barracks. So we provide  
23 room and board. You eat in the mess hall, so we  
24 provide, obviously, food. We wear uniforms,  
25 which is a cost to our cadets, and it's not

1 minimal. But there are some other things that go  
2 along with this, but we certainly, on a regular  
3 basis, are talking about how to mitigate tuition.  
4 And thanks to the study and what you all have  
5 done in the last five years to help us mitigate  
6 tuition increases, that has certainly helped.  
7 But we're concerned.

8 **Q. Does The Citadel make a profit off of its dining**  
9 **plans?**

10 A. No, sir.

11 **Q. All right, so the fact that the costs have been**  
12 **increasing over the last several years, there's**  
13 **not a profit made on that?**

14 A. I don't believe so, sir. No, sir.

15 **Q. All right, how about the housing costs?**

16 A. No, sir.

17 **Q. Okay, so the money that the students pay, the**  
18 **cadets pay for dining plans, the money that they**  
19 **pay for the meals, that's going in only to**  
20 **support the meals?**

21 A. Yes, sir, and in fact, I think if we have a  
22 surplus, we're using that for renovations in the  
23 mess hall, like we currently are. Like with room  
24 and board, we've got a fund that if we need  
25 renovations in the barracks, which we do on a

1 regular basis, that money is being used to  
2 renovate the barracks.

3 **Q. What kind of -- how engaged is the Board in the**  
4 **oversight of the administration?**

5 A. I'd say significant, particularly in the last two  
6 years under Chairman Dellaney the Board has become  
7 -- as you all probably know, has become very  
8 engaged. When I first got on the Board, I'm  
9 like, what am I doing on the Board? I mean, I'm  
10 like really trying to figure out what the Board's  
11 role is. And there's a balance between being  
12 very strategic in governing and then getting down  
13 too far in the details. And I think depending on  
14 what's going on, you've got to be able to  
15 moderate in that space. So I feel really good  
16 that the Board is very engaged. We're  
17 accountable to the State, and this body, and I  
18 feel like we are much better than we were.

19 **Q. What kind of training is provided to new Board**  
20 **members?**

21 A. We had -- there is training. I went off-site a  
22 couple times when I first got on the Board.

23 **Q. What were you all doing?**

24 A. It was one of the associations, I can't recall  
25 the name of it now, but it's one of the higher

1 education associations. When we go, we've had  
2 them come in at off-site meetings before and give  
3 us up-to-date training, that sort of thing. So  
4 we're continually looking to understand what's  
5 going on in higher education.

6 **Q. Is that the Commission on Higher Education, or is**  
7 **it a private entity?**

8 A. That is a private entity. Yes, sir.

9 **Q. Okay. Is there ongoing training beyond your**  
10 **initial appointment service?**

11 A. Yes, sir. It probably could be more, but we do  
12 have people come in and talk to us from time to  
13 time.

14 **Q. When they come in, what do they talk about?**

15 A. Risk management is one of the things that we are  
16 very concerned about. We've learned a lot from  
17 our current provost, particularly, and I think  
18 one of the biggest things is addressing the issue  
19 of higher education and what it costs, not just  
20 at The Citadel, but everywhere. The other issue  
21 that we've been educated on is in 2025, as you  
22 all probably well know, the cohort of  
23 18-year-olds starts going like this (gesturing).  
24 So there's less people to come to all these  
25 schools, and we feel like at The Citadel we're

1 well-positioned to accept these people because  
2 we're unique. Our degree does mean something.  
3 It's hard. People relish getting Citadel  
4 graduates, and I think that helps us attract  
5 people.

6 **Q. So has the Board discussed a plan for how to deal**  
7 **with tuition and fees in the face of a decline in**  
8 **student enrollment?**

9 A. Well, yes, sir. I mean, we're continually  
10 looking at it. I can tell you that the barracks  
11 hold 2,364 rooms, and we started off full this  
12 year, which is a pretty amazing feat. Right now  
13 I think we've only got about 2,200 cadets, which  
14 you all probably know is first year is not very  
15 easy, and we tend to have 10 to 12% of freshmen  
16 that will leave in the first semester. But we're  
17 probably higher than we've been. I know we're  
18 higher than we've been, and applications for this  
19 year look good. Again, I think The Citadel's  
20 offering something special, and there's kids out  
21 there that will come do this. And I think we  
22 have an opportunity to bring them in and educate  
23 them when they leave school.

24 **Q. Sure, The Citadel is unique. It does have a**  
25 **different type of draw than what we see in some**

1 other universities. But I am concerned that with  
2 where The Citadel's tuition and fees are right  
3 now, if you're looking in the future at a  
4 declining enrollment just because of population  
5 numbers, that how the Board is going to handle a  
6 declining enrollment, how they're going to handle  
7 tuition and fees in light of a declining  
8 enrollment.

9 A. Well, the Board's mission is to not have  
10 declining enrollment. Yes, the demographics of  
11 the kids coming out.

12 Q. Society is affecting you on that.

13 A. Sir?

14 Q. If the student population in society is  
15 diminishing, then that's going to affect your  
16 student enrollment to some extent, right?

17 A. I think we have -- It could, yes, sir,  
18 absolutely. But I think we feel like we offer  
19 something very unique to the state of South  
20 Carolina and the nation that we can attract our  
21 number of people. We don't have to find 5,000 a  
22 year. We've just got to find -- We've got to  
23 fill up 2,364 beds, which is 700 or 800, 900  
24 freshmen coming in every year, which we've been  
25 getting recently. We struggle with COVID.

1 General Walters kept campus open during COVID.  
2 We went to class during COVID, did online on  
3 COVID. But we are positioned, I think, because  
4 of what we offer and the value we bring, to hold  
5 our own. That's what we intend to do.

6 **Q. Thank you.**

7 SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: First, let me welcome Senator Isaac  
9 Devine. Welcome. Nothing like having another attorney on  
10 this Board. Who had a question?

11 SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

13 MR. NICHOLSON - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

14 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your question 10, you**  
15 **said The Citadel can improve by continuing to**  
16 **focus on your four-year graduation rate. What**  
17 **specific things do you think need to be done to**  
18 **improve that rate?**

19 A. Well, you know, I know the numbers were mentioned  
20 a while ago. I'm actually looking at one of our  
21 brochures that we published. It says we're at  
22 74.4%. I'm going to have to square that up with  
23 what you guys got. I'll do that. I'd be glad to  
24 follow up. You know I think we've got to -- the  
25 picture we've got to paint to these students is,

1 and a lot of them are buying into it, is when you  
2 leave The Citadel, you're going to have a job.  
3 About 90% of all the senior class that graduates  
4 here are going to have a job. They're going to  
5 go into the military, they're going to medical or  
6 law school. The other thing is about, I think we  
7 are the highest salary of any South Carolina  
8 state college 10 years after graduation, \$72,085.  
9 Which, again, tuition's an issue, but we do seem  
10 to be producing graduates that are finding jobs  
11 that are lucrative jobs that are putting them in  
12 good spots.

13 **Q. Do you think because of the uniqueness -- I mean,**  
14 **obviously you're losing, I think you just hit 10%**  
15 **to 11% right off the top in that first semester.**  
16 **You're never going to be at 100% because you've**  
17 **lost X amount right off the top.**

18 **A.** Financial group budgets for that every year, so  
19 we account for that and know when that's going to  
20 happen.

21 **Q. So if you have a 75% graduation rate, then that's**  
22 **significantly better than the 60% that I was**  
23 **looking at. Does it -- how do you drive that,**  
24 **though? Mesh that up with what Senator Massey**  
25 **was saying. You have a declining student**

1 population. You have high tuition, bottom line.  
2 And you potentially have a two-thirds graduation  
3 rate. I mean, at some point, those lines all  
4 merge in something, and the result isn't what you  
5 want at The Citadel. So I guess what's the plan  
6 to make sure that those three things don't all  
7 interact at the exact same time?

8 A. Yes, sir. I'm certainly not minimizing 100% of  
9 graduates graduating, I think the --

10 **Q. I'm not expecting 100%.**

11 A. I'm with you. I was just looking here. The  
12 national average is 37%. So, you know, we feel  
13 like we want to do better, and that's our  
14 intention to do that. I would suggest that  
15 one-third of our cadet corps is in engineering,  
16 which is astounding. Just as a side note, 50% of  
17 the engineering students come from out of state.  
18 But upon graduation, 70% of the engineers that  
19 are graduating from The Citadel are staying in  
20 the state of South Carolina. So to get back to  
21 your question, sir, I think I guarantee you  
22 there's not a whole lot of cadets graduating in  
23 four years at The Citadel in engineering. So --  
24 and I can find that out and let you know. But I  
25 know when I was there, you were lucky to get out

1 in five years in engineering.

2 **Q. Are there -- I went to an engineering school.**  
3 **I'm a liberal arts major, but I went to an**  
4 **engineering school. Parents are paying that**  
5 **tuition. The State is, through scholarship,**  
6 **subsidizing tuition. Graduation rates and moving**  
7 **through the system not as quickly as you can but**  
8 **in an efficient, expeditious manner, do you**  
9 **believe that five years is an appropriate --**  
10 **again, it's not a gotcha question. I'm just**  
11 **asking. Is five years an appropriate time frame**  
12 **to graduate from The Citadel?**

13 **A.** In some cases, I think so, yes, sir. I will say,  
14 too, that this is probably no secret to you all,  
15 but all the kids that are coming into The Citadel  
16 now have got college classes. We have a lot of  
17 kids that are leaving in three years. In fact,  
18 the Board had to take some action because we  
19 would get people to come in, take two years at  
20 tech, and then come in to be a knob and to be a  
21 senior and graduate. We did not feel like that  
22 somebody could come in and do two years like that  
23 and get the benefit and gain what The Citadel  
24 does without being there for three years. We  
25 have a number of people, a percentage, and I'm

1 not sure what it is, sir, that are out much  
2 sooner than four years.

3 Q. I get that the biggest question -- I know there  
4 are a lot of schools now, dual credit, AP  
5 courses. You can walk in as a sophomore. In  
6 light of that, that's one of my issues with what  
7 I consider low graduation rates. I walk in as a  
8 sophomore. I should get out in a minimum of four  
9 years, if not sooner. And so that begs my  
10 question of what is The Citadel doing, what is  
11 the Board doing to ensure that these students are  
12 graduating in a timely manner and that the money  
13 invested in The Citadel, and especially in those  
14 students is well spent? Because it's return on  
15 investment, right? I get that you think that The  
16 Citadel believes you need to be there three years  
17 in order to get The Citadel experience. I get  
18 that. But I wonder, do I need to really be there  
19 six years before I can get to a certain  
20 graduation?

21 A. Yeah, we certainly do not want anybody to be  
22 there six years, five years either. But there  
23 are cases when you're going to have some cadets  
24 that are five years or four and a half years.  
25 Certainly, I understand, and it's a challenge.

1           We understand your concern.

2           MR. CHAIRMAN: There we go. I share my Senate  
3 colleagues' concerns about the high cost of not only The  
4 Citadel, but we've talked about this for years, about the  
5 high cost of higher ed throughout our entire state. And  
6 maybe it's not so much true in The Citadel, but, you know,  
7 a lot of these students graduate with, you know, they may  
8 owe \$200,000 in loans and stuff. That makes it very  
9 difficult. So I'm sure we'll be asking other schools the  
10 same questions and stuff. But I do want to first ask for a  
11 motion for a favorable report.

12           SENATOR MASSEY: Motion.

13           SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

14           MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion and second. All those in favor,  
15 please raise your right hand.

16                           (All hands are raised.)

17           MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Opposed?

18                           (No hands are raised.)

19           MR. CHAIRMAN: So that's unanimous. Thank you, sir,  
20 for your willingness to serve. And that will do it for The  
21 Citadel. And we will now go to Coastal Carolina, and we've  
22 got at least, what, 13 or 14 of these.

23 COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY:

24 So the 1st Congressional District Seat 1, expires in 2027.  
25 And that is George Edward Mullen of Hilton Head.

1 GEORGE EDWARD MULLEN:

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: Come on up, George. Okay. We'll hold  
3 off for just a second. Mr. Mullen, just come right on up  
4 here, sir.

5 MR. MULLEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'd just raise your right hand,  
7 let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole  
8 truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God.

9 MR. MULLEN: I do.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you will just give us your name and  
11 the board seat you were running for, and then a brief  
12 reason, statement, why you were running for the seat.

13 MR. MULLEN: Well, thank you. I'm George Mullen. I'm  
14 from Hilton Head. I served on this Board for the last 13  
15 years. I guess my term really was up two years ago, but we  
16 didn't have this proceeding at that time, so I'm sort of  
17 held over for the last two years. I got on this Board when  
18 my son had just started at Coastal. He was in a very  
19 special program that we had, the Coastal Life Program.  
20 There are similar programs at South Carolina and Clemson  
21 y'all may have heard of. My son has Down syndrome, and I  
22 really didn't know what to expect when I sent him off to  
23 college. He lived in the dorm, took some regular classes,  
24 some special classes. And I was just so impressed with the  
25 way the university handled the group of kids they had in

1 the Life Program. But just the interaction of the students  
2 in general to this group of kids, I thought that was  
3 something that perhaps I had very much interest in running  
4 for the Board. It so happens at the same time we had  
5 redistricting when the 7th Congressional District was born.  
6 So the 1st Congressional District shifted down to Beaufort  
7 County. The person who held that was in the now-new 7th  
8 District, so it became an open seat, and I thought I'd run.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

10 MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

11 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Mr. Mullen, can**  
12 **you please state your current address?**

13 A. It's 48 Planters Row, Hilton Head.

14 **Q. Thank you. And is this where you pay your 4%**  
15 **property tax?**

16 A. It is, where I have, in this particular address,  
17 the last 20 years.

18 **Q. Okay. And is this address within the**  
19 **Congressional District to which you have applied?**

20 A. It is.

21 **Q. Thank you.**

22 A. It's the 1st Congressional District, which, you  
23 asked me that question, Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry.

24 **Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state**  
25 **board, commission, committee, or elected office,**

1 other than the Coastal Carolina Board?

2 A. I do not.

3 Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations  
4 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
5 institution's Board of trustees?

6 A. I do.

7 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
8 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
9 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
10 after the Commission's report has been released?

11 A. I do understand.

12 Q. Thank you. And have you currently asked any  
13 third parties to contact members of the General  
14 Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of  
15 anyone attempting to intervene in this process on  
16 your behalf?

17 A. I have not and I do not know of anyone who has.

18 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
19 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
20 any changes that might occur that would affect  
21 your application and overall eligibility for  
22 serving on a college Board?

23 A. I do.

24 Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mullen. Mr. Chairman,  
25 I have no further questions.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: A question from the Commission members.  
2 Senator Bennett.

3 MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

4 Q. Sorry, I'm having trouble working these buttons  
5 in the house. They're more complicated than I  
6 thought. Mr. Mullen, thank you for being here  
7 and for your service and for willing to continue  
8 that service.

9 A. Thank you, sir.

10 Q. I just want to talk to you a little bit. I know  
11 you weren't in the room, but we've been talking  
12 quite a bit this morning about affordability and  
13 getting kids out of college, in and out of  
14 college. I'm just curious, what's your  
15 out-of-state student percentage?

16 A. Yes, it's quite high, 60%.

17 Q. Are there discussions at the board level of that  
18 number? Do you like that number, do you dislike  
19 that number, is there a way to improve the  
20 in-state tuition numbers?

21 A. Well, you said in-state tuition numbers. You  
22 mean population numbers?

23 Q. In-state students.

24 A. We don't want in-state tuition to go up.

25 Q. I'm talking right now about in-state students,

1           **just in general. We'll get to the tuition part.**  
2           **Just the fact that you've got a 60% out-of-state**  
3           **tuition -- I'm sorry, out-of-state student body,**  
4           **are there discussions at the board level on how**  
5           **do you get more in-state students as opposed to**  
6           **out-of-state?**

7    A.    We've had those discussions frequently. And I  
8           think your question as you first framed it was,  
9           is it good, is it bad? There's both positive and  
10          negatives to it. First thing I'd say is that we  
11          have a policy. It has been there way before I  
12          was ever on this Board that every qualified South  
13          Carolinian will be admitted. There will never be  
14          a place that is a person who is displaced because  
15          of our acceptance of out-of-state students. So  
16          we start from that proposition. And then you  
17          have to look at what is the basic mission of this  
18          university. We are a state university, primarily  
19          a regional in the Pee Dee coastal area. And our  
20          obligations are to serve those people first and  
21          foremost, and then the rest of the students in  
22          the state of South Carolina. To the extent that  
23          we have excess capacity, the benefits of  
24          out-of-state students are pretty overwhelming.  
25          And it goes back to the tuition question, which

1 we've not talked about yet. But our tuition for  
2 out-of-state students is \$30,000 a year.  
3 In-state students, it's \$11,600. So we're  
4 charging basically three times tuition. If we  
5 did not have that 60% out-of-state revenues  
6 coming in, it would skew our numbers so badly for  
7 in-state students that the people from New Jersey  
8 and New York and Maryland are, to a great extent,  
9 subsidizing the students that we do have from  
10 South Carolina. So to that extent, it is a real  
11 advantage. But we have not had an area where we  
12 have to be turning people away. We do have  
13 academic requirements that need to be met, but  
14 out of our South Carolina applicants that we  
15 have, either through the bridge program that we  
16 have at Horry Georgetown Technical College or  
17 through the university, we're able to place 93%  
18 of those applicants. They don't all choose to  
19 come, but the opportunities for South Carolinians  
20 is definitely there. Probably better than any  
21 other school you'll see in the state.

22 **Q. So what you're telling me is that the 40% of**  
23 **in-state students right now is, at this point in**  
24 **time, the most that you can attract to the**  
25 **university?**

1 A. Unfortunately, that is true. There are -- and  
2 I'm just going to speak from a dad who has an  
3 18-year-old daughter getting ready to go off to  
4 college. And she wants big football, big  
5 sorority, big fraternity. It's almost an  
6 entertainment type that they're looking for. And  
7 she is pretty typical of the incoming students at  
8 USC. We don't compete with South Carolina and  
9 with the Clemson and all that. We attract a  
10 different clientele, quite frankly.

11 **Q. I notice in your questions that you talk a lot**  
12 **about virtual classes being the preferred method**  
13 **of delivery, or for growing population. You**  
14 **state that they're particularly non-traditional**  
15 **students. It's the most available and**  
16 **cost-efficient mode to a degree. The university**  
17 **should continue to develop online offerings to**  
18 **serve those students. There is more and more**  
19 **evidence, I think, in studies that are showing,**  
20 **while it may be cost-effective and it may be**  
21 **something that people desire, that it's not**  
22 **necessarily the most effective way to provide**  
23 **education or engage students. Does the Board --**  
24 **I guess, one, would you agree with me on that?**  
25 **And two, is it something that the Board discusses**

1           **about how best to deliver education to your**  
2           **student population?**

3       A.   Well we certainly had talks about to the extent  
4           that you're doing online or non-traditional  
5           methods of delivery. We've had discussions with  
6           that. Our provost often talks on that sort of  
7           situation. Do I agree with you that --  
8           personally, I don't believe that the best method  
9           is on a remote or online. I agree. I do not  
10          believe that. I think face-to-face is the best  
11          way to learn. It's certainly what I would  
12          prefer. But if you're dealing with a  
13          non-traditional student, the student who perhaps  
14          cannot afford to live on campus and leave his  
15          home to come to Conway, or you're dealing with  
16          the military student who has a full-time job that  
17          wants to participate, you need to come up with a  
18          way of servicing the non-traditional. And one of  
19          the key ways to look at that would be through the  
20          virtual. As a matter of fact, one of the  
21          programs that we have at Coastal, we will allow a  
22          South Carolina resident to take up to five  
23          virtual courses at \$100 a class. Talk about  
24          cost-effective, and being able to service someone  
25          who otherwise perhaps could not have afforded to

1 live here. I think it's been -- I was going to  
2 say it's been effective. We hope for it to be  
3 effective. It's all sort of new ground right now  
4 for us.

5 **Q. You talk about the five classes. Are you talking**  
6 **about those that are for on-campus students or**  
7 **off-campus?**

8 A. No, for off-campus virtual classes.

9 **Q. Thank you Mr. Chairman.**

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

11 MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

12 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What are your thoughts**  
13 **on -- I'm hearing a lot about the accreditation,**  
14 **SACS and universities and colleges and**  
15 **universities are now looking at other accrediting**  
16 **bodies. Have you heard about that?**

17 A. Oh, yeah, I've heard, certainly.

18 **Q. And can you tell me your thoughts on that?**

19 A. An awful lot of that, I think, is coming out of  
20 the current administration and the education  
21 department of this president. And they're  
22 looking at it from the differing ways of  
23 accrediting bodies that qualify for federal  
24 assistance. There's also been talk of some of  
25 our larger universities, I think that Clemson and

1 Carolina are perhaps the two of them that have  
2 looked at it, of establishing their own  
3 accreditation bodies outside of SACS. We deal  
4 with SACS. SACS does a very intensive review  
5 every five years of our school. We have to do  
6 extensive reporting to them. We have never run  
7 into problems where we have had any sort of  
8 warnings or probation from them. SACS has worked  
9 fine for us.

10 **Q. Do you see any potential risk with going to**  
11 **another accrediting body?**

12 A. Oh, I think there's always the risk of any time  
13 you're going to something new that goes to the  
14 unknown. How would a body that is being formed  
15 for -- and I'm going on tip now because I'm not  
16 one of them, but if you're a Power Four and  
17 they're looking at big athletics, how's that  
18 accreditation body going to be judging athletes,  
19 for instance? Are they going to approach it from  
20 a different way because Power Four has a  
21 different concern there? They might. Don't  
22 know, that's speculation. But yes, there would  
23 be concern of anything that is new and changing  
24 to what has been established. I sort of have a  
25 theory if it's not broke, why do you want to fix

1           it? And as I said, SACS has worked quite well  
2           for us.

3           **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair.**

4           MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Issac Devine.

5           MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

6           **Q. Thank you so much, Mr. Mullen, for your service**  
7           **and your willingness to continue to serve. Just**  
8           **a couple of questions. In your questionnaire,**  
9           **you talked about not needing more students**  
10          **because you are growing, but you talked about the**  
11          **construction of needed facilities. Can you tell**  
12          **us what the Board's current plan is on the**  
13          **facilities and making sure that you are**  
14          **balancing, not spending overly on facilities, but**  
15          **making sure that we've got the right facilities?**

16          A. Absolutely, and a couple of different things that  
17          we look at from there. First, this has probably  
18          been one of my primary roles that I've had on the  
19          Board, is that I sit on virtually all the design  
20          and programming committees for new buildings. In  
21          that role, I take a position that usually one or  
22          two board members sit on the committee with  
23          probably four or five other administration  
24          officials. We select the architect, we select  
25          the contractor, and then we work throughout the

1 process as the buildings get built. So I've been  
2 very proud of the position I've taken on that. I  
3 think that if you come onto our campus, you'll  
4 see a gorgeous campus, very attractive buildings,  
5 very functional buildings. We are right now in  
6 the design phase for our new Health and Human  
7 Performance building. This is an 85,000 square  
8 foot, 58 million dollar project that we're  
9 building today. As you notice, we didn't come  
10 and ask the legislature to give us a special  
11 allocation of money for this building, although  
12 it'll probably be one of the largest projects  
13 that we've built. We are very fortunate in Horry  
14 County has a 1% local sales tax for education, of  
15 which we get what amounts to right at \$17 million  
16 a year to use on new construction, so that we've  
17 had the funds there and we're able to do this.  
18 We just completed the Thompson Library. This  
19 month, we will open up the total renovated  
20 Kimball Library, which was our old building.  
21 They're very functional, modern facilities to  
22 service what the current modern students demand.  
23 The technology-wise, the space programming layout  
24 is all very effective. One of the discussions we  
25 had at our board meeting that we had just last

1 week, we had it here in Columbia so that we could  
2 meet with the legislature during our Coastal at  
3 the Capital Day is what we're doing for housing.  
4 We have a need for more housing right now. Right  
5 now, we're having to lease from an apartment  
6 project that is near University Place, which is  
7 one of our larger housing sections. We were  
8 having discussions on where this new project will  
9 be going. The positive on building new  
10 dormitories is that it's revenue-generating. We  
11 are able to charge the Board rates for that to  
12 pay off the bond indebtedness we get through the  
13 revenue bonds for the new dormitories. Plus,  
14 we're still allowed to allocate funds from our  
15 special penny tax to academic and residential  
16 buildings.

17 **Q. Thank you.**

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, it's working. Senator Massey.

19 MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

20 **Q. Mr. Mullen, thank you for being here. Thank you**  
21 **for your service. What's the total student**  
22 **population at Coastal?**

23 A. Today, it is right at a little over 11,000. If  
24 you were to ask me that in August, the number was  
25 12,006. That 12,006 was total headcount, not

1 equivalent student body. The reason that it has  
2 gone from 12,006 to 11,086 is that December  
3 graduation, we had 700 people graduating. Then,  
4 we also have a loss of right at 8% between the  
5 freshman fall semester and spring semester.

**6 Q. Is that normal?**

7 A. Yes. And I think a lot of that has to do with  
8 the fact that we got 60% out of state. You get  
9 kids from New York, New Jersey. They may get  
10 more homesick. They may have also thought that,  
11 quite frankly, they thought they were coming down  
12 the beach going to have fun. And we're a real  
13 college. You've got to work. You've got to put  
14 in the work. That may account for some of that.

**15 Q. So then, your in-state population is around 4,500  
16 kids?**

17 A. It's 40% of 12, 48. We'd like more.

**18 Q. What is your out-of-state acceptance rate?**

19 A. I don't know the exact number. Overall,  
20 acceptance rate is right at 72%. And as I told  
21 you, the in-state is much higher. I don't have  
22 that exact figure for you.

**23 Q. Okay.**

24 A. I can get it.

**25 Q. I think you told us earlier that if you have a**

1           **South Carolina student who is qualified, they're**  
2           **coming in.**

3       A.    They're coming in. And the -- you know, if they  
4           meet our academic qualifications, which are  
5           established by our faculty senate. The Board  
6           doesn't set that. The administration has a  
7           faculty senate that establishes what the minimum  
8           qualifications are. Primarily, it's looking at  
9           the rigor of their high school, their grade-point  
10          averages in high school. We no longer require  
11          SATs or ACTs. If they don't qualify, we then  
12          have an alternative program that they can come to  
13          in the summer. If they take two classes and pass  
14          that, then they are admitted into the August  
15          freshman class. And if they don't qualify at  
16          that level but still have potential, good  
17          potential to be a college student, we have an  
18          enrollment with the Horry Georgetown Technical  
19          College to enter into our bridge program. After  
20          a year, they then become a full-fledged student  
21          at Coastal. There's only a handful, 7% of our  
22          South Carolina applicants who academically don't  
23          qualify at that level.

24       **Q.    It sounds like if you're a South Carolina high**  
25       **school graduate, it's hard not to get in.**

1 A. We want you, and we will work to make it  
2 successful.

3 **Q. Do you know what the retention rate of in-state**  
4 **students is?**

5 A. The total retention rate this year is 79%. I  
6 don't have the breakdown between in-state and  
7 out-of-state, although in-state is higher. I do  
8 know that. During my 13 years on the Board, I'll  
9 tell you that that retention number has gone from  
10 68% when I got on the Board to 79.1% today. It  
11 is an area that I still believe is too low. It's  
12 something that we need to work on. I think one  
13 of the ways, as far as attracting new students, I  
14 said we really don't have to attract new  
15 students, we just need to keep the ones that we  
16 have. I would love to see our retention numbers  
17 get up into a 90% level. That gets into what  
18 typically private schools will strive to get.  
19 Get over 80%, we're not doing bad as an in-state  
20 school. I think the national average is more in  
21 the 70% range. So we've gotten much better, we  
22 can still do better than that.

23 **Q. Does Coastal market out-of-state?**

24 A. Yes, we do.

25 **Q. Does Coastal market in the Northeast?**

1 A. We do. They are the primary draw of the  
2 out-of-state students are Maryland, New Jersey,  
3 New York.

4 **Q. Does Coastal market in Edgefield?**

5 A. I certainly hope we do.

6 **Q. I've not seen it.**

7 A. We should -- I'll have a talk with our admissions  
8 officers as to why they don't take the road and  
9 go there.

10 **Q. Saluda, Pickens, Anderson. Does Coastal market**  
11 **the South Carolina students? Really, it's kind**  
12 **of what I'm getting at.**

13 A. We do. Our admissions committee goes on the  
14 road. They go on the road to various high  
15 schools. I don't know how they select which high  
16 schools they go to. They will go to all of the  
17 regional college fairs that take place in the  
18 state. We have, and I don't know how effective  
19 it is, I don't personally think it's very  
20 effective, but we have billboards. We have the  
21 local Horry County, Georgetown County, of going  
22 into the schools. We have special programs for  
23 8th graders, for instance, to have a day on  
24 campus at Coastal. It's more of a heavy  
25 marketing to the region than that we're set up

1           there to primarily serve the Pee Dee, the Coastal  
2           regions. Should we do a better job throughout  
3           the state? I think so.

4   **Q. Well, it's hard to get the in-state students if**  
5   **they don't know you're there.**

6   A. I hope that people have now heard about us. I  
7   can tell you that probably when I got on that  
8   Board 13 years ago, we may not have. Winning a  
9   national championship in baseball or going back  
10  and being the runner-up the second year helps.

11 **Q. Absolutely.**

12 A. Our football program has gotten much improved  
13 during those 13 years, and that gets the name out  
14 there. Athletics probably shouldn't be the front  
15 door of the university, but in reality, you're  
16 dealing with 18-year-old kids, it is.

17 **Q. Well, you told us about your daughter. That's**  
18 **something to appeal to. Does -- has the Board**  
19 **talked about -- you told us that right now you're**  
20 **at about 60-40 out-of-state, in-state. Has the**  
21 **Board talked about -- what's an acceptable**  
22 **number? If you're marketing heavily in the**  
23 **northeast, you're going to get more of those**  
24 **people coming. Is the Board okay with 65-35? Is**  
25 **the Board okay with 70-30?**

1 A. I think as long as we're servicing every South  
2 Carolinian that is qualified. What those  
3 out-of-state students do for us, it holds down  
4 the cost for all of our South Carolinians. While  
5 we -- you know, before the legislature came  
6 forward with the tuition mitigation and  
7 encouraging us to freeze our tuition, we had  
8 frozen our tuition the two years prior to that.  
9 I think we were the only institution in South  
10 Carolina that had done that. We've now gone over  
11 six years without an in-state tuition increase.  
12 Out-of-state, we do continue to increase. We use  
13 the student price index to increase our costs for  
14 out-of-state tuition. But as long as, quite  
15 frankly, they're willing to come and pay three  
16 times what our in-state students will pay, it  
17 allows us to provide services to our South  
18 Carolinians without us having to come to you and  
19 ask for more. It seems to work.

20 **Q. Well I mean there is considerable state taxpayer**  
21 **support going into the university there, right?**

22 A. We get about 10% of our budget, roughly \$36  
23 million, I believe.

24 **Q. Well, that could mean that the state's not**  
25 **contributing enough or it could mean that the**

1           **budget's too high.**

2       A.    Well, we would always like for you to contribute  
3           more.

4       **Q.    I'm sure.  We would probably like for you to**  
5           **spend less.**

6       A.    We -- actually, I think we actually do a pretty  
7           good job of it.  I think if you look at our  
8           overall budget, it's 356 million dollars, I  
9           believe.  We tend to take a very, very  
10          conservative approach.  Our Board, and you'll get  
11          to meet us today because everybody is up for  
12          re-election.  You'll find us a very conservative  
13          bunch of people.  And fiscally, we look hard at  
14          our numbers.

15      **Q.    What's the university's debt?**

16      A.    I think our capacity is like 120 million.  We may  
17          be at 80 million, I think.

18      **Q.    We had Mr. Miller, the AD, was here last week and**  
19          **I was looking at debt numbers at Clemson and**  
20          **Carolina, but I don't remember looking at**  
21          **Coastal's.**

22      A.    I know that we still have capacity, which I think  
23          a lot of other universities don't.  And there is  
24          a difference in the revenue debt, the  
25          dormitories.  We built five new dormitories in

1 the past, I guess it's eight years, seven years.  
2 And we still have debt that was refinanced on  
3 that. But I think it was in the 80 million  
4 dollars that we refinanced that.

5 **Q. Well, I will say, I do think there's a**  
6 **consideration that the General Assembly should**  
7 **make whether 36 million dollars for 4,500 kids is**  
8 **a good return on investment.**

9 A. I hope you think it's excellent.

10 **Q. That seems like a lot of money for that number of**  
11 **students. Now, I appreciate what you're saying**  
12 **about the numbers and about the budget with**  
13 **out-of-state tuition supporting in-state tuition.**  
14 **Sixty percent of the student body sounds high to**  
15 **me for a --**

16 A. I don't argue with you at all. I agree with you.  
17 I agree. It's a -- when I first walked onto the  
18 campus, I was surprised. Quite frankly, I was  
19 surprised that a little regional school would  
20 draw out-of-state students like that. I will  
21 tell you this, 60% of our graduates stay in South  
22 Carolina. So while it's only 40% that are South  
23 Carolina residents when they come, 60% are  
24 staying.

25 **Q. Is that a good thing?**

1 A. That's an excellent, maybe it helps with that  
2 analysis you were just doing a moment ago. They  
3 weren't South Carolina residents when they came  
4 to our school, but they are when they leave.

5 **Q. Is that a good thing?**

6 A. I think so.

7 **Q. Depends on where they come from.**

8 A. I haven't always lived in South Carolina. I was  
9 born in Richmond, Virginia, but I've lived here  
10 since I was 2 years old. So I've lived here for  
11 70 years. I understand what you're saying.

12 **Q. Thank you, sir.**

13 SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

15 MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

16 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I noticed in your**  
17 **questionnaire you said that the weakness is our**  
18 **graduate programs, which are not well-received**  
19 **and are shrinking in size. Talk to me about your**  
20 **graduate programs.**

21 A. Well, we've got an excellent program in marine  
22 science. That is what our flagship program would  
23 be. As far as doctorate programs, we have  
24 recently started a Ph.D. in education. We will  
25 soon have a doctorate of physical therapy. As a

1 matter of fact, that's going through the approval  
2 process right now, and hopefully we'll start that  
3 in 2029. The master's degree programs that we've  
4 had, other than servicing teachers who are trying  
5 to get their master's in education to step up  
6 their credentials, we don't have a very strong  
7 response. If you look at our total graduate  
8 program, it has about 500 people in it. I can  
9 tell you during my time there that we've had as  
10 many as 700 people in our graduate program. I  
11 think we need to do a better job of, particularly  
12 on the graduate school, of servicing the needs of  
13 our region. You know, an awful lot of people in  
14 graduate school have full-time jobs. So a lot of  
15 those who would be coming are people from the  
16 Horry, Georgetown, Florence, Marion areas. I  
17 don't know why or what happened. I've talked to  
18 administration. I've talked to our previous  
19 administration. We have a brand new president  
20 now. I don't know if you've met Jamie Winebrake.  
21 Very impressive. He understands that, and he is  
22 going to do something about it. We were going to  
23 -- we were recently classified as an R3 school by  
24 the Carnegie Foundation as a research  
25 institution. We are virtually close to being an

1 R2, and that is one of our goals that we have in  
2 the next coming years. With that, though,  
3 requires a more robust graduate program.

4 **Q. So marine science is your number one graduate**  
5 **program?**

6 A. Yes.

7 **Q. And then after that, you think it's potentially**  
8 **education?**

9 A. Education, yes. Not so much for the people  
10 getting their PhD. Those are the only two  
11 doctorate programs we have, but mainly in the  
12 master's degree programs.

13 **Q. So if I want to get a marine science degree or**  
14 **get into a marine science grad school, what's the**  
15 **undergrad degree that you get for that?**

16 A. Marine studies.

17 **Q. Marine studies.**

18 A. Yes.

19 **Q. And is that your number one major for undergrads?**

20 A. No.

21 **Q. What's your number one major for undergrads?**

22 A. Business.

23 **Q. Business.**

24 A. Yes.

25 **Q. So students are coming from other schools, or are**

1           **you primarily -- of your graduate program**  
2           **students, how many did their undergraduate work**  
3           **at Coastal versus somewhere else?**

4           A.    I don't have the exact number. I know that we  
5           have a crossover from it. I think into the PhD  
6           program, there are a handful. I don't know the  
7           exact numbers. We could get those for you,  
8           Senator.

9           **Q.    I'm very interested in graduation numbers. And**  
10          **as I looked at yours, you've got about a 37%**  
11          **four-year graduation rate and about a 48%**  
12          **six-year graduation rate.**

13          A.    Fortunately, those numbers have changed. Because  
14          I don't know how old those are.

15          **Q.    That's based on the 2018, 2024 six-year cohort.**

16          A.    The -- well, the six-year cohort, you'd have to  
17          be a little bit changed every year. We are now  
18          on the six-year at 56% is the numbers that our  
19          administration just gave us.

20          **Q.    And what's your four-year?**

21          A.    Four-year, it was at 48%.

22          **Q.    You have a lot of -- so it's under half. So do**  
23          **you have a lot of kids who show up at Coastal who**  
24          **have dual enrollment credit, AP credit, and they**  
25          **don't come in as a freshman, they come in as a**

1           **sophomore?**

2           A.    I don't think the number is as large as you would  
3           think.  And I'm almost going back to my own kids.  
4           I had one daughter who had 36 hours, another had  
5           32 hours.  They spent a whole four years in  
6           college.  They could have used these, but when  
7           you start applying to your core requirements, it  
8           limits how much you get to use those when you get  
9           into your majors.  I'll say this on the  
10          graduation numbers.  If you also read my  
11          statement that I gave to you, I thought our  
12          greatest weakness was our retention and our  
13          graduation numbers.  We start off in the hole,  
14          particularly when you're dealing with the  
15          six-year number there.  If you recall, I told you  
16          that we had a retention number back then of in  
17          the 73%, 74%.  So we're losing 26% of our  
18          students off the bat.  These people who come here  
19          their first year and never repeat back for the  
20          second, those count against you in your  
21          graduation numbers, even though they transfer to  
22          Clemson, transfer to Carolina and they ultimately  
23          get their degrees.  As far as when you're  
24          calculating our six-year graduation rate, that  
25          26% that we lost that first year, we're in the

1 hole that much. We could never have using those  
2 old numbers. Now I said we got up to 79% this  
3 year, but that means the best we'll ever do in  
4 six years, if we never lose another student, is  
5 have a 79% graduation rate. If you look at a lot  
6 of institutions, they have that now. We could  
7 never get there because of that hole you start  
8 in. So if you start -- if you focus on changing  
9 your retention, as I said, during my 13 years on  
10 this Board, we've gone from 68% to 79%, up to  
11 11%. That means our graduation rates should  
12 increase proportionally.

13 **Q. Let me ask this. Most of the students who leave,**  
14 **you said earlier, leave because they moved from**  
15 **out of state, they came down here. If you**  
16 **lowered your in-state numbers, your retention**  
17 **numbers would go up and your graduation rate**  
18 **would go up, correct?**

19 A. You would certainly hope they would. You lose  
20 students to transfer in South Carolina. I can  
21 tell you that if we did a study on this, and I  
22 will say it may have been six or seven years ago,  
23 of where were those kids going? And we had a  
24 significant number, and I hate to be touting what  
25 is somewhat of a competitor of ours, a lot of

1 kids who didn't get into Clemson or got bridged  
2 at Clemson, rather than doing the bridge at  
3 Clemson, they came to Coastal for a unit then  
4 transferred. We had a substantial number of  
5 those that showed up. We run into the people  
6 wanting to go to what Clemson and Carolina have  
7 to offer, that Coastal never will. We will never  
8 be a Power Four school, and we know that. We're  
9 never going to be on that type of level. We  
10 don't have fraternity and sorority houses. So if  
11 you're looking at that aspect of college, you're  
12 not going to get that. I think we've improved  
13 athletics dramatically, so we've got to give kids  
14 what they want. At the same time, we've got to  
15 give them what the parents want, which is  
16 first-class education. Hopefully half the  
17 students want that too.

18 **Q. Last question. You said something earlier about**  
19 **you're involved in buildings and leasing and**  
20 **things. Does the Board vote on leases?**

21 A. Yes, every lease.

22 **Q. Every lease for every building, the Board would**  
23 **vote?**

24 A. The Board approves every lease that we have. And  
25 we do -- they're an annual lease, so yes.

1           **Q. Thank you, sir.**

2           MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

3           MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

4           **Q. I just have one question for you. How can you**  
5           **realistically -- and let me say this. I've been**  
6           **on the Committee for a while now, and every year**  
7           **we ask the same questions about in-state,**  
8           **out-of-state students. How do you realistically**  
9           **have more in-state students and keep the costs**  
10          **where you have it?**

11          A. One of the things we'd probably be asking you for  
12          more money, in all seriousness. Our tuition is,  
13          as I said, \$11,600. Our room and Board is about  
14          \$14,000. I think you'll see both of those  
15          numbers are on the way low end of what other  
16          universities in the state charge. We are  
17          fortunate to be able to take advantage of that  
18          other source of income. We're fortunate to be  
19          able to take advantage of the penny sales tax  
20          that we get \$17 million a year from Horry County.  
21          All those go to help hold down costs. The only  
22          other way to address costs, if we were to  
23          eliminate our out-of-state students, and that  
24          revenue they bring in, is to reduce services.

25          **Q. My last question. Do you all still have the**

1           **partnership with South Carolina State in their**  
2           **speech pathology program?**

3           A.    We do not.

4           **Q.    Okay.**

5           A.    I'll tell you what new programs that we do have,  
6                    is that we have now gone and entered into  
7                    articulation agreements with all 16 technical  
8                    schools in the state.  I think we'll be the first  
9                    university in the state to do that.

10          MR. CHAIRMAN:  No other questions?  Do I have a motion  
11          for approval from the Commission?

12          SENATOR MASSEY:  So moved.

13          MR. CHAIRMAN:  All those in favor signify this by  
14          raising your right hand --

15          REPRESENTATIVE KING:  Second.

16          MR. CHAIRMAN:  Got it.

17                        (All hands are raised.)

18          MR. CHAIRMAN:  All those opposed?

19                        (No hands are raised.)

20          MR. CHAIRMAN:  Thank you, sir.

21          MR. MULLEN:  Thank you very much.  I appreciate it.

22          MR. CHAIRMAN:  You're welcome, sir.

23          MR. MULLEN:  I look forward to serving for the next  
24          two years.  I'll probably have to be back up here again, I  
25          guess.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: I bet you're looking forward to that  
2 again.

3 MR. MULLEN: Hopefully I'll have some answers to some  
4 questions I didn't have for you today. I hope you'll ask  
5 those again, Senator.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, we're going to pause for a  
7 second. She's going to hand out some copies.

8 MS. WEBB: And what Ellie is passing out is just  
9 simply to help Commission members aid you all knowing who  
10 is coming.

11 OFF THE RECORD

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we'll go ahead and get back  
13 on track here. And next up is the 3rd Congressional  
14 District Seat 3 that expires in 2027, it's William S. Biggs  
15 of Salem, my favorite county.

16 WILLIAM S. BIGGS:

17 MR. BIGGS: It's a great county to be from.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh boy, you got it. Welcome, sir.

19 MR. BIGGS: Thank you.

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you would just raise your right  
21 hand, let me swear you in. Do you swear to tell the truth,  
22 the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

23 MR. BIGGS: I do.

24 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Just tell me your name and  
25 the Board seat you're running for and just a brief opening

1 statement.

2 MR. BIGGS: Thank you, sir. William Biggs. I'm  
3 running for the third congressional district of South  
4 Carolina. I have served on this Board since, hard to  
5 believe, 2006. I've had the pleasure of being chair of the  
6 Athletics Committee, the Finance and Audit Committee, and  
7 four years as chairman of the Board of the university.  
8 During that time, I've seen our enrollment grow from right  
9 at 6,000 to almost 12,000, or a little over 12, as we  
10 started this school year. I've seen the university grow  
11 with the new buildings that we've been able to add, and  
12 also had the privilege of a daughter attending Coastal  
13 Carolina, where she received her undergraduate in business  
14 and her MBA from Coastal Carolina before she decided to go  
15 to law school. Very proud of the education she received.  
16 But also, during that time as chair, I took a lot of time  
17 going out and talking to families before graduation to find  
18 out what they were happy with. Did their son or daughter  
19 enjoy their experience at Coastal Carolina? And I was able  
20 to learn so much more from those families and what Coastal  
21 Carolina meant to them. It's been an honor to serve. I  
22 look forward to having that opportunity, if this Committee  
23 chooses, to allow me to serve again. Coastal Carolina is  
24 an important part of our higher education in this community  
25 because it's offering things that are different. You know

1 a lot of our state students, they want to stay in the area,  
2 Coastal gives them that. A lot of our students, like my  
3 daughter, wanted to get a little bit away from home, but  
4 have that college experience. She received that at Coastal  
5 and received an excellent education. So it's just been an  
6 honor and privilege to have served almost 20 years. And  
7 I've grown in love with this university and what it does.  
8 It's just something I'm very proud of.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

10 MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY MACEY WEBB:

11 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Biggs, can you**  
12 **please state your current address?**

13 A. 308 Calm Water Court, Salem, South Carolina.

14 **Q. Thank you. Is this the address that you pay your**  
15 **4% property tax?**

16 A. Yes, ma'am.

17 **Q. Is this the address within the congressional**  
18 **district to which you have applied?**

19 A. Yes, ma'am.

20 **Q. Thank you. Do you currently serve on any local**  
21 **or state Board, commission, committee, or elected**  
22 **office other than the Coastal Carolina Board?**

23 A. No, I do not.

24 **Q. Thank you. Do you understand the obligations and**  
25 **responsibilities of serving on a public**

1 institution's board of trustees?

2 A. I do.

3 Q. Are you aware that you cannot contact any member  
4 of the General Assembly and formally ask for a  
5 vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after  
6 the Commission's report has been released?

7 A. I do.

8 Q. Have you currently asked any third parties to  
9 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
10 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
11 intervene in this process on your behalf?

12 A. I do not.

13 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
14 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
15 any changes that might occur that would affect  
16 your application and overall eligibility for  
17 serving on a college Board?

18 A. I do.

19 Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Biggs, Mr. Chairman.  
20 I have no further questions.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions from Commission members?  
22 Senator, I'm sorry. I apologize.

23 MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

24 Q. That's all right. Thank you for the raise. Two  
25 quick questions. Hopefully they're quick. I'll

1           **deviate from what we've been talking about**  
2           **because you've heard some of the concerns.**

3       A.    Yes, sir.

4       **Q.    One question specific to you, but in general.**  
5           **Nineteen years on the Board. Thank you.**

6           **Appreciate your service. God bless you. What's**  
7           **too long for a Board member to serve?**

8       A.    That's really a hard question. It's -- I think  
9            as long as your passion for that university is  
10           still there. You still want to see, you know,  
11           the university continue to grow, to do great  
12           things, to make sure that our young men and women  
13           are getting an education that can be productive  
14           in the communities that they live in. You know,  
15           I'm not sure. Would term limits be a good thing  
16           for college Boards? Maybe. I'm looking at this  
17           probably being the last time I run. One, I'm  
18           getting a little bit older. Two, my daughter who  
19           graduated is on the CAF Board. She loves the  
20           university. And maybe she'll want to run to  
21           replace that seat. Maybe there will stay a Biggs  
22           on the seat. Maybe there'll be somebody in the  
23           3rd district that can serve better. But as of  
24           right now, I'm looking at this probably being my  
25           last term. But I think that's really up to you,

1 and the members of the General Assembly.

2 **Q. Question about your deliberations. This is what**  
3 **I'm always interested in. Tell me about Coastal**  
4 **in your experience. Is there -- describe for me,**  
5 **to the extent that you can, the Board experience.**  
6 **Is your Board engaged? Do they challenge your**  
7 **leadership? Or are they just a receiver of**  
8 **information?**

9 A. No, sir. This Board likes to challenge. I found  
10 that out during four years as the chair.  
11 Luckily, most of our discussions are held in  
12 executive session when there's something that's  
13 controversial. Because we like to come out and  
14 be united, if at all possible, to make sure what  
15 we're doing is best for the university. But this  
16 Board's very engaged. We have lively discussions  
17 about different areas and different thoughts.  
18 And I think every chairman that we've had  
19 encourages that. If we're just a Board going  
20 there and say yes to everything that the  
21 president or the administration wants, we're not  
22 doing our job. We need to challenge them. And  
23 in challenging our administration to do their  
24 job, I feel we're doing what we should do. And  
25 the university will benefit from that.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative Rose.

2 MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

3 **Q. Yes, sir. You're chairman of the athletics?**

4 A. I was the first chairman. Now, when I step down  
5 as chairman of the Board, I chose not to ask to  
6 chair any committee. I feel others should get  
7 those opportunities. And I serve on committees.  
8 But I think everyone should get an opportunity to  
9 chair a committee or be the chairman, if that's  
10 what they want.

11 **Q. I got you. I was just curious how you guys got**  
12 **that baseball coach. That was a heck of a run**  
13 **last year.**

14 A. Well, he had been with us. He had been with  
15 Coach Gilmore. It was a great run. The run we  
16 had in 16-17 was unbelievable. That World Series  
17 ring sits on my desk. I'm very proud of it. To  
18 see Coastal go. And that year we went to LSU and  
19 let them stay at home. This year we just  
20 happened to run into the best pitcher in college  
21 baseball and some umpires that seemed to be a  
22 little unfairly looking at things, at our  
23 coaches. But it was a great run. And it gave us  
24 so much national publicity for kids that are  
25 reaching out from all over the country about

1 Coastal. The website went nuts with the number  
2 of people that researched us and looked at us.  
3 The same thing when, you know, our basketball  
4 team almost beat Virginia, the number one seed,  
5 the publicity we got. The first bowl win we  
6 received. Athletics opened so many doors to  
7 people seeing the university. And that baseball  
8 run last year, we all were sitting on the edge of  
9 our seat in that first game. It was awesome.

10 **Q. Thank you.**

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Massey.

12 MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

13 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's good to see you.**

14 A. Good to see you.

15 **Q. Thank you for being here. The ejection in the**  
16 **deciding game was egregious.**

17 A. I totally agree.

18 **Q. That was ridiculous. You said when you -- I**  
19 **think I heard you say that when you started your**  
20 **service on the Board at The Citadel -- I'm sorry,**  
21 **not The Citadel, Coastal had just over 6,000**  
22 **students?**

23 A. Right at 6,000 students, yes, sir.

24 **Q. Do you know at that time what was the breakdown**  
25 **between out of state and in state?**

1 A. It was over 50% in state at that time.

2 **Q. Okay. And so since your time there, the total**  
3 **population has effectively doubled. Is that**  
4 **fair?**

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 **Q. So certainly the Board has noticed the increase**  
7 **in percentages from out of state as compared to**  
8 **in state. Has the Board had conversations about**  
9 **a target number as far as total students but also**  
10 **what the percentage breakdown between out of**  
11 **state and in state would be?**

12 A. We have talked about, you know, what could, with  
13 the landlocked abilities we have, where we could  
14 add additional facilities. You know, what could  
15 Coastal be? Is it 15,000 max, maybe? We've been  
16 growing at about 3% a year.

17 **Q. Total?**

18 A. Total student population. Even in years when  
19 they were predicting that all schools are going  
20 to drop off, COVID hit, all this happened, we  
21 still continued to grow. And I would like to see  
22 that grow more in state. We are a state  
23 university. And while it's 60-40 now, I wish  
24 that was opposite. I wish we were 60% in state  
25 students and 40, and we had to come ask you for

1 more money to support the university. For me,  
2 with a dollar going there, I was very excited we  
3 were getting in state tuition. And I'm happy  
4 that we've been able to hold that tuition rate  
5 steady, you know, since 2019 for our in-state  
6 students. We had another child that went out of  
7 state. Of course, rodeo scholarships are not  
8 offered everywhere. I'm not sure he's all  
9 together all the time. Why would you want to  
10 tackle a full-grown bull? I don't know. But I  
11 paid out-of-state tuition for that. So --

12 **Q. It seems like that's what your wife does every**  
13 **day is try to tackle a full-grown bull.**

14 A. She does, and the other night she might have went  
15 a little far -- no, just -- but I see the  
16 difference.

17 **Q. Well and I'm curious, and I apologize for**  
18 **interrupting you, but I'm curious here. I mean**  
19 **at what point -- so just from your tenure.**

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 **Q. And I don't think 19 years is too long. You have**  
22 **another year, I guess, under this term.**

23 A. That's why I said I'm thinking.

24 **Q. That's fine. And I'm not holding you to**  
25 **anything. If the -- so you've seen the total**

1 student enrollment double. You've seen the  
2 percentages from in-state versus out-of-state go  
3 from approximately 50% when your service began to  
4 now it's at about 40%. And the reason I ask the  
5 question about whether there are Board  
6 conversations about this is, how much is enough?  
7 How much is too much? And not just from a  
8 student population. Whether the student  
9 population increases to 15 or whether it's 50,  
10 it's too much. But whether it does increase to  
11 15. When is it for the Board that the  
12 out-of-state population is too much compared to  
13 the in-state? Is 60% too much? Are we okay at  
14 63, 65? At what point is the Board going to say,  
15 we're not accepting any more out-of-state  
16 students in comparison to our in-state numbers?

17 A. Well, sir, I think as long as we're focusing on  
18 in-state and we're accepting those students, as  
19 you've heard many times before, we need to keep  
20 that population growing to keep the school, you  
21 know, financially liable. But you brought up a  
22 question earlier. You know, are we going to  
23 Edgefield County? Are we going to Saluda County?  
24 Are we going to McCormick and Abbeville, the  
25 smaller counties? We're not but we need to. We

1 need to put more of a focus on getting every  
2 county in our state to let them know what Coastal  
3 Carolina is, what Coastal Carolina has to offer  
4 for them. And, yes, the 3rd Congressional  
5 District is about as far away from Coastal as  
6 anyone else in our state. But we offer things  
7 that I believe a lot of our high school students  
8 would be interested in. And, yes, they do go  
9 into Anderson and hit the bigger high schools and  
10 into Greenville. But, you know, make it a week's  
11 trip when you come up. Hit that 3rd district.  
12 Hit Seneca. Hit West Union. Hit Edgefield.  
13 Those should be hit. We need to make the  
14 students and their parents in every county of  
15 this state know what we have to offer and try to  
16 grow that in-state student population.

17 **Q. You referenced tuition. And you indicated in**  
18 **your responses that you believe tuition is**  
19 **reasonable at \$11,600. I don't know that I**  
20 **disagree with that. But I guess my question here**  
21 **is if the tuition for in-state students is**  
22 **\$11,600, what's the total cost of attendance?**

23 A. Total cost of attendance when you play room and  
24 Board and everything is closer to \$30,000 a year.

25 **Q. Is that reasonable?**

1 A. That's hard for a lot of families. You know, we  
2 try to make sure that any scholarship  
3 availabilities that are out there are offered to  
4 our students. And we encourage that. There's a  
5 lot of work programs that our students can get  
6 into working on the university to help offset  
7 their costs. But higher education has gotten out  
8 of control. I think we can all agree to that.  
9 The cost to go to college hurts. Our technical  
10 schools are offering great programs, and they're  
11 offering great careers. We need to make sure  
12 that when you're graduating from a four-year  
13 institution, you're coming out with a degree that  
14 offers you ability to get a good job and  
15 contribute to your community.

16 **Q. Agreed. So I guess the question then is if the**  
17 **cost of higher education is getting or has gotten**  
18 **out of control, and I think you and I agree on**  
19 **that, whose responsibility is it to get a hold of**  
20 **that?**

21 A. It's all of us, every one of us. From a Board  
22 standpoint, we need to make sure that we're  
23 passing down to our administration, you know,  
24 let's look at the budget. You know, where are we  
25 overspending? Where can we make cuts? We've

1 done a very good job of that at Coastal over the  
2 past few years. And, you know, during the time  
3 that I was chair, I will have to say our current  
4 chair, Ms. Hanna, was a big proponent of looking  
5 into everything and bringing it up. And you talk  
6 about those discussions behind the scenes when  
7 they'd get heated, they would get heated. But we  
8 were able to go in and tell everyone, you need to  
9 reduce your cost 10%.

10 **Q. But to Senator Bennett's point, some of those**  
11 **conversations need to be heated, right?**

12 A. They do.

13 **Q. Otherwise you're just -- I mean, we don't need**  
14 **people who are just going to go and just sign off**  
15 **on whatever the administration wants to do. I'm**  
16 **not saying that the administration is saying**  
17 **anything wrong, but that's not the role of the**  
18 **Board.**

19 A. It isn't.

20 **Q. Right? I mean, it seems to me somewhat**  
21 **disingenuous to argue that an \$11,600 tuition is**  
22 **reasonable when at the same time increasing**  
23 **mandatory fees every year. Because ultimately,**  
24 **as a parent, I don't care whether it's tuition or**  
25 **room and Board or whatever, it's coming out of**

1           the same pocket.

2       A.     It's the total cost.

3       Q.     And so if the cost of attendance is increasing  
4           significantly every year. And it has because the  
5           room and board costs are increasing, the meal  
6           costs are increasing. And most of the time when  
7           somebody's living on campus, the university  
8           requires them to have a meal plan. When all  
9           those fees increase additionally, you get the  
10          total cost of attendance. Thirty thousand  
11          dollars is -- I mean, the average salary in South  
12          Carolina is in the low 50s. And I am concerned  
13          that we don't do enough to check university  
14          spending. We talk about what's coming in. We  
15          don't always talk about how it goes out. And so  
16          I appreciate that there has been some heated  
17          conversations about that. I would hope that  
18          there would be more. Because what the university  
19          is spending directly relates to how much it has  
20          to collect. And what I don't want to have is  
21          we're going to keep spending so that we'll just  
22          increase out-of-state population because they're  
23          going to subsidize it. Because if you get to,  
24          I'll tell you, Shane's opinion is that 60-40 is  
25          already too high. But if you start increasing

1           that spread, just for financial reasons, to  
2           subsidize additional things, that suggests to me  
3           deeper problems. And so I would hope that the  
4           Board would take a look at those things, consider  
5           that scenario as well.

6           A. I cannot disagree with you in any sense.

7           Q. Thank you, thank you Mr. Chairman.

8           MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative McGinnis.

9           MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS:

10          Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I met you on the  
11          elevator on the way up.

12          A. Thank you for letting me in the door.

13          Q. Again, I will say, though, the questions about  
14          out-of-state, representing that area down there,  
15          we can't keep our northern neighbors out. We've  
16          considered bills to maybe put a wall along the  
17          Mason-Dixon line and have the north pay for it.  
18          But it's not working. So we're getting plenty of  
19          out-of-state, whether we like it or not. But I  
20          think we do a good job accommodating the people  
21          who we are getting. But I do agree that a  
22          stronger push may need to be needed -- may need  
23          to be taken to get people from the other areas.  
24          My question for you is, speaking of this growth,  
25          and my daughter will be attending as a freshman

1 next year. My question is, with all the building  
2 that's happening, and we're talking about the  
3 need for more dormitories and things like that, I  
4 know you all have been approached by people  
5 talking about public-private partnerships. But  
6 how do you feel about public-private  
7 partnerships, and do you think it could be a  
8 solution to maybe take some of the burden off of  
9 the school and share it with the community?

10 A. And this -- everyone looks at this differently.  
11 Personally, I feel if the university can do it  
12 and we can bring that in and afford it, it's  
13 better if we're operating the buildings, if we're  
14 making sure it's done. When you get into the  
15 public-private, then you start getting into how  
16 much profitability they're wanting to make, and  
17 then it becomes to them, you know, well, we've  
18 got to be more profitable. We've invested this  
19 much money, and then can we control the cost the  
20 way that we can if it's owned by the university?

21 Q. It probably goes by a deal-to-deal. I imagine  
22 you could negotiate the terms of some of those  
23 deals where it wouldn't be so egregiously in  
24 favor of the private. I don't know which is  
25 best. I'm just kind of trying to get a sense for

1           **what else. You're throwing all the spaghetti up**  
2           **against the wall, I guess, is what I'm trying to**  
3           **ask.**

4           A. Everything should be looked at. And then what  
5           best serves the university and the students that  
6           are coming there is the decisions we should go  
7           with.

8           MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

9           MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

10          **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question in**  
11          **reference to the 36 million dollars that the**  
12          **state funds the institution. What percentage of**  
13          **that actually goes towards in-state students'**  
14          **tuition mitigation?**

15          A. I do not have those numbers, sir, but I would say  
16          that the majority of that money that comes in  
17          from the state is what allows us to keep our  
18          tuition to in-state students low. While we'd  
19          love it to be lower, I think if you look at the  
20          cost of other state institutes, what they're  
21          charging for in-state, Coastal is one of the best  
22          deals you can get. But the funding that comes  
23          from the General Assembly to Coastal is what is  
24          used, and it is less than 11% of our total  
25          operating budget. But without that, we would

1 have to increase in-state tuition. And with  
2 that, and the increases you've given us has  
3 helped us keep that tuition at the same cost it  
4 was since 2019.

5 **Q. The scholarships that the college gives, what**  
6 **percentage of the scholarships that you all give**  
7 **are given to out-of-state students?**

8 A. I do not know the answer to that, sir. I can get  
9 it for you.

10 **Q. Please, I would like to know that. And if so, do**  
11 **you believe that as we try to get more South**  
12 **Carolinians at the institution, making sure that**  
13 **the scholarships are given to South Carolina**  
14 **students versus trying to entice out-of-state**  
15 **students to come to South Carolina?**

16 A. Yes, sir, I do agree with you on that, that as a  
17 state university that is supported by the  
18 taxpayers of this state, we should put our focus  
19 on our in-state students.

20 **Q. My last question, do you believe that faculty and**  
21 **staff retain full First Amendment protections**  
22 **when expressing views outside of the classroom,**  
23 **outside of the college?**

24 A. Yes, sir, I think so. As long as the law is  
25 being followed, they have that right.

1           **Q.   Elaborate when you say as long as the law is,**  
2           **when you're talking about free speech.**

3           A.   When you're talking about free speech, if you're  
4           not, you know, enticing problems or if you're not  
5           trying to get, you know, to hurt a person.  
6           Those, you know -- if free speech is free speech  
7           in the First Amendment, there's a reason it is  
8           the First Amendment and free speech should be  
9           there and every American should have the right to  
10          state their opinions.

11          **Q.   Thank you.**

12          MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Is there a motion  
13          for favorable from the Commission?

14          SENATOR MASSEY: So moved.

15          MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a second?

16          REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

17          MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor signify by raising  
18          your right hand, please.

19                                 (All hands are raised.)

20          MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it. Okay. Thank you, sir.

21          MR. BIGGS: Thank you very much. You all have a  
22          wonderful day.

23          MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Bill. Say hello to Sherry  
24          for me, okay?

25          MR. BIGGS: I'll do it.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thanks. Okay, we're now up  
2 to the 4th Congressional District Seat 4, which expires in  
3 2029. Mr. William E. Turner, III from Simpsonville. If  
4 you just raise your right hand and repeat after me, do you  
5 swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help  
6 you God?

7 WILLIAM E. TURNER, III:

8 MR. TURNER: I do.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Just state your name and just a little  
10 bit about why you're running for the Board and then tell us  
11 a little bit about yourself.

12 MR. TURNER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members  
13 of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak  
14 today. My name is Will Turner, and I've had the privilege  
15 of serving on the Board at Coastal Carolina University  
16 since 2011. Over the past 14 years, I've watched Coastal  
17 Carolina grow from a young, rising institution into a  
18 nationally recognized university with strong academic  
19 programs and expanding research footprint and  
20 championship-caliber athletics that have elevated our  
21 visibility across the country. I'm a 1997 graduate of  
22 Coastal. In addition are my wife, my brother, my  
23 brother-in-law, and most recently my oldest daughter  
24 graduated in 2022. I first sought a seat on this Board  
25 because I believed Coastal Carolina had tremendous

1 potential and because I felt called to support and  
2 strengthen a relatively young public institution serving  
3 South Carolina families. That commitment has only deepened  
4 over time. My focus continues to be on responsible  
5 governance, strengthening academic quality, expanding  
6 in-state recruitment, and building a more connected and  
7 engaged alumni community. I remain actively involved on  
8 campus as well as off through regular visits. I have  
9 strong ties to the Conway community, having grown up there,  
10 as well as Myrtle Beach. I'm on campus very frequently,  
11 even though I live in the upstate. I'm running for  
12 re-election because I believe my long-term perspective,  
13 steady leadership, and deep commitment to Coastal's mission  
14 position me to continue contributing meaningfully during  
15 the next chapter of growth and opportunity for Coastal  
16 Carolina. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

18 MR. TURNER - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

19 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Turner, can you**  
20 **please state your current address?**

21 A. 6 McRae Place, Simpsonville, South Carolina.

22 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay**  
23 **your 4% property tax?**

24 A. It is.

25 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address within the**

1 congressional district to which you have applied?

2 A. Yes, it is.

3 Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any  
4 local or state board, commission, committee, or  
5 elected office other than Coastal Carolina  
6 University?

7 A. I do not.

8 Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations  
9 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
10 institution's board of trustees?

11 A. I do.

12 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
13 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
14 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
15 after the Commission's report has been released?

16 A. I understand.

17 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
18 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
19 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
20 intervene in this process on your behalf?

21 A. I have not.

22 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
23 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
24 any changes that might occur that would affect  
25 your application and overall eligibility for

1           **servicing on a college Board?**

2           A.   I'm sorry. I apologize. I missed the very first  
3           part of that.

4           **Q.   Are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation**  
5           **and duty to report to us any changes that would**  
6           **affect your eligibility?**

7           A.   Yes.

8           **Q.   All right. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Turner and**  
9           **Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.**

10          MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions from Commission members?

11          Senator Issac Devine.

12          MR. TURNER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

13           **Q.   Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you so much,**  
14           **Mr. Turner, for serving and your willingness to**  
15           **continue to serve. When I was reading your**  
16           **questions, it stuck out to me the intent to**  
17           **strengthen alumni base. And now hearing your**  
18           **opening statement, the breadth of your**  
19           **connections with alumni intrigued me. So I just**  
20           **wanted to ask about what is Coastal doing as far**  
21           **as encouraging alumni giving, and what are you**  
22           **doing with the alumni giving dollars as far as**  
23           **maybe in-state scholarships or recruiting or**  
24           **enticing in-state students to come to Coastal?**

25           A.   Great question. Thank you very much, Senator

1 Devine. We have a robust alumni engagement team  
2 at Coastal. They spend a lot of time getting out  
3 on the road and spending time with alumni that  
4 have moved all over the country. In fact, I kind  
5 of call it the alumni roadshow a little bit.  
6 There are probably eight to ten trips annually  
7 where our alumni team goes out to various pockets  
8 around the country, and they put together events  
9 that allow alumni from different parts of the  
10 world that are there to get together and talk  
11 about their Coastal experience. And obviously  
12 the goal is to continue to bolster this, and one  
13 day, whether they're donors today or not, one day  
14 they may want to give back to Coastal. And from  
15 that, we are able to continue building on  
16 scholarship dollars that are available to  
17 students.

18 **Q. Do you know about what is that amount that we**  
19 **have at alumni giving, and as a Board, have you**  
20 **all set some targets or some goals as far as**  
21 **increasing that alumni giving?**

22 **A.** Yes, ma'am. In fact, we are currently in the  
23 silent phase of a rather sizable campaign with  
24 sizable goals. We are several years into this  
25 campaign, but our goal is to raise 100 million

1 dollars by the end of this project. And while  
2 we're not there yet, we're well underway,  
3 achieving right at 60% to date. And there are so  
4 many initiatives that are not just alumni-driven,  
5 but also workforce-driven. We're looking to the  
6 business owners, the industry leaders in the  
7 state, in the region, to come forth and tell us  
8 what they need for college graduates coming out  
9 of whatever institution they come from. But most  
10 importantly, what can Coastal do to supply the  
11 workforce that these business leaders need today  
12 and in the future?

13 **Q. Thank you.**

14 A. Thank you.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King?

16 MR. TURNER - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

17 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Two quick questions. In**  
18 **reference to the giving back to the college, how**  
19 **much have you given, and is there an obligation**  
20 **or commitment from each Board member to give to**  
21 **the college?**

22 A. There's nothing that's etched stating that  
23 trustees should give, first and foremost.  
24 However, I do give to the university. I don't  
25 give to the level that others do. I am a father

1 of three daughters, and two of those daughters  
2 are finished with school, but I still have one  
3 more daughter to put through school, so I give  
4 what I can. I'm happy to say, though, in our  
5 most recent Giving to You Tuesday, which is an  
6 athletic giving program, we have another one  
7 that's academic-related later in the year, but we  
8 did have 100% representation from the Board  
9 toward that event.

10 **Q. In reference to student loans that students may**  
11 **take out to go to Coastal, do you know what the**  
12 **percentage is of repayment? Because I understand**  
13 **that it does affect the accreditation sometime**  
14 **that students are not paying their loans back.**  
15 **So what is the percentage of the students that**  
16 **graduate that pay their student loans back?**

17 **A.** I don't have that number. However, I think  
18 things have changed dramatically since COVID, and  
19 the fact that the repayment basically was put on  
20 hold for a while. So I don't know that we've  
21 seen those numbers in recent years, especially  
22 given the fact that students are just now, or  
23 former students, graduates, are just now starting  
24 to start paying those back again. We can  
25 certainly get those numbers for you.

1           **Q.    Thank you.**

2           MR. CHAIRMAN:  Senator Massey, question?

3           MR. TURNER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

4           **Q.    Yes.  Thanks for being here.  When did you first**  
5           **start on the Board?**

6           A.    2011, July 2011.  Mr. Biggs told us earlier that  
7           he began his service in 2006, and over that  
8           period of time that the student population had  
9           effectively doubled.

10          **Q.    Do you remember what the student population was**  
11          **when you first began your service?**

12          A.    It was not much bigger than that.  We had some  
13          slow growth from his beginning to mine.  I want  
14          to say it was approximately 7,500, maybe, when I  
15          started.

16          **Q.    The growth that has taken place since that time**  
17          **during your service on the Board, has that been**  
18          **strategic?  Or has it -- how has that happened?**  
19          **How have we gone from 7,500 to 12,000?**

20          A.    It's actually been very strategic, Senator  
21          Massey.  We -- I can remember back in late 2018,  
22          we sort of established a goal.  We were looking  
23          at 12,500 by 2020.  Obviously, COVID stopped  
24          that.  But prior to that, we were growing very  
25          strategically because we didn't want to outgrow

1 our ability to serve the students that we did  
2 attract. Infrastructure is expensive.  
3 Technology is expensive. Faculty are expensive.  
4 So we knew that we had to manage that growth very  
5 strategically so that we could provide the  
6 service and the safety of the students that we  
7 did attract.

8 **Q. So the goal -- the Board's goal was to go to**  
9 **12,500 by 2020?**

10 A. And we shut that down.

11 **Q. Sure. So from -- so that would be from 2011 at**  
12 **approximately 7,500 to 2020 at 12,500. That's**  
13 **like an 80% growth over a period of nine years.**

14 A. It's --

15 **Q. What was the -- I'm curious, what was the Board's**  
16 **thinking in making that type of enrollment**  
17 **increase?**

18 A. The demand. The demand was there. And it still  
19 is. We're seeing record numbers of applications.  
20 In fact, our current academic year, I think we  
21 had over 27,000 applications to Coastal.

22 **Q. The demand -- based on what I've heard from your**  
23 **fellow Board members who have appeared already,**  
24 **it sounds like that demand is coming from out of**  
25 **state. Is that fair?**

1 A. That is fair, absolutely.

2 Q. All right. I noticed in an addendum that you  
3 provided to your personal data questionnaire, you  
4 indicated that you would like to attract more  
5 in-state students by ensuring academic offerings  
6 align with statewide workforce needs.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Do you agree with that?

9 A. I do.

10 Q. Do you think the university provides major  
11 options or graduate options that do align with  
12 state workforce needs?

13 A. We have, and we continue to. In fact, we are  
14 responding to the massive health care need in the  
15 community, the region, and the state, and that's  
16 largely what's driven us to develop the Doctor of  
17 Physical Therapy program that's going to launch  
18 in two years.

19 Q. I noticed the university does not offer  
20 engineering degrees. So is the pursuit toward  
21 the statewide workforce needs, it's more on the  
22 health care side, right?

23 A. Largely in the health care, but engineering is  
24 literally on the horizon. It's coming.

25 Q. Okay. What's your time frame on that, do you

1 **expect?**

2 A. Knowing that the College of Science is soon to be  
3 renamed to include the College of Science and  
4 Engineering, it's right around the corner. I  
5 don't have a specific time frame on the  
6 curriculum and the passage through CHE, but it's  
7 well underway.

8 **Q. Which engineering majors does the Board propose**  
9 **that CHE accept?**

10 A. That I have not seen yet, sir.

11 **Q. Okay. Because that's certainly, you know, if you**  
12 **start offering engineering degrees, that**  
13 **certainly lines up with some of our workforce**  
14 **needs because we've become a manufacturing state.**

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 **Q. There are lots of engineering demands.**

17 A. I live in it.

18 **Q. Yeah, sure. You live right in the middle up**  
19 **there.**

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 **Q. I agree. You also indicated that you want to**  
22 **ensure options make higher education an**  
23 **affordable option. Do you believe that's the**  
24 **case now at Coastal?**

25 A. I think we're well on our way to doing that, and

1 I attribute that largely to the programs that  
2 have been created between the universities, and  
3 not just Coastal, but between the universities,  
4 the technical system, technical college system,  
5 and the local county school districts. My  
6 youngest daughter is a junior in high school at  
7 J.L. Mann High School in Greenville. She's  
8 barely setting foot on the high school campus.  
9 Her entire curriculum for her junior year and  
10 senior year are college-based. She's in a  
11 program that's called Expressway to Tiger Town.  
12 It's for future teachers that can start classes  
13 as juniors. In fact, she started as a sophomore  
14 taking college-level courses. What this is  
15 doing, even though she could have graduated this  
16 past December from high school, I'm like, why  
17 would you do that? You're getting two years of  
18 free education, thus making it easier on me to  
19 put her through school when she does finish high  
20 school. But should she want to go to grad school  
21 after that? I'm literally still investing four  
22 years of college and getting six. So I think  
23 we're creating pathways, especially at Coastal,  
24 to make it easily accessible and much more  
25 affordable.

1     **Q.    Has the Board received any information as to how**  
2           **students who come in with significant college**  
3           **credits by dual enrollment, how those students**  
4           **perform in the college classes?**

5     A.    I think it's still a little early to see that,  
6           but I see what's happening at my home. I watch  
7           how she's rising to a level that her two sisters  
8           didn't do early in their academic careers. She's  
9           stepping forward, taking the initiative, knowing  
10          the impact that it's having on our family  
11          economics. She understands that even at 16,  
12          almost 17 years old. So the impact is there. I  
13          think given another two, three years, as we start  
14          to see these students matriculate from the high  
15          school slash tech school programs into the  
16          university systems and beyond, I think we're  
17          going to see some really significant, successful  
18          numbers coming out of these.

19    **Q.    I ask that question because I, too, am a father**  
20           **of a junior who's been taking a significant**  
21           **number of dual enrollment college classes. And**  
22           **I'll tell you that this is not a university issue**  
23           **as much as it is a technical college issue, I**  
24           **guess, because they're the ones who did the dual**  
25           **enrollment programs. That my experience is that**

1 the dual enrollment classes that she's taking are  
2 nowhere near the rigor of the college-level  
3 courses that I took when I was an undergraduate  
4 student. And so I wonder, and I don't think  
5 that's isolated to my household, because I hear  
6 that from other people, too. So I do wonder how,  
7 you're right, it's making it much more  
8 financially available for those children. I'm  
9 just wondering what they're getting out of it.  
10 And if they're learning -- if the rigor of that  
11 coursework is sufficient to prepare them for the  
12 coursework that they're going to get at the  
13 university level. And does it then require  
14 remedial courses once those children come into  
15 the university setting? Or are we dumbing down  
16 university settings, university coursework, and  
17 therefore the majors and how they are produced in  
18 the end, are we dumbing down that because of  
19 what's going on? Because I can tell you, we've  
20 had a number of dual enrollment courses. I  
21 haven't seen any of them that match what I had as  
22 a freshman when I went to university. So I'm  
23 curious if you -- maybe it's as a parent, if you  
24 see that, but beyond that, whether the Board, it  
25 receives information about that. And whether the

1           **Board asks questions about that. Because I feel**  
2           **like that we're creating this pipeline and we're**  
3           **making it cheaper, but we're making it cheaper to**  
4           **get an education that does not prepare them as**  
5           **well for what they're going to get hit with at**  
6           **some point.**

7           A.    I totally understand your comments. Personally,  
8           I've not seen that. I watch how hard my child  
9           works every day. She's going to class with  
10          students that are twice her age. She's earning  
11          their respect. She's participating. She's  
12          standing up, leading.

13         **Q.    Are those online or are they in person?**

14         A.    No, they're in person.

15         **Q.    Okay.**

16         A.    She's on Greenville Tech's campus every day.

17         **Q.    Great.**

18         A.    So she's taking part. She's jumping in with both  
19          feet, and she's creating success for herself.  
20          The rigor that I see her at home taking on, in  
21          addition to working part-time, she has a job as  
22          well. She's also in the classroom as a student  
23          teacher, if you will, even as what you would  
24          consider still a freshman, maybe early sophomore  
25          student. But she's being immersed in this

1 program so that when she does matriculate out  
2 into the teaching workforce, she's absolutely  
3 prepared. I've not seen anything being dumbed  
4 down, not at least at my house. It could be that  
5 way other places. I can't speak to that. But so  
6 far, I haven't seen that.

7 **Q. One final point. And that is you also indicated**  
8 **in your answers that you think that Coastal faces**  
9 **challenges due to its age and rapid growth. And**  
10 **I'm curious how does -- It seems to me that the**  
11 **rapid growth is by design that the Board has**  
12 **instituted this plan for the rapid growth. How**  
13 **does the Board -- what are the plans that the**  
14 **Board has to respond to that rapid growth? How**  
15 **do you propose to deal with it?**

16 A. Our biggest challenge right now, as you've  
17 already heard, is housing. We have a large  
18 demand. We also have some housing requirements  
19 for freshman students and sophomore students. So  
20 with the influx of applications, acceptances, and  
21 record enrollment year over year over year, we  
22 have to provide a place for them to live. And we  
23 have to provide safe places for them to live and  
24 resources that they can tap into so that their  
25 success is, for lack of a better term,



1 I'll swear you, you swear to tell the truth, the whole  
2 truth and nothing but the truth so help you God.

3 LISA MABRY DAVIS:

4 MS. DAVIS: I do.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome and just state your name and  
6 what position you're in. What position you're going to  
7 play again and then tell us a little bit about yourself and  
8 why you're running.

9 MS. DAVIS: Okay. As Chairman Whitmire has said, my  
10 name is Lisa Davis and I'm from Gaffney, South Carolina,  
11 and I represent the 5th Congressional District on the  
12 Coastal Carolina University Board of Trustees. I was  
13 elected in 2020 to fill the remaining portion of a term of  
14 a trustee who had resigned. I have enjoyed every minute of  
15 my service as a trustee. During my brief tenure, Coastal  
16 Carolina has become the state's third largest university,  
17 hitting 12,000 students in enrollment, and has achieved  
18 national recognition for our academic and athletic  
19 programs. From hosting College Game Day to preparing to  
20 launch our own satellite, the entire country, except  
21 Edgefield County, has recently discovered teal nation. I  
22 would like to say that my road to trusteeship is not  
23 conventional at all. I don't have a background in banking,  
24 construction, public affairs, I'm not an attorney, and I  
25 had absolutely no experience in higher education when I was

1 elected to this Board. My expertise has been in the  
2 founding and running of a small business and rearing four  
3 children. As far as my educational background, I'm a  
4 graduate of Clemson University and the University of South  
5 Carolina, so I expected my children to follow me to the  
6 orange or the garnet. But when two of my three oldest  
7 children chose teal, I quickly became aware of just how  
8 fabulous Coastal Carolina University was. It was during  
9 their time as students that I heard from my friend and  
10 fellow Gaffneyite that a Board seat had become open, and  
11 she encouraged me to run. I've been a Chanticleer ever  
12 since. In addition to my Board service, where I serve as  
13 vice chairman of the Academic and Student Affairs  
14 Committee, I've endowed a scholarship, supported the  
15 athletics program, and become an internship site and hired  
16 a number of Coastal Carolina graduates in my business. As  
17 far as my role on the Board, my expertise, if you could  
18 call it that, has been just a common sense voice of a  
19 parent whose children went to Coastal. And every decision  
20 our Board makes, at the front of my mind, is what will be  
21 the real world impact on this decision to our students and  
22 their parents. I serve as a trustee in that spirit.  
23 Again, thank you so much for this opportunity, and I'm  
24 going to attempt to answer your questions, and I hope  
25 you're all about worn out. But you know what, honestly, in

1 case you all don't ask me the right questions, I just want  
2 to brag. Just a few minutes, is that okay? Coastal, you  
3 know, when my son first said, I'm going to go to Coastal, I  
4 thought, oh Lord, why not Clemson? You got in there. Why  
5 not USC? You got in there. Why in the world are you going  
6 to go to Coastal? Because honestly, I didn't realize how  
7 wonderful Coastal was. And he was going in the National  
8 Intelligence and Security Program, and he said, Mom, I  
9 can't get that degree anywhere else, you know, in the  
10 state. This is just up and coming. This is my passion.  
11 This is what I want to do. So I thought, okay, we'll  
12 definitely give that a chance. And in case y'all don't ask  
13 me the right questions, I'm going to brag to you now about  
14 Coastal. We have recently received the Carnegie  
15 Classification for Community Involvement. We have 60  
16 community partnerships addressing real-world needs through  
17 workplace demands. At Coastal, we don't sit around in  
18 ivory towers pondering intellectual questions. We just  
19 think, what can we do for the residents of South Carolina?  
20 Since my son is part of the U.S. military and a graduate of  
21 Intel National Security Program, I'm really proud that CCU  
22 achieved the silver status by the organization Military  
23 Friendly and made the best visit, made the best for vets  
24 list in 2025. We have Fulbright Fellowship students. We  
25 have a Goldwater Scholarship recipient. And in CHE, we

1 received the first place in academic review of our  
2 programs, ensuring adequate enrollment and graduation rates  
3 in specific programs. We really are good, y'all. And we  
4 can't help that all these out of state students want to  
5 come. They come on vacation, and Lord have mercy, they  
6 just want to stay there. I mean, who would not want to  
7 come to the beach? So I think that's just why we have so  
8 many out-of-state students. And I know that we're not  
9 supposed to get in the weeds of university management, but  
10 if they would let me go to Edgefield and some of these  
11 smaller counties, I would personally go and recruit  
12 students myself. Because Coastal Carolina is a great  
13 place, and I'm so thankful that I've been a trustee. And I  
14 hope you all will let me stay, even though I might not know  
15 all these answers. Okay, go ahead.

16 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Macey.

17 MS. DAVIS - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

18 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Ms.**  
19 **Davis. Ms. Davis, can you please state your**  
20 **current address?**

21 A. I can. 738 North Green River Road, Gaffney,  
22 South Carolina.

23 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay**  
24 **your 4% property tax?**

25 A. It is.

1 Q. Thank you. And is this the address within the  
2 congressional district to which you have applied?

3 A. It is.

4 Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state  
5 board, commission, committee, or elected office  
6 other than Coastal Carolina?

7 A. I do not.

8 Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations  
9 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
10 institution's Board of trustees?

11 A. I do.

12 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
13 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
14 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
15 after the Commission's report has been released?

16 A. I am.

17 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
18 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
19 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
20 intervene in this process on your behalf?

21 A. No.

22 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
23 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
24 any changes that might occur that would affect  
25 your application and overall eligibility for

1           **servicing on a college Board?**

2           A.    Yes.

3           **Q.    Thank you, Ms. Davis.**

4           A.    Thank you.

5           **Q.    Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.**

6           MR. CHAIRMAN: My only suggestion is you better do  
7 something with Edgefield County. That's the home of  
8 governors, by the way. What do you have, about 10, Senator  
9 Massey?

10          SENATOR MASSEY: About ten, yes.

11          MR. CHAIRMAN: Quite a place. Well, you might be the  
12 next. You never know. All right. Anybody have questions?  
13 Representative King.

14          REPRESENTATIVE KING: I don't really have a question.  
15 I just want to say thank you for your service. And we  
16 actually need people like you on boards to have that  
17 balance. So thank you for your service.

18          MS. DAVIS: Thank you.

19          MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Massey. Oh, who was it?  
20 Senator Devine. Sorry.

21          MS. DAVIS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

22          **Q.    No problem. Thank you. Thank you so much for**  
23               **your service, and thank you for your enthusiasm.**  
24               **I mean, especially at 2:00 o'clock, and I'm**  
25               **eating candy to kind of stay focused. I love**

1           your presentation. But I want to be quick. Two  
2           things that stood out to me in your personal data  
3           questionnaire. One, I wanted to ask, you talked  
4           about your perspectives and that you've been able  
5           to communicate openly, which has brought the  
6           Board together. And that intrigued me. Has  
7           there been some issues on the board, or do you  
8           just feel like you've been able to bring the  
9           diverse natures together? What made you make  
10          that statement?

11        A. Well, let's see. Lots of times when you get  
12          really, really smart people and you have these  
13          really, really powerful people, sometimes we get  
14          lost in the sauce just a little bit. We sit and  
15          debate and debate and debate issues, and that's  
16          wonderful. That's what we should do, and that's  
17          what we're charged with. But I've kind of  
18          appointed myself as kind of the informal social  
19          chairman, if you will, so that we can fight like  
20          cats and dogs, maybe in closed session, and then  
21          come out and be able to share a meal together, go  
22          have a drink together, whatever the need may be.  
23          And that really helps us all understand where  
24          we're all coming from, because we do come from a  
25          diverse background, understand where we're all

1 coming from and where we want to go. And  
2 thankfully, this Board, I mean, they are  
3 phenomenal people, and their best interest is the  
4 child. Everyone's student is their best  
5 interest. And the taxpayer's dollar, and the  
6 families, and our hearts are really in the right  
7 place.

8 **Q. Thank you. And then my last question is, you**  
9 **also talked about prioritizing diversity by**  
10 **attracting first-generation college students or**  
11 **attendees. Are you all already have first-gen**  
12 **programs? And if so, what does that look like?**

13 **A.** Yes. There are several programs on campus for  
14 first-generation college students, and those are  
15 like led by the students, and they are funded by  
16 the students. And we also have -- I don't think  
17 anybody's told you about the Chauncey's South  
18 Carolina Promise. And that's not just for  
19 first-gen students. It's really for -- it  
20 attracts a lot of first-gen students. And that  
21 is the program that provides free tuition to  
22 South Carolina residents who graduate in the top  
23 10% of their class whose income level, whose  
24 household income level is below 80,000. And that  
25 does track along with the first-gen college

1 student.

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?

3 SENATOR MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator.

5 MS. DAVIS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

6 **Q. I, too, appreciate your enthusiasm. They ought**  
7 **to send you out on the recruiting trips.**

8 A. I'm going to Edgeville, honey. Just as soon as  
9 we can get out there.

10 **Q. Come on, come on. I hear you. I appreciate**  
11 **that. So you indicated in the answers that you**  
12 **provided to the Committee that you believe that**  
13 **the university is on the right path with**  
14 **attracting students and continuing to grow. What**  
15 **we have heard so far from other Board members is**  
16 **that the university is up to about a little over**  
17 **12,000, at least at the beginning of the academic**  
18 **year, with about a 60-40 split out-of-state to**  
19 **in-state. Is that the right path?**

20 A. I'm not sure if it's the right path. It just  
21 kind of is the path. If we had more qualified  
22 South Carolina students to fill our empty seats,  
23 we would take them all. And believe me, we would  
24 love to have more South Carolina students. But  
25 the fact is, we have those seats available.

1            Might as well fill them with somebody.

2    Q.    Sure. And I understand that. But those seats  
3            are available because the Board has decided to  
4            create the seats, right? And I understand that  
5            you're limited in getting the other South  
6            Carolina students. We have other universities,  
7            many of whom we're going to hear trustee  
8            candidates for from today. There are others that  
9            are competing with you in that respect, and I  
10           understand that. But I'm curious, why is it that  
11           the Board has decided that because we can't  
12           attract more South Carolina students, we must  
13           necessarily increase the number of out-of-state  
14           students? Why create more seats if you don't  
15           have the South Carolina students to do it?  
16           Because what's happened is those seats have been  
17           created such that now we are at a 60-40 split.  
18           We heard from Mr. Biggs, when he started 19 years  
19           ago, it was a majority of South Carolina  
20           residents. So there's clearly been a strategic  
21           move by the Board of Trustees not only to  
22           increase the population, but to increase the  
23           non-resident component of that population. And  
24           I'm curious as to why. And I've got a theory,  
25           but I don't want my theory to be right. And I

1 realize that so far, of all the people we've  
2 heard from Coastal, you're the newest as far  
3 as board service.

4 A. Right, right.

5 Q. So some of these -- a lot of these decisions,  
6 especially these strategic decisions, were made  
7 before the Board had the pleasure of your  
8 company. So I'm curious about that, though. I  
9 mean, are there conversations that go on at the  
10 Board level about this?

11 A. Sometimes we have sat in a Board meeting before  
12 and just said, what is our magic number? Does  
13 anybody know what the magic number is? And we're  
14 all saying, well, we don't really know. You  
15 know, it just depends on our infrastructure and  
16 our housing and what are we able to do. But I  
17 really can't answer that question.

18 Q. So the Board has had conversations about it, but  
19 the Board has not come to a conclusion about what  
20 that magic number is?

21 A. Right, what a magic number is. Right, what a  
22 magic number is.

23 Q. And when you say magic number, we're talking  
24 about a magic number of total students enrolled?

25 A. Yeah, yes.

1 Q. And also what the breakdown should be between  
2 non-residents and residents. Is the Board  
3 talking about that?

4 A. We are very concerned about our South Carolina  
5 numbers.

6 Q. Is the Board concerned about your non-South  
7 Carolina numbers? Are there conversations about  
8 that? I think you answered the question. That's  
9 fine. You also indicated in your written  
10 responses that you believe that the cost of  
11 tuition should be based on infrastructure costs.  
12 I'm just looking at an addendum to the PDQ.  
13 Maybe this is a summary. But I read that you  
14 believe that the university can continue  
15 improving by building an alumni base and ensuring  
16 workforce needs are met by the programs offered.  
17 Do you agree with that?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And then I also have down here that you feel that  
20 the virtual offerings are important and that the  
21 cost of tuition should be based on infrastructure  
22 costs.

23 A. Let's see. I think that was in regard to the  
24 question about, let's see, how was it? About  
25 online. What should the cost of online classes

1           be or should it be a whole lot less? And it was  
2           kind of a guess as to should those classes cost a  
3           whole lot less than in-person classes? And I  
4           said since we don't really know the  
5           infrastructure costs, we don't know how much it's  
6           going to cost, you know, to have those systems in  
7           place as far as computer technology and such to  
8           fund those classes. Those classes, the cost of  
9           that should be based on after we find out how  
10          much it even costs to have the classes. That  
11          didn't sound right.

12          **Q. But I understand better what you meant by that**  
13          **now. That makes sense to me too. I don't**  
14          **disagree with that. One of your fellow Board**  
15          **members -- I just forgot where I was going with**  
16          **that.**

17          A. Good. Good, sir.

18          REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: She speaks for all of us.

19          **Q. Thank you. I'll end it here.**

20          A. Thank you, Senator Massey.

21          **Q. You did very well.**

22          MR. CHAIRMAN: You came out lucky on him. Any other  
23          people with questions? All right, I'll entertain a motion  
24          for a favorable from the Commission?

25          REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: So moved.

1 REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by  
3 raising your right hand.

4 (All hands are raised.)

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it. Okay. Thank you. It was nice  
6 talking to you.

7 MS. DAVIS: Thank you.

8 (OFF THE RECORD)

9 NATASHA MABRY HANNA:

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: You can just come on up, because I  
11 think you're next. Okay. If you would, just raise your  
12 hand and repeat after me. I swear to tell the truth, whole  
13 the truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

14 MS. HANNA: I do.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: And if you'll just tell me your name  
16 and your position on the Board, and then a little short bio  
17 of why you want to run.

18 MS. HANNA: Certainly, thank you. Good afternoon, my  
19 name is Natasha Hanna, and I am seeking re-election for the  
20 7th Congressional District seat. I live in Conway, and I  
21 currently serve as the chair of the Board of Trustees. My  
22 connection to Coastal Carolina University is very personal.  
23 I came -- I'm one of those out-of-state students that you  
24 all talked about today. I came here in 1990 to go to  
25 Coastal. I planted my feet in the sand and never left. I

1 met a local boy who was born and raised in Myrtle Beach and  
2 also a graduate of Coastal. I graduated in 1994. I left  
3 there and went to Horry Georgetown Technical College, where  
4 I got my paralegal degree. And then I returned to the  
5 University of South Carolina, where I obtained my law  
6 degree, my juris doctorate in 2002. I have been married  
7 for 28 years. I live right across the street from campus.  
8 I have two boys who attended college here in South  
9 Carolina. And truly, Coastal Carolina University, I tell  
10 you all these things. I have my own law firm. I have  
11 several businesses my husband and I own. And I tell you  
12 all these things, not to pat myself on the back, but to  
13 tell you what is possible at Coastal Carolina University.  
14 A small-town girl from a small town in Virginia  
15 accomplished that. And I'm standing here before you today  
16 just super grateful for the way it gave me. I'm also very  
17 proud to appear before you today, along with all of my  
18 trustees, our entire Board is up for re-election. And I  
19 can tell you without any hesitation that this Board is more  
20 unified, more engaged, and more effective than at any point  
21 during my many years of service on this Board. And that  
22 cohesion is not an accident. It is the product of our two  
23 past Board chairs, both Bill Biggs and Delan Stevens. You  
24 heard from Bill Biggs earlier, and you'll hear from Delan  
25 Stevens later. They have created a transparent Board of

1 trustees who respect one another, who debate vigorously in  
2 the board room, and who leave that room speaking with one  
3 voice on behalf of the university. And those results speak  
4 for themselves. And if I can take just a moment to get  
5 some points about what has happened at Coastal in the last,  
6 let's just say, 10 years. We've appointed two university  
7 presidents, most recently Dr. Jamie Winebrake, whom I'm  
8 hopeful that you've all met. He's got an amazing vision.  
9 He's exceeded expectations on every level. We've hit  
10 record-breaking enrollment with 12,006 students last fall.  
11 We've approved transformative new academic programs, which  
12 complement the workforce needs in South Carolina, such as  
13 nursing, a doctor of physical therapy, a master of science  
14 in finance. We've established the Conway Medical Center  
15 College of Human and Health Performance to train health  
16 care professionals that our community desperately needs.  
17 We've maintained a multi-year tuition increase, in part  
18 thanks to tuition mitigation by this legislature. We've  
19 guided capital improvements, both on the athletics and the  
20 academic side. We've championed free expression and  
21 institutional neutrality by opting the Chicago Statement  
22 and the Calvin Principles. And most importantly, we think,  
23 we've established training for our trustees, implemented  
24 ambassador requirements, and our Board members have  
25 attended conferences that help us to grow as trustees. And

1 while all these accomplishments are given to the leadership  
2 and the university as a whole, I just want to share with  
3 you our Board functions in the way that a governing board  
4 should, with shared purpose, with rigorous oversight, and a  
5 genuine commitment to the institution. And so, you know,  
6 at Coastal, I love this university, and that's why I'm  
7 here, that's why I continue to serve. But our enrollment  
8 is surging, our academic profile is strengthening, and our  
9 new president is bringing fresh energy and vision like  
10 we've never seen before. Our Board is full of experience,  
11 we all bring certain things to the table, and I've just  
12 never been more excited to appear before you today, and I'm  
13 grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve. Thank  
14 you.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Macey.

16 MS. HANNA - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

17 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Hanna, can you**  
18 **please state your current address?**

19 A. 874 Denali Drive, Conway, South Carolina.

20 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay**  
21 **your 4% property tax?**

22 A. Yes.

23 **Q. And is this address within the congressional**  
24 **district to which you have applied?**

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any  
2 local or state board, commission, committee, or  
3 elected office other than the Coastal Carolina  
4 Board?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations  
7 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
8 institution's board of trustees?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
11 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
12 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
13 after the Commission's report has been released?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
16 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
17 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
18 intervene in the process on your behalf?

19 A. No.

20 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
21 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
22 any changes that might occur that would affect  
23 your application and overall eligibility for  
24 serving on a college Board?

25 A. Yes.

1           **Q. Thank you, Ms. Hanna. Mr. Chairman, I have no**  
2           **further questions.**

3           MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions from Commission members?  
4           Senator Bennett.

5           MS. HANNA - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

6           **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Hanna.**  
7           **I appreciate you being here and for your service**  
8           **to the Board. I just want to cover one question**  
9           **that I asked a previous candidate about your**  
10          **Board deliberations. They said that your Board**  
11          **is engaged. I heard you say your Board is**  
12          **engaged. Does that go beyond just that simple**  
13          **phrase where you challenge your leadership, where**  
14          **you actually debate where the university is**  
15          **going, or is it more of an information-gathering**  
16          **session?**

17          A. Our Board has evolved greatly, and I would say in  
18          years past it may have been a rubber stamp. Lots  
19          of times people get on Boards to eat cake, and  
20          that is not what we have. We have very good  
21          debate, and it's not high-level where we just set  
22          policy, come to five meetings a year, and walk  
23          away. We have engagement, you know, whether it's  
24          in the Board meetings. We do a lot of the heavy  
25          lifting and committee work. We've got great

1 committee members, great committee leaders who do  
2 the heavy lifting and share with the rest of the  
3 Board, and we have built a pretty strong trust  
4 with our Board members. So, yes, we do debate.  
5 We do ask a lot of tough questions of the  
6 administration, and we toe the line on that.  
7 Yes, sir.

8 **Q. I want to go back to the comment made by Ms.**  
9 **Davis. I think she was talking about her son**  
10 **going to Coastal because the program there, I**  
11 **think it was a security program there, was the**  
12 **only program in the state offered, and that's why**  
13 **he went there, which I kind of love to hear.**  
14 **Because one of the things -- I was looking at a**  
15 **sheet that went around. We talked about**  
16 **graduation rates, almost ad nauseum with the**  
17 **previous so I'm not going to go there. However,**  
18 **the sheet that I have that shows those graduation**  
19 **rates, the other thing that strikes me on the**  
20 **sheet is that we have 32 colleges and**  
21 **universities operating in South Carolina, 32.**  
22 **Personally, I think that's way too many for a**  
23 **state our size. But what's probably more**  
24 **disturbing to me is the amount of duplication**  
25 **that we see. Ms. Davis mentioned the program**

1           that her son used. It's the only one. But at  
2           the same time, you're talking about expanding  
3           into engineering, and probably at least eight or  
4           nine of these universities on this already have  
5           engineering programs. What's the conversation  
6           like in your Boardroom when a new program is  
7           presented for potential inclusion or approval?  
8           Do you look at what's available in other  
9           universities across the state and defer  
10          sometimes, or do you get in a silo and just kind  
11          of think what's best for the university?

12        A.    Great question. I'm glad you asked. So what our  
13          Board did, it's been about 18 months ago. We  
14          actually requested the administration to report  
15          back to us on an intensive program review, and  
16          the administration did that. Dr. Winebrake  
17          actually brought that back to us in February of  
18          this year, where we have three pages of  
19          information on the programs and the course  
20          offerings that we have. And if we're bringing a  
21          new program in, we want to know are there  
22          programs that we can close out, that we can  
23          replace, so that we're making sure that we're  
24          offering the right programs for the students  
25          based on supply and demand. So that's one thing

1 that we do. Another thing is that we look at  
2 what institutions across the state are doing.  
3 And the Commission on Higher Education, they make  
4 sure that we're doing that as well, that we're  
5 not duplicating efforts. So from our standpoint,  
6 from the Board's standpoint, we have asked those  
7 things, and we do look at that. Yes, sir.

8 **Q. Have there been situations where you've said no?**

9 A. There have not. I think our administration has  
10 made a pretty good argument each time. What we  
11 have asked is if you're going to bring this  
12 program in, we want you to go back and review  
13 what we can eliminate or what's no longer there.  
14 Like, for example, we have some classes that are  
15 only we have ten students in it, others where  
16 we're not classes but programs where we have ten  
17 students, other there's 758. So we look at that  
18 and we say, look, why are we putting money and  
19 resources for something that only ten people are  
20 taking versus this where it's absolutely  
21 flourishing? You know, and a good example of  
22 that is our nursing programs that we are in  
23 desperate need of in our community.

24 **Q. Which kind of gets back to the same question. I**  
25 **understand that every community has those needs,**

1           **but it seems like every community in these states**  
2           **has a nursing school. Do we need to have those**  
3           **conversations of do we need to have a nursing**  
4           **school in every community or do we need to have**  
5           **good opportunities for students across the state**  
6           **to access nursing school?**

7           A. Based on my understanding is, first of all, yes,  
8           you should ask those questions. And we as a  
9           Board should ask those questions. But if the  
10          need is there and we've been told by the medical  
11          professionals that the need is there. I mean,  
12          just in our own community we have tons of people  
13          that are moving into our state. Horry County is  
14          one of the fastest growing areas in the entire  
15          country. We know the need is there. So as long  
16          as there is a shortage of those nursing, then I  
17          think we should continue to fulfill it but  
18          continue to ask the questions.

19          **Q. Sure. And I guess I've just used nursing as an**  
20          **example, but it could be any program.**

21          A. Yes, sir. Right.

22          **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair.**

23          MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Devine.

24          MS. HANNA - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

25          **Q. Thank you. Thank you so much, Ms. Hanna. Just -**

1           -- I don't want to belabor the point, but as  
2           chair, I kind of held this question for you, not  
3           ask the other Board members. But kind of similar  
4           to Senator Bennett's questions about programming,  
5           but mine is I think earlier Mr. Turner or  
6           someone, Mr. Biggs, talked about the facilities.  
7           But right now there's a lot nationally that  
8           universities are having to look at regarding  
9           safety and security. So just wondering, has the  
10          Board had those conversations? And are there  
11          things that you all are seeing that as you move  
12          forward? You talked about, you know, Horry  
13          County being the fastest growing. There's a lot  
14          of people. Your landlocked, so there's a lot as  
15          far as growth for the university. I'm just kind  
16          of wondering, what are your conversations around  
17          safety and security for the campus and the  
18          students? And what plans are you all putting  
19          that into the overall program for the university?

20        A. Well, number one, we absolutely lead as far as  
21          safety goes. That is always the number one  
22          question around our Board. And I can't help but  
23          mention one of our Board members who's not  
24          running for re-election, Johnny Bartell. He is  
25          the champion of our police force and all the

1 safety requirements that we have on campus. And  
2 so that is a conversation that is constant around  
3 our board room as safety first. We've taken  
4 campus polls with both our faculty, our students,  
5 and our staff to see if there's issues. I mean,  
6 it could be something as simple as lighting  
7 around campus and as far as, you know, campus  
8 dorms. And truly we have not seen an issue at  
9 Coastal. We feel like we're a very safe campus  
10 and we provide that for our students. And did  
11 you have a question about facilities expanding as  
12 well?

13 **Q. No, this is wondering if y'all were constantly**  
14 **putting that as part of your plan. And so it**  
15 **sounds like you are.**

16 A. Yes.

17 **Q. I just wanted to make sure that that is top of**  
18 **mind as well.**

19 A. Yes.

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? All right. Do I have a  
21 motion to require a favorable by the Commission?

22 REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Second?

24 REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by

1 raising your hand.

2 (All hands are raised.)

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: You got it. Opposed?

4 (No hands are raised.)

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

6 SENATOR BENNETT: Mr. Chairman.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes?

8 SENATOR BENNETT: I'd like the record to reflect that  
9 I have recused myself, as Hanna has donated to my campaign,  
10 in the year 2020. The form only asked for the last four  
11 years. That was six years ago. But I am recusing myself  
12 because of that.

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: So noted. Thank you. I'm sorry. I  
14 didn't hear you say that much. Thank you, sir. Thank you  
15 for your service. What part of Virginia are you from?

16 MS. HANNA: Rafford. A little small town.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yeah. I know where that is.  
18 Pretty up that way.

19 MS. HANNA: It is beautiful.

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you again.

21 MS. HANNA: Thank you.

22 JASON MICHAEL REPAK:

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Moving right along. Well,  
24 not right along, but we're moving along. We are now at-  
25 large seat eight, which expires in 2029. And it is Jason

1 Michael Repak from Murrells Inlet. Come on up, sir. If  
2 you'll raise your right hand, I'll swear you in. Do you  
3 swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
4 the truth, so help you God?

5 MR. REPAK: Yes, sir.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'll just state your name and your  
7 position on the Board, and then a little bio about why you  
8 want to continue serving.

9 MR. REPAK: Absolutely. So I'm Jason Repak, and I  
10 serve in seat eight, which is the first at-large seat on  
11 the Coastal Carolina Board of Trustees. I first joined  
12 this Board five years ago, excuse me, six years ago. Now  
13 my very first meeting was our special meeting over  
14 COVID-19. So what an exciting time to join the Board. But  
15 it has been my passion to give back to causes that continue  
16 to develop opportunities for young people. From my time in  
17 Civil Air Patrol, where I have 50 cadets that I've mentored  
18 through our program, and to the time I spend at Coastal  
19 Carolina University, it's to give others opportunity and to  
20 grow them and their future in South Carolina. So Coastal  
21 Carolina provided a transformative experience for myself  
22 growing up in Horry County, and then graduating, going off  
23 to find work in the corporate world before I realized that  
24 home is where I really wanted to be, and to start my  
25 business. And this is just the place that I'm truly

1 passionate about and want to continue serving and giving  
2 back to.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

4 MR. REPAK - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

5 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Repak, can you  
6 please state your current address?

7 A. 4859 Elm Road, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina.

8 Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay  
9 your 4% property tax?

10 A. Yes, it is.

11 Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any  
12 local or state Board, Commission, committee, or  
13 elected office other than the Coastal Carolina  
14 Board?

15 A. No, I do not.

16 Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations  
17 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
18 institution's board of trustees?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
21 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
22 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
23 after the Commission's report has been released?

24 A. I'm aware.

25 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to

1 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
2 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
3 intervene in this process on your behalf?

4 A. No.

5 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
6 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
7 any changes that might occur that would affect  
8 your application and overall eligibility for  
9 serving on a college Board?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Thank you, Mr. Repak. And, Mr. Chairman, I have  
12 no further questions.

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions by Commission members?  
14 Senator Massey.

15 MR. REPAK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

16 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Repak, thank you  
17 for being here.

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Mr. Repack, in the summary of your personal data  
20 questionnaire that we have, there is a statement,  
21 and I don't believe this is your statement. I  
22 believe this is a summary of information that you  
23 provided, but I want to read this to you, okay?

24 A. Uh-huh.

25 Q. It says, he believes the student body must

1           **continue to grow and help qualified graduates**  
2           **enter various workforce fields, such continued**  
3           **growth can help to offset the administrative**  
4           **costs of the university. I'm curious, is that**  
5           **your position?**

6       A.    That's not my exact wording, but yes, I believe  
7           that growth of the university, while it needs to  
8           be sustainable and reasonable growth, I believe  
9           growth of the university continues to grow  
10          opportunities for our students, and therefore the  
11          economic opportunity for our state.

12       **Q.    What would be your target number for student**  
13       **enrollment?**

14       A.    There is no target number of student enrollment,  
15           in my opinion. It has to be sustainable growth,  
16           though. If you said, let's grow 10% next year, or  
17           let's have 15,000 students next year, that's just  
18           not a sustainable number. But any responsible,  
19           sustainable growth inside the university that  
20           creates those opportunities for our students and  
21           our state, I believe is reasonable to plan for.

22       **Q.    Does the university have a responsibility to**  
23       **create opportunities for non-resident students?**

24       A.    I believe as a state institution, it's our  
25           responsibility to create those opportunities for

1 our citizens. But those opportunities that are  
2 created for our in-state students and our  
3 out-of-state students create economic  
4 opportunities for our entire state. And so, if  
5 you'll allow me to expand, so my time in the  
6 corporate world before I came back home and  
7 started my own business was with Rolls-Royce. At  
8 Rolls-Royce, part of the project I was working on  
9 was what we call a state beauty contest. We were  
10 across Virginia and Indianapolis, and South  
11 Carolina was one of the final two states in the  
12 running for a very large manufacturing site that  
13 was going to be over \$500 million in investment  
14 and over 500 employees in the workforce. And  
15 this would be an advanced manufacturing  
16 workforce. And the reason that site chose  
17 Virginia instead of South Carolina was  
18 availability of the educated workforce and the  
19 training opportunities for that workforce. So in  
20 Virginia, they created over 35 million dollars  
21 worth of funding split across Virginia State  
22 University, Virginia Tech, and University of  
23 Virginia to develop the workforce to prepare  
24 those that would enter that employment with  
25 Rolls-Royce. And so I believe that while, yes,

1 we have a first and foremost responsibility to  
2 our in-state students, the opportunities that we  
3 create for out-of-state students still creates  
4 economic opportunity for South Carolina in  
5 general.

6 Q. So, one of the -- to that point, one of the more  
7 frustrating things that I see is that too often  
8 we give up on our in-state students and start  
9 recruiting out-of-state. And that happens a lot  
10 with industry that I see. Is that we, well, I  
11 mean, I'll tell you, we had the debate, the most  
12 recent big debate on this was with Scout. And  
13 part of that conversation was about -- I'll tell  
14 you what we heard from the Department of  
15 Commerce, was that they thought there was an  
16 untapped pool of manufacturing talent in the  
17 Midlands that could support, you know, Scouts  
18 looking to like 4,000 employees. Which was a  
19 real surprise to many of us because, as I said at  
20 the time, no matter where you go from Bojangles  
21 to Boeing, they're looking for employees. And it  
22 was a real surprise to Boeing and BMW as well  
23 that there was an untapped pool of manufacturing  
24 talent anywhere in the state because they were  
25 having trouble finding those people. But it

1 seems to me that what happens lots of times is we  
2 have a lot of young South Carolinians who really  
3 are not as exposed to opportunities, and so they  
4 don't know what's out there. These are smart  
5 kids, and they think they can do anything. They  
6 think they can be doctors and engineers and  
7 astronauts and build cars and whatever else. But  
8 if they don't know that those opportunities exist  
9 in South Carolina, it's a problem. And then when  
10 you have South Carolinians providing significant  
11 funding, in the case of Scout, over a billion  
12 dollars. And then Scout cannibalizing other  
13 manufacturers in the state or recruiting  
14 employees from elsewhere as opposed to focusing  
15 on developing the talent that is within, that's  
16 troubling to me. And so I get a little bit  
17 concerned about how quickly do we give up on  
18 South Carolina students before we just start  
19 developing programs for non-residents and try to  
20 use those programs to recruit non-residents to  
21 come in. Do you have, with your thought process  
22 of the necessity for continued growth, because I  
23 understand you don't have a target on what that  
24 total student enrollment should be, what should  
25 the breakdown be between non-resident and

1           **resident?**

2           A.    Thank you for your question. I think it's a  
3           multifaceted question and statement. First and  
4           foremost, I would find it very surprising that  
5           anywhere would have untapped workforce available  
6           for advanced manufacturing to the tune of 4,000  
7           jobs. I think that highlights the need to  
8           continue to invest in the educational  
9           opportunities to create that workforce, as that  
10          is one of the top things that employers are  
11          looking for is a ready and willing workforce, the  
12          ability to train them, and the infrastructure to  
13          support their manufacturing facility. For us,  
14          for our own in-state versus out-of-state,  
15          ultimately, right, we would love to see more  
16          in-state students because those are the ones that  
17          will continue to stay in South Carolina, even  
18          though 60% of our graduates already do stay in  
19          the state. We also have a lot of education  
20          majors that stay in the state and become teachers  
21          in Horry County, which is fantastic. But for me,  
22          right, I look at it and say, if we are willing to  
23          accept every qualified applicant from South  
24          Carolina, and we do, we have almost 95% of South  
25          Carolina students that apply have a pathway into

1 Coastal Carolina University. And on top of that,  
2 if they're in that top 10% of their class, and if  
3 their household income is below, I think it's  
4 either \$80,000 or \$85,000, they have no tuition  
5 at Coastal Carolina. And so we create those  
6 opportunities for them, but ultimately they've  
7 got to want to come to Coastal Carolina. And we  
8 want them to come to us, and so we create those  
9 opportunities for them. But, you know, one of my  
10 mentors, when I was coming up, said, sometimes  
11 your treasure's not at home. And so I think for  
12 a lot of those students, they look at it, and if  
13 they believe their treasure's at home, they may  
14 be staying at their local in-state institution.  
15 And so we have to continue to provide those  
16 opportunities for others.

17 **Q. Yeah, I mean, I think, well, as you talked about,**  
18 **just from your personal experience, I mean,**  
19 **people, there's an attraction. I mean, you knew**  
20 **about Coastal, right?**

21 A. The only place I applied to.

22 **Q. Yeah, and so I think for folks who grow up in**  
23 **that area, that's what they know, and there's an**  
24 **attraction there. I understand that. Now, for**  
25 **some people, for some children, the attraction is**

1 not to be anywhere near where you grow up. I  
2 understand that, too. I guess what I struggle  
3 with is what is the obligation of South Carolina  
4 taxpayers to provide educational opportunities  
5 for non-residents? I mean, if Coastal -- and  
6 this isn't really specific to Coastal, right? We  
7 could be talking about Francis Marion, or we  
8 could talk about Lander, or we could talk about a  
9 number of other places around the state. If  
10 there are places that are having a hard time  
11 recruiting South Carolina's high school graduates  
12 to attend there, then what is our obligation to  
13 increase the seats such that we provide? What's  
14 the obligation to increase seats that we're going  
15 to give off to non-residents?

16 A. Well, I would debate whether or not it would be  
17 an obligation, but more so an opportunity. So we  
18 talk about the upcoming enrollment cliff, which  
19 is supposed to start next year, and it's a 10%  
20 reduction in high school graduates between now  
21 and 2041. And so if we continue to want to  
22 compete for workforce, and we continue to want to  
23 compete for employers to come to this state, we  
24 are going to have to have a workforce to fill  
25 those jobs. And so I don't look at educational

1 opportunities for those out-of-state students as  
2 an obligation. I look at it as investing an  
3 opportunity to continue to attract talented  
4 workers into this state that can fill that  
5 workforce demand of the future.

6 **Q. So 40% of your student body is comprised of South**  
7 **Carolina high school graduates.**

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 **Q. 60 % of your student body will stay in South**  
10 **Carolina after they complete their coursework.**

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 **Q. So how many of the non-residents are we**  
13 **retaining?**

14 A. I would have to get that data and give it back to  
15 you.

16 **Q. I mean, if 40% of the student body is coming from**  
17 **South Carolina, 60% of the student body is going**  
18 **to stick around. We're not retaining a whole lot**  
19 **of those non-residents.**

20 A. Not necessarily. We don't know. I don't have  
21 the in-state versus out-of-state breakdown on the  
22 retention rate or the graduates that stay  
23 in-state, but I would be happy to get that data  
24 and give it back to you.

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

1 MR. REPAK - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

2 Q. Thank you so very much.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. A couple of questions for you. As a Board  
5 member, after hearing the discussion of the  
6 Committee today, what would you do different once  
7 elected as a Board member to increase the number  
8 of South Carolina residents? That's one  
9 question. The second one is, can you give me the  
10 figures of how much out-of-state students are  
11 actually paying to go to South Carolina, go to  
12 Coastal Carolina? Also, I would like to have a  
13 breakdown as to what how much scholarships the  
14 out-of-state students are getting, that could be  
15 going to South Carolina students. And you may  
16 have that information, but if not, could you get  
17 it to us?

18 A. Yes, sir. I'd be happy to. I have -- so our  
19 out-of-state tuition is -- it just went above  
20 \$30,000 per year for our out-of-state tuition  
21 rate. Our overall room and Board fees, I  
22 actually have it on hand, but I would have to dig  
23 through this packet to get it to you, and I  
24 wouldn't want to misquote the numbers, so I'd be  
25 happy to come back to you with that number. As

1 far as the scholarship split between in-state and  
2 out-of-state, I don't have that on hand, and I'd  
3 be happy to get it for you.

4 **Q. Would you say that South Carolina students get**  
5 **the majority of the scholarships, South Carolina**  
6 **residents?**

7 A. I couldn't speak to that, because I know a lot of  
8 scholarships come in through Pell Grants. A lot  
9 are based on GPA and their academic performance.  
10 And then, of course, with our Chauncey's Choice  
11 Program, that is relatively new, so I don't have  
12 that split, but I'd be happy to get it for you.

13 **Q. Do you all have specific scholarships that the**  
14 **actual college awards?**

15 A. We have about 5% of our budget that goes towards  
16 scholarships, but I don't have the breakdown.

17 **Q. But is that 5% going to South Carolinians?**

18 A. I don't have that breakdown, so I'd have to get  
19 it for you.

20 **Q. Thank you.**

21 SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

22 MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

23 MR. REPAK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

24 **Q. Thank you for being here. I kind of left the**  
25 **graduation rate alone for the last three or four**

1           **people, but you wrote in your data questionnaire**  
2           **that the greatest weakness is historically below**  
3           **average graduation rates.**

4       A.    Yes, sir.

5       **Q.    We chart below 50% even at the six-year mark,**  
6           **just in the numbers that we're given.  What is**  
7           **being done, what can be done going forward, to**  
8           **bring those numbers higher?**

9       A.    Yes, sir.  And thank you for your question.  So  
10       our most recent data is 55% on a six-year  
11       graduation rate, and that number will continue to  
12       improve as the numbers matriculate through,  
13       because our retention rates have gone up over 10%  
14       in just the last 10 years.  And so we expect that  
15       graduation rate to continue to climb closer and  
16       closer to the national average, which is 61% on a  
17       six-year graduation rate.  Even the top public  
18       institution in the country loses about 25% of  
19       their class after the second year.  And so  
20       getting to 100%, while it would be a laudable  
21       goal and one we would love to achieve, a mid-60%  
22       graduation rate would be fantastic.  And so we  
23       have taken robust efforts to get more students on  
24       campus, to create new clubs and organizations for  
25       them to be a part of, to continue to attract that

1 talent that is capable and ready for college  
2 after they graduate high school. And we continue  
3 to look for ways to keep them engaged on campus.  
4 Because if they feel like Coastal and are  
5 performing at Coastal in a way that they feel  
6 like they're being successful, they will stay  
7 through and matriculate to graduation. And that  
8 program and those offerings that we've done has  
9 shown results, getting our graduation rate up  
10 from the 40s into the 55% range.

11 **Q. Is it the Board's position that college should**  
12 **take six years and not four?**

13 A. Well, I would love it to only take four. I  
14 personally took four and a half years to graduate  
15 and did it through a double major, but I never  
16 changed my major. Over 50% of college students  
17 will change their major at least once. Over 10%  
18 of college students will change their major more  
19 than once. And every time you change your major,  
20 it then changes the core coursework that you have  
21 to complete, so it draws out your graduation  
22 rate. And that's also neglecting the fact that  
23 these are young adults, so life happens along the  
24 way. And some are like myself, and I took a  
25 semester off to do a six-month internship while I

1 was studying at Coastal. So I believe that a  
2 six-month graduation rate, like you, I look at it  
3 and go, that doesn't always make the most sense.  
4 But I understand why that is used as the standard  
5 metric.

6 **Q.** And I guess my concern is that we're, I mean, you  
7 go in at 18, and six years later you're 24. You  
8 just have an undergraduate degree. Or just,  
9 that's a goal. It's a laudable goal. But I  
10 worry about, we're investing millions of dollars  
11 in higher education, and that higher education at  
12 some point has to graduate students quickly and  
13 efficiently. While it's only ten, eleven  
14 thousand dollars a year to go to Coastal, and  
15 that's a fantastic number. That's 44,000 versus  
16 66,000. And that's debt that that student may  
17 have to pay back over the next 10, 15 years. And  
18 so that's really my concern is that we, are we  
19 getting, one, are we getting a return on our  
20 investment, and two, is the student getting a  
21 return on their investment when they have to pay  
22 probably 22,000 more just to graduate from  
23 college? Not sure there's an answer to that  
24 question, but I throw it out there as something  
25 that I would like you all, and all universities



1 Board.

2 MR. SPIVEY: My name is Gene Spivey. I'm from Myrtle  
3 Beach. I've served on the Board 24, 25 years now. I will  
4 start by saying there's probably not a whole lot you  
5 haven't heard from this crowd yet. I would like to  
6 apologize. I'm not wearing a tie, and if you can see my  
7 feet, I'm not wearing socks. I have lost the ability for  
8 now to do certain things. I'm having a little health  
9 issue. We'll be straight soon enough, but.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: No problem.

11 MR. SPIVEY: With that, that's all I got, sir.

12 SENATOR BENNETT: Mr. Chairman.

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Bennett.

14 SENATOR BENNETT: I didn't think anybody from the  
15 beach wore socks.

16 MR. SPIVEY: It would be rare. Typically, my rule is  
17 if I'm wearing a tie, I'm wearing socks. But I can't right  
18 now, I can't get socks from my feet.

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: You better check to see if there's any  
20 sand in the shoes.

21 MR. SPIVEY: They are loafers, so yes.

22 MR. SPIVEY - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

23 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Spivey, can you**  
24 **please state your current address?**

25 A. 3990 Lark Hill Drive, Myrtle Beach.

1 Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay  
2 your 4% property tax?

3 A. Yes, ma'am.

4 Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state  
5 Board, Commission, committee, or elected office  
6 other than the Coastal Carolina Board?

7 A. No.

8 Q. And do you understand the obligations and  
9 responsibilities of serving on a public  
10 institution's board of trustees?

11 A. I do.

12 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
13 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
14 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
15 after the Commission's report has been released?

16 A. I do.

17 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
18 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
19 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
20 intervene in this process on your behalf?

21 A. I'm not aware.

22 Q. Are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation  
23 and duty to report to the Commission any changes  
24 that might occur that would affect your  
25 application and overall eligibility for serving

1           **on a college board?**

2           A.    I do.

3           **Q.    Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Spivey. Mr. Chairman,**  
4           **I have no further questions.**

5           MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions for Mr. Spivey from the  
6 Commission members?

7           SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

8           MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir. Go right there.

9           MR. SPIVEY - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

10          **Q.    Mr. Spivey, I'm looking at your data**  
11          **questionnaire, and it says affordability is**  
12          **important for attracting out-of-state students.**  
13          **Explain that to me, because I think you've heard**  
14          **a lot. You've been sitting in the crowd, so**  
15          **you've heard our views on the 60-40 split. So I**  
16          **read that, and I'm curious.**

17          A.    That was probably more of a general question.  
18                Affordability is important for all students, but  
19                it's important for that demographic, too. I also  
20                have a -- it's not going to be what you want to  
21                hear as having to do with the out-of-state, but  
22                one of my goals over the last couple of years,  
23                and this is more of a--not a coastal issue, but I  
24                think it's a South Carolina issue that needs to  
25                be addressed, and it needs to be probably

1 addressed at y'all's level, is when Senator  
2 Massey is talking about, are we bringing the  
3 right students. You know, a large number of our  
4 students are in that New Jersey, Ohio, Maryland  
5 corridor. I understand what you're saying, but  
6 one of the issues that I see is -- and where that  
7 statement is going is I would love to see South  
8 Carolina institutions, us, Clemson, South  
9 Carolina attract more students when we can from  
10 closer states. North Carolina, Georgia,  
11 Tennessee, Alabama. Because those are the states  
12 we can't attract. So that's probably where I was  
13 going with that. We need to figure out how to  
14 make it more affordable to neighboring states.  
15 When you're a Northeastern student, if you're in  
16 state at their school up there, it's not too  
17 terribly far from what we're charging  
18 out-of-state, but trying to attract students  
19 from, let's say, North Carolina or Georgia, we  
20 can't do that because their tuition is so much  
21 lower. They're not going to come to us  
22 out-of-state because their in-state tuition is so  
23 much lower. So that's probably where I was going  
24 with that statement, is we need to figure out how  
25 to attract more regional southeastern students.

1 Not have in-state rates for North Carolina  
2 students or Georgia students, but have something  
3 closer to that rate. We as a university can only  
4 mitigate down to a certain level. We had a  
5 number of -- a year or so ago, a number of North  
6 Carolina students and Georgia students who have  
7 in-state school at Coastal was very low. It's  
8 surprisingly low when you look at that compared  
9 to some of the other Northeast corridors. That's  
10 probably where I was going with that. I mean --  
11 and, too, I would probably make the argument,  
12 too, that out-of-state students, while we do  
13 allow and take any South Carolina student that  
14 will qualify and is qualified, a lot of those  
15 out-of-state students do help pay for a lot of  
16 what's going on in-state, too. I mean we make --  
17 It used to be that we could say that out-of-state  
18 tuition was the true cost of education. The  
19 in-state rate is pretty much what they paid minus  
20 what help we get from the state. That's no  
21 longer the case. The true cost of tuition is  
22 more than what an out -- is less than what an  
23 out-of-state student is paid. So, to a certain  
24 level, they're helping to carry South Carolina  
25 students into Coastal.

1     **Q.     Would you agree with me that one of the drivers**  
2           **of costs, new building costs, growth costs, is**  
3           **your large out-of-state population?**

4     A.     I don't know if I'd agree with that.  I mean,  
5           we've talked about growth and the number, they  
6           put their number on us.  You know, what's the old  
7           line?  If you're not growing, you're dying.  I  
8           mean, we're trying to maintain a pretty steady,  
9           solid growth.  We could -- I mean, at any point,  
10          I've been on the Board 24, 25 years now, I  
11          forget.  We could have blown this thing up way  
12          bigger years ago, but we haven't.  We've tried to  
13          maintain that 2, 3% over the years to keep  
14          growing.  And like I said, as long as we're  
15          taking every in-state student that qualifies, I  
16          mean, we're going to have to keep doing what  
17          we're doing.

18    **Q.     So there was testimony earlier that maybe as**  
19           **short as 10, 12 years ago, the university was**  
20           **over 50% in-state.  It is now 60/40.  Would you**  
21           **agree with me that your growth is in out-of-state**  
22           **students, far surpassing in-state students?  For**  
23           **it to go from 50 to 40 and from -- or above 50**  
24           **and then all the way to 60, that's where your**  
25           **growth is.  Your growth is out-of-state students.**

1           **We can parse it any way we want.**

2           A.    It's both.  It's both.  But when I first got on  
3           the Board in 2000 or 2001, we were about 3,800  
4           students.  And the ratio was about 50-50 then,  
5           in-state versus out-of-state.  Following our  
6           chair's leave, my now ex-wife, she came here from  
7           New York, came, went to Coastal, graduated.  
8           Stayed, has a job in Myrtle Beach.  I mean, I  
9           think that is definitely part of the demographic.  
10          But going back 24 years, it was 50/50 then and  
11          it's 60/40 now.  I wish it could go—we can only  
12          grow South Carolina as fast as we can.  
13          Apparently, we need to do more at Edgefield.  But  
14          we're trying all we can to get as many South  
15          Carolina students as we can.

16          **Q.    Thank you, sir.**

17          MR. CHAIRMAN:  Senator Massey.

18          MR. SPIVEY - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

19          **Q.    And I get that.  You want to try to get as many**  
20          **South Carolina students as you can.  But why has**  
21          **the Board then made the decision that if we can't**  
22          **get South Carolina students, we're going to grow**  
23          **with non-resident students?  Because you've**  
24          **increased the seats in order to bring in more**  
25          **non-resident students.**

1 A. Well, it's both. I mean, you can't go from 3,800  
2 to almost 12,000.

3 **Q. Yeah, but you're at about 4,800 from what we**  
4 **heard earlier, right? They're right now at the**  
5 **in-state, 40%.**

6 A. Well, I'll say when I first got on the Board, we  
7 were at 3,800 students. I mean, we can't go from  
8 3,800 to 12,000 just on the 60% out of state.  
9 It's grown slowly from 50/50 to 60/40. I mean,  
10 it's got to be growing on both numbers. And we  
11 know it is, but you can't grow, whatever that is,  
12 the number of students a year at 3% or 400  
13 students a year with just the out-of-state  
14 students.

15 **Q. I mean, to Senator Johnson's point, there's**  
16 **clearly been an appeal, a marketing effort, to**  
17 **non-resident students that has led to a larger --**  
18 **The vast majority of students who are coming in,**  
19 **it's taking you a while to get to 60/40, right?**  
20 **To get to 60/40 from 50/50, you're growing at**  
21 **more than a 60/40 rate. You're bringing in more**  
22 **non-resident students compared to resident**  
23 **students. I mean, it seems to me like that that**  
24 **has been a strategic decision that the Board has**  
25 **made over the last 20 years.**



1 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, got it. All those opposed, no.  
2 All right. Thank you, sir.

3 MR. SPIVEY: Thank you.

4 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we're going to move to  
5 at-large seat 10, which expires in 2029. Mark S. Kelley  
6 from Conway. I recognize Representative McGinnis at this  
7 time.

8 MARK S. KELLEY:

9 REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
10 I'd like to make a motion that, pursuant to SC Code 2-20-  
11 360, we find that a public hearing is unnecessary for Mr.  
12 Kelley due to the exigent circumstances he finds himself in  
13 currently. Due to Mr. Kelley being hospitalized or recently  
14 hospitalized, he is unable to attend either of our public  
15 hearings scheduled for this week. Mr. Kelley has served on  
16 the CCU Board of Trustees since 2021. He's a former member  
17 of the South Carolina House of Representatives. I  
18 personally know Mr. Kelley, and he has served the Coastal  
19 Board well and has been a fantastic Board member. Correct  
20 me if I'm wrong out there, anybody. He's an asset to CCU.  
21 Therefore, I make the motion that, pursuant to SC Code 2-  
22 20-360, we find that the public hearing is unnecessary for  
23 him since, pursuant to the statute, there is no known  
24 opposition to his candidacy. And, therefore, I move to  
25 find him qualified and nominated based on the materials

1 found in his submitted application packet to our  
2 Commission.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a second?

4 REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please  
6 signify by raising your right hand. Oh, wait a minute.  
7 Hold off a minute. I need to do the whole thing.  
8 Got you. All right. I need to authorize this according to  
9 our attorney here. Pursuant to SC Code 2-20-360, I find  
10 that a public hearing is unnecessary for Mr. Kelley due to  
11 these extenuating circumstances and due to him having no  
12 known opposition. This is something that we usually do not  
13 do as a Screening Commission. However, due to these  
14 extenuating circumstances and due to Mr. Kelley being a  
15 sitting Board member on the Coastal Carolina Board, I find  
16 that in this very limited situation, a public hearing is  
17 not necessary. Okay. I've got the second already. All  
18 those in favor, signify by raising your right hand, please.  
19 Okay.

20 (All hands are raised.)

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Opposed?

22 (No hands are raised.)

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: No? All right. Mr. Kelley is reported  
24 out favorable. We are now at At-Large Seat 11, which  
25 expires in 2027. Okay. We have four people running for  
26 this trustee position, so the first one is Brian J. Argo of

1 Myrtle Beach. You'll just come on up. Raise your right  
2 hand and let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth,  
3 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you  
4 God?

5 BRAIN J. ARGO:

6 MR. ARGO: Yes, sir.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. State your name and a  
8 little bit about yourself and why you're serving on the  
9 Board.

10 MR. ARGO: Hi. My name is Brian Argo. I am from  
11 Horry County, and I am interested in serving on the Coastal  
12 Carolina Board of Trustees because I have such great pride  
13 in that institution. I relocated in 2017 with my wife and  
14 three daughters, and I can tell you -- yeah, and I've had  
15 the opportunity to witness that pride both personally and  
16 professionally about Coastal Carolina and what it means for  
17 our community, and so from a personal perspective, I've had  
18 the opportunity to serve on the Coastal Education  
19 Foundation Board of Trustees, which helps with the Coastal  
20 Carolina University endowment, and I've also served on the  
21 Conway Medical Center College of Health and Human  
22 Performance Board of Visitors, and I've seen firsthand the  
23 good that this organization can do for our community. From  
24 a professional perspective, I'm the president and CEO at  
25 Conway Medical Center, and I've had the opportunity to hire

1 many Coastal Carolina University grads and have seen the  
2 work-ready product that has come out of that institution.  
3 So with that --

4 MR. ARGO - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

5 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Argo, can you**  
6 **please state your current address?**

7 A. Yes, ma'am. It's 1022 Johnston Drive, Myrtle  
8 Beach, South Carolina.

9 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay**  
10 **your 4% property tax?**

11 A. Yes, ma'am.

12 **Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state**  
13 **Board, Commission, committee, or elected office?**

14 A. No, ma'am.

15 **Q. And do you understand the obligations and**  
16 **responsibilities of serving on a public**  
17 **institution's Board of trustees?**

18 A. Yes, ma'am.

19 **Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any**  
20 **member of the General Assembly and formally ask**  
21 **for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours**  
22 **after the Commission's report has been released?**

23 A. Yes, ma'am.

24 **Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to**  
25 **contact members of the General Assembly on your**

1           **behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to**  
2           **intervene in this process on your behalf?**

3           A.   No, ma'am.

4           **Q.   Are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation**  
5           **and duty to report to the Commission any changes**  
6           **that might occur that would affect your**  
7           **application and overall eligibility for serving**  
8           **on a college board?**

9           A.   No, ma'am. I'm not aware.

10          **Q.   You are not aware?**

11          A.   No. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

12          **Q.   Okay, so you're saying that you --**

13          A.   No, I am aware.

14          **Q.   You are aware that you do --**

15          A.   Yes, ma'am. Of the responsibilities.

16          **Q.   Okay. Thank you. All right. Thank you, Mr.**  
17          **Argo, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.**

18          MR. CHAIRMAN: Question for Mr. Argo? Representative  
19          King.

20          MR. ARGO - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

21          **Q.   Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your**  
22          **willingness to serve. Can you tell me what is**  
23          **your present relationship with the college?**

24          A.   Yeah, absolutely. So, currently, I am the  
25          president and CEO at Conway Medical Center. We

1 are located approximately one mile from Coastal  
2 Carolina University, thankfully. My relationship  
3 with the college right now from that aspect is  
4 Conway Medical Center does hold a couple of  
5 contracts with the university to provide  
6 services. And then, personally, as I said, I  
7 also serve on the Coastal Education Foundation  
8 Board and also on the Board of Visitors for the  
9 Conway Medical Center College of Health and Human  
10 Performance.

11 **Q. That relationship with Conway Medical, do you**  
12 **think that there will be any type of conflict?**

13 A. I'm sure that from time to time there will be  
14 services that the university is seeking that  
15 would be in conflict with things that Conway  
16 Medical Center is doing. I'm aware that that can  
17 arise. And I think from my perspective, it's  
18 just making sure that being a good Board member,  
19 recusing yourself from those conversations, and  
20 abstaining from any type of voter action that  
21 would occur from those.

22 **Q. You've seen this committee today speak on**  
23 **ensuring that South Carolina residents have a**  
24 **clear opportunity to go on to Coastal. As a**  
25 **Board member, what would you do to ensure that**

1           **most of your students are coming from South**  
2           **Carolina?**

3           A.   Yeah, I think when you look at Horry County --  
4           and I'll stay at home for a little bit, but when  
5           you look at Horry County and Horry County  
6           Schools, I think one of the things that I'm  
7           really proud of that Horry County Schools has is  
8           Horry County Early Schools Early College  
9           partnership with Horry Georgetown Technical  
10          College. That's for first-generation college  
11          students that have access to join that program  
12          through Horry County Schools. I think as Coastal  
13          Carolina looks for opportunity to keep South  
14          Carolina students at home, and specifically  
15          first-generation South Carolina students at home,  
16          I think that promotes an opportunity to work with  
17          local school districts to get in there to promote  
18          similar programs so that we can make sure that  
19          we're driving in-state enrollment and garnering  
20          interest from those folks for in-state  
21          enrollment.

22          **Q.   Thank you.**

23          A.   Yes, sir.

24          MR. CHAIRMAN:   Senator Massey.

25          MR. ARGO - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

1 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Argo, how long have  
2 you been CEO of the hospital?

3 A. Yes, sir. I joined Conway Medical Center in 2017  
4 as the chief financial officer. In 2022, I was  
5 the COO, and in 2023, I took over as CEO.

6 Q. Is any part of your compensation package in that  
7 CEO role dependent upon -- I mean, do you get any  
8 benefit if you secure additional contracts? Do  
9 you have any bonuses tied to securing additional  
10 work for the medical center? And specifically,  
11 what I'm getting at here is -- I mean, very  
12 candidly, is if the university decides to  
13 contract more with the medical center than it  
14 has, is there any type of personal financial  
15 benefit to you in that?

16 A. Directly, the answer is no. There is a portion  
17 of my bonus that is compensation off of EBITDA.  
18 So, off of EBITDA -- earnings before interest,  
19 depreciation taxes, and amortization, so there is  
20 an income component to a bonus, but directly tied  
21 to any of these contracts, no, sir, there's not.  
22 And frankly, there's not a lot of money in  
23 student health or other programs within the  
24 university. For us, it's really about workforce  
25 development, partnering with Coastal Carolina to

1 really help drive workforce development in  
2 healthcare, and so that's been an important  
3 component of our relationship with them.

4 **Q. Do you anticipate arguing for additional**  
5 **healthcare-related majors or courses of study?**

6 A. I think arguing for them, I think educating the  
7 Board and educating administration on those  
8 needs, just like any other business does, I think  
9 that's obviously a particularly important  
10 component. I think we know that healthcare  
11 specialties in this state are particularly  
12 underserved when you look from a workforce  
13 development, as there have been funds that have  
14 come out of many of your committees to really  
15 help support that growth. I think we have a  
16 great technical college system here as well,  
17 which provides a nice foundation for that. But  
18 then having four-year institutions that can help  
19 those students that want to go further and obtain  
20 those degrees, I think is particularly important.  
21 And it's not just healthcare. We hire  
22 accountants, we hire human resource  
23 professionals. I think there's a lot of  
24 opportunity to service the needs of hospitals in  
25 this state.

1     **Q.     How does the nursing program at Coastal impact**  
2     **your medical center? You get a lot of students**  
3     **who are graduates of Coastal who work in the**  
4     **nursing program at your hospital?**

5     A.     Yeah, we do. We are the largest clinical  
6     rotation site in the county for both Coastal  
7     Carolina University and Horry Georgetown  
8     Technical College. So we do get quite a bit of  
9     new grads that are coming out of those programs.  
10    Part of it is we want to help educate those  
11    folks, and we want them in our hospitals. We  
12    want them understanding what it's like to work in  
13    our hospitals, so when they finally do come out  
14    of school that they understand what the job  
15    really means. It's not necessarily uncommon for  
16    nurses or other clinicians to come out of college  
17    and hit the floor and start taking care of  
18    patients and be like, this might not be for me.  
19    And so I think for us, it's opening our doors to  
20    be that education partner. It's also why we help  
21    educate medical students. We have medical  
22    students through our hospital. We have residency  
23    programs as well. So that is in our DNA as a  
24    nonprofit and Conway Medical Center. I think  
25    it's extremely important.

1           Q.   Well, I think you provide a valuable expertise  
2                   and experience that can be beneficial to the  
3                   Board. I would just encourage you to be careful  
4                   about some of the conversations that may come up,  
5                   not just recusing yourself from votes. But I  
6                   would also caution you about soliciting business  
7                   from a university that could benefit the medical  
8                   center, because any type of thing like that that  
9                   could be argued by someone that you're receiving  
10                  a personal benefit from, I would just encourage  
11                  you to stay away from it.

12           A.   Yeah, fair enough. Yes, sir.

13           MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? Entertain a motion for a  
14 favorable report by the Commission.

15           SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

16           REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

17           MR. CHAIRMAN: Second. All those in favor, please  
18 signify by raising your right hand.

19                                 (All hands are raised.)

20           MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it. Opposed, no. Thank you so  
21 much.

22           MR. ARGO: Thank you, sir.

23           MR. CHAIRMAN: Congratulations. Thank you for your  
24 service. Next, we have Richard Blake Kline of Myrtle  
25 Beach. If you could raise your right hand, let me swear

1 you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
2 nothing but the truth, so help you God?

3 RICHARD BLAKE KLINE:

4 MR. KLINE: I do.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: Just state your name, tell us a little  
6 bit about yourself.

7 MR. KLINE: Okay. My name is Richard Blake Klein, but  
8 I go by Blake. And I was kind of inspired by Natasha  
9 Hanna's presentation about her journey to get to Coastal  
10 and what Coastal means to her. So I've got a few notes, if  
11 you'll allow me to. I actually grew up in Clemson, South  
12 Carolina. I've been a South Carolina boy most of my life.  
13 I had a West Point dad, very regimented growing up, and so  
14 I wasn't quite ready for college. Ended up moving down to  
15 Myrtle Beach in 1982 and waited a lot of tables and tried a  
16 few businesses, sold some real estate, didn't do very well.  
17 Finally decided that it was time for me to go to college.  
18 And so I enrolled in Coastal Carolina, and I studied  
19 biology and chemistry. I thought I wanted to be a physical  
20 therapist, and then I thought I wanted to be a pharmacist,  
21 and ultimately I decided I wanted to be a doctor. So I  
22 graduated in three and a half years. Coastal gave me a  
23 great education. I went to Medical University, South  
24 Carolina, and graduated in 1994. Went on to Medical  
25 College, Georgia, and studied anesthesiology, where I

1 finished that program in 1998. I went on to become chief  
2 of anesthesiology at two different hospitals, one in Aiken,  
3 South Carolina, and then also Florence, South Carolina.  
4 And then I transitioned my career into interventional pain  
5 management, and I joined Florence Neurosurgery and Spine  
6 about 13, 14 years ago. And then after a few years there,  
7 I was actually living in Myrtle Beach and coming back and  
8 forth, and I decided that I wanted to move my whole  
9 practice to Conway. So I opened up Atlantic Coast Spine  
10 and Pain Center 11 years ago. And so I basically built  
11 that from the ground up, and I'm now the doctor and CEO of  
12 that. I currently train the anesthesiology residents from  
13 Grand Strand Anesthesiology, so they're all under my care.  
14 They do rotations with me to learn interventional pain  
15 management, so I think I have a unique educational  
16 experience there. I also train doctors from across the  
17 country, as well as mostly in South Carolina, on minimally  
18 invasive interventional spine procedures like Spinal  
19 Simplicity and Boston Scientific. I'm actually on faculty  
20 for both of those companies. So I think, like I said, I  
21 have a unique experience in health care, education,  
22 administration, and business, having served all those  
23 roles. This could not have been accomplished without my  
24 attending CCU. I wasn't the greatest student coming out of  
25 high school, but CCU gave me that opportunity. So I truly

1 bleed teal. If it wasn't for Coastal, all this would not  
2 be possible for me. And my son is a CCU graduate as well.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

4 MR. KLINE - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

5 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Kline, can you  
6 please state your address?

7 A. 122 Vista Del Mar Lane, Myrtle Beach, South  
8 Carolina, 29572.

9 Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay  
10 your 4% property tax?

11 A. Yes, it is.

12 Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state  
13 board, Commission, committee, or elected office?

14 A. No, I do not.

15 Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations  
16 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
17 institution's Board of trustees?

18 A. I do.

19 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
20 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
21 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
22 after the Commission's report has been released?

23 A. I am.

24 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
25 contact members of the General Assembly on your

1           **behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to**  
2           **intervene in this process on your behalf?**

3           A.    No, I'm not.

4           **Q.    And are you aware that you have an ongoing**  
5           **obligation and duty to report to the Commission**  
6           **any changes that might occur that would affect**  
7           **your application and overall eligibility for**  
8           **servng on a college Board?**

9           A.    I'm aware.

10          **Q.    Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Kline, Mr. Chairman.**  
11          **I have no further questions.**

12          MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions by the Commission? No  
13          questions? Okay, entertain a motion for a favorable report  
14          and a second.

15          REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

16          MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor signify  
17          by raising your right hand.

18                                (All hands are raised.)

19          MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I got that in before you were  
20          paying attention. No questions. Thanks. Any opposed?  
21          No. All right. Thank you, sir.

22          MR. KLINE: Thank you.

23          MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, doctor. All right. We've  
24          got one more candidate for seat 11. His name is Edward  
25          Robert Tkacz. I believe that's correct. Welcome, sir. If

1 you'll let me swear you in. You solemnly swear to tell the  
2 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help  
3 you God?

4 EDWARD ROBERT TKACZ:

5 MR. TKACZ: I do.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Just state your name, and  
7 why you're interested in running for the seat, and a little  
8 bit about yourself.

9 MR. TKACZ: Good afternoon. My name is Edward Tkacz.  
10 I am a hybrid in-state, out-of-state student that went to  
11 Coastal. I moved to South Carolina when I was 17, 16. I  
12 finished high school and got the in-state tuition to go to  
13 Koch School in 97, graduated in 2001 with a degree in  
14 computer science. I then went on to work in the defense  
15 industry, worked in various places, started in Maryland,  
16 worked in Germany after that, went to Iraq for about a  
17 year, went back to Germany, went to Qatar for two years,  
18 was in Afghanistan for two years, bounced around the world  
19 on my Coastal Carolina degree. I started a company in  
20 2011, which I sold about two years ago, working in defense.  
21 We were doing all the software contracts across the world  
22 with the Department of Defense. Some stuff on the East  
23 Coast here in North Carolina, Florida. We had a contract  
24 here at Fort Jackson at one point as well. We also did  
25 work out in Germany with my company. We did work in parts

1 of Africa, interesting things. But all because of my  
2 Coastal degree, I would say. Since selling the company, I  
3 have been working on myself. I've been continuing my  
4 services to Coastal. I've spent six years on the alumni  
5 board, supporting the alumni board. I revamped their  
6 process for screening new members coming onto that board  
7 and the actual process for electing these members. I've  
8 been on the Board of Visitors for the Science -- the Gupta  
9 College of Science for the past seven years as well. I'm  
10 pretty proud of some of the work I've been doing there.  
11 I've actually worked with the Navy's Information Warfare  
12 Center. A couple guys there, they run this hack-a-thon for  
13 all the local universities in South Carolina. And I  
14 finally got Coastal to commit to it. I brought them into  
15 the fold last year and let them see the cyber defense  
16 challenge firsthand. So they could -- now that I'm trying  
17 to get them to actually commit to going to it -- they've  
18 seen it now that I'm trying to get them to commit to going  
19 to it. These are some of the accomplishments I've led as a  
20 board member for two of the boards at Coastal.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

22 MR. TKACZ - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

23 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Tkacz, can you**  
24 **please state your current address?**

25 A. 1805-F, Low Country Place, Myrtle Beach, South

1 Carolina, 29577.

2 Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay  
3 your 4% property tax?

4 A. Yes, it is.

5 Q. All right. And do you currently serve on any  
6 local or state board, commission, committee, or  
7 elected office?

8 A. I do not.

9 Q. And do you understand the obligations and  
10 responsibilities of serving on a public  
11 institution's Board of trustees?

12 A. I am aware.

13 Q. Are you aware that you cannot contact any member  
14 of the General Assembly and formally ask for a  
15 vote, commitment, or pledge until 48 hours after  
16 the Commission's report has been released?

17 A. I am aware of that.

18 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
19 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
20 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
21 intervene in this process on your behalf?

22 A. No, I am not. No, I am not.

23 Q. Thank you. And are you aware that you have an  
24 ongoing obligation and duty to report to the  
25 Commission any changes that might occur that

1           **would affect your application and overall**  
2           **eligibility for serving on a college Board?**

3           A.    Yes, I am.

4           **Q.    Thank you, Mr. Tkacz.  And, Mr. Chairman, I have**  
5           **no further questions.**

6           MR. CHAIRMAN:  Questions for Mr. Tkacz?  Senator  
7           Devine.

8           MR. TKACZ - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

9           **Q.    Just very quickly, thank you so much for your**  
10           **application and your interest.  In looking at**  
11           **your addendum, you mentioned that the university**  
12           **should prioritize investments that directly**  
13           **strengthen the academic mission and student**  
14           **outcomes rather than focusing on enrollment and**  
15           **growth.  Can you give us a couple of examples of**  
16           **those investments you think that the university**  
17           **needs to be made, and if elected to the board,**  
18           **how would you influence that?**

19           A.    I'm going to speak on my experience as a computer  
20           scientist that often talks with computer science  
21           departments.  I noticed that the computer science  
22           department in general, as part of the group  
23           that's called science, has had some minor issues  
24           retaining professors.  And I think part of that  
25           is maybe some of the salaries are a little low in

1           that department. I feel like as we continue to  
2           grow in the AI space and technology is moving as  
3           fast as it is, I think we need to be more  
4           prepared in that regard and focus a little bit  
5           more on that. Right now, I believe computer  
6           science may only get anywhere from 200 to 300  
7           enrollees right now, while some of the other  
8           colleges are getting 2,000, 3,000 people. I feel  
9           like we need to focus more on technology, and  
10          that's because -- you know, I'm probably some  
11          bias. I'm a computer scientist, so I'm going to  
12          be focused on that. So that's one of the things  
13          that I see. Let's get some good professors in  
14          there, get some good doctors that are going to  
15          stick around, not have this revolving door of  
16          professors coming in and using it as a stepping  
17          stone for their next job. Thank you for the  
18          question.

19           MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

20           MR. TKACZ - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

21           **Q. I'm going to also ask you a question based off**  
22           **your questionnaire. As I read it, it says**  
23           **university needs to grow in a way that is**  
24           **sustainable and remains aligned with its mission,**  
25           **especially with increased enrollment demand from**

1           **out-of-state students. How do you do that?**

2           A.    That's a good question. I would love to see the  
3           data as to what we are doing now. I don't have  
4           all the data, but I know the statistics because  
5           I've talked with many of the personnel that  
6           they're dealing with enrollment, and I understand  
7           the issue itself. I just don't understand why  
8           it's happening and how do we go about fixing  
9           that. I feel like my experience as a computer  
10          scientist and an aspiring data scientist right  
11          now, I can maybe help in that regard and look at  
12          data and kind of come up with some answers.

13          **Q.    You also wrote that you believe the university**  
14          **should adapt to the emergence of AI and**  
15          **intelligence systems. What types of -- what**  
16          **would you recommend the university do?**

17          A.    Once again, it's kind of one of those things I  
18          have to see what's going on myself. I just know  
19          that I'm looking at it from the perspective of  
20          the Department of War right now. The industry is  
21          changing completely. I don't know if you've been  
22          reading the news lately regarding Anthropic and  
23          what's been going on with the Department of War,  
24          how they -- there's definitely some tension right  
25          there between a big industry partner and now the

1 Department of War. Because the Department of War  
2 is having a hard time keeping up with technology  
3 and trying to manage contracts that deliver these  
4 capabilities at a sustainable rate, I guess you  
5 could say. I would love to see what Coastal is  
6 doing right now in terms of how are students  
7 using AI? What are they using it for? Are we  
8 putting policies in place, guardrails, to make  
9 sure that people aren't plagiarizing or using AI  
10 in a way to give themselves the best, you know,  
11 lecture or, you know, using it in a way that's  
12 detrimental to their education.

**13 Q. Thank you, sir.**

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Entertaining a  
15 motion and a second for a favorable report.

16 REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

17 REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, signify by raising  
19 your right hand.

20 (All hands are raised.)

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: That everybody? Okay, opposed, no.  
22 All right, thank you, sir.

23 MR. TKACZ: Thank you very much.

24 MR. CHAIRMAN: We did have one other candidate, James  
25 Brandon Sessions from Myrtle Beach, but he withdrew. Ms.

1 Hanna, you've got three excellent candidates.

2 MS. HANNA: Yes, sir.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure whoever comes out ahead,  
4 you'll do well. Now we're going to Seat 12 At-Large, which  
5 expires in 2029. Hal Delan Stevens from Conway. Come on  
6 up. Sorry about that. Raise your right hand and I'll  
7 swear you in. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole  
8 truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

9 HAL DELAN STEVENS:

10 MR. STEVENS: Yes, I do.

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: State your name and tell us why you  
12 want to be on the Board.

13 MR. STEVENS: Hal Delan Stevens, and I go by Delan. I  
14 was born and raised in Conway. I've been there all my  
15 life. I grew up on a family farm. I was thinking that as  
16 I got older, farming was not going to be for me because I  
17 didn't like working from daylight to dark every summer and  
18 never having a vacation. So I thought I'd be the first  
19 generation to go to college, and I ended up going to  
20 Coastal Carolina, graduated in 1979, and then returned home  
21 to the farm. So it didn't work out exactly like I thought,  
22 but I really did enjoy farming, so it was part of my life.  
23 I've served on several committees at Coastal, from the  
24 Higher Education Commission to the Coastal Athletic  
25 Foundation, and I've just always been a part of the

1 community, and Coastal's always been a part of the  
2 community, even when it was small. It was still a big  
3 part. It was a big deal when we got it for people like me  
4 who could just drive to college, and get a good degree.  
5 And get something to help you later on in life, even in  
6 farming it helped me. But it really helped me when I got  
7 into the banking business and had my own business. So just  
8 being born and raised there and having roots there and  
9 seeing Coastal grow, I've just always enjoyed being around  
10 it, and it's always intrigued me.

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

12 MR. STEVENS - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

13 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Stevens, can**  
14 **you please state your address?**

15 A. 1343 Riverside Drive, Conway, South Carolina.

16 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay**  
17 **your 4% property tax?**

18 A. Yes, ma'am.

19 **Q. Great. And do you currently serve on any local**  
20 **or state board, commission, committee, or elected**  
21 **office other than the Coastal Board?**

22 A. No, ma'am.

23 **Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations**  
24 **and responsibilities of serving on a public**  
25 **institution's board of trustees?**

1 A. Yes, ma'am.

2 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
3 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
4 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
5 after the Commission's report has been released?

6 A. Yes, ma'am.

7 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
8 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
9 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
10 intervene in this process on your behalf?

11 A. No, ma'am.

12 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
13 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
14 any changes that might occur that would affect  
15 your application and overall eligibility for  
16 serving on a college Board?

17 A. Yes, ma'am.

18 Q. Thank you, Mr. Stevens. Mr. Chairman, I have no  
19 further questions.

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions by the Commission?  
21 Representative King.

22 MR. STEVENS - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

23 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was reading your  
24 statement here in reference to the population of  
25 international students. Do you know what that

1           **population is?**

2           A.    I think it's about maybe 3 or 4% of what our  
3           overall is.

4           **Q.    Okay.  The other thing is, I see where you have**  
5           **the 30% of students of color.  What groups are**  
6           **that?  What groups are considered color?**

7           A.    Any -- I mean, I would consider any group or  
8           nationality other than white.  That was my, on  
9           that, yes.

10          **Q.    All right, thank you.**

11          MR. CHAIRMAN:  Anyone else?  I'm sorry, Senator  
12          Bennett.  I apologize, sir.

13          MR. STEVENS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

14          **Q.    Thank you, Mr. Stevens.  I appreciate you being**  
15          **here.**

16          A.    Thank you.

17          **Q.    I'm curious in your questionnaire here in the**  
18          **supplement.  You mentioned several times in the**  
19          **questions about believing that Coastal Carolina**  
20          **should move to a R1 institution, research one**  
21          **level institution.**

22          A.    I would like to see it, yes, sir.

23          **Q.    That would be quite a jump.**

24          A.    Yes, sir, it would be.

25          **Q.    How do you propose or how do you think they get**

1           **there and how long do you think that takes?**

2           A.    I think we're almost to the -- I don't think it  
3           would think it would take many years. I won't be  
4           on the Board when it occurs. But I think the  
5           thing you would have to do is really concentrate  
6           a little bit more on your academics. Make sure  
7           that the programs we offer are sustainable and  
8           are things people want to do. For instance, like  
9           our marine science, to me, is nationally. People  
10          know it. So I think there are certain things  
11          with that, our law business school, that we can  
12          focus on from an educational standpoint and get  
13          more people involved and more people to come and  
14          get the academics at a higher level than we  
15          currently, you know, do. So I would think that  
16          would be the same. How many years? I think it  
17          would take 10, maybe 15 years. Who knows?

18          **Q.    I don't know if you were in the room when I asked**  
19          **the question earlier of another candidate about**  
20          **the duplication of programs across the state with**  
21          **our 32-some-odd colleges and universities across**  
22          **the state where we've got duplication in efforts.**  
23          **Multiple engineering schools, multiple business**  
24          **schools, multiple accounting, multiple nursing,**  
25          **multiple this and that. Do you think by moving**

1           **to even an R2, certainly an R1, feeds into those**  
2           **challenges of duplication of efforts?**

3           A.   No, sir. I would think if the programs, if I  
4           understand it correctly in what I've read and  
5           researched and talked with our presidents, both  
6           now and past, I think what we need to do is  
7           concentrate on what we're good at. And like I  
8           say, marine science is something. I don't think  
9           you need a program for everything because you're  
10          right. I mean, Clemson has one of the best  
11          engineering programs around, definitely in the  
12          state.

13          **Q.   Never heard of Clemson.**

14          A.   It's a small school upstate. But I think what  
15          you have to focus on, what you can really draw  
16          students with and what you're really good at and  
17          make top students want to come because that's a  
18          top program, not just in the state, but within  
19          the nation.

20          **Q.   Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**

21          MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. Any other?

22          Entertain a motion and a second for a favorable report.

23          REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

24          SENATOR BENNETT: Second.

25          MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor signify

1 by raising your right hand.

2 (All hands are raised.)

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: And those no. Thank you, sir. One  
4 question.

5 MR. STEVENS: Yes, sir.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a unique color for a Coastal. I  
7 know it's, is it blue or is it green? Is it blue-green?

8 MR. STEVENS: It's supposed to be teal.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Teal, okay. There you go. It's  
10 pretty.

11 MR. STEVENS: Thanks, sir. Thank you.

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, thank you, sir. Next up is  
13 At-Large seat 13. This expires in 2027. And Lee A.  
14 Belcher from Conway is up. Welcome, sir. If you could  
15 raise your right hand, I'll swear you in. You swear to  
16 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,  
17 so help you God?

18 LEE A. BELCHER:

19 MR. BELCHER: I do.

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome. State your name and tell us a  
21 little bit about why you want to be on the Coastal Board.

22 MR. BELCHER: All right, thank you. And thank you to  
23 this committee for having us here today. My name is Lee  
24 Belcher, of course. You all know that. I was born and  
25 raised in Columbia. I might be one of the few people that

1 left Columbia and went to the beach other than going on  
2 vacation. But went to Coastal Carolina University. Had the  
3 opportunity there to meet my wife, Tanika, who played  
4 basketball there as well for the university. We both  
5 graduated there, stayed, and we have three young kids that  
6 we raised in that area. I started my career in the finance  
7 industry at Coastal Carolina University. Unique story. I  
8 was able to start working at a financial institution my  
9 senior year. So I structured my classes for Tuesday,  
10 Thursday, 8:00 to 5:00, and then worked at the bank Monday,  
11 Wednesday, Friday, Saturday. So that was my introduction  
12 into banking. A unique time as well. I graduated in 2008.  
13 We all know what happened that time period. So I decided I  
14 had a job, and the bank did not downsize in my position so  
15 much as well stay in the finance industry. And this led me  
16 to a career where I've been able to help financial  
17 institutions across the state, understanding those higher  
18 education institutions across the state and help them,  
19 which led me to saying, hey, I think there's something I  
20 can do to add value to my institution. So I am currently  
21 going for At-Large seat. Not going for, currently in the  
22 At-Large seat, 13, and been on the board since 2019.  
23 Really simply, if I can just put it in one thing, I think I  
24 would like to continue serving because I believe we're  
25 making a difference at the university. I think I have an

1 understanding and skills in the finance industry that make  
2 a real impact and helps the student's success and helps  
3 long-term planning for the university that puts them in a  
4 bright future. I think we've done that well over the last  
5 few years and would like to continue.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

7 MR. BELCHER - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

8 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Mr. Belcher, can  
9 you please state your current address?

10 A. 1220 Wood Stork Drive, Conway, South Carolina,  
11 29526.

12 Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay  
13 your 4% property tax?

14 A. I would like to pay it on other ones, but yes.

15 Q. Understood. Do you currently serve on any local  
16 or state board, commission, committee, or elected  
17 office other than the Coastal Carolina Board?

18 A. No, I do not.

19 Q. And do you understand the obligations and  
20 responsibilities of serving on a public  
21 institution's Board of trustees?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
24 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
25 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours

1 after the Commission's report has been released?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
4 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
5 behalf or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
6 intervene in this process on your behalf?

7 A. No.

8 Q. All right. And are you aware that you have an  
9 ongoing obligation and duty to report to the  
10 Commission any changes that might occur that  
11 would affect your application and overall  
12 eligibility for serving on a college Board?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Thank you, Mr. Belcher. And Mr. Chairman, I have  
15 no further questions.

16 MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions? Senator Devine.

17 MR. BELCHER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

18 Q. Just quickly, since you mentioned Columbia, I  
19 have to say, what high school did you go to?

20 A. Went to Airport High School.

21 Q. Okay, that's great. So did you live in District  
22 19 when you lived here?

23 A. Well, I lived in West Columbia, so yes, District  
24 19.

25 Q. So back to this. I love the financial

1           **background. As a current member of the Board in**  
2           **understanding the finances of Coastal Carolina**  
3           **and strategic planning, where are some of the**  
4           **things that you think the Board can focus a**  
5           **little bit on to strengthen up the university's**  
6           **finances and certainly not necessarily want the**  
7           **state to give more?**

8       A.    Absolutely. And I think this is at any  
9           institution, this is any corporate organization,  
10          always discuss this and have this topic. When  
11          things are going well, people kind of have their  
12          blinders on and things are going good. We keep  
13          moving along and keep continuing to go along.  
14          But I think the focus for us and what we've done  
15          and tried to do is watch and manage expenses.  
16          And so for this committee to understand, too, we  
17          take a deep dive in our expenses. We have those  
18          conversations with our CFO, with our Board, with  
19          our president that we discuss, do we actually  
20          need this expense? How can we mitigate it? How  
21          can we lower expenses? How can we not focus on  
22          raising tuition? And part of the conversations  
23          that we recently had, we had to go in and talk  
24          about tuition, fees, meal plans, housing. And  
25          those were part of those conversations. Like we

1 do not need to, this year we didn't raise  
2 housing, and that was specific and intentional.  
3 We don't look to do those things if we don't have  
4 to. And so where are avenues that we can reduce  
5 and we can cut and we can reallocate funds? And  
6 that's a big portion of it. It comes down to  
7 focusing on budgeting and focus on need,  
8 especially not when things are going bad, but  
9 when things are going good as well.

10 SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

12 MR. BELCHER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

13 **Q. Thank you, sir. What's the number one driver to**  
14 **the university's expenses, in your opinion?**

15 A. It's the people. So about almost 60% are people  
16 in managing costs associated with having  
17 professors there. One of the things that I'm  
18 proud of, and I talk about a lot, is we've come  
19 in and we've asked our administration, we've  
20 asked our faculty and staff to do more with less.  
21 And so I'll give a prime example, and I usually  
22 pull these numbers here. In 2019, we had 490  
23 full-time faculty and staff. In 2025, we have  
24 509. Those requests come in all the time that  
25 say, we're growing, we're growing, we need more

1 full-time faculty and staff. And the questions  
2 go back to us as, how do we manage that? What  
3 are we doing with our case load? How many  
4 courses are we teaching? Those are the things  
5 that we push and ask them. And I'm grateful for  
6 the administration and the faculty and staff for  
7 bearing with us as we try to make sure that we  
8 have that right mix and that we don't get too  
9 overloaded with faculty and staff and  
10 expenditures for that.

11 **Q. Now you've brought up something that I'm very**  
12 **interested in. On average, how many classes does**  
13 **a professor teach, or do you have any idea?**

14 A. I will -- I'm going to -- I don't want to  
15 misquote, so I'm going to say I'm going to ask to  
16 get back that one to you. I believe it's in the  
17 neighborhood of closer to four case loads, I  
18 think.

19 **Q. Four case loads. So as opposed to, say, one hour**  
20 **a week and I'm writing a book, professor, you've**  
21 **got professors in the classroom doing things.**

22 A. Yeah. And now we are looking at, from a research  
23 aspect that we do, and we discussed this here. I  
24 think from a research standpoint, we do want to  
25 explore that a little bit more. We think that's

1 a big component, but we don't want to leave it as  
2 the instructional piece of it. So we are going  
3 to try to play that balancing act where we do  
4 have some of that research, but we have teachers  
5 in the classroom teaching and giving the students  
6 an opportunity to have small aspects from a  
7 research standpoint.

8 **Q. When you say regions that are experiencing**  
9 **demographic declines, do you remember writing**  
10 **that?**

11 A. I do.

12 **Q. What do you mean by that?**

13 A. So what I mean by that is we have to start taking  
14 a closer look at where our students are coming to  
15 Coastal in those areas or those northern areas.  
16 And they're opposed to having a demographic  
17 decline in students, student populations. So the  
18 enrollment cliff will hit those areas or is  
19 expected to hit those areas significantly harder  
20 than other regions. And so we have to prepare  
21 ourselves. And I think that's some of the things  
22 that we're doing. And not to say light of it,  
23 just speak a little bit about the in-state  
24 students and what we're doing there. We may  
25 have, in years past, had a strong focus on the

1 northern student base and population. They love  
2 coming down here. They come on vacation to  
3 travel. Their grandparents have moved down to  
4 Myrtle Beach, the fastest growing county in the  
5 United States. But we are now starting that  
6 trend of going into -- and I'll speak to a Board  
7 member who passed away, Dalton Floyd, who created  
8 a program to allow us to go into middle schools  
9 in Horry County. And the president put the focus  
10 in now that we're going to those middle schools,  
11 high schools, and bringing those students on  
12 campus early. That is going to help us with our  
13 in-state population is that -- as our academic  
14 profiles continue to grow and we're on a national  
15 stage and we're having things come from every  
16 direction and people want to come to the beach  
17 that we're intentionally focused on, all right,  
18 this isn't a short-term solution. We have got to  
19 buckle in and start reaching out to these  
20 students while they're in middle school. And the  
21 responses that we're getting from those students  
22 that come to our campus from middle school, come  
23 on the football teal turf and come out of the  
24 tunnel and then learn more about Coastal is  
25 what's going to drive us to be able to support

1 South Carolina a little bit better down in years.

2 **Q. Well, I'd certainly encourage you to take that**  
3 **middle school show on the road throughout the**  
4 **state of South Carolina.**

5 A. That's what I think.

6 **Q. And encourage the students throughout our state**  
7 **to do that. Thank you, sir.**

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. Any other  
9 questions? Entertain a motion and a second for our  
10 favorable report.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KING: Motion.

12 SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor, please  
14 signify by raising your right hand. Opposed, no. Thank  
15 you, Mr. Belcher.

16 MR. BELCHER: Thank you.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: Good to see you again.

18 MR. BELCHER: Good to see you.

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to do two more on Coastal.  
20 Then we'll take a break so our reporter can -- she looks  
21 like she can use a break now. But you can hold on for two  
22 more.

23 COURT REPORTER: Good to go.

24 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Up next is at-large seat  
25 14, Joe N. Jarrett, Jr. of Myrtle Beach. This seat is up

1 in 2029. Welcome, sir. If you'll just raise your right  
2 hand and let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth,  
3 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you  
4 God?

5 JOE N. JARRETT, JR.:

6 MR. JARRETT: I do.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: State your name and tell us why you  
8 want to be on this Board.

9 MR. JARRETT: My name is Joe Jarrett. I moved here  
10 from Pittsburgh with Nancy, my wife, who is here today, and  
11 our three children who live in Myrtle Beach. I had been a  
12 fairly decent athlete in college. And when we came here,  
13 we didn't have football. We did have a basketball team.  
14 And so I came over to watch basketball, met the president  
15 of the college at that time. He was the chancellor of the  
16 college, and offered my services as a sports medicine  
17 physician because they did not have a sports medicine  
18 physician at that time. Although I didn't really want to  
19 be a sports medicine physician, I called my good pal Dr.  
20 Dick Ward from The Ohio State University. He was a sports  
21 medicine trained physician, and he moved down to Myrtle  
22 Beach. And from that point on, we had established an  
23 office in Myrtle Beach where we had a number of physicians  
24 over time. We were the team physicians for Coastal for  
25 many years. And I was very happy to be able to go on trips

1 with the team and, you know, just be a general team  
2 physician. But in 2016, I retired. And at that point, I  
3 wasn't too interested in doing anything else, but after a  
4 couple of years of being not employed of any sort, I  
5 thought it might be nice to be on the Board at Coastal.  
6 Especially when we had our new president, Mike Benson, and  
7 he had a whole new approach to the college experience for  
8 both the faculty, the staff, and the students. So that's  
9 how I got to be involved. Now, I know that we've been  
10 talking about all kinds of different things, the enrollment  
11 cliff and the out-of-state candidates, and I just wanted to  
12 go over a few things. Pardon me one second. I have a  
13 little bit of a spring pollen effect. There's a few things  
14 that I would like to go over. And again, it does relate  
15 somewhat to the out-of-state student population and student  
16 athletes. But I wanted to go over and let you guys hear  
17 this. We have a couple of -- well, there's four promises  
18 right now. Chauncey, South Carolina, promise. And the  
19 tuition promise is that, and you've heard this, this is a  
20 10% of their, if a student is in the top 10% of class whose  
21 family earns less than \$80,000, they will come to college  
22 free. The top 10 promise, since 2014, Coastal Carolina  
23 University has guaranteed admission to any South Carolina  
24 resident who graduates in the top 10% of their high school  
25 class. High school seniors interested in enrolling as

1 freshmen via CCU's top 10 promise program must complete an  
2 application and submit an official high school transcript  
3 showing class rank. This has been a very successful  
4 program, although I think it could be a lot better. But  
5 again, maybe that's because most of those students are from  
6 Horry County and some of them want to go out and be in the  
7 wider world in a different place than Horry County. We  
8 also have the LIFE program, which is really good. I think  
9 we talked about that earlier. And this is an interesting  
10 one. We have a transfer promise. Eligible transfer  
11 students who have earned the Associate of Arts, Associate  
12 of Science, or Associate of Applied Science degree from a  
13 South Carolina technical college are guaranteed admission.  
14 Ninety-three percent of in-state completed applications are  
15 accepted to CCU directly or through our bridge program  
16 partnership with Horry Georgetown Technical College.  
17 Students who earn one of the above-mentioned degrees from  
18 SCTC receive a minimum of 60 transfer credits in junior  
19 status when they enroll at the college. So you can see  
20 that we have a great link with our sister institution, the  
21 Horry Georgetown Technical College. And furthermore, we  
22 have started to make inroads in associations with the  
23 remaining 15 South Carolina technical colleges.  
24 Additionally, I don't think it was mentioned that the  
25 school also has veteran programs for veterans. In the fall

1 of 2025, more than 650 students used military benefits,  
2 including veterans and active duty members attending CCU.  
3 The university offered reduced tuition for military  
4 personnel, \$250 per credit for part-time, and \$3,750 for a  
5 semester for full-time active military, National Guard, and  
6 Reserve students. And so that's been a good thing.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank, you, sir. Macey you go  
8 ahead and ask him questions.

9 MR. JARRETT: Okay. I'm sorry.

10 MR. JARRETT - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

11 Q. You're good, Mr. Jarrett. Thank you, Mr.  
12 Chairman. Mr. Jarrett, can you please state your  
13 current address?

14 A. 9403 Kings Road, Myrtle Beach.

15 Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay  
16 your 4% property tax?

17 A. It is.

18 Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any  
19 local or state board, commission, committee or  
20 elected office other than the Coastal Carolina  
21 Board?

22 A. No.

23 Q. And do you understand the obligations and  
24 responsibilities of serving on a public  
25 institution's board of trustees?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
3 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
4 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
5 after the Commission's report has been released?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Yes, you do -- you understand the 48-hour rule?

8 A. Yes, ma'am.

9 Q. Thank you. And have you currently asked any  
10 third parties to contact members of the General  
11 Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of  
12 anyone attempting to intervene in this process on  
13 your behalf?

14 A. No.

15 Q. All right. And are you aware that you have an  
16 ongoing obligation and duty to report to the  
17 Commission any changes that might occur that  
18 would affect your application and overall  
19 eligibility for serving on a college Board?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Well, you are aware that you have an ongoing  
22 obligation and duty to report to us?

23 A. Yes, ma'am.

24 Q. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Jarrett. Mr.  
25 Chairman, I have no further questions.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions for Dr. Jarrett? Senator  
2 Devine.

3 MR. JARRETT - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

4 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Jarrett,  
5 for your service and your willingness to continue  
6 to serve. I just have a couple of questions  
7 regarding the addendum to your personal data  
8 questionnaire. On number nine, you say that the  
9 university's DEI initiative was divisive and has  
10 been disbanded, and that you say that the focus  
11 now is to provide a sense of belonging for all  
12 students, regardless of race, religion, gender,  
13 and political viewpoints. So I wanted to ask a  
14 couple of questions about that. Can you tell us  
15 what was the university's specific DEI initiative  
16 and how did it get divisive and how did the Board  
17 step into that?

18 A. Well, actually, you know, the Supreme Court, as  
19 well as the United States, as well as in South  
20 Carolina, had made the initiative. It was not --

21 Q. Let me help. I guess I'm asking specifically.  
22 Like I know there were general -- I guess what I  
23 find is that people use DEI and they don't  
24 necessarily talk about specific programs. So  
25 although there wasn't a universal, like there

1           wasn't a national diversity, equity, inclusion  
2           program, different businesses or different  
3           universities created their own programs. Did  
4           Coastal Carolina have a program that was  
5           specifically created under diversity, equity,  
6           inclusion?

7           A.     It did.

8           Q.     Okay. And so now that the university no longer  
9           has that specific program?

10          A.     They went a different way.

11          Q.     Okay. And so I guess the different way is what  
12          you're saying about focusing on a sense of  
13          belonging universally?

14          A.     Yes, ma'am.

15          Q.     So what exactly is the university doing to foster  
16          that sense of belonging?

17          A.     They have a lot of programs for the kids. There  
18          are any number of outdoor activities and ways of  
19          meeting other students, especially the first-year  
20          students. And it's been quite successful to this  
21          point.

22          Q.     And so it's not a specific program, but a  
23          variety?

24          A.     It's a variety of different programs that are  
25          available for people that are in many different

1 interests.

2 **Q. And has the Board taken, I guess, a position**  
3 **regarding supporting that program or any other**  
4 **program? Or how is the Board playing a role in,**  
5 **number one, ensuring that all students do feel**  
6 **belonging, but also making sure that your faculty**  
7 **and staff recognize that that is a goal of the**  
8 **school?**

9 A. Right. Absolutely.

10 **Q. All right. Does the Board -- I guess that's my**  
11 **question. Has the Board done anything, issued a**  
12 **statement, encouraged it through the president?**  
13 **How is the Board, I guess, making sure that the**  
14 **university keeps that as a priority?**

15 A. Well, actually, it's more of a job for the  
16 administration than it would be for Board. And  
17 the administration relays this to the Board,  
18 relays the things that are going on with this  
19 very nice way of trying to get people to be  
20 comfortable on their campus and safe and to enjoy  
21 each other and not have a lot of conflict,  
22 political issues, and that kind of thing.

23 **Q. And have you all seen a difference?**

24 A. Yes.

25 **Q. Thank you. I appreciate you answering my**

1                   **questions.**

2           MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? Entertain a motion and a  
3 second for our favorable report. Do you have a motion?  
4 Yeah. Thank you. Entertain a motion and a second for a  
5 favorable report?

6           REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

7           SENATOR DEVINE: Second.

8           MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by  
9 raising your right hand.

10                                   (All hands are raised.)

11           MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, no. Dr. Jarrett, thank you,  
12 sir.

13           MR. JARRETT: Thank you all very much.

14           MR. CHAIRMAN: This is our last Coastal. These guys  
15 just had six members. All right. The last one is At-Large  
16 Seat 15, Patrick Steven Sparks from Myrtle Beach, and this  
17 expires in 2029. Raise your right hand, please, sir. Do  
18 you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing  
19 but the truth, so help you God?

20           PATRICK STEVEN SPARKS:

21           MR. SPARKS: I do.

22           MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Just state your name  
23 and why you're interested in the Coastal position.

24           MR. SPARKS: My name is Patrick Steven Sparks, and I  
25 appreciate your time today. I know you mentioned that you

1 appreciate our service. I appreciate yours as well. And I  
2 know your court reporter has had a long day, so I will be  
3 brief, as you will allow me to be. I graduated Coastal in  
4 1995. Been in the North Myrtle Beach area since I was in  
5 seventh grade. I grew up where you didn't want to go to  
6 Coastal. Coastal was considered 13th grade when I grew up,  
7 right? So you graduated high school, and Coastal was next  
8 door. So I've heard folks talk a little bit about there  
9 might be some sort of a bias about why local kids may not  
10 want to go there. I have that same bias. But Coastal is  
11 the reason why I'm reasonably successful today. Married,  
12 23 years, got two daughters. I used our marketing degree  
13 that I got from Coastal to run our family business. And  
14 the reasons why I wanted to be associated with Coastal,  
15 some of them quite selfish. I started out on the  
16 Educational Foundation Board, and then selfishly I'm  
17 looking at aligning my business with Coastal Carolina in  
18 terms of the growth and how can I advertise with Coastal  
19 and be seen as to be a part of Coastal and that is a rising  
20 star in our area. You know, when we're sitting there in  
21 the Horry County South Carolina Fest, Horry County, right,  
22 we've got a lot of people coming in, but Coastal is by far  
23 the gem of what we have in Horry County. It's responsible  
24 for a tremendous amount of our arts. It's responsible for  
25 a tremendous amount of our sports. And those two things,

1 as our new university president says, make up the front  
2 porch of our university, right? So they're getting us  
3 national attention, and we're able to do some really great  
4 things there. But I do appreciate your time today and  
5 allowing me to speak to you.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

7 MR. SPARKS - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

8 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Sparks, can you**  
9 **please state your current address?**

10 A. 8926 North Ocean Boulevard, Myrtle Beach, South  
11 Carolina, 29572.

12 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay**  
13 **your 4% property tax?**

14 A. It is.

15 **Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any**  
16 **local or state board, commission, committee, or**  
17 **elected office other than the Coastal Carolina**  
18 **Board?**

19 A. I do not.

20 **Q. And do you understand the obligations and**  
21 **responsibilities of serving on a public**  
22 **institution's Board of trustees?**

23 A. I do.

24 **Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any**  
25 **member of the General Assembly and formally ask**

1 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
2 after the Commission's report has been released?

3 A. I'm aware.

4 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
5 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
6 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
7 intervene in this process on your behalf?

8 A. I'm not aware of anyone.

9 Q. All right. And are you aware that you have an  
10 ongoing obligation and duty to report to the  
11 Commission any changes that might occur that  
12 would affect your application and overall  
13 eligibility for serving on a college board?

14 A. I am aware.

15 Q. Thank you, Mr. Sparks. And, Mr. Chairman, I have  
16 no further questions.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions for Mr. Sparks?

18 SENATOR BENNETT: Mr. Chairman?

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir. Senator Bennett.

20 MR. SPARKS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

21 Q. My apologies. I'm asking a question. I've been  
22 tasked with his role. Thank you, Mr. Sparks. I  
23 appreciate you. Your family business is what?

24 A. Sparks Toyota.

25 Q. Okay. Car dealership.

1 A. It is.

2 Q. All right. So at the risk of stereotyping here  
3 and also at the risk of opening up a door that we  
4 could probably talk for hours on, I'm curious how  
5 you see not only your board, but all of our  
6 college university boards. What is your role in  
7 the entire NIL discussion across the country?  
8 And the constant, I say constant, or let's say  
9 annual renewal of state law to assist in allowing  
10 our colleges and universities to stay  
11 competitive? Do you have any thoughts on that?

12 A. I do. I do, and I appreciate the question. I  
13 think you, when I say you, as in Columbia, have  
14 taken this up, what, the last four years in a  
15 row?

16 Q. In a row.

17 A. Yeah, and it seems like it never ends, and nor  
18 does it seem like it has any sort of a path to a  
19 conclusion. My personal opinion is we've gone  
20 down a rabbit hole in the list. There's some  
21 sort of federal thoughts about it that intervene  
22 as to whether a student athlete is technically an  
23 employee, and that may not be a path that they  
24 would like to understand. Employees get hired.  
25 They get fired. They get suspended. They may

1 not get paid everything because they didn't  
2 potentially play a certain way. I think that's a  
3 slippery slope, but I think all of this is pretty  
4 slippery as well. You know, the thing that I  
5 like to remind people when they ask me about NIL,  
6 and specifically at our university, and we played  
7 a much, much lower number than obviously the city  
8 we're in right now and then obviously Clemson,  
9 but we still pay. You know, we have a baseball  
10 team that finished runner-up in Omaha last year.  
11 We are paying players. There is no doubt, and we  
12 have to do that. The thing that a lot of folks  
13 don't get is that seems to get a tremendous  
14 amount of attention other than the 95% of the  
15 other students who aren't in any way, shape, or  
16 form affected by that, right? You know, 5%, 6%  
17 of our student athletes are at that level, and  
18 the rest of them are just kids. I've got two of  
19 them. One of my daughters is going to play  
20 sports, and I'm paying full freight at  
21 universities for them to attend or will be for my  
22 youngest this coming year. So as a parent, NIL  
23 doesn't necessarily affect me. However, it is  
24 the overriding issue that most folks see when  
25 they talk about college athletes.

1 Q. As a Board member, however, it kind of goes back  
2 to the question I've been asking throughout the  
3 day about how much pushback is there from a Board  
4 to leadership. Not pushback, challenge,  
5 questioning. I think challenge is the better  
6 word to make sure that the university is doing  
7 the right things and not just rubber stamping  
8 decisions. It seems to me, from an athletic  
9 department standpoint, that tail has been wagging  
10 the dog, at least for the last four years, right?  
11 Are there serious discussions within your  
12 Boardrooms of when is enough? I mean, recognize  
13 it's a difficult challenge, right, when you're  
14 always trying to compete and you don't want to  
15 have somebody else get a better opportunity. But  
16 is there a discussion about is there enough where  
17 we just say this is all we're going to do?

18 A. We have lively debates about that, and I think we  
19 have some on our Board that will look at you and  
20 tell you that at our level, is this sustainable?  
21 And do we want it to be sustainable, quite  
22 frankly? You know, when we're paying players,  
23 we're on such a slippery slope to begin with.  
24 And I'm not certain that anybody knows where it's  
25 going to end up. But we're looking at it and

1 trying to control the things we can control. We  
2 can't control NIL legislation, you know, people  
3 are being sued left and right, NCAA and various  
4 other entities. And then suing your own  
5 student-athletes, which I thought I'd never see  
6 the day where a college would physically sue --  
7 or a university would sue a student-athlete who's  
8 no longer there. But we're there, right? I  
9 think that we're trying to control the things  
10 that we can control. We're looking at it from a  
11 contractual standpoint with our football coaches  
12 and carving out COLA races and things like that.  
13 You know, previous to this, if you didn't specify  
14 that, a university football coach would get a  
15 COLA race, right, as a state employee. So we've  
16 looked at it and really tried to clean up a lot  
17 of our contracts, especially with the football  
18 program we just started under stat. Our athletic  
19 director, Chance Miller, is doing an amazing job  
20 there, just making sure that we're trying to  
21 insulate ourselves and be smart about the revenue  
22 dollars we have. And then, additionally, some of  
23 the opportunities to market the university, we're  
24 looking at trying to find funds in different  
25 areas, areas that Coastal had not participated in

1 before. Now, larger universities knew about  
2 this, but, you know, putting logos on the fields  
3 and doing some things like that, we had never  
4 done. More sponsorships with either Myrtle Beach  
5 and the City of Conway to try and help come in  
6 and partner in some of these games that we're  
7 doing, the home games. You may have seen the  
8 opportunity to give away free concessions. That  
9 got us a lot of views and a lot of clicks. And,  
10 you know, we're trying to put the math together  
11 on that and say, hey, listen, we went out and got  
12 a lot of information from customers. How can we  
13 market back to them and sell Coastal to those  
14 folks? So we're looking at it, I think, to your  
15 point, very strategically, on our end, on the  
16 things we can control. The NIL space is outside  
17 of anything that we have.

18 **Q. Well, you got that right. Just be ready for the**  
19 **mid-season trade request, because I think that's**  
20 **what's coming next.**

21 A. I'm scared.

22 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Senator. Any other  
24 questions? I entertain a motion and a second for a  
25 favorable report.

1 SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

2 REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor, signify  
4 by raising your right hand.

5 (All hands are raised.)

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it. Okay, opposed, no. Thank you,  
7 sir.

8 MR. SPARKS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to take a short break. I  
10 know our reporter is looking forward to that break. I  
11 think we are, too.

12 OFF THE RECORD

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we're back in session, or back in  
14 whatever. Back on the record, there you go. Welcome.  
15 This is -- let me find my spot here. This is Lander  
16 University At-Large, Seat 12. It expires in 20- -- anyway,  
17 it expires sometime. This is Sabrina Ann Walker from  
18 Sumter. If you'll raise your right hand, I'll swear you in,  
19 please, ma'am. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole  
20 truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

21 SABRINA ANNE WALKER:

22 MS. WALKER: I do.

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey. Oh, yeah, I'm sorry.

24 MS. WALKER: I understand you're wanting to get home.  
25 It's been a long day for you.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Yeah, if you'd just state  
2 your name and then why you're interested in the Lander  
3 Board.

4 MS. WALKER: So my name is Sabrina Anne Walker. I go  
5 by Anne. And I am the longest-serving Lander Board member.  
6 I'm only 50, but some people say I'm 76. But anyway, my  
7 daughter's 52, so you can figure it out. I have -- I'm a  
8 Lander grad. And I have a long line of family members,  
9 mother, sister-in-law, daughter, niece, a crowd of us that  
10 have gone to Lander. And so I have to say that I love  
11 Lander. I've heard others say that they bleed teal or they  
12 bleed orange or whatever it might be, but I love Lander.  
13 And so -- and my vocation is in the criminal justice  
14 business, but my avocation is higher ed. I've always had a  
15 real interest in higher ed and actually did all the  
16 coursework for a doctorate in higher education. Shame on  
17 me. I didn't write the dissertation, but I learned a lot.  
18 And so I just have a real interest in it and have for many  
19 years actually worked in higher ed for a while back in the  
20 80s. And so, and I'm going to make this short because I  
21 have also at one time was in the speaking and training  
22 business, so I could talk forever so I won't, but thank  
23 you.

24 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, ma'am. Macey.

25 MS. WALKER - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

1 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Walker, can you  
2 please state your current address?

3 A. Sure. 43 Mason Croft Drive, Sumter, South  
4 Carolina.

5 Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay  
6 your 4% property tax?

7 A. Yes, ma'am.

8 Q. All right. And do you currently serve on any  
9 local or state board, commission, committee or  
10 elected office other than the Lander Board?

11 A. No, ma'am.

12 Q. All right. And do you understand the obligations  
13 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
14 institutions Board of trustees?

15 A. I do.

16 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
17 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
18 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
19 after the Commission's report has been released?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
22 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
23 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
24 intervene in this process on your behalf?

25 A. No, ma'am.

1           **Q. All right. And are you aware that you have an**  
2                           **ongoing obligation and duty to report to the**  
3                           **Commission any changes that might occur that**  
4                           **would affect your application and overall**  
5                           **eligibility for serving on a college board?**

6           A. Yes.

7           **Q. Thank you, Ms. Walker. And, Mr. Chairman, I have**  
8                           **no further questions.**

9           MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Macey. Questions for Ms.  
10 Walker?

11           SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

12           MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir. Senator Johnson.

13           MS. WALKER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

14           **Q. I'll try to move along here. Ms. Walker,**  
15                           **enrollment's increased 72% since 2015. What's**  
16                           **enrollment now?**

17           A. We're right at about 4,700 students.

18           **Q. About 4,700 students.**

19           A. Yes, sir.

20           **Q. And what's the number one major at Lander?**

21           A. The number one what?

22           **Q. Major.**

23           A. Major.

24           **Q. What classes are they taking?**

25           A. They're taking business, nursing, education.

1           Those are the top three.

2       **Q.   Business, nursing, education.**

3       A.   Uh-huh.

4       **Q.   I noticed in the graduation rates and the sheet**  
5       **that I have has about a 36% four-year rate and**  
6       **about right at 50% six-year graduation rate.**  
7       **That sound about right?**

8       A.   Yes, sir.  Yes, sir.

9       **Q.   Are you concerned about a 50% graduation rate**  
10      **over a six-year period?**

11      A.   Absolutely.  We talk about it all the time.  We  
12      get a lot of first-time college students.  And,  
13      you know, as we all know, we're influenced  
14      usually by our family, by our parents.  I was  
15      fortunate enough.  My mom's an Lander graduate,  
16      my dad was a Citadel graduate.  There was never  
17      any discussion about whether or not I was going  
18      to college, and there was no discussion about  
19      whether or not I was going to get out in four  
20      years.  I got in at three and a half, not because  
21      I was so smart.  It was just the opposite.  I  
22      thought everybody was taking 18 hours a semester,  
23      and I found out at the end of my junior year that  
24      was not the case.  And so I did an internship and  
25      I was able to get out in three and a half years.

1 So, yes, we talk about graduation rates on a  
2 regular basis, and we continue to keep that in  
3 the forefront because, as you well know, you can  
4 fill up these institutions to the best of your  
5 ability, but we want people who are graduating.  
6 And our big focus at Lander is that when you  
7 leave Lander, when you do graduate from Lander,  
8 that you are job-ready. You do one of two  
9 things. You either go on to graduate school or  
10 you go to work, and so it's just not -- our  
11 emphasis is not on just get a college education.  
12 It's get a college education so that you can  
13 either go on to graduate school or that you can  
14 go to work.

15 **Q. What policies has the Board or the university**  
16 **enacted to improve your graduation rate?**

17 A. Specific policies -- I mean, we literally, at  
18 every Board meeting, have X number of policies  
19 that are brought before us that we deal with,  
20 approve, question, talk about, so that's an  
21 automatic thing on our agenda all the time. So  
22 far as specific ones, it's everything from -- I  
23 mean, we've had discussions about who to be let  
24 in, to be very candid with you. And what's their  
25 preparation so far as, you know, when they're

1 coming in. What are we doing so far as -- which  
2 we do a lot of, I mean, all the colleges and  
3 universities do, I'm sure, but we have tutoring  
4 available. And so we don't just shrug our  
5 shoulders and say, hope this will work out. It's  
6 we've got to figure out how to make this work  
7 out.

8 **Q. Thank you, ma'am.**

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Senator Devine.

11 MS. WALKER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

12 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just very quickly, Ms.**  
13 **Walker, thank you so much for being here and**  
14 **staying up late and for serving so long on the**  
15 **Lander Board. That's great service to our state.**  
16 **Just quickly, two things. A follow-up on Senator**  
17 **Johnson's question regarding the enrollment.**  
18 **Yes, 72 % in 11 years seems like a lot. What**  
19 **specifically are you all doing to do that, have**  
20 **that increase, and are you still looking to grow**  
21 **even more, or do you feel like you're at a sweet**  
22 **spot?**

23 A. We're not at the sweet spot yet, but we're not  
24 looking to become, you know, 10,000 or anything  
25 like that. I have to contribute or attribute the

1 success to the staff, to the president, to the  
2 staff. We have a president who, when you're  
3 hired, you're hired to get the job done. And if  
4 you can't get the job done, you don't get a whole  
5 lot of opportunity to hang around and not make it  
6 happen. And so we've just had a number of  
7 creative ways, you know, that first-year  
8 experience. And, of course, that goes back to  
9 what you asked. That first-year experience is so  
10 important because we want to influence them to  
11 stay and to continue and to graduate. And so  
12 we've done a variety of things with that. But as  
13 you all know, we're dealing with a totally  
14 different group of young people with totally  
15 different experiences than what any of us had in  
16 college. We weren't there or high school when  
17 COVID was going on. We weren't, you know, all  
18 those things. And I'm not blaming that. I'm  
19 just simply saying with social media, with  
20 everything else, we're just living in a whole  
21 different world. And it's -- you know, I was  
22 taught to be independent before I ever went to  
23 college. So it wasn't any of this calling up mom  
24 and mama coming up to talk to a professor. And  
25 that's happening in college and universities now.

1 And it's just incredible that that happens. But  
2 it does. And so it's an ongoing challenge, no  
3 doubt about it. But we will continue to strive  
4 to hit it with our best shot because it's  
5 important. But our president, he's a man of his  
6 word. He wants to make things happen. One of  
7 the things, I know you didn't ask this question.  
8 You all hear a lot about building and about  
9 getting new buildings and that kind of thing.  
10 We've made a real effort at Lander. We've had  
11 some new buildings. But to rehab what's been  
12 there, I mean, for a while, and to make it --  
13 bring it up to date, which is a whole lot cheaper  
14 than or less expensive than just building brand  
15 new buildings. So that's something that we've  
16 done.

17 **Q. That actually was my last question you went to.**  
18 **You said universities should stay on top of**  
19 **building needs regarding dorms and other**  
20 **facilities. I think you were in here when I**  
21 **asked Coastal Carolina about the safety and**  
22 **security as part of their facility needs. So are**  
23 **you all doing that assessment as well? And is**  
24 **that part of conversations that the Board is**  
25 **having, how to keep the young people safe?**

1 A. Yes, ma'am. As long as I've been on this Board,  
2 we have always taken a hard look at safety to the  
3 point of college presidents going on a regular  
4 basis with certain members of the staff at  
5 nighttime and walking the campus to say, we need  
6 more lights here, we need this here, we need that  
7 there, to make sure that we're providing a safe  
8 environment. We have an incredible police chief,  
9 and he just does a wonderful job for us on  
10 campus. And he's very personable. The students  
11 like him, but they also know he means business.  
12 And so that's a good thing. But yes, ma'am,  
13 we're very safety conscious. And not only the  
14 things like I said, like lighting and stuff, but  
15 just are your sidewalks, can somebody like me go  
16 from one corner of the campus to the other? I'm  
17 on this because a guy tried to rob me about 20  
18 years ago. Right ankle got messed up really  
19 badly. So I'm on it because the doctor said get  
20 on the scooter, and I said okay. But the bottom  
21 line is that there's so many aspects to safety.  
22 And it's not just did we provide a well-lighted  
23 campus, or did we provide security, did we have  
24 the boxes where they can push them all around the  
25 campus to get help or to get transportation,

1           whatever it might be. I hope that answers your  
2           question.

3           MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Bennett.

4           MS. WALKER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNET:

5           **Q. One and a half questions, I promise. Thank you,**  
6           **ma'am, for being here.**

7           A. Yes, sir.

8           **Q. I heard that voice, and I said, where have I**  
9           **heard that voice before? I had to flip back**  
10          **through, and I looked through, and I see where**  
11          **you're a Rotary District Governor.**

12          A. In 08-09, and you became president of the  
13          Summerville Club in 2010.

14          **Q. That's right.**

15          A. Yeah. Yes, yes.

16          **Q. So good to see you again.**

17          A. Good to thank you, same here.

18          **Q. Just quickly, how much of your -- how much of**  
19          **your student -- delivering education to student**  
20          **is online versus on campus?**

21          A. The majority of it is on campus. I mean, we have  
22          online learning that's going on, and I can't give  
23          you those percentages. I don't have that. But I  
24          know that the majority of it is in person.

25          **Q. Do you see the online work that's going on, is**

1           **that -- I mean, there's so much data out there**  
2           **now that's telling us why this all sounds**  
3           **wonderful. It just doesn't work, and it's not**  
4           **good. Do you see online being a response to a**  
5           **need, or do you see it more of a, for lack of a**  
6           **better term, a money grab?**

7    A.   Well, my personal experience with it is that if  
8           you'd have to shoot a gun to my head and tell me  
9           to get a degree online, I'd tell you to go ahead  
10          and shoot, because I just don't have those  
11          computer skills. I'm surrounded by people who  
12          do. I have some, but not to the extent. But I  
13          have personal experience. I have a daughter  
14          who's 52 who did an undergraduate degree at  
15          Lander in psychology, and then got very  
16          interested at Lander, in the technical aspects of  
17          things and technology, and attempted to go to the  
18          University of South Carolina and get her  
19          master's. And she was at the time working with  
20          federal probation, and they said, we'd love to  
21          have you. And they said, but you can't work and  
22          do it. You'd have to come full time. Now, this  
23          was some years ago. And so she ended up getting  
24          her degree in technology, computer information  
25          systems, completely online from, I can't remember

1 right now, anyway, a legitimate accredited  
2 institution. And she's been very successful in  
3 her career working with United Healthcare in the  
4 technology aspect of things. She's kind of the  
5 backroom of health care. Anyway, it goes on and  
6 on. So I know that that meant a lot to her to be  
7 able to have that opportunity, because otherwise  
8 she would have had to literally quit work. And  
9 that was not an option for her to do, because we  
10 paid for the undergraduate degree. It was her  
11 responsibility to take it from there.

12 **Q. Great. Thank you.**

13 A. Thank you.

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Entertain a motion and a  
15 second for a favorable report.

16 SENATOR DEVINE: Motion.

17 REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Everyone please raise your right hand.

19 (All hands are raised.)

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: Looks unanimous to me. Okay, thank  
21 you. Opposed, no. Ms. Walker, thank you so much. As a  
22 fellow Rotarian, Rotarian up here, I guess we're all Harris  
23 fellows.

24 MS. WALKER: Of course.

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: That cost me a lot of money.

1 MS. WALKER: Excuse me for this personal, but my  
2 daughter was just elected district governor for our  
3 district, so exactly 20 years after I was district  
4 governor, she'll be in that 28, 29.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a wonderful service.

6 MS. WALKER: Isn't Shane also a Rotarian, I believe?  
7 I'm not sure. Shane Massey?

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: Is he? Okay. I used to be a member of  
9 Lions and so kind of hollows, and my little town just gone  
10 away. Rotary is still there. So thank you so much.

11 MS. WALKER: Thank all of you, I appreciate your  
12 service.

13 MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA:

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Up next is the Medical  
15 University of South Carolina, 2nd Congressional District.  
16 Lay member expires in 2028. William Delleney Wiseman of  
17 Blythewood. Welcome, sir. If you'll raise your right hand.  
18 Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
19 nothing but the truth, so help you God?

20 WILLIAM DELLENY WISEMAN:

21 MR. WISEMAN: I do.

22 MR. CHAIRMAN: Just give us your name again and why  
23 you want to serve on the MUSC.

24 MR. WISEMAN: Thank you very much. I'm Bill Wiseman.  
25 I reside in Blythewood, South Carolina. I'm a graduate of

1 the University of South Carolina, 1982, in Mechanical  
2 Engineering. I spent my career in construction, design,  
3 and planning, and building buildings all throughout the  
4 country. And I'm excited about maybe bringing some of that  
5 experience to the Board at MUSC. We've got four children,  
6 two of which still live in South Carolina, and three  
7 grandchildren over in Sumter, so I'm glad they're close by  
8 as well. My career experience is over 40 years, as I said,  
9 design and planning and construction of buildings, from  
10 very small renovation projects up to multi-hundreds of  
11 million-dollar projects. And my predecessor, hopefully, on  
12 this Board, Mr. Bill Bingham, was an engineer from West  
13 Columbia and spent a lot of time helping with the  
14 facilities down there, and I would like to continue that  
15 legacy with the medical university. And frankly, at my  
16 stage of life, I want to help other people and give back to  
17 my community and my state and be a part of some good things  
18 that happen in MUSC. I'm the beneficiary of some of the  
19 excellent care that they promote down there, and so now I  
20 want to give back to them. And I'll answer any questions  
21 you might have.

22 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Macey.

23 MR. WISEMAN - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

24 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Wiseman, can**  
25 **you please state your current address?**

1 A. 109 Highview Farms Road, Blythewood, South  
2 Carolina.

3 Q. Thank you. And is this where you pay your 4%  
4 property tax?

5 A. It is.

6 Q. And is this address within the congressional  
7 district to which you have applied?

8 A. It is.

9 Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state  
10 board, commission, committee, or elected office?

11 A. No.

12 Q. And do you understand the obligations and  
13 responsibilities of serving on a public  
14 institution's Board of trustees?

15 A. I do.

16 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
17 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
18 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
19 after the Commission's report has been released?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
22 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
23 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
24 intervene in this process on your behalf?

25 A. No.

1 Q. All right. And are you aware that you have an  
2 ongoing obligation and duty to report to the  
3 Commission any changes that might occur that  
4 would affect your application and overall  
5 eligibility for serving on a college Board?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Thank you, Mr. Wiseman. And, Mr. Chairman, I  
8 have no further questions.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Macey. Questions for Mr.  
10 Wiseman? Senator Bennett?

11 MR. WISEMAN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

12 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Wiseman,  
13 for being here and for your willingness to serve  
14 on this committee. What's your familiarity with  
15 the MUSC Board versus the hospital and the  
16 hospital Board and how they interact?

17 A. I frankly don't have a whole lot. I'm familiar  
18 with that, but unfortunately any answers I would  
19 give specific to the operations of the university  
20 would be anecdotal. I don't have any firsthand  
21 knowledge of it. My company was part of a joint  
22 venture that built buildings at the university,  
23 the College of Dental Medicine a few years back,  
24 the Ashley River Tower, and most recently the  
25 Children's Hospital. And so I was exposed to

1 MUHA as well as MUSC, but that's the extent of my  
2 knowledge.

3 **Q. Are you familiar with MUSC, the Hospital**  
4 **Association, and probably by default the**  
5 **university itself, their expansion across the**  
6 **state over the last decade, decade and a half?**

7 A. Yes.

8 **Q. Do you think that MUSC gets outside of its**  
9 **mission by engaging in those expansions?**

10 A. I don't have an opinion on that yet.

11 **Q. Would that be something that you would be**  
12 **concerned about if you were on the Board or would**  
13 **question?**

14 A. I would. I would be active in that discussion.  
15 I think the medical university's mission as being  
16 the flagship university to teach those subjects  
17 in South Carolina is a noble one. I also think  
18 that competition is good, so I would certainly be  
19 part of that discussion.

20 **Q. Sure. I think the thing that I would ask is, as**  
21 **you move forward, the lines are somewhat blurred**  
22 **oftentimes, at least to the public, on exactly**  
23 **where the university starts and stops and where**  
24 **the hospital association starts and stops. And**  
25 **concerns about the expansion of the hospital,**

1 while I think it's noble and it probably does  
2 follow through the mission of the university to  
3 reach some of the rural areas that don't have  
4 access to health care. Those are good things.  
5 But a lot of those expansions are also in the  
6 non-rural areas where there's a lot of private  
7 sector and even non-profit engagement that  
8 somehow is sometimes seen as a little unfair  
9 competition. There's competition and there's  
10 unfair competition. I don't think there's  
11 anybody up on this dais that doesn't want MUSC to  
12 be successful and put out the best doctors that  
13 they possibly can or other allied health care  
14 professionals. But I think there's some concern  
15 about whether or not they expand that mission  
16 inappropriately at times.

17 A. I understand.

18 Q. Thank you, sir.

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

20 MR. WISEMAN - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

21 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure if you are  
22 familiar with the Rena Grant Sickle Cell Center  
23 that's at MUSC, the hospital. The state of South  
24 Carolina has taken an interest in sickle cell.  
25 But what we have found is that the actual school

1 is not teaching it. And how could we or what do  
2 you think could be done to facilitate that type  
3 of relationship?

4 A. Frankly, not to dodge the question, but I don't  
5 think I know enough to speak to that. I  
6 apologize. But hopefully when I come back in a  
7 couple of years, I hope to come back before you  
8 all have some discussion about that.

9 Q. Well, I would love to. You don't have to answer  
10 it now, but I would love before you come back for  
11 us to have some discussion because that has been  
12 Rena was one of our employees here in the House  
13 who passed away from sickle cell. And the state  
14 has funded some sickle cell programs around the  
15 state. It has become an interest. But as a  
16 person like myself who has family members that  
17 live with sickle cell, there is not enough  
18 doctors in South Carolina that can facilitate the  
19 sickle cell patients. And so one of the things  
20 that we were hoping for is that MUSC would at  
21 least offer courses that dealt with sickle cell.  
22 Thank you.

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Devine.

24 MR. WISEMAN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

25 Q. Thank you. Just quickly. Good to see you, Mr.

1           **Wiseman. Thank you so much for applying. Just a**  
2           **question on your questionnaire. When you were**  
3           **talking about the weaknesses of the university,**  
4           **you mentioned the management of changing federal**  
5           **reimbursement and grant funding. Can you**  
6           **elaborate as to what you mean on that? And as a**  
7           **Board member, how would you address that?**

8           A. Well, again, my knowledge of that issue is  
9           somewhat antiquated. But I would assume that the  
10          reimbursement of federal funds. You know, we  
11          deal with health insurance reimbursements every  
12          day. Personally, I would think on a hospital  
13          level, it's very complex and very difficult. And  
14          it's something that needs to be dealt with and  
15          anticipated as they move forward in terms of  
16          their budgets and everything else. So I don't  
17          know if that answers your question or not.

18          **Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**

19          MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? Okay. Entertain a  
20          motion.

21          SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

22          MR. CHAIRMAN: Second?

23          REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

24          MR. CHAIRMAN: For approval. Okay. All those in  
25          favor, signify by raising your right hand.

1 (All hands are raised.)

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Thank you, sir, for your  
3 willingness to serve on a very important university in our  
4 state.

5 MR. WISEMAN: Have a good night.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We are now down to Winthrop  
7 University. The first one is the 7th Congressional  
8 District seat, Alison Jean Hamilton of North Myrtle Beach.  
9 Welcome. If you would just raise your right hand. You  
10 promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
11 the truth, so help you God?

12 WINTHROP UNIVERSITY:

13 ALISON JEAN HAMILTON:

14 MS. HAMILTON: I do.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. And if you'll just give  
16 your name again and why you want to continue serving.

17 MS. HAMILTON: All right. I'm Allison Jean Hamilton,  
18 and I'm seeking election on the 7th Congressional District  
19 seat. I have a lot of family members that attended  
20 Winthrop, my paternal grandmother, my mother, two aunts,  
21 and three cousins. I decided at a very young age that I  
22 wanted to study at Winthrop. I graduated in 1992,  
23 undergraduate with a degree in business with an option in  
24 economics, and in 1995 with my MBA. I'm here today to ask  
25 you for the honor and the privilege to serve my alma mater.

1 I want to serve. Winthrop is on the rise. I want to help  
2 Winthrop become the best version of itself. And I  
3 recognize that Winthrop's prosperity and success is crucial  
4 for alumni, employees, the City of Rock Hill, York County,  
5 and the entire state of South Carolina. If I'm allowed to  
6 serve on the Winthrop University Board of Trustees like  
7 yourselves, I'll be obligated to the taxpayers of South  
8 Carolina. Working together with the General Assembly, we  
9 need to be sure that Winthrop, as a state-supported school,  
10 provides a positive return for the taxpayers' investment,  
11 that our students with degrees that are in demand by  
12 industry in our state, and that we provide our state with  
13 the workforce we need to attract the best business  
14 opportunities for our people.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

16 MS. HAMILTON - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

17 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Hamilton, can**  
18 **you please state your current address?**

19 A. 6100 North Ocean Boulevard, Unit 502, North  
20 Myrtle Beach.

21 **Q. Thank you. And is this address where you pay**  
22 **your 4% property tax?**

23 A. Yes.

24 **Q. And is this address within the congressional**  
25 **district to which you have applied?**

1 A. It is.

2 Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any  
3 local or state board, commission, committee, or  
4 elected office?

5 A. I do. I serve on the Winthrop Alumni Executive  
6 Board, and I serve on the Rotary Myrtle Beach Sun  
7 Fun Committee.

8 Q. Thank you. And I just note that those are not  
9 public offices for purposes of us having to  
10 determine the dual office holding, but I  
11 appreciate you disclosing those to the  
12 Commission.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations  
15 and responsibilities of serving on a public  
16 institution's board of trustees?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
19 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
20 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
21 after the Commission's report has been released?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
24 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
25 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to

1           **intervene in this process on your behalf?**

2           A.    No, I have not.

3           **Q.    Thank you.  And are you aware that you have an**  
4           **ongoing obligation and duty to report to the**  
5           **Commission any changes that might occur that**  
6           **would affect your application and overall**  
7           **eligibility for serving on a college Board?**

8           A.    Yes, I do.

9           **Q.    Thank you.  Thank you, Ms. Hamilton.  Mr. Chairman,**  
10          **I have no further questions.**

11          MR. CHAIRMAN:  Thank you, Macey.  Any questions for  
12          Ms. Hamilton?  Representative Rose.

13          MS. HAMILTON - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

14          **Q.    Ms. Hamilton, thank you for your willingness to**  
15          **serve.  I guess -- you said you went to Winthrop?**  
16          **Did you attend Winthrop?**

17          A.    I did, yes.

18          **Q.    What years did you attend Winthrop?**

19          A.    I graduated in '92 and '95.  Undergraduate '92  
20          and '95.

21          **Q.    Okay, thank you.  You know what?  That's all I**  
22          **need.  I don't have any more questions.**

23          MR. CHAIRMAN:  Senator Johnson.

24          MS. HAMILTON - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

25          **Q.    Thank you, Ms. Hamilton.  Are you related to Joel**

1           **Hamilton?**

2           A.    I have to talk to Joel.  I don't -- not that I  
3           know of, but I want to find out.

4           **Q.    You're not --**

5           A.    Not close.

6           **Q.    You're not related by marriage or anything that**  
7           **you are aware of?**

8           A.    No, if it is, it's distant.  Yes, sir.

9           **Q.    Okay, and for those of you who aren't -- Joel**  
10          **Hamilton is the current chair of the Winthrop**  
11          **Board.  You said that you don't -- and I**  
12          **understand why you said that you don't believe**  
13          **Winthrop has any weaknesses.  But I am curious.**  
14          **Winthrop was a teacher school for years and**  
15          **years, and has a very low male alumni base.  Do**  
16          **you agree with that?**

17          A.    That is true.

18          **Q.    And because it was a teacher school, it has had**  
19          **difficulty raising money for any type of**  
20          **endowment or just for the university in general**  
21          **over the past, oh, say, 50 years.**

22          A.    Very true.

23          **Q.    My district is up in Fort Mill.  So I'm not in**  
24          **the Rock Hill area.  But when I go to Rock Hill**  
25          **and I see it, a lot of the dorms, especially on**

1           **Cherry Road, are not in the best of shape at this**  
2           **point. And we see some of that. As a Board**  
3           **member, what plans do you see going forward to**  
4           **kind of revitalizing some of that and also**  
5           **increasing the academic choices for students to**  
6           **try to increase the overall enrollment at the**  
7           **university?**

8       A.    On the dorms along Cherry Road, a couple of  
9           those, Richardson and Wofford, have been torn  
10          down. They were dilapidated. And Lee Wicker,  
11          you can see there, too, and they've recently  
12          redone the roof on there and have done some work.  
13          They've got a plan in place, my understanding is,  
14          to put some more housing where those two  
15          buildings were torn down. Some student housing.  
16          I think the first phase is like 400 students, and  
17          the second phase is another 400. My  
18          understanding is they're pods. So that is what  
19          they're looking at as far as the building. I  
20          know also our current provost, van Delden, he's  
21          been, I think, a really good hire from President  
22          Serna. And we have added in our School of  
23          Business a real interesting program where  
24          students are going to be actually able to  
25          graduate with a degree in business and also a

1 pilot's license. And there's a good demand there  
2 for that with the airport in Charlotte. So we're  
3 following demand. And I know we're working at,  
4 from what I understand, talking to the provost,  
5 that that is the first step. They're going to  
6 add some other airline pilot, like a management  
7 program for an airport management to that degree.  
8 And that's the kind of things that I know about  
9 at this time.

10 **Q. Thank you.**

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: That it? I entertain a motion and a  
12 second for approval.

13 REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

14 REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, raise your right  
16 hand.

17 (All hands are raised.)

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you, ma'am, my mother, and  
19 my daughter went to Winthrop. Excellent school.

20 MS. HAMILTON: Well thank you, and thank you all for  
21 your service.

22 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Okay.

23 OFF THE RECORD

24 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right we're back live. We're now  
25 at the At-Large seat 10 for Winthrop. There are two

1 candidates. The first one is Jean Haubert. Is that  
2 correct? Jean Haubert of Fort Mill. Come on up.

3 JEAN HAUBERT:

4 MS. HAUBERT: Hey, sorry about that. The monitors in  
5 there are frozen.

6 MS. WEBB: We're frozen, too.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry about that.

8 MS. HAUBERT: No, it's okay.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, if you'd just raise your  
10 right hand and I'll swear you in. Swear to tell the truth,  
11 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you  
12 God?

13 MS. HAUBERT: I do.

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'll just name your, you know,  
15 your name for the record and tell us why you want to serve  
16 on the Winthrop Board.

17 MS. HAUBERT: Yeah, thank you. So, my name is Jean  
18 Haubert. I go by Jeannie. I am running for the Winthrop  
19 at-large seat 10. I want to be on the Winthrop Board  
20 because I worked at Winthrop for nearly 20 years, and it  
21 still holds a really special place in my heart, and I  
22 continue to kind of look for ways that I can serve that  
23 institution. I'm really very proud of the education that  
24 students receive at Winthrop. I feel like I have a deep  
25 familiarity with this institution, and it builds a lot of

1 skills that will be useful in guiding it over the next  
2 couple of years. And so, just to tell you a little bit  
3 about who I am, I started in Winthrop in 2006. I was hired  
4 as an instructor, ascended through the ranks, became  
5 eventually a full professor, served as department chair for  
6 about seven years. As department chair, some of my  
7 accomplishments were to increase our freshman to sophomore  
8 retention rates within the department, to decrease  
9 departmental spending, so I became known as having a good  
10 reputation for lean budgeting. I created some  
11 career-focused course work that became a model for other  
12 departments. I expanded internships and community service  
13 learning courses within our department, and increased  
14 alumni giving, creating new scholarships for students. We  
15 also had, amongst the departments in the college, some of  
16 the best on-time graduation rates due to flexible  
17 scheduling. So those are some of the things that I  
18 accomplished while at Winthrop that I'm really proud of.  
19 In 2022, I left to advance my career working as a research  
20 director for a national association of about 10,000  
21 members, an all-profit scholarly association. So I stayed  
22 kind of education-adjacent, even though working outside of  
23 the academy. And now I am executive director of an  
24 education research nonprofit. So when I left Winthrop,  
25 they threw me a big party, which was really nice. And one

1 of the things that one of my colleagues said to me really  
2 stood out, which was, well, now that you've given up your  
3 position, you do have to leave the building, but you don't  
4 have to leave the people. And so I haven't left the  
5 people. Those students still have my heart. And I think  
6 that as a trustee member, I can ensure kind of the  
7 long-term value of their degree. And that's important to  
8 me.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Macey.

10 MS. HAUBERT - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

11 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Haubert, can**  
12 **you please state your current address?**

13 A. Sure. I'm at 1060 Kings Bottom Drive, Fort Mill,  
14 South Carolina, 29715.

15 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay**  
16 **your 4% property tax?**

17 A. Yes.

18 **Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any**  
19 **local or state board, commission, committee, or**  
20 **elected office?**

21 A. I do not.

22 **Q. And do you understand the obligations and**  
23 **responsibilities of serving on a public**  
24 **institution's board of trustees?**

25 A. I do.

1 Q. Thank you. And are you aware that you cannot  
2 contact any member of the General Assembly and  
3 formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge  
4 until 48 hours after the Commission's report has  
5 been released?

6 A. I'm aware.

7 Q. Thank you. And have you currently asked any  
8 third parties to contact members of the General  
9 Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of  
10 anyone attempting to intervene in this process on  
11 your behalf?

12 A. I have not.

13 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
14 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
15 any changes that might occur that would affect  
16 your application and overall eligibility for  
17 serving on a college Board?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Thank you, Ms. Haubert. And, Mr. Chairman, I  
20 have no further questions.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions? Senator Bennett.

22 MS. HAUBERT - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

23 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good evening.

24 A. Hey.

25 Q. Thanks for sticking with us.

1 A. Yeah, you're welcome.

2 **Q. Just a couple of quick questions.**

3 A. Sure.

4 **Q. You stated in your personal data questionnaire**  
5 **that you believe that the total in-state tuition,**  
6 **including housing and fees, is about \$36,000.**

7 A. The total cost of attendance.

8 **Q. Total?**

9 A. Total cost of attendance. So, yes, tuition,  
10 housing, fees.

11 **Q. Annually.**

12 A. Uh-huh.

13 **Q. So, I bring that up because my oldest daughter is**  
14 **an alumnus of Winthrop.**

15 A. Sure.

16 **Q. Not removed yesterday, but not too terribly long**  
17 **removed from that. I don't remember the number**  
18 **exactly. But I feel as though, I think she would**  
19 **have graduated, let's see, eight years ago. I**  
20 **feel as though if that number had been close to**  
21 **that, back then I would have choked a lot.**

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 **Q. So, what do you attribute -- what I probably**  
24 **would see is a significant increase in total cost**  
25 **of attendance over that period of time, over say**

1           **the last decade?**

2           A.    Yeah, no, I'm -- that's a great question.  And  
3           so, the tuition piece of that is about \$14,000  
4           right now.  So, that's according to their latest  
5           numbers on their website.  I have a high school  
6           senior right now, so we're paying very close  
7           attention to total cost of attendance as well.  I  
8           went to Furman University, and when I attended  
9           there, it was \$25,000 a year.  And now it is  
10          \$82,000 a year.  So, this is an issue across  
11          higher education.  Right, it is not a Winthrop  
12          specific issue.  And as a faculty member, I had  
13          folks ask me all the time, what are you all doing  
14          over at Winthrop?  You got lobsters on every  
15          table?  What's happening?  Honestly, it's quite  
16          the opposite.  I think that we started tightening  
17          belts at Winthrop in 2008, from what I remember.  
18          I mean, I came in in 2006.  In 2008, we started  
19          tightening belts and never loosened those belts.  
20          It's only gotten tighter.  So, I think that what  
21          is happening is a kind of rising cost across the  
22          board, keeping up with other schools.  If you  
23          look at Winthrop's total cost of tuition, that  
24          total attendance number, it's consistent with the  
25          cost of attendance at other state institutions as

1 well. But it's just kind of a rising cost of  
2 business, I think.

3 **Q. There seems to have been a, for lack of a better**  
4 **term, a kind of a revolving door in leadership at**  
5 **Winthrop over the past 10, 12 years. Do you**  
6 **think that is stabilized now? Do you think**  
7 **Winthrop, from a leadership standpoint, is in a**  
8 **good place? Sort of good place?**

9 A. I'm glad you asked. I've been asking that  
10 question, too. I've been watching that for a  
11 long time and talking to a lot of faculty, a lot  
12 of alumni. From what I understand, faculty and  
13 staff are quite pleased with the new leadership  
14 and do feel like it's stabilized quite a bit.  
15 That was a concern for me, has been a concern for  
16 me in the past, and it has been -- it does seem  
17 to be improving.

18 **Q. Are you familiar with Winthrop's graduation rate,**  
19 **six-year graduation rate, four-year graduation**  
20 **rate?**

21 A. That's a good question. I don't know it off the  
22 top of my head, do you have it in front of you?

23 **Q. I do. Do you think it's good or bad?**

24 A. I think it's good. Am I wrong? I would love to  
25 know. I could tell you, you know, where we were

1 for my department, but I'm going to guess it's in  
2 the 70s.

3 **Q. According to these figures, which are the most**  
4 **recent numbers that we have from CHE, Winthrop's**  
5 **four-year graduation rate is 56%.**

6 A. Okay.

7 **Q. And their six-year graduation rate is only 45%.**

8 A. And that's not good, that's not good.

9 **Q. What do you attribute that? I mean, how do we -**  
10 **-**

11 A. Ours in my department, we're 86%.

12 **Q. What was your department?**

13 A. Sociology, anthropology, and criminology, 86%. I  
14 would love to see the entire institution a lot  
15 closer to that number.

16 **Q. You've been inside the walls. You've been**  
17 **outside the walls. What do you think it takes to**  
18 **improve these graduation rates?**

19 A. So --

20 **Q. If yours was in the 80s.**

21 A. Yeah. I think -- I mean, for us, I would say  
22 what was really helpful in on-time graduation was  
23 really flexible scheduling and course  
24 scaffolding. Right, so that when we were looking  
25 through what courses are required before you can

1 take other courses, eliminating a lot of those  
2 barriers, is it really necessary that they took  
3 in this particular order, or is it necessary that  
4 they have these three prerequisites before taking  
5 another course? To the extent that you can  
6 minimize some of that bureaucratic red tape and  
7 just make it easier for students to take courses  
8 when it comes up.

9 **Q. I'm ready for course A. Course A now isn't being**  
10 **offered until next fall, so therefore I can't**  
11 **take the other.**

12 A. Right. And I have to take three other ones  
13 before I can get to that course. If you can  
14 eliminate a lot of those barriers, that creates a  
15 lot of flexible scheduling for students, and they  
16 can progress a lot faster. The other thing,  
17 particularly for post-traditional students,  
18 having a blend of offerings in terms of night  
19 courses or some hybrid offerings, a couple of  
20 online courses, or at least rotating offerings,  
21 to create a lot more flexibility for students who  
22 work.

23 **Q. Is that what you mean in your personal data**  
24 **questionnaire where you say that the university**  
25 **has -- this might not be exactly your words, but**

1           **university has shifted to an innovative mode to**  
2           **keep enrollment up? Is that what you're**  
3           **referring to?**

4           A.   Well, they are -- no, not necessarily. I do  
5           think that we did a decent job at Winthrop of  
6           doing that, and adding in some remote courses,  
7           some hybrid courses, to flex a little more. I  
8           was thinking more programmatically, that they're  
9           really working to innovate with some of the  
10          FinTech degrees, the aviation degree, there's a  
11          degree in AI, right now. Gaming degree, right.  
12          So really trying to identify what the gaps are  
13          and what the workforce needs, and put out some  
14          programs that are not -- that are unique within  
15          South Carolina, that are not duplicating other  
16          programs.

17          **Q.   Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**

18   MS. HAUBERT - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

19          **Q.   Thank you, Chairman. Really, very quickly. Ms.**  
20          **Haubert, thank you for coming today.**

21          A.   Sure.

22          **Q.   Your comments struck a nerve with me, because I**  
23          **can remember trying to push my children out of**  
24          **college in four years, and which passed and**  
25          **failed in that order on that. But what I**

1 remember is this problem. You couldn't take  
2 Class A until you took Class B, and all the  
3 issues, despite the fact that you were more than  
4 qualified to take Class B. I would hope that if  
5 you get in on the Board of Trustees, that you  
6 would streamline that because I can tell you one  
7 of the themes today from this committee has been  
8 it shouldn't take six years to go to college.

9 A. Agreed.

10 Q. College should be four years, if not shorter,  
11 based on the fact we have dual enrollment in all  
12 the programs and children are coming in with a  
13 lot more hours.

14 A. A ton of hours.

15 Q. And so I would appreciate, and it would be  
16 refreshing to see our boards and our colleges  
17 start doing that. Thank you, ma'am.

18 A. Hundred percent.

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative Rose.

20 MS. HAUBERT - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

21 Q. Just briefly, this is more of a comment or  
22 something. If you are successful in getting on  
23 the Board, a few years ago there were some tennis  
24 players at Winthrop that contacted me. I played  
25 tennis at the University of South Carolina a

1 while back. And Winthrop was on our schedule.  
2 They would come play at the University of South  
3 Carolina, and the one thing about Winthrop was  
4 that they had a very good tennis team. And I  
5 played number one singles at South Carolina, and  
6 I played a guy that was from Brazil who was an  
7 excellent tennis player, all conference at  
8 Winthrop, and we would have a battle. And so we  
9 got to know each other, and knowing that I was  
10 now serving the legislature, Winthrop in 2020 got  
11 rid of their tennis program, which was arguably  
12 the most prestigious program in terms of  
13 conference championships, all these different  
14 things. The tennis players contacted me. And so  
15 one of the things that I was kind of appalled by  
16 was that because they had recruited a lot of  
17 players from Brazil and England, there was a lot  
18 of individuals that were wanting to speak at the  
19 Board meetings, and there's articles about what  
20 transpired, but there was a guy that was a very  
21 decorated student athlete on the tennis team.  
22 He's from England, and this is an example. He  
23 wanted to call in or be virtual for the hearing,  
24 and at that time, the Board actually declined him  
25 the ability to call in or be present when he's in

1 England. And other members, they would go into  
2 executive session, no one would know what was  
3 transpiring about the program. And so it evolved  
4 from, I understand there has to be difficult  
5 financial decisions that are made, but the way  
6 that these student athletes who love Winthrop,  
7 love this program, were treated was quite  
8 honestly appalling. And I understand that  
9 there's been turnover and things of that nature,  
10 but these student athletes were also in the  
11 process of raising money privately to try to do  
12 different things to save the program, and were  
13 just basically shut down. And so I share that to  
14 say we want good people to run and serve, and I  
15 hope that if you are successful, that you don't  
16 let a process like that take place if somebody's  
17 an international student and wants to log on for  
18 a meeting or we want to be as open and  
19 transparent as possible. And selfishly, I do  
20 hope that at some point, Winthrop can bring back  
21 their very decorated tennis programs, and not at  
22 a club level, but a varsity level.

23 A. I remember when that happened, and I also was  
24 appalled, A, at the cuts, the cut of that team,  
25 and B, at the lack of transparency on the Board.

1 With not allowing people to speak. There was  
2 also, around that same time, a lot of people  
3 given inequitable time for speaking to the Board,  
4 and so all of those things need correcting.

5 **Q. Well, that's the answer that I wanted to hear,**  
6 **and so, thank you, and I appreciate you running.**

7 A. Absolutely

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? All right, and  
9 Entertain a motion for a favorable report. I need a --  
10 REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

11 REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor, please  
13 signify by raising your right hand.

14 (All hands are raised.)

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, opposed? Thank you, ma'am.

16 MS. HAUBERT: Thank you, sir. Appreciate your time.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: And the last Winthrop candidate is  
18 Timothy O'Riley of Rock Hill. If you'd come up, please,  
19 sir. If you'd just raise your right hand, let me swear you  
20 in. Promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing  
21 but the truth, so help you God.

22 TIMOTHY O'RILEY:

23 MR. O'RILEY: I do.

24 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you would just give us your name and  
25 tell us a little bit about why you'd like to serve on the

1 Winthrop Board.

2 MR. O'RILEY: Yes, sir. Distinguished Board, thank  
3 you for having me. My name is Timothy O'Riley, but I go by  
4 Tim. That's fine. The reason I would like to throw my hat  
5 into the ring, so to speak, is just out of community pride.  
6 I have been a resident of Rock Hill for 10 years, over a  
7 decade, been in the Carolinas for 12 or 13 years. This is  
8 the longest place I have lived since I was a child. When I  
9 heard about this opportunity while I was out and about in  
10 my community and involved, I thought about what it took to  
11 add value to the Board and to be part of that team. I was  
12 already familiar with the Winthrop campus. I've been  
13 immersed in it, as you can see in my questions. I've done  
14 a lot of activities there. I've been involved. Winthrop  
15 has great community involvement. They care about the  
16 community. They care about Rock Hill. And when I stopped  
17 and looked at my own background, my educational background,  
18 my professional background, what I bring with my master's  
19 in business administration with a focus in strategic  
20 management and how I've been able to apply that to my  
21 career professionally in different sectors and different  
22 industries, my educational history as far as the college  
23 experience, being a resident assistant and things like  
24 that, being a student legal services assistant, being  
25 involved even in undergraduate admissions, the process of

1 being a tour guide and things like that. I thought about  
2 that, and in my history of community involvement, I  
3 realized I had something to offer. And I felt a  
4 responsibility to come forward and say, hey, I can help  
5 with this. Winthrop is doing a good job of addressing what  
6 these needs are. And you can go back 10 years as far as  
7 what they've done to try to improve things, and I think  
8 it's a great time because the current president is an  
9 alumni, so you know he cares and you know he's on top of  
10 things. And his Elevate program started a year ago. It's a  
11 good time to come in. So it's not like I need to bring in  
12 all these suggestions and say you need to do this, you need  
13 to do that. What I am bringing is my unique background.  
14 Obviously, I don't have a history inside the university  
15 going back 20 years, but that could be an advantage if I'm  
16 someone with just a fresh, unbiased perspective, bringing  
17 in emotional intelligence, coming in with that consultant  
18 approach that I've done, being a strategic partnership  
19 partner and saying, okay, how about this? We have this  
20 need here. How's that? I'm happy to elaborate more on  
21 those questions. I can tell you that when I look at the  
22 strengths and weaknesses, I think a lot of it just  
23 basically comes down to that financial income diversity  
24 piece. I think it's great that we're having partnerships  
25 with Schwab. How about Alpine Financial up the road, one

1 of the biggest investors of its kind, broker-givers, those  
2 kind of grant things. We can't just keep relying on state  
3 income in order to solve our problems. They're doing a  
4 great job being responsible, but where do we go from here,  
5 and how are we doing with that?

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

7 MR. O'RILEY - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

8 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. O'Riley, can you  
9 please state your current address?

10 A. 1821 Reservation Road, Rock Hill, South Carolina,  
11 29730.

12 Q. Okay, thank you. And is this the address that  
13 you pay your 4% property tax at?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. All right, and do you currently serve on any  
16 local or state Board, Commission, or committee,  
17 or elected office?

18 A. I do not.

19 Q. And do you understand the obligations and  
20 responsibilities of serving on a public  
21 institution's Board of trustees?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
24 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
25 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours

1 after the Commission's report has been released?

2 A. I'm aware.

3 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
4 contact members of the General Assembly on your  
5 behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to  
6 intervene in this process on your behalf?

7 A. I have not.

8 Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing  
9 obligation and duty to report to the Commission  
10 any changes that might occur that would affect  
11 your application and overall eligibility for  
12 serving on a college Board?

13 A. I do.

14 Q. Thank you, Mr. O'Riley. And, Mr. Chairman, I  
15 have no further questions.

16 MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions? No questions? All right.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: I move to approve.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Second?

19 REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, raise your right  
21 hand.

22 (All hands are raised.)

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Thank you, sir, for your  
24 willingness to serve.

25 MR. O'RILEY: Thank you for your time.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: Time to turn to page 3, or 2 or  
2 whatever. I'll tell you what, I appreciate you senators a  
3 lot more now. Couple of these long days you spend. All  
4 right. Wil Lou Gray. As soon as we get those in, we'll  
5 adjourn. Okay. Welcome, sir. I assume you're Dan Austin  
6 Dobson.

7 WIL LOU GRAY OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL:

8 DAN AUSTIN DOBSON:

9 MR. DOBSON: I am Dan Austin Dobson.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: And you're the incumbent, and you're  
11 from Myrtle Beach.

12 MR. DOBSON: Yes, sir. Originally from Spartanburg  
13 County. Grew up in Spartanburg County many years ago.

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's great. If you would just  
15 tell us a little bit why you want to continue to serve on -  
16 - oh, yeah. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth,  
17 and nothing but the truth to help you God?

18 MR. DOBSON: I do.

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: It's been a long day.

20 MR. DOBSON: I understand that.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your service. All of  
22 you, and your patience. It's been a long day, I know.  
23 Make a brief statement on why you want to serve on the Wil  
24 Lou Gray. Please.

25 MR. DOBSON: Okay. Do you need anything about my

1 education or anything? Graduating?

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything you want to say.

3 MR. DOBSON: Okay. I'll just let you know. I  
4 graduated from Gardner Webb College. Now University, back  
5 in 1964 with a BS degree in business administration.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you. All right, Macey.

7 MR. DOBSON - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

8 **Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dobson, can you**  
9 **please state your current address?**

10 A. 1181 Waterway Lane, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina  
11 29572.

12 **Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay**  
13 **your 4% property tax at?**

14 A. Yes, it is.

15 **Q. All right. And do you currently serve on any**  
16 **local or state board, Commission, committee, or**  
17 **elected office other than the Wil Lou Gray Board?**

18 A. No.

19 **Q. Okay. And do you understand the obligations and**  
20 **responsibilities of serving on a public**  
21 **institution's Board of trustees?**

22 A. I do.

23 **Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any**  
24 **member of the General Assembly and formally ask**  
25 **for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours**



1 MR. DOBSON: All right. Thank you, gentlemen.

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: The last person up is Jackie Chitty  
3 Drake from Gaffney. Come on up. You're the last one  
4 today.

5 JACKIE CHITTY DRAKE:

6 MS. DRAKE: I'm it. Thank you.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you would just -- yeah, I remembered?  
8 Raise your hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the  
9 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

9 MS. DRAKE: Yes.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. If you'll just, for the  
11 record, state your name again and why you want to serve on  
12 the Wil Lou Gray Board.

13 MS. DRAKE: I'm Jackie Drake. I am a retiree from  
14 Cherokee County School District. I retired as the system  
15 information management database coordinator for the entire  
16 district. After retiring, I still am working with kids at  
17 our church. I work with them at the Sunday school level.  
18 Also, we provide at our church as well, where we bring in  
19 Miracle Hill, the people that are there that are sheltered,  
20 and we provide a meal for them. And we do ministry work  
21 there as well in helping them, any educational needs that  
22 they may -- that we can help them with. So that's a little  
23 bit about me. I have three grandchildren, 11, 10, and one.  
24 And I would like to have the opportunity to serve at Wil

1 Lou Gray.

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Macey.

3 MS. DRAKE - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

4 Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Drake, can you  
5 please state your current address?

6 A. 136 Sheraton Loop, Gaffney, South Carolina,  
7 29341.

8 Q. Thank you. And is this the address you pay your  
9 4% property tax?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. And do you currently serve on any local or  
12 state board, commission, committee, or elected  
13 office?

14 A. No.

15 Q. And do you understand the obligations and  
16 responsibilities of serving on a public  
17 institution's board of trustees?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any  
20 member of the General Assembly and formally ask  
21 for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours  
22 after the Commission's report has been released?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to  
25 contact members of the General Assembly on your

1           **behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to**  
2           **intervene in this process on your behalf?**

3           A.    No.

4           **Q.    And are you aware that you have an ongoing**  
5           **obligation and duty to report to the Commission**  
6           **any changes that might occur that would affect**  
7           **your application and overall eligibility for**  
8           **servng on the Wil Lou Gray Board?**

9           A.    Yes.

10          **Q.    Thank you. Ms. Drake, I have no further**  
11          **questions, and Mr. Chairman, I have no further**  
12          **questions at this time.**

13          MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Seeing none, is there a  
14 motion?

15          REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

16          MR. CHAIRMAN: And a second?

17          REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

18          MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor signify by raising  
19 your right hand. Okay. Thank you so much.

20          MS. DRAKE: Thank you.

21          MR. CHAIRMAN: And I might say, Wil Lou Gray does an  
22 outstanding job.

23          MS. DRAKE: I'm looking forward to it.

24          MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you so much.

25          MS. DRAKE: Thank you.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you senators have any idea what time  
2 you will be adjourned? It's not a week away, is it?  
3 Probably every three or four in the afternoon. Yeah, we'll  
4 be done by 5 p.m. We've got you all for your service and  
5 your time. Thank you.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: We're meeting on Thursday. Is there a  
7 motion to adjourn?

8 SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

9 REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: We are adjourned.

11 (There being nothing further, the proceeding concluded at  
12 7:08 p.m.)

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## CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, JENNIFER NOTTLE, COURT REPORTER AND NOTARY PUBLIC  
IN AND FOR THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA AT LARGE, HEREBY  
CERTIFY THAT I REPORTED THIS PROCEEDING, ON MONDAY, THE 2ND  
DAY OF MARCH, 2026, AND THAT THE FOREGOING 266 PAGES  
CONSTITUTE A TRUE AND CORRECT TRANSCRIPTION OF MY STENOMASK  
REPORT OF SAID PROCEEDING.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I AM NEITHER ATTORNEY NOR  
COUNSEL FOR, NOR RELATED TO OR EMPLOYED BY ANY OF THE  
PARTIES CONNECTED WITH THIS ACTION, NOR AM I FINANCIALLY  
INTERESTED IN SAID CAUSE.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE SET MY HAND AND SEAL THIS  
22ND DAY OF MARCH, 2026.

  
\_\_\_\_\_

JENNIFER NOTTLE, COURT REPORTER

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES JULY 19, 2033

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144:20	83:9 114:23	157:2,8	218:22	<b>2%</b>
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