

Office of the Chancellor



*Reach greater heights.*

October 25, 2023

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

Members of USC Upstate community recently observed National Coming Out Day, a time to acknowledge and celebrate the courage it takes to openly embrace sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in a world where LGBTQIA+ communities continue to face challenges.

In reading about the history of this observance — which dates back to 1988, coinciding with the anniversary of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay rights — I came across an interesting take on the language used around living these identities publicly.

And I learned that instead of focusing on “coming out,” it might be worthwhile to look at this process as “inviting in.”

“Coming out” could imply that the person has been hiding. But with “inviting in,” we are reminded that the LGBTQIA+ person is choosing to invite friends, family, and colleagues in. The person is not asking for permission, is not stepping out from the shadows, and is instead controlling the narrative.

Regardless of the words a person chooses to use to describe their efforts to live an authentic life, we at USC Upstate support all LGBTQIA+ people. We offer resources on campus and want everyone to feel welcome and safe in this community.

So I just want to say: No matter where you are in your journey, we at USC Upstate support you. We seek to create an environment free of hate, discrimination, and bias. We want everyone to be healthy, liberated, and celebrated. And we are honored when you choose to invite us in.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie L. Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Bennie L. Harris  
Chancellor