



REACH *Our* GREATER HEIGHTS





Our vision
of education for all
that **inspires** a thriving
and just society
guides our future.





Chancellor's Report 2024

OUR MISSION:

- **Transform** the lives of students, their families, and communities,
- **Advance** social and economic mobility,
- **Empower** faculty, staff, and students to become lifelong leaders,
- **Offer** innovative and global research, teaching, and high-impact learning and
- **Drive** regional economic growth.

OUR VALUES:

- **People First.** USC Upstate cultivates an inclusive community that advances equity, wellness, and civility.
- **Integrity.** USC Upstate prioritizes honesty and ethical conduct as fundamental to our core mission of student success.
- **Access.** USC Upstate removes barriers to opportunity and success.
- **Stewardship.** USC Upstate is committed to affordability and intentional stewardship of resources, both human and financial.
- **Continuous Improvement.** USC Upstate strives for excellence in all operations.
- **Community Connection.** USC Upstate prioritizes community collaboration and engagement.



A Message from the Chancellor

As our institution continues to grow and evolve, it is with great pride that I share the University of South Carolina Upstate's 2024 Chancellor's Report. During the past year, we have seen significant advancements across our campus. We have embraced cutting-edge technology, enhanced our facilities, expanded our academic programs, remained committed to excellence in education, and fostered an inclusive and supportive community.

We have made strides in integrating AI and cybersecurity into our curriculum, providing our students with the skills and knowledge to thrive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. The establishment of the National Security and Government Institute under the leadership of Maj. Gen. T. Glenn Davis is a testament to our commitment to preparing students for critical roles in an ever-changing world.

Our efforts to improve campus infrastructure have also borne fruit. The addition to our library and the new facilities for the Student Success Center, Center for International Education, and Athletics are just a few examples of how we are enhancing the learning environment to support collaborative and innovative education.

We also have strengthened our community connections through initiatives like Movement 2030 and the Upstate Talent Forum, aimed at fostering educational and economic growth in Spartanburg County. These partnerships underscore our role as a key contributor to regional development and social mobility.

In the pages of this report you will also learn more about USC Upstate's Greater 2030 Strategic Plan, a new and in-depth report that looks at priorities, goals, and plans for the institution. As we take this look into the future, we remain dedicated to our vision of education for all that inspires a thriving and just society.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the USC Upstate family. Together, we are helping our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community Reach Greater Heights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie L. Harris".

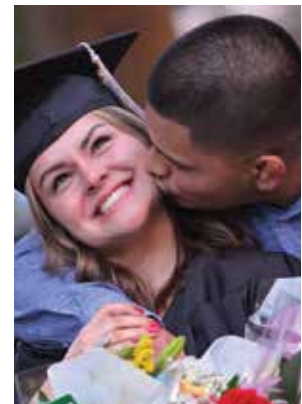
Bennie L. Harris, Ph.D.
Chancellor
University of South Carolina Upstate





A Road map for the Future: Greater 2030





The process of shaping a new vision to guide the University of South Carolina Upstate for the next five years began by recognizing where the campus' strengths lie.

Embedded in the university's vision statement – education for all that inspires a thriving and just society – is a promise to welcome all students, no matter where they are in life, and give them the skills they need to succeed in the workplace and in life.

To that end, the university provides an education that prepares students for the jobs of the future by equipping them with the critical thinking and

knowledge to adapt to rapid change. Personalized attention from faculty and staff encourages students to pursue research and leadership opportunities that further hone their workplace readiness abilities.

The Greater 2030 Strategic Plan builds on these successes and proposes new directions to pursue to enhance the student experience. It combines innovative academic learning with practical yet exciting course-to-career pathways. And it

addresses some of the challenges students will face in the years ahead as artificial intelligence becomes more critical to workplaces across all sectors.

Greater 2030 focuses on five cornerstone areas that are designed to further the university's strategic priorities and address the needs of students and the workforce: Spartan Distinct, Spartan Recruit, Spartan Success, Spartan Partners and Spartan Future.

Spartan Distinct

USC Upstate is focused on providing flexible educational programs – including new degrees, research opportunities, and study-abroad programs – that improve students’ intellectual, creative, personal and social development and prepare them for careers.

>>> Getting teachers into the classroom

According to The State newspaper, teacher vacancies in South Carolina have nearly tripled since 2019, hitting a record 1,613 at the start of the 2023-24 school year. USC Upstate is actively working on getting more qualified teachers into Upstate classrooms so students receive an excellent education that prepares them for college success.

The **Union County Fast-Track to Teaching Initiative** is one such effort. The program will provide an educational pathway for Union County School District students to obtain a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education, elementary education or middle-level education.

High school students can begin working toward a degree through dual enrollment with USC Union. They will earn an associate degree first, and upon graduation, can complete the requirements for a bachelor’s in one of the three areas of education within two years.

The **Grow Your Own Project** is a partnership with Spartanburg County School District 2 that enables eight aspiring educators in the district to earn an online bachelor’s degree in elementary education with an add-on in middle school mathematics. Funded by an innovation grant from the South Carolina Department of Education, the program is free for paraprofessionals or teaching assistants who hold an associate degree, provided they commit to teaching in the district for three years following degree completion.

>>> Building the future

Located right on the Interstate 85 corridor, USC Upstate is ideally positioned to support the global ecosystem that makes up the region’s manufacturing hub. With industry employment growing more than 17% over the past 10 years, according to the state Department of Commerce, skilled college graduates are in high demand.

To offer students more options while simultaneously developing a talent pipeline for industry, USC Upstate hired Don Bent, former chief operating officer for Oshkosh Defense, to support the development of a new undergraduate engineering program. Bent will also help foster strategic partnerships with regional manufacturers.

Bent, executive in residence and distinguished professor of practice, will be advising USC Upstate faculty in the George Dean Johnson, Jr. College of Business and Economics and the College of Science and Technology on creating courses that are relevant to industry needs and standards. He will also be working with business leaders to create internships and apprenticeships for Upstate students.



Lauren Dotson '23 transferred to USC Upstate to pursue a degree in secondary education. She was a substitute teacher for Greenville County Schools during the spring, and plans to start a full-time teaching position in the fall. USC Upstate provided her with the personalized advising and instruction she was seeking. Dotson says, “I was also able to balance being a full-time mom and full-time student, which I wasn’t sure I was going to handle. But I did it!”





Anna



BMW GROUP

>>> **Thinking globally**

USC Upstate and the University of Applied Sciences (UAS) Landshut in Germany have offered a dual degree program for students in business or science since 2012. Now that program is expanding to include more majors and more options for short-term study.

It's another way to help students prepare for an increasingly global workplace. More than 575 foreign-owned businesses have a presence in the Upstate region, and in recent years USC Upstate has created new pathways to help students with cross-cultural communication. That includes a global studies minor and a global competence certificate.

The Upstate program with Landshut currently allows Upstate students who have studied at the Spartanburg campus for three years to travel to Germany to complete the final year of their degree. Students also intern with a global company and learn German, and receive diplomas from both universities at graduation.

New options include a semester exchange for students seeking a shorter study abroad experience, and summer trips for students on both campuses. The program will also be open to students in all business majors, information management and systems, health information management and cybersecurity.

>>> **A thriving and just society**

This fall USC Upstate will open the Chief Justice Donald W. Beatty Center for Justice & Society to increase the number of students pursuing degrees that will lead to legal and justice-related careers. Central to its offerings will be high-impact, experiential learning activities, including mock trial and study away or abroad. Students applying to law school or graduate school will also receive help with LSAT/GRE preparation.

Political science majors will have the option to add a concentration in law and justice studies, and a pre-law minor will also be added that includes an internship and mock trial practicum.

>>> **The doctor is in**

USC Upstate launched its first doctoral program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice, in the fall of 2024. It targets registered nurses looking to have a leadership or policy role in health care. Graduates of the program will be prepared to serve in positions that plan and implement programs that lead to better care outcomes for the community, particularly underserved populations.

The university is also exploring a Doctor of Education program, to prepare educators for leadership roles in schools or education-related institutions.

>>> **More pathways in criminal justice**

A new master's program is offering additional leadership opportunities for those working in criminal justice-related fields or social services. Students in the program learn how to apply social science theories and methods to criminal justice administration, evidence-based policing, public policy reform, and victim advocacy. Graduates are prepared to pursue leadership or policy roles in a wide array of fields and organizations.



Claudine Feig has been inspired by the words and works of Mother Teresa since a trip to Calcutta, India, as a college junior. Feig, an instructor at the Mary Black College of Nursing, realized that with a Doctor of Nursing Practice, she could in that same spirit do many small things that would have a far-reaching impact. "I realize there is still so much to learn and so much more I can be doing to continue to improve the lives of others," Feig says.





Spartan Recruit

As universities nationwide grapple with the “enrollment cliff” – a decline in the number of college-age students beginning in 2025 – USC Upstate is developing creative ways to attract, enroll and retain a diverse and highly qualified student body.

>>> International recruitment

New partnerships abroad are adding to the diversity of USC Upstate’s student body. For fall 2023, international student enrollment grew 25% over the previous academic year, with more students from India choosing to pursue a degree at Upstate. Additional efforts are being explored in China, East Asia and Eastern Europe.

>>> Reverse transfer opens up opportunities

A new partnership with Greenville Technical College is providing students with a track toward a bachelor’s degree while helping them earn an associate degree along the way. Students who transfer to USC Upstate after two years at a technical or community college can receive an associate degree using credits earned at Upstate.

Earning an associate degree first can help students feel a sense of accomplishment and encourage them to finish a bachelor’s. It also provides students with a degree to fall back on should life circumstances require them to leave school before completing a bachelor’s. Graduates with an associate degree can earn approximately \$4,600 to \$7,200 more per year in salary than those with no degree at all.

Bachelor’s degree attainment in the Upstate region is currently below 30%, and the university is among the educational institutions working to improve that situation through initiatives that support degree completion.

>>> Promise Scholarship expands to more students

More students have the opportunity for an affordable education with the expansion of the Upstate Promise Scholarship. In its second year, the program offers students from Spartanburg, Greenville, Cherokee, and Union counties a chance to earn degrees debt-free. High school graduates must receive a South Carolina LIFE scholarship to qualify. After all scholarships and grants are applied, the remaining tuition is covered by the Promise Scholarship. Currently, USC Upstate has 210 Promise Scholars and is growing annually with cohorts of 100.

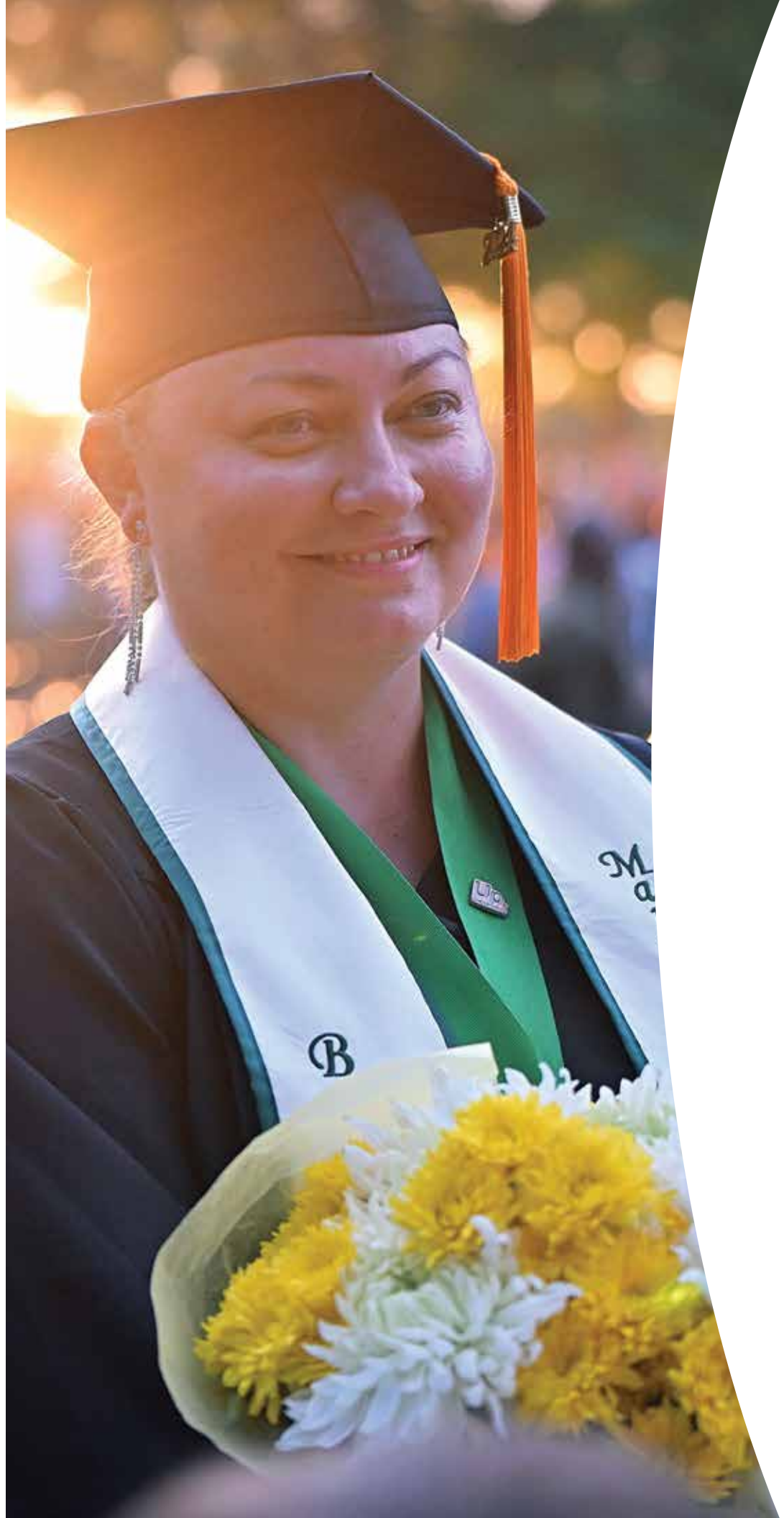
>>> A new resource for veterans

USC Upstate is proud to be a gold award-winning Military Friendly school. To help veterans connect with more resources for themselves and their families, USC Upstate, in partnership with the state Department of Veterans’ Affairs, has added a cutting-edge software platform to campus. The SC Veteran Coalition powered by Combined Arms features several innovative tools, including an easy to use referral system to quickly and efficiently help veterans locate services they require, including career opportunities. The service is free for all veterans.



Victoria Sands '24 serves in the U.S. Army as a military intelligence officer. She was immediately impressed by the dedication of the faculty and staff she met when she first visited campus, and got involved in many leadership activities as a student. “I met so many incredible people who were rooting for me to do my best, stay involved with organizations, and succeed after college,” Sands says. “This is what I imagined college would be, only better.”





Spartan Success

USC Upstate's commitment to students' academic success begins with faculty and staff who mentor and support students throughout their time on campus. New career, advising, and wellness programs have been added to improve students' sense of belonging and increase retention and academic performance.

>>> Bridge program boosts college readiness

A five-week summer program is helping new students and rising sophomores improve their math and English skills before starting classes in the fall. The effort aims to address the continuing academic fallout from the pandemic, when many students experienced learning loss in core subject areas.

For entering first-year students who earned less than a B in high school math, the bridge program offers a refresher course to prepare them for their general education math class. Students also learn study skills and receive information about campus resources that support student success.

Rising second-year students who failed to earn their general education credit for either English or math will receive course refreshers as well. They also receive lessons on effective study habits and support services on campus.

>>> Nursing exam pass rates jump to 97%

Nursing graduates of the Mary Black College of Nursing achieved a 97% pass rate on the 2023 National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). The rate is a nearly 15% increase from 2022.

Faculty made a concerted effort to improve pass rates by updating curriculum, reviewing benchmarks for assessment testing, and analyzing where learning gaps were occurring. The improved performance on the NCLEX, which is required to receive a nursing license, means more skilled nurses will be entering the workforce to help fill a critical nursing shortage in South Carolina.

>>> More paid research opportunities for students

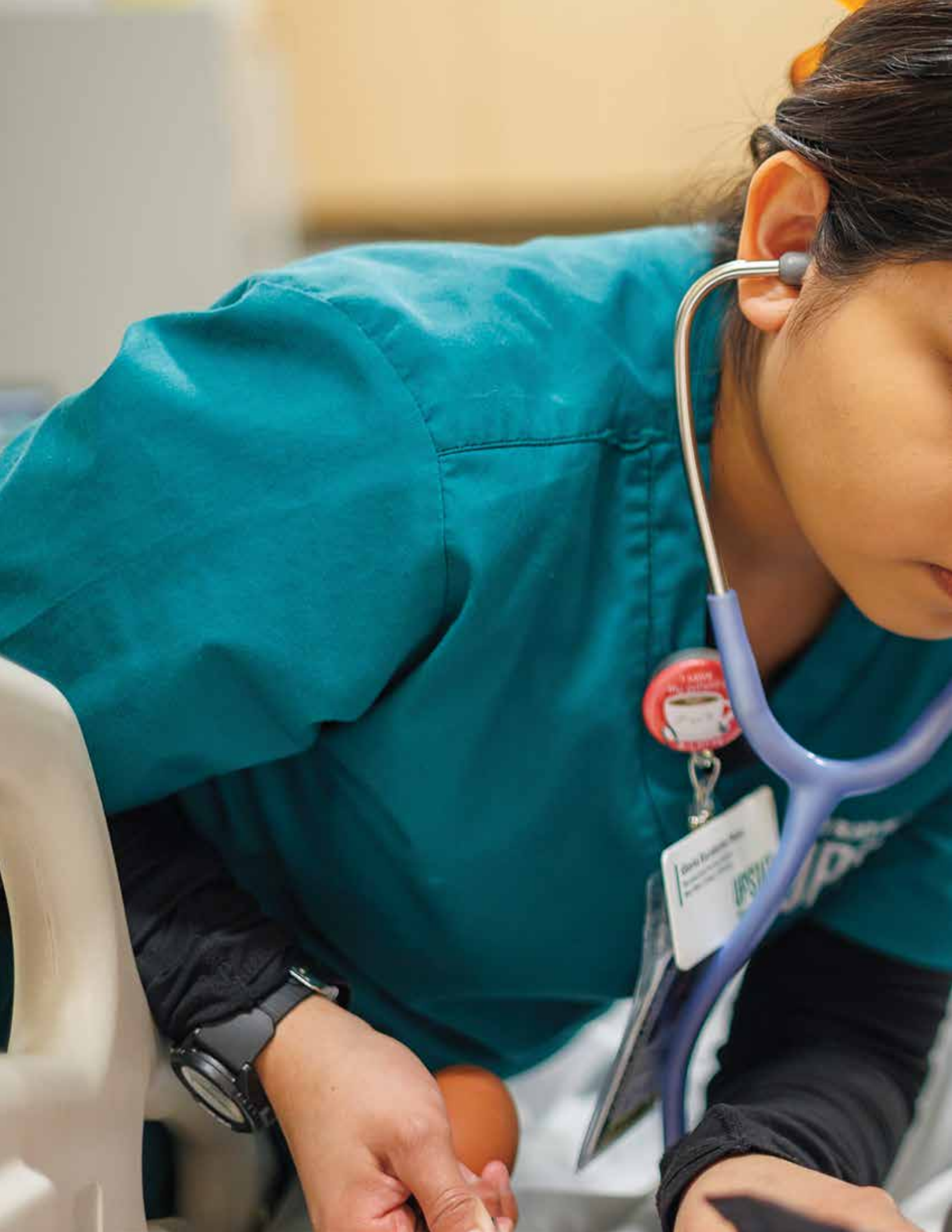
A \$50,000 award from Power:Ed has enabled USC Upstate to offer more paid summer research internships to students. The Er(Up)T program, now in its third year, pairs students with a faculty mentor who guides their research in the biomedical sciences. The eight-week internship is paid, allowing students to focus full time on career-relevant research without having to hold another job. The program also offers career development workshops and opportunities to present research at local and regional conferences.

>>> Leadership Academy provides essential skills

To help students hone their leadership abilities and develop important professional skills, Chancellor Bennie Harris created the Chancellor's Leadership Academy. Students selected for the opportunity attended seven sessions to earn a certification, and learned how to drive change at USC Upstate. By helping students feel invested in their campus, the academy seeks to increase retention and build pride in the institution.



Chancellor Harris has taught me the principles of servant leadership and the importance of meeting people where they are. He has helped me to know how to become a source of change.” Zach McQueen '25





Spartan Partners

As a regional comprehensive university, USC Upstate has been deeply integrated into the community since its founding. That commitment to serving the region, and partnering with organizations dedicated to improving educational outcomes and social mobility for those most in need, continues today. USC Upstate also is a key supplier of talent to fill the state's most urgent employment needs, including nursing and teaching. The university continues to explore new degree and certificate programs that will benefit the local economy.

>>> Joining the Movement

USC Upstate has joined a coalition of Spartanburg County colleges, businesses and nonprofits to support Movement 2030, a new county-wide initiative to help Spartanburg children and families succeed, no matter their circumstances.

Led by the Spartanburg Academic Movement, Movement 2030 aims to improve school readiness, post-secondary degree attainment, and neighborhood outcomes for thousands of county residents. More specifically, the initiative seeks to increase kindergarten readiness from 49% to 65%, and increase the percentage of high school students enrolled in post-secondary programs to 70%.

USC Upstate will focus on ensuring students have the financial and academic resources they need to complete their degrees, whether they are a transfer student, entering college for the first time, or returning to college after stopping out for a time.

>>> Starting the conversation

Last fall USC Upstate hosted the inaugural Upstate Talent Forum. The event brought together business, academic and legislative leaders to strategize on building robust workforce pipelines to help close the talent gap and ensure future success for the Upstate and South Carolina. Though job openings across the state have grown more than 200% since 2013, hiring has increased by only about 30%, according to the state Department of Employment and Workforce.

USC Upstate and other colleges want to ensure students have access to career-relevant internship and employment opportunities while in school so they are prepared for the workforce when they graduate. More skilled graduates will also ensure employers have applicants who are ready to fill available jobs.

A second forum is scheduled for Oct. 8-9, 2024.

>>> Building teachers' skills

As technology advances, the need for students to have fluency in STEM fields has increased. USC Upstate is helping equip elementary school teachers with the tools they need to teach those skills to children.

A five-day professional development program last summer, funded by a Computer Science for All grant, showed teachers how to use Finch robots to teach coding. Instructors also learned best practices for implementing a computer science curriculum in their classrooms.

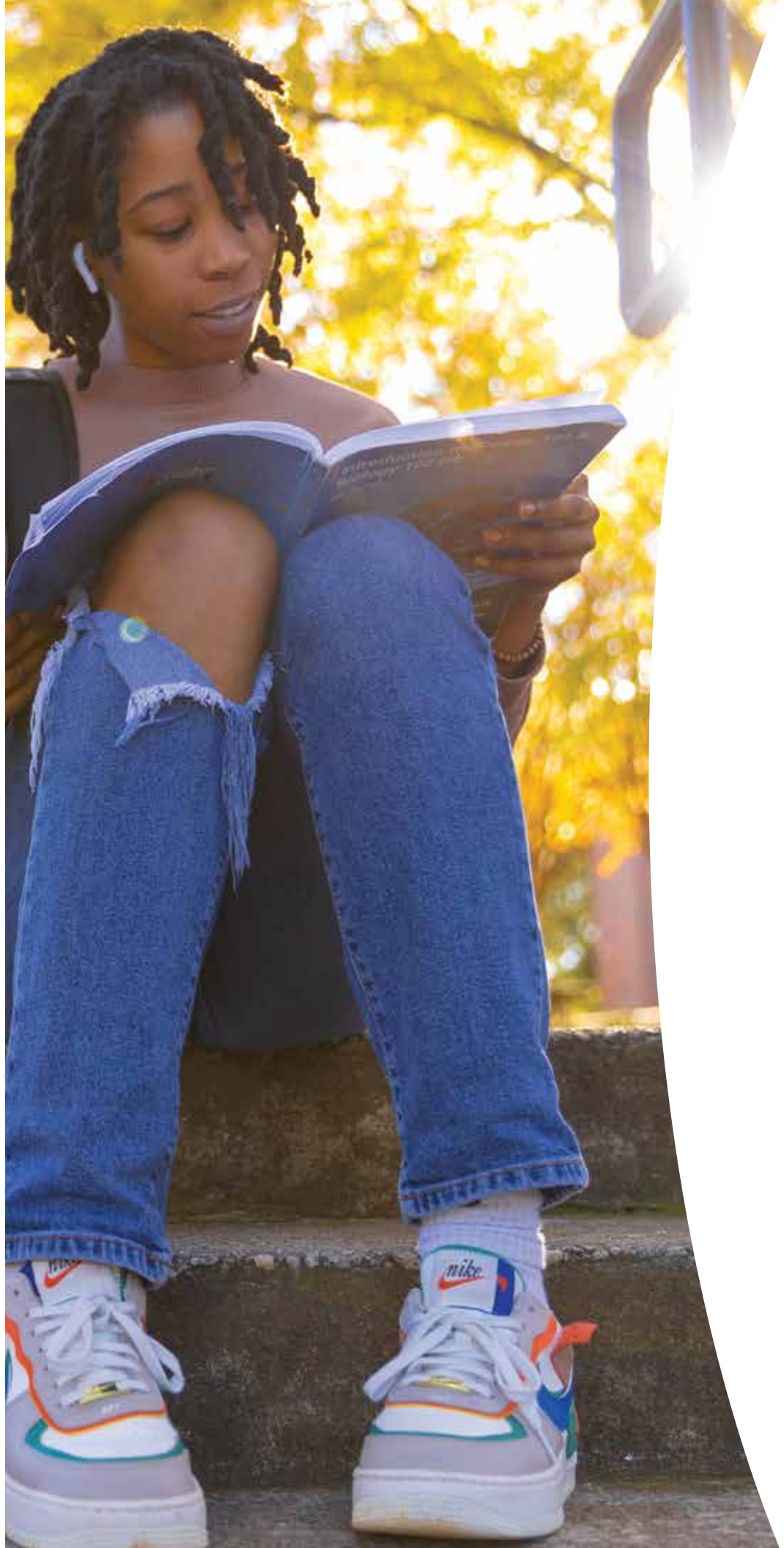
Refika Turgut, assistant professor of education, serves a resource for the teachers, providing monthly onsite and online support to help with any issues that arise.



I have not just gotten a four-year degree, I have gained lifelong friends, colleagues and opportunities that I would never have imagined."

Jasmin Elizalde '24





Spartan Future

The workplace of the future is already undergoing rapid transformation brought on by generative AI. From programming to data analysis to communication, AI stands to affect most if not all areas of academia. USC Upstate is preparing students to be nimble and flexible to adapt to these and other changes as they come.

>>> Focus on cybersecurity

Last year retired U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. T. Glenn Davis joined USC Upstate as inaugural executive director of the newly established National Security and Government Institute. Davis plans to develop partnerships with key industries, particularly in the field of cybersecurity, and expose students to national and world leaders to create an environment that fosters the growth of informed and effective leaders.

In addition to his long and distinguished military service, Davis also served as chief operating officer of United Dynamics, Aerospace & Defense, and as director of Pratt & Whitney's F-22, F-35 and C-17 sustainment operations in Oklahoma City.

>>> Making room for new needs

For the first time since 2009, USC Upstate has received funds for a new construction project on campus. An addition to the Library will add 22,000 square feet to the existing building and bring renovations to the second floor.

The addition will add tutoring rooms for the Student Success Center that can also be used as group study spaces; create conference areas and multipurpose rooms for the Center for International Education; provide a study hall for Athletics; and add classroom space, among other features. The design by Moseley Architects seeks to encourage collaborative learning in an inspiring space.

>>> Bringing AI to campus

Faculty continue to explore new strategies for incorporating generative AI in their classrooms as more students become familiar with the technology. This fall USC Upstate will host a conference on the power and implications of the AI revolution. The event, which is open to the community, will look at the impact of AI on industry, careers, academic research and teaching.



Malik Tate '23 graduated with a degree in computer science and a job as an IT desktop specialist at Denny's headquarters in Spartanburg. While a student, he enjoyed sharing insights about his internship experiences with students looking to enter the field. He also participated in data career events on campus and helped advise his peers on how to connect with potential employers. Tate says, "USC Upstate has been a major influence, opening a world of opportunities for me."



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