



I am writing today to welcome you back to the University of South Carolina Upstate after the extraordinary challenges we have faced due to Hurricane Helene. Whether you were directly impacted by the storm or helped others in need, your courage and compassion have been nothing short of inspiring. As our community has endured tremendous hardship, I have seen the strength and resilience of our Spartan family shine through.

I recognize that for many of us, this is not just a return to campus, but the beginning of a long road to recovery. Some members of our community are still dealing with the aftereffects of the storm—whether it's damage to homes, displacement, or the emotional toll that such a catastrophe brings. Please know that the university is here to support you in any way we can. Our counseling services, financial aid office, employee assistance and student support teams are available to provide assistance and resources as we work together to rebuild.

Even in the face of adversity, our commitment to learning, growth, and community remains stronger than ever. Whether you're a student resuming your studies, a faculty member re-engaging with your classes, or a staff member ensuring that the campus runs smoothly, your contributions are invaluable to the vibrant community that makes USC Upstate so special.

In a separate communication, I will share more about their contributions, but I want to extend my humble acknowledgment to Sheryl Turner Watts, Fred Scott, and the entire facilities and maintenance team; Klay Peterson and the public safety team; Tierney Bates and Chloe Jones and our housing and residence life team; and Jim Shecter and our Sodexo team for their sacrificial commitment to our students and the entire USC Upstate community. A special acknowledgment to Robbie Davis for his leadership in ensuring the setup and efficient operation of Spartanburg County Medical Shelter in the G.B. Hodge Arena. And there are many others whom I know and don't know, and I look forward to acknowledging their service.

This experience has reminded us that even in the most difficult times, we can overcome great challenges when we stand together. We are not only returning to our routines—we are rebuilding and emerging more united than ever.

On Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. we will host Team South Carolina Day sponsored by the offices of U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham, Governor Henry McMaster and Lt. Governor Pamela Evette to provide resource support for individuals affected by Hurricane Helene. Also, please click on the link for additional disaster assistance: Disaster Assistance | Businesses Recovering from Helene | OneSpartanburg, Inc. ([onespartanburginc.com](https://onespartanburginc.com))

Thank you for your resilience, your patience, and your dedication to our shared future. I look forward to seeing you on campus and continuing our journey together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie L. Harris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a prominent flourish at the end.

Dr. Bennie L. Harris  
Chancellor