



December 2, 2025

With the start of December, I've been reflecting on the idea of giving. I'm not just talking about financial giving, but the gift we offer as an institution: the gift of education.

Education is one of the greatest gifts a society can give to its own future. The ability to read, think critically, explore ideas, and participate fully in civic and cultural life has long marked the difference between exclusion and empowerment. Every time we open a book, analyze a paper, or engage in a classroom discussion, we participate in a hard-won legacy that transforms individuals and strengthens communities.

As I think about this, I'm reminded of a simple story about a village that received a single lantern during a long winter. At first, people worried that one lantern could never be enough. But as they passed it from home to home, neighbors gathered together, helping one another and feeling less alone. The lantern didn't eliminate the darkness, but it created pockets of connection, warmth, and possibility. In the end, it wasn't the lantern itself that changed the village, but the shared commitment to spreading its light.

That story captures the moment we are in as a state and as a university. South Carolina has set a goal for 60% of residents to hold a high-quality postsecondary credential by 2030, and USC Upstate proudly supports the Greenville Chamber of Commerce's parallel effort to reach 60% attainment in Greenville County.

These goals are ambitious, but they are also essential. When more people gain access to advanced education and training, the entire community benefits. Families become more economically secure, workplaces become more innovative, and our region becomes more resilient and competitive.

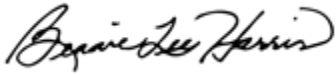
Reaching 60% is not simply a metric. It is an act of giving, giving individuals the tools to shape their futures, and giving our state the talent, creativity, and problem-solving capacity

it needs to thrive. It is our shared lantern, and we advance it not by holding it in one place, but by ensuring its light reaches as many people as possible.

As a university community, we are both stewards and recipients of this gift. Every certificate earned, every degree completed, and every student we prepare contributes to a stronger, more vibrant South Carolina.

Thank you for all you do to share the gift of education. Together, we are helping our region spread this light and create lasting opportunities for everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bennie L. Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bennie" being more prominent.

Dr. Bennie L. Harris
Chancellor