

Dear Spartan Family,

Long before it became a day of parades and pie, Thanksgiving was a harvest festival: a time to pause, gather the bounty, and give thanks for the hands that made it possible.

This was quite literal in my family of 10 in Deeson, Mississippi, where my parents raised cotton, soybeans, and wheat that we all tended on the farm.

As this year's holiday approaches, I have been thinking about our harvest at USC Upstate, and about the people who tend it. That means you.

This fall, 5,442 students chose to learn with us, nearly 8% more than a year ago. More than 1,345 graduates crossed the commencement stage. Numbers like these are a yield, and every one of you helped bring it in: the faculty member who stayed after class to answer one more question, the staff member who solved a financial aid problem before it turned into a crisis, and the student who pulled a classmate into a study group or saved them a seat at the game.

A good harvest depends on what happens long before anyone sees the results. It takes steady work in every season, people who keep showing up when the weather turns, and a shared belief that what we are growing is worth the effort. That is exactly what I see in this community. Your patience, your ingenuity, and your generosity toward one another are the reasons USC Upstate keeps flourishing.

As you travel home, to friends' homes, or welcome others to your table in the coming days, I hope you set the work down for a while. Rest, enjoy good food and good company, and take some quiet pride in what you helped grow this year. When I count my blessings this Thanksgiving, each of you will be among them.

With gratitude and warm wishes for a happy Thanksgiving,

Chancellor Bennie L. Harris, Ph.D.