

TO: Coastal Carolina University Staff Senate

FROM: Michael Benson

DATE: November 9, 2021

RE: President's Report

Attendance at an event inducting Joe Moglia prevents my joining you for this month's meeting and for that I apologize. I'm pleased to submit this brief written report.

Two weeks ago, we launched the Presidential Signature Series by welcoming Rabbi Shmuley Boteach to campus. The lecture was very well done and was recorded by our communications team. When the production is finalized, I will send out a link Rabbi Boteach's lecture to campus. On November 4<sup>th</sup>, the HTC Distinguished Speaker series welcomed President Freeman Hrabowski to present a lecture as a capstone to reading his excellent book, *The Empowered University*. If you were unable to attend, you missed a very inspirational talk. We will also share that video once completed.

Our CCU Board of Trustees had a series of very productive meetings on Thursday, October 28 and I'm pleased to report that our mandatory mask mandate will remain in place for the remainder of the semester. The Board has asked we reconvene before December graduation to discuss our COVID numbers and possible plans for the Spring semester. We will keep you apprised of any new developments.

Speaking of the Sun Belt, conference expansion at the Power Five level has impacted every area of Division I athletics. Our home league has been busy making itself even better and I had the pleasure of serving as one of four presidents on the Sun Belt's membership committee as we worked through ever-changing situations and scenarios. I would argue that the outcome of our collective efforts has resulted in the best Group of 5 conference in America. Not only will the expansion of our conference lead to increased exposure for Coastal Carolina University, I fully expect the improved alignment to have a tremendously positive impact on student recruitment in new markets and increased philanthropic support.

Over the past weeks, we added the following institutions: Southern Miss, Old Dominion, Marshall, and James Madison. This means the East Division of the Sun Belt will be a geographically tight cluster of peer institutions: Marshall, James Madison, Old Dominion, Appalachian State, Coastal Carolina, Georgia Southern, and Georgia State. Such a compact footprint will result in less time away from campus for our student athletes and reduced travel costs.

Thank you for your commitment to this University and I look forward to seeing you this week at the Homecoming activities.