

James F. Barker, FAIA, President, Clemson University
CUF 75th Anniversary Remarks
September 26, 2008



Thank you, Jimmy. And thank you to all of the volunteers, students, faculty and staff members who have helped make tonight's celebration meaningful and memorable.

On very special occasions such as this one – the 75th anniversary for the Clemson University Foundation – it is appropriate to reflect on where we have been...to pause and think of how far we have come. But not for long.

Because the Foundation isn't about the past. It's about the future. It's about the future of students like Sally, and Whitney, and Steven – and all the wonderful contributions they will make because of the opportunities Clemson University has given them.

It's about faculty members whose innovative approach to teaching, service and research is helping build a knowledge-based economy, improve quality of life, and prepare students for jobs that don't exist yet.

So I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about Clemson's future, and it's pretty simple. We will be one of the nation's top 20 public universities.

The first time we said that, a lot of people had their doubts. And truthfully, when we were ranked 39th in 2001 – the top 20 seemed pretty far away.

Fortunately for us, the people in this room were NOT among the naysayers. Instead, you said, "How can we help?" And because of your leadership, your determined spirit, and your personal contributions, we are almost there.

Let me read a list of university names, and see if you can tell me what they have in common: Purdue, Rutgers, Texas A&M, Virginia Tech, Michigan State, University of Minnesota, University of Iowa and University of Connecticut. You might say, "Well they're outstanding public research universities," and you'd be right. Here's something else they have in common: They're all ranked below Clemson.

Tonight you've heard how the Foundation has contributed to Clemson's success through scholarships and endowed chairs that helped us recruit outstanding students and faculty. You've helped us turn

“big ideas” into realities like CU-ICAR. You’ve helped us add much-needed research and academic facilities.

But we’re now in a new league, and we need a new plan. Fortunately, we have one. We call it the Clemson Road Map. The first Road Map was an academic plan that has helped us achieve many great things, including national recognition from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. I trust that you have received at least one copy of this article by now.

The *Chronicle* front-page feature has the headline: “Clemson University Balances Growth with Focus.” It explains how Clemson plans to excel by concentrating on what we do best, and by not trying to be all things to all people.

When I was interviewed for that article by reporter Paul Fain, I asked him if he was aware of any other university that had developed a five-year strategic plan. He seemed a little surprised at the question and said, “Well, lots of universities have five-year plans.” Then I asked, “Are you aware of any universities that have completed a five-year plan and then started another one?” He had to admit that was not quite as common.

Our new five-year plan is built on a solid foundation: We are not changing our vision statement, our mission, our 10-year goals, or our emphasis areas. We’re still committed to individual student success, innovation, economic prosperity, and serving the people of South Carolina.

What’s different is that this plan is a collaborative effort, not just an academic plan. All resources – academic, research, public service, student affairs, and support areas – are working together to achieve the Top 20 vision.

The new plan is student-centered. Students helped shape it and set priorities. After all, they are the core of the university.

The first plan revamped the curriculum to create room for engagement and enrichment opportunities. The new plan “fills up” that time by increasing participation in Creative Inquiry, service-learning, research, co-op programs and internships . . . by increasing the rigor of the Honors College, by offering more Study Abroad opportunities, and by developing ways for students to be more engaged with our economic development initiatives.

The first plan was about positioning Clemson to compete for the Top 20. The new plan is about reaching and sustaining a Top 20 ranking. It is about looking, acting and delivering like a Top 20 university. It is about being able to successfully compete for students, faculty and resources against very highly-regarded universities . . . and being prepared to be measured against those standards.

The new plan recognizes and addresses areas where we are not currently meeting the Top 20 standard, such as many of our core academic facilities, technology, infrastructure, student housing, and student life spaces.

We need to recognize that the students we are attracting today define “quality” by three measures: what happens in the classroom, the student life experience, and facilities. The first plan skewed toward improving quality in the classroom – which was the right priority.

But today's students have high expectations, and our prospective students have a wide range of educational opportunities. We need to address all three components if we are to attract and retain top students.

Unfortunately, many of our classrooms look just like they did when our current students' grandparents were here in the 1950s. Lee Hall, where I studied, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, and is in desperate need of renovation and expansion. Long Hall is 70 years old and Godfrey was completed in 1908, so it marks its centennial this year. We have not had a state bond bill for basic educational facilities since 1999, before I became Clemson's President. Even our "smart classrooms" are not as smart as we need them to be for this generation of technologically literate students.

If you've been on campus lately, you know that we are attempting to address this need. The construction fences are back. Facilities and infrastructure will be a high priority of our next five-year plan.

The new plan continues to invest in emphasis area niches that will drive economic development, but it is about "finishing what we started" rather than coming up with new "big ideas." These priorities will include CU-ICAR, the Restoration Institute, the Advanced Materials Center, Bioengineering and biotechnology, and the re-direction of our agricultural Research and Education Centers to focus on 21st century needs and opportunities.

The new plan will increase access to a Clemson education by strategically growing in areas with capacity, expanding the Bridge to Clemson program, developing more 2 + 2 collaborations, and managing campus population rather than just enrollment.

That means when we have students who are studying abroad or doing co-op or internships, we have seats that can be filled on campus. In other words, we can "grow without growing." These strategies will help us keep more of our top students in state, increase the number of college graduates in South Carolina, and deliver the work force our industries need.

The Clemson Road Map is aspirational. It is challenging. It is do-able. However, we know that we cannot depend on state appropriations and tuition to fund the plan. We will need a much broader set of funding strategies, including private gifts, land use or development, public-private partnerships, and self-generated revenue. The Foundation will be a critical partner in these endeavors.

Together, we have achieved great things, and Clemson's future is bright. We will take our place among the nation's best public universities. We will deliver all the benefits that a top-tier research university brings to its constituents. But we need to remember that this is exactly what was expected of us from the start. After all, it was Thomas Green Clemson himself who said:

" . . . we should feel that our mission on earth had not been in vain . . . if anything we have said should awaken the minds of our people to the urgent necessity of inaugurating an education system which is the only hope for South Carolina, . . . that like the rays of the sun, it will give life, vigor and prosperity to unborn thousands, . . . and make our State as she should be, . . . a blessing to her people, and a brilliant light to the world."