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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Dear Southernites and Friends:

Tomorrow is **SU National Academic Signing Day**. Hundreds of young scholars from throughout the United States will be joining alumni chapters throughout the United States to commit to attend Southern University. Now in its third year, the SU National Academic Signing Day is growing. It's exciting to hear students from as far as Sacramento and Chicago and Washington, DC proclaiming they have chosen Southern University, and will be attending SUNO, SUBR or SUSLA. I cannot thank Federation 3rd Vice President, Carlton Jones, and the Chapter Presidents from around the country enough for their hard work in assisting the University coordinate this event. These leaders have been doing dry-runs over the last few days and following up with students to ensure we will have a flawless presentation tomorrow. As usual, we plan to video these scholars and alumni all across America as they sign **academic** letters of intent to attend ***The Southern University***. The collaboration and coordination with the admissions offices on the three campuses have been fantastic, and I thank them for their cooperation and expertise. I look forward to seeing everyone tomorrow at one of our cities with one of our alumni chapters.

On Wednesday, I attended a powerful meeting of alums, board members and administrators. As you know, while we celebrate the many successes that occur throughout the Southern System, we also have some considerable challenges as well. Alums all across America have been expressing increasing concern about these challenges. I sincerely believe they have done so out of love for our Alma Mater. I want to thank Mrs. Ann Smith, SU Board Chairlady, and Mrs. Sonja Norwood, creator of the 5th Quarter Club, for convening a meeting to hash out some of these deep concerns. Seven members of the Board of Supervisors attended the meeting along with Alums Jamal Taylor, Simone Bray, Nonica Morgan, Director Derrick Warren, and Camille Mayo, the President of the Los Angeles Chapter. President Belton and other members of the senior administrative staff also attended this meeting. The meeting was a frank discussion about complaints from alumni and students from all across the country. In fact, the discussion even got a little heated at times. However, when the meeting ended, I think all who attended felt like much progress had been made, and there was a positive path forward. I think this will only be true if everyone remains committed to being vigilant about advancing our University.

It is important to have these candid face-to-face discussions. We must not allow complaints or concerns to linger. There is no secret that our enrollment has dropped considerably over the last decade; that our physical plant has suffered from years of deferred maintenance; and that our internal processes and controls still need more improvement. I am hopeful that the discussion Wednesday is a new beginning. I hope that our University does not suffer the fate of other

institutions that imploded under the weight of their own unwillingness to acknowledge they have problems and their failure to commit to truly solve the problems. Not just talk about the problems, but actually implement solutions. I often say that Southern is both on the brink of closure and the brink of greatness. It's a scary paradox. For example, we have an incredible opportunity to fully develop and implement the IMAGINE 20,000 plan. Yet, we seem to sometimes be incapable of solving our internal university issues in a manner that will allow us to be successful. At the last SU Board retreat, Dr. Robert Ford said to the Board of Supervisors the System needed a comprehensive assessment. He said it again in an email to the Board leadership. If we don't fix our systemic problems, all of our "imagination" will be for nought.

I will continue to work to be a good ambassador for Southern, and I hope other alums will continue to do so. This Alumni Federation will also continue to seek solutions to our problems and make every effort to help implement the solutions. The meeting Thursday, sparked by serious complaints from alums in the 5th Quarter Club on social media and alumni leadership across the country, was a step in the right direction. I hope the lines of communication will remain open, and that we as a Southern University family will continue to work to **Make our Great University Greater**.

Let's continue to be vigilant ambassadors, my friends!

Sincerely,

Preston

Preston J. Castille, Jr., Esq.
National President
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