Dear Dr. [name of presidential finalist],

This moment of great flux in higher education presents both challenges and opportunities for the College of Charleston. As we seek both to remain grounded in what makes the College unique and to position ourselves for a bright future, the Faculty Senate formed this ad hoc committee to solicit input from the College community about the identity and vision for the College. An online survey in Spring 2018 collected more than 620 responses from administrators, tenured and tenure-track faculty, instructors, adjunct faculty, and permanent and part-time staff. Staff includes personnel employed in admissions, registrar, disability services, academic progress and persistence, and other departments that provide support for the academic experience. We wish to briefly summarize a few points from this survey that may help you in your interview conversations.

What do we want to be?
From among options for how to shape the College’s future, both faculty and staff strongly supported the aim to be a liberal arts institution in the form of a selective, preeminent national university (for example, William and Mary), although views of the faculty were somewhat stronger than those of staff. In contrast, staff were somewhat more supportive of the aim to be a comprehensive university (for example, George Mason), whereas faculty were more mixed. Overall, the majority of both faculty and staff strongly supported the view that our focus should be on providing a high-quality experience for our undergraduate students, and the majority disagreed that we should shift our focus to becoming a research institution.

What strengths should we emphasize?
Both faculty and staff (though faculty more so) strongly supported marketing the College to emphasize that in today’s rapidly changing work environment, the communication and critical thinking skills emphasized by a traditional liberal arts education are more important and valuable than ever. There was general agreement that the T&P evaluation should be strongly supportive of faculty engagement with students and with the larger community outside of the classroom—indeed, we have formed a campus-wide faculty, staff, and community committee to apply (spring 2019) for status as a Carnegie Engaged campus. The majority agreed that a core strength is our ability to provide individualized support for students. Faculty also emphasized the importance of support/resources for new program development. There was strong disagreement with the idea that we should lower our standards to attract more students. Finally, staff supported the idea of expanding and diversifying professional programs in order to adapt to regional growth and to increase enrollment.

What should we market? (top responses from multiple-choice list)
78% Faculty interactions with individual students
73% Value of liberal arts skills to equip students to better deal with changing world / technology
66% Opportunities for individualized research or creative activities with faculty

Changes Suggested by Survey Results
- Resources should better match expectations
- Tenure and promotion process should better reward key parts of our identity, including engagement with students and community
- Improvement in structure of shared governance
- Stronger leadership with a greater degree of transparency between administrators, faculty, and staff
- Greater opportunities and support for faculty and staff to interact and collaborate
- Greater recognition of and appreciation for staff suggestions and contributions
- Greater recognition of and support for adjunct faculty
Respectfully,
Members of the ad hoc Faculty Senate Committee on Institutional Identity and Vision
   William Bares, Computer Science, chair
   Jen Wright, Psychology
   Todd McNerney, Theatre
   Pamela Riggs-Gelasco, Chemistry
   Jonathan Neufeld, Philosophy
   Robert Podolsky, Biology
   Jeri Cabot, Dean of Students