

DON'T LET ANYONE TELL YOU CLEMSON ISN'T AFFORDABLE

Dr. James P. Clements
President, Clemson University
Special to *The State* editorial board

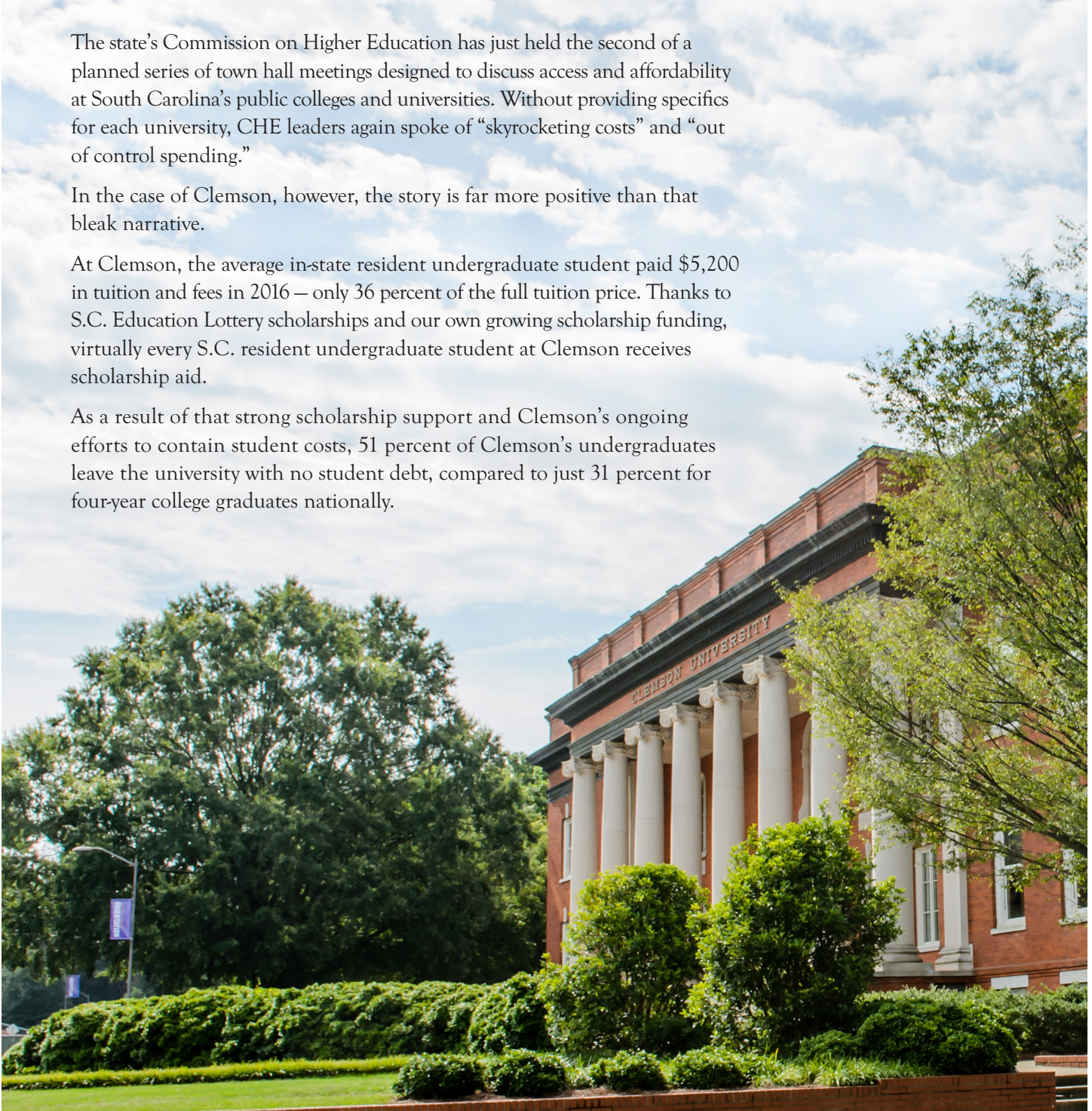
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The state's Commission on Higher Education has just held the second of a planned series of town hall meetings designed to discuss access and affordability at South Carolina's public colleges and universities. Without providing specifics for each university, CHE leaders again spoke of "skyrocketing costs" and "out of control spending."

In the case of Clemson, however, the story is far more positive than that bleak narrative.

At Clemson, the average in-state resident undergraduate student paid \$5,200 in tuition and fees in 2016 — only 36 percent of the full tuition price. Thanks to S.C. Education Lottery scholarships and our own growing scholarship funding, virtually every S.C. resident undergraduate student at Clemson receives scholarship aid.

As a result of that strong scholarship support and Clemson's ongoing efforts to contain student costs, 51 percent of Clemson's undergraduates leave the university with no student debt, compared to just 31 percent for four-year college graduates nationally.



Clemson also has consistently been cited nationally for its financial management and work to control costs. Our credit ratings are at historically high levels, and the highest of any university in the state. Rating agencies have praised Clemson for its strong student demand, prudent fiscal management and focus on degree programs that are relevant to today's workforce needs.

When adjusted for inflation, Clemson's cost to educate a student fell 15 percent from 2008 to 2016 and is below regional peers such as University of North Carolina, N.C. State University and the University of Georgia. At the same time, Clemson has remained among the best public universities in the nation, residing in the top 25 in the U.S. News & World Report rankings every year for the past decade. Clemson has earned that distinction while spending 40 percent less per student than the average of our top 25 peers, according to U.S. Department of Education data.

Clemson's focus on relevant academic programs and research in areas such as automotive engineering, advanced manufacturing, health sciences and energy is helping to fuel South Carolina's economic recovery. More than ever, Clemson is producing a workforce designed to meet the needs of the state, as evidenced by the fact that we educate 68 percent more scientists and engineers and 52 percent more agriculture, forestry and life sciences students than a decade ago.

As a public, land-grant university, Clemson has always prized its responsibility to serve the entire state. We do that by remaining true to our commitment to educate primarily South Carolinians (more than two-thirds of our undergraduate students are state residents) and partnering with leading S.C. employers such as Boeing, BMW, Samsung, Michelin, General Electric and Sonoco on research and academic programs that strengthen the state's economy.

We do it by working to close the achievement gap for historically under-represented student groups through our Men of Color Summit and Emerging Scholars programs, and by offering agricultural extension services in all 46 counties.

And we do it by striving every day to be good neighbors and citizens, and living up to our core values of honesty, integrity and respect.

These are challenging times for many in higher education. We share the goal of the CHE and others that our colleges remain as affordable as possible.

Clemson's demonstrated success in achieving this goal stands in direct contrast to the generalizations that have been made. Indeed, we are proud to continue to provide a world-class education at an affordable rate, and remain committed to building on our legacy of serving the residents of South Carolina as we have done for nearly 130 years.



ClemsonForward will position Clemson for the next 50 years and make an impact on real issues facing the people of our state and nation. Clemson Forever supports the goals of ClemsonForward through its unrelenting mission to strengthen the University by building a solid financial base of private giving, providing exemplary stewardship of those gifts and clearly communicating to donors the impact of their gift and the gratitude of the Clemson Family.

864-656-2121
cufund-L@clemson.edu
clemson.edu/giving

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