First question posed to faculty to help guide the discussion of graduate education at the College of Charleston:

1) What do you think the role of graduate education at the College should be, including thoughts on the merger proposition?

- We are primarily an undergraduate institution, that’s the first priority, and how does graduate education fit into that? We have a few graduate programs that are connected to undergraduate programs. Increasing the number of graduate programs will take away from the undergraduate focus, and might be wastefully duplicative/unnecessarily competitive to offer certain programs. It seems as though we already offer “local” programs geared towards the community’s needs.

- Graduate programs should be complementary to our existing undergraduate programs.

- If we offer PhDs, we will be in another category of competition regarding grants.

- Funding is a major concern regarding the future of graduate programs.

- We have the capacity and a good reason to expand graduate education: there is demand in this part of the state, and we have the capacity for limited expansion.

- Current programs that were targeted for a PhD program already have limited resources and faculty pushback.

- Programs and universities work better when they’re built from the bottom up and consider demand – organic supply and demand.

- Where’s the harm in having Clemson or USC come to Charleston? It might be harmful if they would take away students that we would otherwise get, but I don’t see that happening.

- We might lose donors that aren’t loyal to an institution, but we don’t have a large donor base anyways.

- The President only sees Boeing.

- Boeing isn’t necessarily interested in what CofC does. They are more interested in Trident Tech for things like mechanical assembly. They are interested in grooming employees for middle management and project management.
- This makes the case for the liberal arts and sciences, and not creating students with highly specialized skills because industry wants employees with critical skills.

- How responsive should we be to industry and/or student needs?

- We can serve both! The liberal arts and sciences model allows there to be no conflict with that.

- If you want to maximize earning potential, the model is a liberal arts + a professional degree.

- We shouldn’t think too narrowly about the “job market.” We’re trying to create citizens of the world.

- There needs to be a dialogue with the community – political leaders, municipal workers, etc. – not just industry. If we only talk to a narrow group of individuals, we will get a narrow view. Legislators view graduates that leave South Carolina as a loss on their “investment.”

2) What do you see as the relationship between graduate and undergraduate education at the College?

- There are positives and negatives to having a department with both graduate and undergraduate programs. Marine Biology, for example, is able to partner with four other institutions/agencies at Fort Johnson, and wouldn't be able to get by without those partnerships. Graduate programs require more time from faculty, which takes them away from undergraduates. There is already a lack of faculty and most intro courses are taught by adjuncts. A good thing is the ability to have a lab, where undergraduates can see graduate-level work.

- Political science and MPA seem to make it work. The MPA program’s student base comes from the area, and they benefit from adjuncts who are currently working in the community in their fields of interest. Teaching one graduate course and two undergraduate courses this semester works. Can't graduate education expand without a merger?

- MPA used to be a joint program with USC, but recently became a stand-alone program. To maintain its national accreditation and remain a viable program after becoming independent, MPA needed X number of graduate faculty, which took lines away from other departments in HSS. And then accrediting bodies also have a lot of restrictions they place on a program.

- What are our peer institutions with similar models of undergraduate and graduate programs? William & Mary, Vanderbilt, Miami of OH, Duke, Rice – all good at integrating undergraduates and graduates.
- You can get a good education at an R1 as an undergraduate; you just have to be self-motivated.

<Moderator> Are resources available?

- No, legislators don’t know what making the College into an R1 really means. It doesn’t mean we will get grants, and grants alone will not fund an R1. We won’t be competitive for federal grants for 20-25 years.

- Legislators think that private industry will cover the cost, but the types of research that industry and universities conduct are totally different.

3) What is your vision for graduate education in 2020?

- Not adding more doctoral programs. There are too many doctorates being produced in the country already. It’s irresponsible. We will enter this game at the bottom of the rankings for all programs. Expanding graduate programs is a recipe for mediocrity. Building first rate programs takes a lot of money.

- Being able to free ourselves from counting up degrees conferred.

- There’s an opportunity to expand the types of graduate certificates offered. Offering more horizontal education, as opposed to hierarchical. If students are already in the workforce, they can’t quit their jobs, give up family time or cut back on community commitments to pursue a degree.

- With the move towards online learning, professionals want some sort of hybrid classes: online plus some class time.

- Certificates would have to be targeted and developed in a way that won’t throw off a department’s hiring scheme.

<Moderator> How do we relay our concerns to the new president, and how do we relay important thoughts regarding graduate education?

- Faculty should push that graduate expansion be limited and thoughtful and really meet an existing need.

- Those pushing for the merger don’t really understand what a comprehensive research university means. What they really want is targeted graduate expansion, but the Board has no idea.