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FEATURED

## USC president visits Lancaster

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Michael Amiridis

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USC President Michael Amiridis spoke at the Lancaster Rotary Club's lunch meeting Thursday, Feb. 9, at USC Lancaster. From left are Steve Sherrill, Bruce

University of South Carolina President Michael D. Amiridis praised USC Lancaster when he spoke at the Lancaster Rotary Club lunch meeting Thursday, Feb. 9, at the Carole Raye Dowing Center.

Amiridis, who was elected as the college's 30th president on July 1, 2022, also toured the USCL campus during his visit.

Amiridis, a native of Kavala, Greece, previously served as chancellor of the University of Illinois Chicago for roughly seven years. He also worked as the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost at USC from 2009-15. In 1999, he earned the National Science Foundation's award for early-career scientists and engineers. He was a fellow of

the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2019, and a fellow of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers in 2015. He is a member of the Rotary Club in Columbia.

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Both Amiridis and his wife, Ero Amiridis, were first-generation college students and graduates, so he stressed the impact that higher education has for both the student and their family.

He also applauded USCL's bachelor's of science in nursing program, which works in conjunction with USC in Columbia to graduate students into the nursing field.

Amiridis said there are currently 1,200 Lancaster County students enrolled at a USC campus, and there are 4,700 USC alumni across the county.

He also said that USC and USCL are working on funding an initiative to help students apply for local jobs in their county, and for hiring managers to consider more local students.

"We are asking the state to fund us and provide incentives for our students to have an internship here in South Carolina in a local company or organization, and also provide an incentive to people who hire them," Amiridis said. "What we want is to bring this together — the employers and our students — because we want our students to stay here."

Rotary District 7750 Governor Joyce Morin started the meeting by reminding people what Rotary is all about.

"We are people of action," said Morin, a member of the Lancaster club. "We are people whose motto is 'Service Above Self.' We are people who are committed to enhancing and improving the lives of those around us, both right in our own backyards and beyond our borders."

Rotary clubs are international, and members join through invitation only. The mission of Rotary is for its members to discuss community issues with other business people, and ways to solve them.

“USCL has been top of the line for partnering with all the folks of this area who seek to serve others and to be of service,” Morin said. “They are generous with offering us venue space, with having the library open to the public, sharing their walking trails and all of their wonderful amenities here. We are just so grateful for their generosity here.”

Morin specifically referenced the Town-Gown Council, co-founded in 2017 by USCL Dean Dr. Walter Collins and Dr. Lisa Hammond. The council works to find creative ways to improve the educational standing of USCL and the cultural and economic standing of Lancaster County.

Dr. Susan Elkins, chancellor of Palmetto College and chair of the Rotary Club of Columbia, said USCL has been named the top two-year university in South Carolina for the sixth year in a row by Niche.com.

“USCL is truly the home and bedrock of this community,” Elkins said. “Together, we all have a very positive impact on education, on workforce development, on economic development, and ultimately, the quality of life of our citizens throughout the region.”

USCL Educational Foundation President Steve Sherrill, a Lancaster Breakfast Rotary Club member, said the foundation’s mission is to “solicit, proceed, manage and disperse funds for the advancement in the interest of USCL.”

He said foundation funds are used for student scholarship, faculty development, the building and maintenance of physical facilities on campus and other needs that may arise. The foundation owns all of the buildings on USCL’s campus.

Bruce Brumfield, chair of the Lancaster Breakfast Rotary Club, thanked everyone for their continued support in helping USCL to grow, and shared the history of how USCL became the entity it is today.

USCL Board member Hugh Mobley discussed USCL's efforts in combating economic inequalities in higher education.

"Our campus right here has one of the lowest cost of attendance of any institution in the state of South Carolina," said Mobley, a Lancaster Breakfast Rotary Club member.

Mobley also called for USCL to be considered for the initiative for free tuition in the two-year sector, where students can receive free tuition as a part of the workforce base initiative.

"If you remember one thing from our lunch together today, I want you to remember this quote from an industrialist from the 20th century, Andrew Carnegie," Amiridis said. "He said 'as I grow older, I don't listen to what people say. I watch what they do.' So don't listen to me, just watch what USC is going to do in years to come."

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