



February 28, 2022

Dear campus community,

Today is Day 5 of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For our students, employees, and alumni from Ukraine, you have our sympathy and unreserved solidarity. We condemn the unwarranted, unacceptable, and incomprehensible Russian invasion. We echo the calls from other nations and our peer institutions for de-escalation and an immediate resolution that leaves Ukraine intact as a free and independent democracy.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "In a real sense, all life is inter-related. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." The senseless and deplorable Russian invasion of Ukraine may be a long way from the relative tranquility of the South Carolina Upstate, but it has a direct impact on the students, employees, and alumni of USC Upstate who call Ukraine home, are Ukrainian by nationality or have family or friends in harm's way. It impacts those of us who interact with these students, faculty, and staff each day, as we seek to understand, and to provide comfort and support.

In the short time I have been at USC Upstate, I have learned that the Spartan community comes together to support each other in challenging times. If you would benefit from professional support, USC Upstate has a variety of options available to you during this evolving situation. If you see friends who are struggling, or if you need support, please reach out to us — don't carry this alone. Contact [Counseling Services](#) online or at 864-503-5195, or the Student Affairs office at 864-503-5107.

One of the reasons I accepted the role of Chancellor is the university's diversity. We have students from 51 nations and 36 states. Nearly 50 percent of our student body is comprised of persons of color. I am not so naïve as to think that learning together is easy, but you do this every day, you do it peacefully, you learn to work with and value people who come from dramatically different backgrounds, and you are ambassadors for collaboration and peace as you take that experience into the global marketplace. In this spirit, it is important to recognize that our Russian students are not our enemies and they, as do many Russians throughout the Upstate and the country, also stand in solidarity with Ukraine. I ask you to extend grace and kindness to *all* students, faculty, staff, and alumni who are impacted as the events in Ukraine continue to unfold.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie L. Harris".

Dr. Bennie L. Harris
Chancellor