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**School District Five hosts UofSC president**

**IRMO** –Lexington-Richland School District Five hosted University of South Carolina President Bob Caslen, along with College of Education staff, on Nov. 22 to discuss the benefits of being a Professional Development School District (PDS-D).

During the visit, President Caslen also spoke to School District Five students from each high school, answering their questions about college and hearing how School District Five has prepared them for college and careers.

“The university’s partnership with School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties is vital to the development of the next generation of teachers, Caslen said. “I always enjoy meeting high school students from across the state who are full of optimism and excitement about their futures. We must continue to work hard to ensure that post-secondary education is accessible and affordable to all students so they can fulfill their academic goals.”

In 2017, School District Five Superintendent Dr. Christina Melton and USC officials met to discuss and develop the idea to become the first ever professional development school district (PDS-D) of its kind in the nation. It became a reality in the 2018-2019 academic year.

“This is a landmark initiative with exciting implications for our district and public education as a whole,” Melton said. “PDS-D is intended to wrap services to support the whole child, bringing in several colleges from the university into our schools. This will allow for laboratory learning, best practices, up-to-date research implementation and professional development led by specialist for our educators. We are honored to be the first PDS-D partnership of this kind in the nation.”

Through the National Association for Professional Development Schools, professional development schools (PDS) nationwide are partnerships between university education departments and schools to prepare new teachers, offer faculty training, help improve classroom practices and enhance student achievement.

Schools in South Carolina must apply to the University of South Carolina and be approved through a rigorous review process before receiving the PDS designation. In School District Five, there already are five Professional Development Schools: Irmo Middle School, Oak Pointe Elementary School, Irmo Elementary School, Irmo High School, and Dutch Fork High School. There are 23 active PDS sites in six Midlands school districts.

“Central to the success of PK-12 education in our state is the nurturing of strong partnerships between colleges of education and school districts. For 28 years, the College of Education has been a national leader in combining school improvement with the preparation of teachers through our Professional Development Schools network,” said Jon Pedersen, dean of the College of Education. “Our long history



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is only strengthened through our new endeavor, a Professional Development School-District, with Lexington-Richland Five. Together we will continue to transform the lives of our future teachers and the students they teach by supporting the whole child.”