

SC Higher Education Hall of Fame Banquet

September 23, 2008

COLUMBIA, SC – On Wednesday, September 23, 2008, the Harry M. Lightsey, Jr. Society officially inducted The Honorable Richard W. Riley into the South Carolina Higher Education Hall of Fame at a black-tie banquet held at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

The South Carolina Higher Education Foundation, Inc. was created as a partner to support the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) in its advocacy role for the state's public and private institutions of higher learning. The SC Higher Education Foundation's mission is to provide funding for statewide CHE programs that fall outside the scope of state funding.

"We started the foundation 8 years ago to advocate for a broad range of topics including better alignment of the K-12 and the post-secondary programs, better campus safety, and improved teaching in our colleges," said Dalton Floyd, current President of the Foundation. "Two years ago we created the Lightsey Society to honor those who have contributed in extraordinary ways to higher education in South Carolina and to encourage others to excel in their efforts on behalf of higher learning. We are honored to have Governor Riley as this year's recipient."

Few in South Carolina's history have embraced education issues and fought for reform with the passion and compassion of Richard Wilson Riley. He is an esteemed education leader, visionary, beloved governor of South Carolina (1979–87), U.S. Secretary of Education (1993–2001), public servant, lawyer, statesman, devoted husband, father, and grandfather. His hard work and many accomplishments have positively impacted untold lives.

A native of South Carolina, Riley was born in Greenville County. In 1954, he graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in political science from Furman University. After serving two years as an officer on a U.S. Navy minesweeper, he went on to earn a law degree in 1959 from the University of South Carolina. He started his political career when he was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1960.

"Harry Lightsey was a wonderful human being and a wonderful educator. I am so honored to receive this award," said Governor Riley.

In his acceptance speech, Governor Riley also touched on a couple of key themes for education.

College readiness for all children

In order to be prepared for the 21st century economy, students need to develop a host of skills that go far beyond simply learning the curriculum. Reading, writing, presenting, working cooperatively with others, problem solving, and serving your community are also critical skills.

College attainment

We have lost ground in our ability to get our children through college. In 1995, the United States ranked 2nd in the world in college attainment (the percentage of the population with a college degree). In 2005, we were 15th. The ultimate goal of higher education should be to enhance the power of rational analysis, intellectual precision, independent judgment and to encourage mental adaptability. We need good teachers to help achieve these lofty goals.

In addressing the current financial challenges facing colleges and universities, Governor Riley has this to offer: "When the going gets tough, the tough get creative".