



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 3, 2015

### **Chamber President to Attend National Conference on Closing Achievement Gaps for African-American Students**

Wilmington, N.C. — Wilmington Chamber President & CEO Connie Majure-Rhett has accepted an invitation to attend a conference being co-hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (USCCF) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on December 10-11, 2015, in Washington, DC. The program—The Path Forward: Improving Opportunities for African-American Students—will further the national discourse on closing achievement gaps for African-American students while attracting the support of business leaders, civil rights leaders, and policymakers. It will serve as an opportunity for local chamber of commerce and business leaders and local NAACP chapter leaders to partner together and create strategies to address African-American student achievement.

Although there has been improvement in our education system, data show that African-American students continue to experience lower academic achievement scores, greater high school dropout rates, and lower postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates than their white peers—and in some cases, their Hispanic peers. Whereas some gaps have narrowed, the effects have not been significant enough to result in the needed improvement in outcomes for African-American students.

“The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is committed to advocating for the best education and resources needed to succeed academically for all students,” said Chamber President & CEO Connie Majure-Rhett. “The information presented at this conference will help us enhance our work with the Blue Ribbon Commission and through programs such as the Youth Enrichment Zone Summer Initiative by providing new ideas and avenues for achievement.”

At the event, USCCF will release an education report on the status of African-American student achievement in the United States. The report will help set the context that more must be done to close the achievement gap for African-American students.

Confirmed speakers include:

Margaret Spellings, UNC System President -Elect

Cornell Brooks, President and CEO, NAACP

Billy Canary, President and CEO, Business Council of Alabama

Dr. Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools

Dr. Rudolph F. Crew, President, Medgar-Evers College

Tom Dawson, Senior Vice President, Partnerships and Operations, USA Funds

LaTasha Dandy, Engineering Leadership Development Program Rep, Lockheed Martin  
Thomas J. Donohue, President and CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
Frederick Hess, Director of Education Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute  
Dr. John H. Jackson, President and CEO, Schott Foundation  
Alex Johnston, President and Founder, Impact for Education  
Roland S. Martin, Host / Managing Editor, News One Now  
Rich McKeon, Director of The Helmsley Education Program, The Leona M. and Harry B.  
Helmsley Charitable Trust  
Terrence Roberts, CEO, Terrence Roberts Consulting; "Little Rock Nine" student  
Stefanie Sanford, Chief of Global Policy and Advocacy, College Board  
The Honorable Tim Scott, United States Senator (SC)  
Shaheena Simons, Deputy Chief, U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division  
Ryan Smith, Executive Director, The Education Trust – West  
Aaron D. Spears, Actor  
Chris Steinhauser, Superintendent, Long Beach Unified School District  
Greg Toppo, National K-12 Education Writer, *USA Today*  
Caroline Wanga, Senior Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Target  
Juan Williams, author, journalist, political analyst, Fox News Channel

Travel expenses to attend the conference are being covered by the organizers.

***About the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce***

The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is the largest membership-based business association in Southeastern North Carolina. The Chamber's mission is to ensure economic prosperity throughout our region. This is accomplished by: creating a diverse, inclusive organization that serves as a strong voice for businesses in the Greater Wilmington area; offering unique membership benefits, services and education; and challenging government officials to address long term community and business interests.

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