Message to Campus, 16 December 2008

Dear Faculty and Staff,

I do not have to tell you that these are trying economic times. We have all felt the sting one way or another, and The Citadel is no exception. If we all pull together The Citadel will better be able to overcome the challenges it faces. That is why I think it is absolutely essential that I keep you informed of what we are confronting and how we plan on moving forward. I want to share with you my plans for keeping you informed and engaged as we take the steps necessary to implement cuts in this year’s budget and develop our 2009-2010 budget with a substantially reduced level of state support.

When we began the 2008-2009 fiscal year on July 1, the state had already demanded a cut amounting to about $1 million. At the end of October, the state further reduced our state appropriation by nearly 15 percent. To date we have had to absorb a 16.83 percent cut in state funding totaling over $2.7 million.

A recent update by the chief economist for the state Board of Economic Advisors projects still further declines in tax revenues and anticipates a very sluggish recovery for the state economy that may take two to three years. In the face of these harsh realities, the governor and legislative leaders have asked state agencies again to be prepared for the possibility of further cuts to the state appropriated portion of our budgets for the current fiscal year. After Governor Sanford asked us to prepare for a four percent reduction in state funds to The Citadel, the state Budget and Control Board recommended recently a seven percent cut of $948,322 from this year’s budget.

Just a few days ago, the Office of State Budget asked us to plan for a 15 percent reduction in our state appropriation for the 2009-2010 year. That 15 percent would come from our already reduced state appropriation of $13.5 million. As you think about this challenge I want to remind you that our state appropriated funds constituted approximately 18 percent of our total budget at the beginning of this fiscal year. With the already imposed budget cuts and those that are no doubt around the corner, the percentage of our budget that comes from our state appropriation will drop to 10 percent or less.

We have worked hard to stay as far ahead of these cuts as possible. Attached to this communication are the two memoranda I sent out to the senior staff, deans, directors and department chairs earlier this semester to help us plan for what were then the anticipated budget cuts. These and other relevant documents pertaining to our current budget predicament will be posted on a web site we are establishing in the next week so that we can involve The Citadel community in an ongoing dialogue about how – together – we can meet this very serious challenge. I hope you will keep abreast of these developments and give us your ideas for how we can best deal with this budget reduction.
As part of my effort to keep you informed, I am scheduling a Town Hall meeting in Buyer Auditorium, Mark Clark Hall, at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 13 January 2009. At that time I will provide up-to-date information and try to answer any questions you might have about the challenges we face.

Our response to these challenges must be ongoing and it must be careful to focus on our priorities. I have asked BG Hines to chair a newly created Fiscal Review Board to ensure that any new obligations to our current or next year’s budget are given a thorough review and that new hires, salary increases, position upgrades, construction projects, and significant equipment purchases are only authorized if there is a compelling justification that is consistent with our mission and strategic initiatives. This Fiscal Review Board meets on Tuesday afternoons at 3 p.m. or as needed to review requests. Those meetings are open, except when there might be a need to discuss specific personnel matters, which would require an executive session. The charge to the FRB and announcements of its meetings will be posted on the web site.

There is no denying that the crisis is deepening and widening and that we will have to make some difficult decisions in order to ensure that our number one priority – the education and development of principled leaders – determines the allocation of our precious human and material resources. We have increased the delay in hiring some of our positions, and we are indefinitely suspending searches for some others.

We are trying to avoid the necessity of lay-offs or furloughs as a result of the seven percent cut. However, we must be prepared to consider all options, except one: there will not be a mid-year increase in the cost to attend The Citadel.

As we look ahead, all areas of the college – without exception – are being asked to show how they can help meet a 15 percent reduction in our next year’s state allocation, just as they have all contributed to meeting our current cuts to the state appropriation.

I am sure we all feel some anxiety as we face these very insecure times. Staying in touch with one another is the best way to gain a sense of control over what is happening. If you hear something and are disturbed by it, let your supervisor know and ask for the facts or contact directly myself or senior leadership for clarification.

As always, I want to thank each of you for your dedication and loyalty to The Citadel. You are all members of the Citadel family and are our most important resource. On behalf of the Board of Visitors and the administration, please know how much we appreciate everything you do for The Citadel. We are all counting on each other to do our part in these challenging times. Together we will be able to sustain our efforts to make this great institution even greater.

John W. Rosa
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)
President, The Citadel