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## Substantive Change Prospectus Section 2. Background Information- Final Narrative

Georgia Southern University

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## 2. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Provide a clear statement of the nature and purpose of the change in the context of the institution's mission and goals and provide evidence of the legal authority for the change (if authorization is required by the governing board or the state).

### **Nature and Purpose of Consolidation in the Context of the Governing Board's Strategic Initiatives**

In his September 14, 2011, report to the University System of Georgia (USG) Board of Regents (BOR), Chancellor Henry (Hank) Huckaby announced that a study would be conducted to determine if "any campus consolidations would further our teaching, research, and service missions in a more fiscally prudent way." On November 8, 2011, the USG Board of Regents formed a Special Consolidation Committee of board members and approved six principles for assessing potential institutional consolidations (**Appendix 2.1**):

1. Increase opportunities to raise education attainment levels;
2. Improve accessibility, regional identity, and compatibility;
3. Avoid duplication of academic programs while optimizing access to instruction;
4. Create significant potential for economies of scale and scope;
5. Enhance regional economic development; and
6. Streamline administrative services while maintaining or improving service level and quality.

In January 2012, the USG announced the proposed consolidation of eight of the 35 public institutions in the USG based on the findings from the BOR's 2011 study and the principles for assessing potential consolidations. By December 2012, the prospectuses for all four proposed institutional consolidations were approved by SACSCOC, effective January 2013. By the end of 2013, all four of the newly consolidated institutions had successfully completed their SACSCOC Substantive Change Committee visits and compliance reviews and were operating as fully consolidated institutions. In January 2015, a fifth institutional consolidation (round two) of two more USG institutions became effective. Rounds three and four resulted in the consolidation of two additional institutions in January 2016 and two more institutions in January 2017. Following the success of these four previous rounds of institutional consolidations, newly appointed Chancellor Steve Wrigley publicly announced the fifth round of two more consolidations on January 11, 2017 (**Appendix 2.2**), recommending the consolidation of Georgia Southern University (GaSou) and Armstrong State University (Armstrong) as well as Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and Bainbridge State College.

Consolidations in the USG have involved all levels of institutions in many different regions of the state. Seven institutional pairings within the University System of Georgia have been consolidated to date by the Board of Regents. Two of the USG's four research universities have undergone consolidation. One of those consolidations, involving Georgia State University, created a multi-campus metropolitan Atlanta institution with over 51,000 students. One of the System's four comprehensive universities, Kennesaw State University, underwent consolidation with Southern Polytechnic State University and now enrolls 35,000 students. GaSou will be the second of the comprehensive universities to be consolidated and is expected to have an enrollment of 28,000, post-consolidation. Three state universities and

one state college in the System have undergone consolidation and range in enrollment from 18,000 to 2,500 students. In addition to the GaSou consolidation, round five includes the consolidation of two state colleges in South Georgia.

According to Chancellor Wrigley's January 6, 2017 recommendation (**Appendix 2.3**), the proposed consolidation of GaSou and Armstrong will "create one institution with expanded regional presence" and "tailored degree programs for the coastal region." This new GaSou will be "positioned to significantly enhance the University System's economic impact for this area." Consolidation will provide the opportunity for the new GaSou to:

- Create an institution of more than 27,000 students, making it the fourth largest public university in Georgia.
- Create a more comprehensive university that serves the needs of the region with a range of degree programs for high demand careers, such as engineering and health care.
- Expand upon Armstrong's expertise as the University System's largest producer of undergraduate health professionals.
- Create opportunities for raising graduation rates for students with Georgia Southern's best practices.
- Build on Armstrong's nationally recognized leadership in supporting student veterans and active-duty military, which will enable the new institution to reach a much larger student population.
- Reinvest savings from administrative efficiencies into programs to support student success.
- Ensure the new Georgia Southern University's Savannah campus offerings effectively balance with and complement those provided by Savannah State University.

The BOR approved Chancellor Wrigley's proposal to pursue consolidation, pending SACSCOC approval, at the January 2017 Board of Regents meeting and identified GaSou President Jaimie Hebert as the proposed CEO of the consolidated GaSou. On January 26, 2017, the Consolidation Implementation Committee (CIC) was appointed, and representatives from both GaSou and Armstrong began the work of planning and implementing the institutional consolidation.

GaSou and Armstrong have operated separately as Level VI and Level V SACSCOC institutions respectively, under BOR-approved mission statements, presented below. One of the first tasks of the newly formed CIC was to combine these two complementary statements into a new mission statement directing the future of the new GaSou.

### **Current Georgia Southern University Mission:**

*Georgia Southern University is a public, Carnegie Doctoral/Research university devoted to academic distinction in teaching, scholarship, and service. The University's hallmark is a culture of engagement that bridges theory with practice, extends the learning environment beyond the classroom, and promotes student growth and life success. Georgia Southern's nationally accredited academic programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies prepare a diverse and select undergraduate and graduate student population for leadership and service as world citizens. Faculty, staff, and students embrace core values expressed through integrity, civility, kindness, collaboration, and a commitment to lifelong learning,*

*wellness, and social responsibility.*

*Central to the University's mission is the faculty's dedication to excellence in teaching and the development of a fertile learning environment exemplified by a free exchange of ideas, high academic expectations, and individual responsibility for academic achievement. Georgia Southern faculty are teacher-scholars whose primary responsibility is the creation of learning experiences of the highest quality, informed by scholarly practice, research, and creative activities. The University offers a student-centered environment enhanced by technology, transcultural experiences, private and public partnerships, and stewardship of a safe residential campus recognized for its natural beauty.*

*Georgia Southern University is committed to advancing the State of Georgia and the region through the benefits of higher education, offering baccalaureate through doctoral degrees and a variety of outreach programs. The University fosters access to its educational programs, provides a comprehensive and fulfilling university experience, and enhances quality of life in the region through collaborative relationships supporting education, health care and human services, cultural experiences, scientific and technological advancement, athletics, and regional development.*

#### **Current Armstrong State University Mission:**

*Armstrong is teaching-centered and student-focused, providing diverse learning experiences and professional programs grounded in the liberal arts.*

Drawing on the strengths of both institutions, an OWG developed the following new mission statement and recommended its adoption at the April 7, 2017 CIC meeting. BOR approval followed on April 19, 2017 (**Appendix 2.4**):

#### **New Mission Statement:**

Georgia Southern University is a public comprehensive and Carnegie Doctoral/Research university offering associate, bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in nationally accredited programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional disciplines.

The University provides transformative learning opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse student population through its legacy of commitment to academic excellence and personal attention. Through the shared resources of its multiple locations, the University creates vibrant learning environments that foster an inclusive, student-centered culture of engagement designed to prepare students for lifelong service as scholars, leaders, and responsible stewards of their communities. The University enhances the quality of life and drives economic development in the Coastal Georgia region, the State of Georgia, and beyond by supporting collaborative efforts in technological innovation, scientific advancement, education, health services, artistic creativity, and cultural enrichment. Faculty, staff, and students embrace the values of integrity, civility, kindness, respect, sustainability, citizenship, and social responsibility in every facet of the University.

## **Legal Authority for Consolidation:**

The Board of Regents is the governing board for the 28 institutions of the University System of Georgia, which includes GaSou and Armstrong. The Board of Regents was created by the Georgia Legislature in 1931 as “Regents of the University System of Georgia” to oversee and manage all state colleges and universities. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia has the legal authority to consolidate GaSou and Armstrong based on authority vested in them as stated in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (OCGA), Section 20-3-31 (**Appendix 2.5**):

The Board of Regents shall have power:

1. To make such reasonable rules and regulations as are necessary for the performance of its duties;
2. To elect or appoint professors, educators, stewards, or any other officers necessary for all of the schools in the university system, as may be authorized by the General Assembly; to discontinue or remove them as the good of the system or any of its schools or institutions or stations may require; and to fix their compensations;
3. To establish all such schools of learning or art as may be useful to the state and to organize them in the way most likely to attain the ends desired; and
4. To exercise any power usually granted to such corporation, necessary to its usefulness, which is not in conflict with the constitution and laws of this state.

In addition, Article I, Section 2 of the Board of Regents Bylaws (**Appendix 2.6**) clearly articulates the authority of the Board over its member institutions:

The charter of the Board of Regents consists of the original charter of the Trustees of the University of Georgia embodied in the Act of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia approved January 27, 1785, and modified by a subsequent Act of the General Assembly of Georgia in 1931, as follows: Be it further enacted by the Authority foresaid, that there is hereby set up and constituted a department of the State Government of Georgia, to be known as the “Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.” The name of the corporation heretofore established and existing under the name and style, “Trustees of the University of Georgia” be and the same is hereby changed to “Regents of the University System of Georgia.”

The government, control, and management of the University System of Georgia and each of its institutions are vested by the people of Georgia exclusively with the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The Board of Regents possesses such other authority as is granted by the Constitution of the State of Georgia and by acts of the General Assembly.

As noted above, the Board of Regents has exercised its legal authority to pursue consolidation of GaSou and Armstrong. However, as documented, in Section 3 (Assessment of Need) of this prospectus, the governing board delegated substantial responsibility and authority to the chancellor and his staff, who in turn charged the institutions’ presidents, faculty, staff, and administrators to devise and take appropriate actions to implement this institutional consolidation. With this delegated authority, the chancellor expects the implementation of this consolidation to occur in a manner consistent with the Board’s intent,

the best interests of the citizens of Georgia, and the policies, requirements, and standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

Substantive changes relating to actions required to consolidate these two institutions and form the new GaSou have emerged from collaborations among System and campus governance processes and the authorities delegated to the individuals involved in them, with approvals of the governing board where needed.

### **Campus Locations of the Consolidated Georgia Southern:**

The main campus of the current Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia will be the main campus of the consolidated Georgia Southern University, and the central administration, including all Vice Presidents - with the exception of the Vice President for Armstrong and Liberty Campus Operations - will reside in Statesboro. The Vice President for Armstrong and Liberty Campus Operations will reside at the Savannah campus. Armstrong's current main campus in Savannah, Georgia and its Liberty Center in Hinesville, Georgia, will function as off-campus instructional sites of the consolidated GaSou. There will be no branch campuses as SACSCOC defines such entities.

### **Appendices**

- 2.1 Board of Regents Guiding Principles for Consolidation
- 2.2 Board of Regents Approves Consolidation of GaSou and Armstrong
- 2.3 Chancellor's Recommendation 01062017
- 2.4 Board of Regents Approves GaSou Mission Statement
- 2.5 Official Code of Georgia 20-3-1 Authority of the Board
- 2.6 Board of Regents Bylaws Article I Section 2 Authority of the Board