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Substantive Change Prospectus Section 10. Evaluation and Assessment- Final Narrative

Georgia Southern University

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10. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Describe how the institution assesses overall institutional effectiveness as well as the means used to monitor and ensure the quality of the changes. Summarize procedures for systematic evaluation of instructional results, including the process for monitoring and evaluating programs as well as using the results of evaluation to improve institutional programs, services, and operations. Explain how this change has affected your institution's strategic planning including the development of annual campus master plans.

As separate institutions governed by the University System of Georgia's Board of Regents (BOR) and accredited by SACSCOC, both GaSou and Armstrong are subject to policies and procedures pertaining to institutional effectiveness and evaluation. BOR Policy 2.9, "Institutional Effectiveness: Planning and Assessment" (**Appendix 10.1**), mandates that each institution implement "a strategic planning process that maintains a current strategic plan in which institutional priorities are defined and through which the institution's mission is carried out." Additionally, each institution should "have a formal process by which systematic assessment of institutional effectiveness is conducted and the results of assessments are used to achieve institutional improvement." Adherence to these BOR policies provides evidence of compliance with SACSCOC Core Requirement 2.5 (CR 2.5) and Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1 (CS 3.3.1). Armstrong's reaffirmation of accreditation by SACSCOC in 2013 and GaSou's reaffirmation in 2015 also attest to each institution's adherence to both USG and SACSCOC requirements in support of evaluation and assessment.

Maintaining Institutional Commitment to the University System of Georgia's Strategic Imperatives

The current strategic direction established by the Board of Regents four years ago entitled, "Strategic Plan and Public Agenda of the University System of Georgia 2013-2018," (**Appendix 10.2**) remains in force and is unchanged as a result of ongoing institutional consolidations in the USG. In fact, institutional consolidations are notable contributors to the achievement of the governing board's Strategic Imperative 3: Commitment to Accountability & Efficiency and Leadership in Higher Education Innovation. That document describes the USG's overall challenge or vision for the future with these words, "The University System of Georgia will create a more educated Georgia that is prepared for the global, knowledge economy by increasing degree completion, ensuring academic excellence, spurring research and creativity, driving business creation, and making effective and efficient use of resources." The framework of the USG Strategic Plan is based on three "Strategic Imperatives," each of which is supported by several key objectives. The strategic imperatives are:

- 1) Strategic Imperative 1: Commitment to Academic Excellence and Degree Completion
- 2) Strategic Imperative 2: Commitment to Economic Development and World Class Research

3) Strategic Imperative 3: Commitment to Accountability & Efficiency and Leadership in Higher Education Innovation

As would be expected, the current strategic plans of GaSou and Armstrong contain strategic themes and goals that are consistent with the strategic initiatives of the governing board for the USG and its public agenda.

Armstrong State's Current Strategic Plan

Over seven years ago in 2010, Armstrong unveiled its current Strategic Plan entitled, "Charting Excellence Together" (**Appendix 10.3**). In 2015, the university published a five-year report (**Appendix 10.4**) on its progress and accomplishments during the first five years of that strategic plan's implementation. The Plan's five strategic goals were summarized in that report as follows:

- 1) Armstrong will foster Student Success
- 2) Armstrong will ensure Transformative Learning
- 3) Armstrong will Modernize and Expand Technologies campus wide
- 4) Armstrong will Strengthen and Diversify Its Financial Base and resources
- 5) Armstrong will Enhance Its Image and Visibility

The 2015 progress report cited numerous advances achieved by the university in those first five years of the current Strategic Plan. The Plan has been instrumental in reinforcing the core values of the institution and uniting faculty and staff around important strategic objectives, many of which have been tightly aligned with the USG's strategic imperatives.

Nevertheless, the age of ASU's current Strategic Plan, the retirement of the university's immediate past president in 2017, and the recent and unexpected opportunity to become an integral part of a much larger and more comprehensive consolidated Georgia Southern University in 2018 will lead immediately to a timely reexamination over the next 18-24 months of the new institution's vision, strategic goals, and action plans as campus-wide representatives forge a new Strategic Plan for the consolidated Georgia Southern University.

GaSou's Current Strategic Plan

Begun in 2011 and last updated in 2013, GaSou's current Strategic Plan (called *Strategic Planning*, **Appendix 10.5**) emphasizes an ongoing strategic planning process in which the University's leadership periodically convenes to review and develop action items that advance the institution's vision and goals. Those action items receive campus-wide review and comment before study teams are formed to move those action items forward.

The framework of GaSou's current Plan includes a Strategic Vision statement, which calls for the University "to be recognized as one of the best public doctoral-research universities in the country within the next ten years." Achievement of that strategic vision remains viable and could be advanced significantly as a result of institutional consolidation.

The Plan's framework also includes four strategic themes under which 3 to 6 objectives are listed. Those strategic themes are:

- 1) Promote Academic Excellence

- 2) Enhance Student Success
- 3) Increase Research, Scholarship and Creative Achievement
- 4) Maintain Fiscal Sustainability

Clearly, there is substantial overlap among the strategic priorities of the USG, GaSou, and Armstrong, especially in the areas of academic excellence, student success, and fiscal sustainability. However, with Georgia Southern being a Level VI institution in SACSCOC, a Comprehensive University in the institutional classifications of the USG, and a Carnegie Doctoral Research University, with a more comprehensive array of graduate and doctoral programs than a Level V, State University, it is to be expected that GaSou has had a greater strategic commitment to expanding its research and economic development mission than Armstrong as reflected in GaSou's strategic theme #3. Here again, the expanded involvement of the new GaSou in Savannah should provide a substantial boost for advancing that strategic theme of increasing research, scholarship and creative activity consistent with the governing board's expectations for the USG's Comprehensive Universities.

As is the case at ASU, the age of GaSou's current Strategic Plan, the relatively recent appointment of the current GaSou CEO and lead president for consolidation, and the proposed consolidation of a new GaSou in 2018 will lead immediately to a timely reexamination over the next 18-24 months of the new institution's vision, strategic goals, and action plans as campus-wide representatives forge a new Strategic Plan for the consolidated Georgia Southern University. In the meantime before that new Plan is developed and adopted, the more comprehensive vision statement and set of strategic themes in the current GaSou Strategic Plan are expected to guide strategic planning in the new GaSou, post-consolidation.

Plans for Creating a Strategic Plan for the New Georgia Southern and Evaluating Overall Institutional Effectiveness

On July 26, 2017, the Consolidation Implementation Committee (CIC) approved a recommendation of OWG 22 (University Policy Mergers & Handbooks) which stated that if "a new policy and/or procedure(s) for the consolidated Georgia Southern University has/have not been approved, then the prior Georgia Southern University policy and procedure(s) on that topic should be followed" post-consolidation (**Appendix 10.6**). GaSou has existing policies governing institutional effectiveness, strategic planning, and program/unit assessment, and no changes to those existing policies have been proposed and approved to date. Consequently, the new GaSou's institutional effectiveness and assessment practices will be guided by the Institutional Effectiveness Policy and Academic Assessment Policy (**Appendices 10.7 and 10.8**) formally adopted by GaSou years ago prior to consolidation.

GaSou's Institutional Effectiveness Policy ensures that "planning and decision-making are grounded in the University's Mission and strategic planning and implementation processes are comprehensive, ongoing, and reviewed periodically". A new, jointly developed mission statement, which drew on the strengths of both GaSou and Armstrong, was approved at the April 7, 2017 CIC meeting and subsequently by the governing board (BOR) on April 19, 2017. Strategic planning and decision-making for the new GaSou will, therefore, be grounded in this new mission statement for the consolidated GaSou which declares:

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.

GaSou's Institutional Effectiveness Policy will provide initial guidance for the strategic planning process of the consolidated university. The process described in the IE Policy is institution-wide, collaborative, and on-going. That process produces a Strategic Plan that is developed to achieve the mission of the consolidated GaSou, including goals, objectives, implementation strategies, estimates for budgetary allocations, and timelines for ensuring progress and achievement of expectations. An on-going review process is also referenced in the policy. The strategic goals of the consolidated GaSou and the ongoing reviews will be addressed in the Administrative, Student Affairs, College and Departmental Academic assessment practices, as outlined in GaSou's IE Policy.

The groundwork for the development of a Strategic Plan for the new GaSou will continue early-mid Fall 2017, guided by the new mission statement. The formal kickoff for campus-wide involvement in the creation of a new Strategic Plan will occur in the spring of 2018 after the consolidation has been approved by SACSCOC and implemented by the BOR. A rough timeline for the strategic planning process is presented below. This timeline will be largely dependent on the implementation timeline, and will, therefore, be refined as the implementation unfolds.

Early to Mid Fall 2017: Current cabinet members and cabinet members named for the new university will generate lists of internal and external factors that may impact the implementation and progress of the new institution.

Mid to late Fall 2017: Data and information gathered in the previous step will be compiled into a draft Environmental Scan and discussions will begin to implement a SWOT analysis.

Spring 2018: A visioning process to identify opportunities will be launched and will incorporate the larger university community.

Late Spring 2018: A strategic planning steering committee will be established and charged with formalizing the SWOT analysis from all data gathered in Fall/Spring.

Fall 2018: During this first fall semester of consolidation implementation, a formal strategic planning process will be launched by the steering committee, utilizing the preliminary data gathered during the previous academic year, following the directions for Strategic Planning in GaSou's Institutional Effectiveness Policy.

Spring 2019: The new strategic plan will be adopted and published, and will begin to be coordinated with the budgeting process.

Important groundwork already completed for strategic planning was accomplished during the formulation of the new Mission Statement for the consolidated GaSou early in 2017. As part of that process, the former mission statements, core values, and strategic themes and goals of the two institutions were compared and contrasted, yielding a rich blend of mission commitments for the consolidated university going forward as reflected in the new mission statement. By carefully examining each sentence of the new Mission Statement as is done below, important guidance for strategic goal setting in the coming year can be discerned as follows:

- *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.*

This mission assertion reaffirms continuation of the current Georgia Southern University's status in the nation, SACSCOC, and the USG, which is more comprehensive academically, more graduate and doctoral-level, and more research-oriented than Armstrong's current institutional status and mission. Among the more comprehensive set of nationally accredited professional programs at GaSou than at Armstrong are the degree program offerings in various business and engineering fields of study. However, this statement also includes a commitment to offering associate degree programs, which are currently a part of Armstrong's educational mission, but not the current GaSou's mission. During the process of consolidation planning in 2017, the number of associate degree offerings that have been publicized by ASU to date will be reduced in 2018, but the content for them will not be discontinued in actual practice since such content will continue to be offered as part of ongoing transfer associate and bachelor degree programs. At most, a small set of associate degree offerings is expected by the governing board in its Institutional Mission policy for Comprehensive Universities in the USG (see BOR Policy Manual 2.10, **Appendix 10.9**), which is what is reflected in the list of continuing degree programs in the Institutional Summary Form for the new GaSou.

- *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.*

Armstrong's current and explicit use of "transformative" educational experiences has been adopted in this mission assertion for the new GaSou. Both institutions currently strongly affirm their commitment to academic excellence which is reaffirmed here. As is noted in an earlier section of this prospectus, both institutions are also committed to relatively small class sizes and personal attention, which are affirmed here as well going forward. Both institutions are

committed to serving a diverse student population and to meeting their needs. Meeting those needs requires intentional efforts to facilitate student success and degree completion, consistent with the governing board's strategic imperative.

- *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.*

Here too, Armstrong's explicit commitment to its core value of civic engagement through outreach and community service has been included in the new mission statement. Both institutions currently strongly affirm their commitment to student success which is reflected through an inclusive, student-centered culture.

- *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.*

Expansion of the institution's basic and applied research and service contributions to economic development, which is clearly reinforced in one of GaSou's current strategic themes, is reinforced here and expanded to encompass the coastal Georgia region that includes Savannah. This is consistent with the USG's Strategic Plan, the BOR's mission for Comprehensive Universities, and the objectives of this consolidation.

- *Faculty, staff, and students embrace the values of integrity, civility, kindness, respect, sustainability, citizenship, and social responsibility in every facet of the University.*

In today's social environment, these ideals are sorely needed among our citizens. Armstrong has been explicitly committed to their advancement, and GaSou has been supportive as well. Their inclusion in the mission statement for the new GaSou underscores their importance in this new educational enterprise.

- **Vision Statement.** Both institutions reference a vision statement in different ways. Armstrong's is reflected in Strategic Goal #5 which calls for an enhanced and visible university image. GaSou's is more explicit and separate from its strategic themes. Its separate Vision Statement ambitiously calls for GaSou to be recognized as one of the best public doctoral-research universities in the country within the next ten years." The consolidated GaSou should continue to aspire to this more explicit and higher calling.

The consolidated GaSou will follow its new mission statement as interpreted above and the Interim Strategic Plan with its five strategic priorities until the new Strategic Plan is constructed and adopted.

Academic, Administrative and Student Support Services Assessment and Program Evaluation

Both GaSou and Armstrong have maintained ongoing, institution-wide commitment to effective assessment processes, in compliance with BOR policy and SASCOC CR 2.5 and CS 3.3.1. Decisions regarding systematic evaluation of program-level student learning outcome instructional results for the new GaSou will be guided by the processes outlined in GaSou's Academic Assessment Policy (**Appendix 10.8**). Each of the educational degree programs of the consolidated GaSou will continue to identify expected student learning outcomes at the program level, assess the extent to which these outcomes are achieved, and use the results to improve the educational programs and maximize student learning outcomes. Institutional procedures outlined in the Academic Assessment Policy include the documentation of expected learning outcomes, direct measurement of these outcomes, analysis of the results, and the use of program assessment findings for program improvement and implementation. Academic Program Assessment Reports are collected and reviewed annually from educational degree programs which include all programs granting undergraduate or graduate degrees, certificate programs not embedded within degree programs, minor programs of study not associated with a major degree program, and the Core Curriculum.

The institution-wide Academic Assessment Policy was developed to align with the University System of Georgia Board of Regents Policy 2.9 (Institutional Effectiveness: Planning and Assessment), which also aligns with SACSCOC CS 3.3.1 and to ensure consistency across all degree programs on campus regardless of whether external specialized/professional accrediting bodies exist. The purpose and policy statement sections of the policy will continue to initially direct all degree programs in the new GaSou through an academic assessment process aimed at maximizing student learning. Although outcomes, curricula, and teaching strategies vary from program to program, the process includes common components, and is cyclic and on-going. The procedures section enumerates the following:

1. Faculty members in each program will develop appropriate student learning outcomes, measure the degree to which these outcomes are achieved and progress towards which the outcomes are achieved, collectively review student learning outcome data generated from measures, and identify strengths and weaknesses for making and implementing recommendations for maximizing student learning outcomes.
2. Faculty members in each program will be involved in annually developing an action plan to address weaknesses in the program identified during the assessment process follow the plan in the subsequent year(s) to investigate the success of the actions taken in promoting student learning.

Similarly, systematic evaluation of core curriculum student learning outcomes for the new GaSou will be guided by the processes outlined in GaSou's Core Curriculum (Core Areas A-E) Approval, Review, and Assessment Process Policy (**Appendix 10.10**). Faculty contributing to the Core Course Assessment process focus on Core Curriculum Student Learning Outcomes addressed in their courses; the types of measure and the relationship between measure and

outcome selected; data collection and integrity; targets; presentation of results; interpretations of results; prior year's action plans; and new action plan for next year.

Through implementing the procedures outlined in the policy and described above, results of actions taken the previous year are reassessed by program faculty and reported in the subsequent report cycle. The new GaSou will continue to ensure that all programs identify expected learning outcomes, assess the extent to which students achieve these outcomes, and provide evidence of achievement based upon the analysis of the results.

Administrative and student support services assessment in the new GaSou will initially follow the IE Policy, which is consistent with the Academic Assessment policy and includes the same cycle and process used for academic program assessment. All Administrative Affairs and Student and Academic Support Services' unit plans and reports will be reviewed annually by a team of Administrative, Academic and Student Support Services staff, to ensure each unit has a documented plan and report, including carefully planned strategies to achieve objectives that will align with the strategic goals of the consolidated GaSou, means of determining achievement of objectives, and planned actions to target weaknesses uncovered.

Also addressed in the IE Policy, academic administrative units incorporate assessment information in their College and Department Annual Reports, which are submitted to and reviewed by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in the summer of each year. These reports align with the strategic goals of the university and include a discussion of major findings and action plans from annual program assessment reports, and serve as a mechanism for budgetary requests for the following year.

Office of Institutional Effectiveness Coordination

According to GaSou's Institutional Effectiveness Policy and Academic Assessment Policy, coordination of GaSou's annual strategic planning process, institutional evaluations, and program/unit assessments is largely the responsibility of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, currently headed by Dr. Teresa Flateby, Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison who reports to the Provost. Coordination of the parallel functions at Armstrong are the responsibility of the Office of Assessment, headed by Dr. Angeles Eames, Director and SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, who reports to the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs. In the consolidated GaSou, these coordinating offices and their staffs will be merged into a single coordinating unit, consistent with GaSou policies on IE and Assessment. Because of the magnitude of SACSCOC responsibilities for institutional effectiveness and assessment documentation, and the upcoming Substantive Change Committee visit for the new GaSou, the consolidated Office of Institutional Effectiveness is not expected to cut back on any of the current support staff positions which are currently allocated to conduct these functions at GaSou and Armstrong.

Programmatic Accreditation

A number of programs from both GaSou and Armstrong currently have accreditation through specialized/professional agencies which utilize a diverse set of accreditation standards. Many of these accrediting agencies establish rigorous guidelines regarding student learning outcomes

assessment and provide institutions with another integrated layer of institutional effectiveness. Notification of external accreditors of the expected consolidated programs is ongoing at this time. Post-consolidation, these external reviews by recognized specialized and professional accrediting agencies will continue to provide an assessment of the quality of accredited programs, most focusing on identifying, measuring, and improving student learning outcomes. A full listing of the specialized accreditors for the new GaSou is found in the Institutional Summary form.

Comprehensive Program Review

Comprehensive Program Review is the University System of Georgia's process of systematically reviewing existing academic programs to maintain high standards, by ensuring a coherent course of study that is rigorous, appropriate for higher education, and compatible with the University mission. According to the University System of Georgia's policy 3.6.3 Comprehensive Academic Program Review (**Appendix 10.11**), each University System of Georgia institution conducts periodic academic program review to evaluate the effectiveness of its academic programs in regard to quality, viability, and productivity of efforts in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service and includes analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. This evidence will be reviewed within the context of the strategic plan. Core Curriculum is reviewed every five (5) years, undergraduate programs are reviewed at least every seven (7) years, and graduate programs at least every ten (10) years according to this policy. Prior to consolidation, GaSou and Armstrong have followed similar processes to comply with USG policy. Adherence to USG policy will continue in the consolidated GaSou, although the specific procedures will be determined during the implementation phase of consolidation, during academic year 2017-2018.

Future Master Plan for the Consolidated University

As an institution reporting to and governed by the Board of Regents, Georgia Southern University is required to have an approved campus master plan that documents its physical facilities and grounds, and guides the long-term physical growth of the university according to its approved mission. The master plan includes utility and infrastructure, desired building and functional adjacencies, appropriate locations for additional buildings, and opportunities for possible land acquisitions. The existing master plans for GaSou and Armstrong are being reviewed by the appropriate Operational Working Groups. After gathering relevant and necessary data for master planning during Fall, 2017, in Spring, 2018, the Facilities Division will embark on the procurement process to identify a firm to initiate the formal master planning process which will involve the newly consolidated Georgia Southern administration, faculty, staff, and students to prepare a single comprehensive future-state master plan. The new plan will detail current and proposed buildings, athletic sports fields, parking, intramural recreational fields, and infrastructure necessary to support the expanded GaSou.

Due to the similarities of the pre-consolidated Universities and the consolidated GaSou's programs and curricula, minimal changes are anticipated in the current physical configuration of campus locations, facilities, equipment and their operations. Facilities staff and managers will be strategically located and will be operating from multiple campus locations to provide necessary support in maintaining safe, clean and comfortable buildings and grounds that are required for instructional, library, student life, administrative and recreational functions.

The USG's standard annual processes that GaSou and Armstrong routinely have used to acquire funding for major and minor capital construction projects and major repair and renovation funding will continue to follow the existing USG procedures as well as the campus master plans and institutional priorities of the two institutions post-consolidation throughout the remainder of FY 2018 and into FY 2019 until a new campus master plan for the consolidated GaSou is completed.

Appendices

- 10.1 Board of Regents Policy 2.9
- 10.2 Strategic Plan and Public Agenda of the USG 2013-2018
- 10.3 Armstrong Strategic Plan 2010
- 10.4 Armstrong Strategic Plan Report 2015
- 10.5 GaSou Strategic Planning and Strategic Themes
- 10.6 OWG 22-1 Approved Recommendation 072617
- 10.7 GaSou Institutional Effectiveness Policy
- 10.8 GaSou Academic Assessment Policy
- 10.9 Board of Regents Policy 2.10
- 10.10 GaSou Core Curriculum Approval, Review, and Assessment Process Policy
- 10.11 Board of Regents Policy 3.6.3