Messages from the Provost

Georgia Southern University

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September 16, 2021: Public Impact Research

Dear Faculty,

We are all engaged in the Fall 2021 term and I hope you and your loved ones are well. With the completion of the first month of classes, I can report that the number of COVID-19 cases through the CARES Center continue to go down. Like last year, we saw an initial spike in cases during the first few weeks of classes, but they have steadily decreased since then. We remain vigilant, but we are encouraged because the number of cases this Fall are lower than last year. Please encourage your students to get vaccinated and wear face coverings. It really is our best defense. I can’t say this forcefully enough.

Public Impact Research

By now, you have heard Dr. Marrero and I use the phrase “public impact research.” I want to take a moment to explain what this term means for us as an institution, and what it means for you as individual faculty members.

What is Georgia Southern University’s identity? This is a vital question we must answer as we look to move the university forward. As competition for students, faculty, and funding increases, we need to identify what makes us unique compared to our peer institutions.

Georgia Southern University’s research activities focus on community engagement, economic support, and professional development in many forms. We are already known as a public impact research university. Faculty research, scholarship, and creative activities improve lives and serve our communities—locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. Our graduates take the skills and knowledge they developed in our classrooms and labs and go on to build careers that make the world a better place.

Within the theme of public impact research, we have identified five areas where we are particularly strong, where we have synergies across all three of our campuses. Those areas are:

- Coastal resilience and sustainability
- Community enrichment
- Holistic fitness and wellness
- Logistics and supply chain innovations
- Advanced materials and manufacturing

These areas answer the question: what is Georgia Southern University known for? They identify our current resources and capabilities, and areas where we can invest and reinforce. They are a way for us to communicate Georgia Southern’s unique identity to community partners, local chambers of commerce, regional economic authorities, external funding agencies, potential faculty hires, and prospective students and their families.

At first glance, some faculty members may be wondering where their research fits into this model. We appreciate those concerns and have intentionally kept these impact areas broad enough to include everyone. Whether your research is in the liberal arts and humanities or in mechanical engineering, every faculty member fits somewhere in this model. You can learn more about these impact areas on the Office of Research website.

As we move the university forward, I’m encouraging all faculty members to pursue more external activities and more external funding. Dr. Marrero has set ambitious goals with regard to research activities as we look to the next five years. These are achievable goals. There are numerous resources available to help you pursue and manage grants and awards through the Office of Research. I encourage you to visit their website and reach out to them.

Finally, all this affects student success, which is our primary mission. Student success will improve when our faculty engages in more public impact research. Good research and quality teaching go hand-in-hand. Public impact research will also enhance our academic reputation, which further benefits our students and graduates.
This is an exciting time for our university. Despite the pandemic, we have a lot of momentum propelling us forward toward excellence. It's an honor to serve this dynamic university alongside you. Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

Carl L. Reiber
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

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