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## Message from the President

Jaimie Hebert

Georgia Southern University, [jhebert@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:jhebert@georgiasouthern.edu)

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# Message from the President

**DECEMBER 1, 2017**

To the University Communities:

Today begins the final month of 2017, bringing an end to an historic year for Armstrong State University and Georgia Southern University. Next week, we will navigate the final approval processes in the consolidation of our institutions. I want to acknowledge and thank everyone on our campuses for the tremendous effort you have made to get us to this point.

In the coming days, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) will vote on the final prospectus for the new Georgia Southern, and shortly after this meeting, the Board of Regents will also vote.

When we return in January, pending these decisions, we will be one institution with three distinct campuses — one community moving forward together as a whole to shape and develop our new University. And while this milestone might feel like the finish line in this rigorous process, it is really only the beginning.

The possibilities and opportunities for our new University are great. But to take advantage of these opportunities will require that we proceed strategically and deliberately toward well defined goals and objectives for our new institution.

To facilitate this process, the new Georgia Southern University must initiate a strategic planning process immediately. While the timeline is ambitious, it is imperative that we launch and complete the initial planning process during the spring semester. This must be a process in which our faculty, staff and students all embark on a collective visioning process to imagine our future, define measurable goals and objectives, and agree on a common path to our future.

We have already initiated the first steps in this process. The President's Cabinet presented SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analyses in November, and the Deans will present their analyses later this month. The Student Government Associations, Faculty Senates and Staff Councils will present their SWOT analyses in January. Coupled with critical national and state trends in higher education, these analyses will provide the initial environmental scan for the new institution and will serve as the basis of our first strategic plan. The environmental scan will be completed by the end of January and a strategic planning steering committee will be charged in early February. We will have our three-year plan completed by June to facilitate the development of operational and fiscal plans for Fall 2018.

This planning process is not intended to merely collect our thoughts and ideas and archive them on a shelf. Our three-year, rolling strategic plan will be a living document that we will use as a guide through these initial years of implementation as we create this powerful new University. Our annual operational plans within the various divisions, as well as our annual budgeting process, will be tied directly to this strategic plan.

My hope is that all of us, everyone in our university community — now encompassing Savannah, Statesboro and Hinesville — will join together in this process. The past year was filled with discussion and compromise as we constructed the landscape of our new University. We must put that aspect of the consolidation behind us now, accept the landscape in which we will operate, and embrace a common, clear navigational path through this new landscape. We must be one collective voice on this journey if Georgia Southern University is to reach its full potential as an intellectual catalyst for the region.

You have all worked tirelessly to get us to this point, and I am very thankful for your dedication. I want to hear your best ideas to move the new Georgia Southern forward, as we create something truly remarkable for our community, our region and our state.

Jaimie Hebert

President