Messages from the Provost

Georgia Southern University

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May 15, 2020: Summer and Fall

Dear Faculty,

At virtual commencement this past weekend, we graduated nearly 4,000 students and had about 100,000 unique viewers and an estimated reach of more than 250,000 for the event's live stream on Facebook. It was an impressive experience to watch and participate in—and one, quite frankly, that many other schools didn't pull off as effectively as we did. Your hard work, flexibility, and creativity during this challenging time made this special moment possible for our students and their families. Thank you and congratulations on the conclusion of a successful year.

**Student Verification for Summer Term**

With the Spring semester now behind us, I want to turn our attention to Summer and Fall. On Monday, you received an email (via Trina Smith) from Dr. Christine Ludowise and Dr. Dustin Anderson regarding attendance verification for Summer. The transition to remote and online delivery for the Summer term has presented a new challenge with attendance verification. In consultation with our Learning Management System (LMS) team, we have developed a solution for attendance verification that should make the process smoother for both you and your students. Please see Monday’s email for more information.

**Fall 2020 Reopening**

We are also planning for variations of reopening of campus this Fall. The health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff are our top priority. With that priority in mind, we will work in tandem with the USG, the Governor’s office, and the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH) to make public health-informed decisions affecting the status of any reopening plan. With guidance from the System, state, and health officials, we are developing plans for multiple return scenarios. Those include:

- Contingency Plan #1: Fall classes begin with social distancing expectations.
- Contingency Plan #2: Fall classes begin fully online.
- Contingency Plan #3: Classes and operations must go to an online format for a period of time during the semester.

With each scenario above, there will be consideration for faculty and students who are at a higher risk for contracting the virus.

We have eight committees with many faculty, staff, and administrators working around the clock to pull together Georgia Southern University’s reopening plan. The workplace health and safety committee is finalizing a draft plan for the initial return of employees to campus. At the end of the month, all committee reports, covering everything from Academics and Research to Athletics, will be submitted to the USG for review. I have seen many thoughtful questions submitted to the SEC and Staff Council, most of which these committees have addressed in their draft reports. Please continue to provide questions and suggestions to fsoffice@georgiasouthern.edu. In the meantime, I ask you to please be patient and respectful of this process.

**Folio Course Preparation**

The one definitive statement I can provide is that the Fall 2020 term will be interesting, and we need to be prepared for all contingencies. I’d like for you to plan for these scenarios by populating your Folio accounts. Folio is our continuity of education mechanism. Please prepare now in the event we open the Fall semester online due to COVID-19 or if we have another hurricane. Even if we do return to face-to-face teaching in the Fall, we need to make sure that if students are ill or quarantined, they can access their course materials via Folio. We will also need to ensure that if you become ill or self-quarantined, or if you must work from home due to your risk factors, you can still deliver your course materials online.

Please reference the email sent by Dr. Ludowise and Dr. Anderson earlier today, which contains more helpful information regarding Folio course preparation. I will also ask the CTE to prove additional support for faculty to activate and use their Folio accounts.

We’ve all been working very hard since March. Let’s take these next couple of days of downtime between the end of Spring and the start of the Summer term to relax, recharge, and spend time with loved ones.