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Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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Thankful as we break for the Holidays – December 11, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

Good morning and thank you to everyone as we finish out the fall semester with final exams, grades, projects, and commencement – it is the season when we reflect back on the year that is quickly coming to a close.

It has been a whirlwind first full semester at Georgia Southern. I am so thankful to work and collaborate with colleagues who believe in the transformational power of education. Ultimately, the success of our students is the pinnacle measurement of our success, and we have many stories that evidence the achievement of our students and graduates.

For instance, I recently received a letter praising one of our students, John Benz, for stopping to help a family who had just been in a terrible accident on I-16. Also, you might have seen the story on Good Morning America about one of our graduates, U.S. Army Brigadier General Vincent Buggs, who surprised a group of kindergarten students who he became pen pals with when he was deployed in Iraq (the students are now high school seniors.) Hopefully you saw the news that our fall 2019 Honors Program enrollment is the largest in the history of the institution, and that College Gazette just named Georgia Southern as one of the top ten “hidden gems” in the nation.

I am thankful for the Eagle Nation family that cares so deeply for this University and its mission. Every day, I am inspired by the commitment I see in our faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

I want to thank all who attended and engaged in our initial “Courageous Conversations” programs last week. Sponsored by the President’s Student Advisory Committee (PSAC) on Inclusive Excellence and facilitated by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the focus of our first program was “Privilege, Respect, and Social Responsibility.” We had almost 200 participants.

As we press into these Courageous Conversations, I was so pleased with the openness and civil discussion that underscores our unwavering commitment to diversity and inclusion. No doubt, these are challenging times...our goal is to educate and elevate the dialogue so that inclusive excellence continues to define our values and behaviors. While it is difficult for us to allow protected speech with which we vehemently disagree, we must uphold the Constitution of the United States.

Future town hall discussions will also aim to help us grow together through dialogue on how our differences, our diversity, makes us better and stronger together. In February 2020, PSAC will sponsor a town hall/panel discussion on “Social Justice” and in March 2020, the topic will be “Gender and Sexuality.” We will continue to press into these conversations. Please engage and visit the inclusive excellence website to learn more: <https://www.georgiasouthern.edu/inclusive-excellence/>.

Later this week, we will honor approximately 2,200 graduates at two commencement ceremonies – one in Savannah and one in Statesboro. You are all aware of our changed format this year. Our commencement committee, made up of departments across all divisions, has been meeting weekly since the beginning of the semester to ensure our graduation ceremonies provide the best possible experience for our graduates and guests. My sincere thanks go out to the planning team and all the people who will be working behind the scenes on Friday and Saturday in Savannah and Statesboro. I am excited to shake the graduates’ hands and celebrate their success!

Hopefully everyone saw my email to the university earlier this month about the FY2021 budget prioritization and development process. The timeline and process provided opportunity for each level of the institution to engage. It also required leadership to communicate prioritization decisions at each stage of the process – from departmental and unit discussions in August to prioritization decisions at the college, major unit, and divisional levels, to the submission of our FY2021 documents to the system office on Nov. 20.

As a reminder, we have completed the FY2021 budget prioritization and recommendations and provide the document links via the MyGeorgiaSouthern Portal (these documents are located on the Performance Excellence – FY2021 Budget Documents tab). Please contact your supervisor or divisional vice president if you have any questions.

Finally, I encourage you to nominate your exceptional colleagues for the newly announced University Awards of Excellence for Faculty and Staff, which are designed to identify and reward individuals and teams who make outstanding contributions to the success of Georgia Southern University.

Faculty Senate and Staff Council collaborated on this new award process, which will recognize individuals and one team that demonstrate excellence in performance and contributions to one area of the University’s pillars and values. A total of 25 awards will be given annually: 12 Strategic Pillar Awards (1 Faculty, 1 Staff), 12 Institutional Values Award (1 Faculty, 1 Staff) and (1) Team Award. The five strategic pillars have 6 award categories (Student Success; Teaching; Research; Inclusive Excellence; Operational Efficiency, Effectiveness &

Sustainability; and Community Engagement) while our values also have 6 award categories (Integrity, Academic Excellence, Discovery & Innovation, Openness & Inclusion, Sustainability, and Collaboration).

For more information and/or to nominate someone, please go to www.georgiasouthern.edu/gsawards/.

Lots of information to share and so many wonderful things to celebrate at Georgia Southern. I wish everyone a wonderful holiday break. My hope for each of you is that your time off is filled with family, friends, laughter, and joy! And don't forget to cheer on the Eagles at the Cure Bowl in Orlando on December 21 – Go Eagles!

Sincerely,

Kyle

People. Purpose. Action: Growing ourselves to grow others!

Last updated: 12/11/2019