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Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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Message from the President – November 1, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

November is here, and now we begin to prepare for the Holidays and the last big push of the fall semester. This will be perhaps the longest email message I have ever sent to campus...so, please forgive me in advance and make sure you are in a comfortable position before reading... 😊 !

Let me start by thanking you for your courage to share with me your experiences and emotions over the month concerning the book burning incident. We will continue to listen to all viewpoints and encourage open dialogue, organic expression, and action. I want to assure you that I am listening, affirming the urgency to improve, and, in this time of learning, growing in understanding. As a follow-up, I want to let you know what we have done and what we are doing to align our values and initiatives to effect change and meet our goals as we strive for inclusive excellence on the campuses of Georgia Southern.

1. Our search for an **Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence**, launched on August 29, 2019, is in progress. This is a senior leadership position that will serve as a member of the President's Cabinet, report directly to me, and provide organizational alignment throughout the institution to deliver our inclusive excellence plan and initiatives.
2. We are working with and supporting the **Student Government Association** leaders to organize work groups following the open forums to translate student suggestions into an actionable plan.
3. **The President's Student Advisory Council (PSAC) on Inclusive Excellence**, which held its first meeting September 16, 2019, will be hosting three "Courageous Conversations" panel discussions/town halls over the next several months and will be identifying additional student organization events to develop an overall "Inclusive Excellence" series. This will be supported by marketing and communication to ensure students are aware of these opportunities and events. In addition, we will continue our "Protect Our Nest" series with a goal of continuous dialogue and relationship building with our university, city and county police officers.
4. **The President's Diversity Advisory Council**, led by Dr. Maxine Bryant, will finalize our Diversity Statement and will serve as a campus diversity crisis advisory team ensuring we communicate effectively and expeditiously.
5. The **senior leadership team** has already established Inclusive Excellence goals specific to their divisional objectives that are presented in their performance scorecards.
6. We are committed to continue our **FYE curriculum**.
7. Each **College is in the process of developing their Inclusive Excellence Plan** and implementation strategy.
8. **Faculty leaders are being encouraged to engage in discussions, forums, lectures, and presentations** conversing on difficult dialogues to educate, inform, and allow all perspectives to be heard.
9. We continue to be committed to the implementation of the **seven recommendations from Dr. Damon Williams** Inclusive Excellence report shared with the campus on August 28, 2019.
10. I and my leadership team will continue to be **accessible, present, and engaged** with you – committing to open dialogue with students – I will update the campus in writing on our progress.

We will be posting and updating all of these activities and initiatives on our Inclusive Excellence site, <https://www.georgiasouthern.edu/diversityandinclusion/>.

As always, I will strive to remember and be guided by our vision statement – People, Purpose, Action: Growing Ourselves to Grow Others! Listening to our **People** and their needs; affirming our **Purpose** to improve our inclusive environment; and putting into **Action** what we must do. Sometimes growth comes when we are under the greatest stress...I believe we are growing now and ultimately this growth will help us impact those who we care most deeply for...our students. It will need everyone to engage in a civil dialogue, provide solutions, and assume individual responsibility to help Georgia Southern improve and grow!

October was also a difficult month as we mourned the tragic death of Jordan Wiggins, a freshman member of the Eagle Football team. No one can be prepared for this type of loss but I am so proud of the Athletic Department, Counseling Center, the Coaches, and community who wrapped their arms around Jordan's teammates and elevated the awareness of suicide prevention. Our thoughts and actions of caring will continue to help the healing of our Eagle Nation.

The football team went undefeated in October – 4 wins in a row including last night upsetting the 20th ranked team in the nation and our rival, Appalachian State. The last week of October saw Georgia Southern homecoming celebration and my investiture events. It was wonderful to have my family and friends see our beautiful campuses and meet the incredible faculty, staff, students, and communities that make up Eagle Nation. They now know firsthand the reason why I'm so grateful to be your president and why this is such a good gig (musical term)! In case you missed any of the events/ceremonies, here is the link to the videos: <https://president.georgiasouthern.edu/investiture/viewing/>.

Over the next few weeks, we will work together through our FY2021 Budget Prioritization Process, sharing the completed budget narrative upon submission to the System on or around November 20. Remember, we will be modeling how we will manage our projected budget allocation reduction of \$6.95M recurring for FY21 and prioritizing future investments. We will also be providing presentations to faculty, staff and students at their Senate, Council and Association meetings over the next few months. The final FY2021 Budget will not be realized until the end of the legislative session in April of 2020.

Finally, during this November month that culminates in time with family and friends giving thanks, let's not forget to care for and thank each other – our colleagues – for their passion and contribution in making Georgia Southern, its three campuses, a vibrant place to work, learn, serve and grow. I know I am thankful for you!

Sincerely,
Kyle

“People, Purpose, Action: Growing Ourselves to Grow Others!”

Last updated: 11/1/2019