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Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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Good afternoon colleagues and welcome to February! — Feb. 10, 2020

As usual, there is a lot going on that I want to tell you about, but for me, nothing will top the fact that my daughter, Lily, turns 10 this week! Big milestone for the Marrero family — any and all advice is welcome!

Here are updates on some of the big initiatives we are pressing into this month:

- A committee has been formed and charged to lead the search for our permanent **Vice President for Student Affairs**. This process will include open forums with our finalists later this spring and I encourage you to be engaged. I appreciate Dr. Melanie Miller for stepping into the interim role and doing a great job leading the division of student affairs since July 1.
- The **Athletic Director** search is underway, and we are thrilled with the national interest this position is generating. The word is out that Eagle Nation is a special place with strong traditions and a dedicated fan base! Our 22-member search committee of faculty, staff, students, alumni, community, and Athletic Foundation Board members are leading this confidential search process. We will keep you posted on their progress.
- I hope you read the announcement last week that Dr. TaJuan Wilson will assume the role of our new **AVP of Inclusive Excellence** at Georgia Southern on March 1. I could not be happier with the process, the final candidates, and the engagement of our campus community in defining the strengths of our finalists. I am confident that TaJuan is the right person to lead our Inclusive Excellence efforts, and I am grateful for our community's continued support of TaJuan as we welcome him to Eagle Nation!
- Please note our upcoming *Courageous Conversations* events – these town hall facilitated discussions, as well as many others scheduled throughout the year, are now highlighted on our [inclusive excellence website](#). As a reminder, *Courageous Conversations* are open to all students, faculty, and staff.
 - On the topic of "Social Justice:"
 - Statesboro Campus** — Monday, Feb. 17, 6 p.m.
Russell Union Ballroom
 - Armstrong Campus** — Tuesday, Feb. 18, 6 p.m.
Student Union Ballroom A
 - On the topics of "Gender and Sexuality:"
 - Statesboro Campus** — Monday, March 9, 6 p.m.
Russell Union Ballroom
 - Armstrong Campus** — Thursday, March 12, 6 p.m.
Student Union Ballroom A
- The legislative session is in full-swing and I have been spending time at the Capitol advocating for Georgia Southern's priorities. We were very pleased with **Governor's budget recommendations** as it relates to formula funding and health benefits. The budget is now going through the legislative process, and I will keep you updated as we know more. Additionally, the **dual enrollment bill** has been a topic of discussion for two legislative sessions now. The dual enrollment program has grown exponentially and has become fiscally unsustainable for the state to maintain at its current level, so changes need to be made. We are supportive of the bill in its current form and do not expect to be negatively impacted by the changes.
- Our **Leadership Development Institute (LDI)**, which includes 64 campus leaders, continues to make an impact throughout the university. At our first two sessions, we defined how to achieve organizational excellence and accountability; how to bring our strategic plan to life and make it part of our daily actions; how to develop an "**Continuous Improvement Mindset**;" and provided tools to help develop leaders through individual growth to improve organizational results. We have assigned common reads for this initiative and created small mentoring groups in which each member is required to participate. This commitment to improvement will continue with our next LDI on Feb. 14, which will focus on our strategic pillar of Inclusive Excellence.
- Our **spring commencement ceremonies** have been announced and extensive planning is underway to ensure our graduates and their guests have the best possible experience. Due to lack of availability, we were unable to book the civic center or convention center in Savannah for the Armstrong ceremony, so we are planning to transform the intramural field on the Armstrong campus. A lot of work is being planned with site improvements, a stage, bringing in seating and bathrooms, etc. It will be a complete transformation of that site. Please refer to GeorgiaSouthern.edu/commencement for updates or if you have any questions. And remember, we will need a great deal of help to staff these ceremonies, so please be receptive if you are asked to volunteer your time.

- I am very excited about another announcement that has been made— our potential collaboration with Junior Achievement to create a **JA Discovery Center** on the Armstrong campus. The Student Recreation Center has been identified as the ideal location, and over the next 8-12 months, we will move Recreation Center operations into the Sports Center as already identified in our facilities Masterplan. With that move, space can be made available for the JA Discovery Center to bring approximately 15,000 middle school students annually to our campus. You can read more at <http://www.georgia.ja.org/blog>.
- In Statesboro, we are working closely with city, county, chamber and other local community leaders on a “**Vibrant Community**” initiative. Last fall, the Chamber hosted author and community developer Quint Studer for two days of observation and recommendations on practical steps local citizens and leaders can take to create a more vibrant community. We are now considering his recommendations and developing next steps to bring together our various initiatives and goals into one master plan, with a unified vision and direction. I am excited for the possibilities and look forward to sharing updates with you.

As always, thank you for all you do for Georgia Southern, and most importantly, what you do daily to keep student success at the center of your work.

Sincerely,

Kyle

Last updated: 2/12/2020