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Messages from the Provost

Georgia Southern University

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Dear Colleagues,

The spring term is well underway and we seem to be getting back to normal (albeit the new normal). I’m very excited to see the increased level of activity on our campuses that demonstrates your commitment to educational and scholarly excellence. I cannot include the long list of these activities here but I’ve pointed out a few key areas in the updates and highlights below.

I would like to remind everyone that the second annual Employee Engagement Survey will come out on February 28. Please take the time to complete the survey. Your feedback is vital. Last year’s survey allowed each unit to identify areas of focused improvement, and the Office of the Provost team identified “communications and engagement” as our focus area.

Hearing your feedback, my office and I have continued to build on our communication, personal engagement, and collaborative efforts. I wanted to highlight some of those here and offer a word of thanks to all of you who have participated or contributed to these:

- An expansion of our monthly newsletter (which you are reading right now).
- The continuation of “Conversations with the Provost.” Please join me on the Statesboro campus on March 9 and April 4, on the Armstrong campus on March 2, or on the Liberty campus on March 28.
- Budget hearings with each of the colleges’ leadership teams and administrative units. We will continue the conversations throughout the spring for the FY24 budget cycle. These hearings foster better communication and transparency regarding our available funds, vacant or open lines, and college/department priorities and requests.
- Attendance at many college faculty meetings this year, both in person and via Zoom. I also welcome invitations to meet with your departments. Please reach out to Trina Smith to discuss my schedule. I am eager to continue meeting with small groups of faculty, staff and students in both formal and informal settings.
- Throughout the pandemic, regular visits to our three campuses. I have been delighted to see the level of energy and enthusiasm that you bring to each. These face-to-face encounters are vital to the success of our working relationships and our students.

I’m committed to ensuring that the appropriate context for colleges, departments, and units is part of our communication culture. I want to emphasize that communication must flow to and between all levels. Deans and chairs should be engaging in discussions frequently with their units. I want to note some of the ways in which we share information to make sure that you feel that you are being engaged and that communication is flowing from the Office of the Provost through your deans and chairs, so that we are all well-informed. Please reach out to your chair, dean, me, or my team when you have questions or need more context.

- Our office holds weekly Provost’s Leadership Team meetings to both communicate information out and address issues in the short- and long-term.
- The President and I meet every month with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Staff Council to answer questions posed from your representatives. Additionally, my team and I attend all full Faculty Senate and Staff Council meetings to provide Academic Affairs updates.
- Our monthly Deans Council meetings include briefings on critical topics and opportunities to strategize ways to accomplish our University goals.
- I attend the Chairs Council monthly meeting to provide information updates and to address any questions. Prior to those meetings, I also meet with the co-chairs of that group to discuss in an in-depth manner issues and questions and to clarify any communications, policies, etc. A special thank you goes to Dr. Beth Myers (College of Behavioral and Social Sciences) and Dr. Carol Herringer (College of Arts & Humanities) for their time and effort in this key area.
- We host biannual Deans, Directors, and Department Chairs (DDDC) meetings. We recently held the Spring 2022 DDDC meeting at the end of January with 125 academic affairs leaders in attendance. We covered topics on Open Educational Resources (OER), Eagle Experience, Momentum Year, Military and Veterans Services, research funding, Student Success, the faculty workload policy (see §377.02 of the Faculty Handbook), and collaboration opportunities with the Partnership for Inclusive Innovation (PIN).
- We hold regular Academic Leadership Council planning retreats to facilitate focused in-depth discussions on priority topics such as strategic enrollment, graduate program development,
Academic Affairs Updates and Highlights

Starting last year, Dr. Joseph Telfair (Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health) organized a faculty well-being ad hoc committee to look into areas where we as a campus can improve our climate and morale. This group provided recommendations to the Office of the Provost, departments, and colleges who have begun implementing where possible. For instance, during the January Faculty Senate meeting, I reminded our senators that it was appropriate to indicate where you might have made changes in teaching, research, and service because of COVID restrictions in your evaluations (such as leaving an asterisk by SRIs for that year).

I was very happy to work closely with the Celebrate Together organizing committee to be a champion of the 2021 event and encourage future Armstrong campus events. The committee delivered an excellent result and the response to this effort was overwhelmingly positive. We had an excellent turn-out from academic departments and student success offices so I hope you are making plans to jump in again this coming fall.

We continue to make great progress and provide innovative thought to student retention, progression, and completion activities through the Momentum Approach activities. Dr. Dustin Anderson along with many of you are leading our efforts in this area—Georgia Southern was recently recognized by the USG's Director of Student Success as the institution with the highest rate of faculty and staff participation in the system. You should have received a message from the Institutional Research Office regarding a survey on High Impact Practices (HIPs) designed to help inform our work with Momentum and student success. Our four- and six-year graduation rates continue to increase and the good news this year is that our freshmen fall-to-spring retention improved for our 2021 cohort. This is a great indicator that our efforts to work with the “pandemic” cohorts of students are successful and that these students are engaging and learning to a greater extent even in consideration of the difficult times we live in. Again, thank you for your patience and for the grace you have extended toward our students in helping them continue their learning.

Americans and the Holocaust, a traveling exhibition from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, formally opened in the Henderson Library on February 9. This was a very well attended and emotional event. The exhibit is now open to all. This is a topic of significance to our future and I encourage all of you to visit and spend some time reflecting on the impact of the Holocaust on you, your family, the community, our students, our country and our future as a civilized society. Thank you to Dr. Lisa Carmichael, Dean of the University Libraries, and her team for making this happen.

Finally, I say this over and over but it is so true that it bears repeating: Georgia Southern University is rapidly moving up in its recognition as an institution of the highest quality education with a faculty of distinction and great scholarly endeavors, all with tremendous public impact. We are ranked as a solid R2 intuition by The Carnegie Foundation, are well ranked nationally by an array of accrediting bodies and recognized by discipline as some of the best in the country. You have a lot to be proud of; you have worked hard in the face of adversity and have proven to our communities what a “Public Impact” university can do. Thank you again for your diligence and dedication to your students and to your academic excellence.

Let’s continue the conversation,
Carl