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Message from the President

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Good morning !

Mar. 9, 2020

As we approach Spring Break (and hope things finally start to dry out), it's hard to believe that it's already March and the spring semester is half over. Hopefully the warmer weather is not far behind.

This semester has been fast-paced and busy for all of us. I am excited to share with you some updates:

- Please join me in welcoming Dr. TaJuan Wilson, our new **AVP for Inclusive Excellence**, to Georgia Southern. He started last Monday and is already making an impact. If you not seen him yet, you can meet Dr. Wilson this week at our next *Courageous Conversations* events. Sponsored by the President's Student Advisory Council, this month's Inclusive Excellence series will focus on Gender and Sexuality. The conversation on the Statesboro campus will be Monday, March 9 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. in the Russell Union Ballroom. Then on Thursday, March 12, we will be on the Armstrong Campus starting at 6 p.m. in Ballroom A of the Student Union.
- As you may have heard, we are also excited to welcome Mississippi State University's Jared Benko as our new **Director of Athletics** (effective April 1). Jared has more than a decade of progressive and respected leadership experience in the Southeastern Conference (SEC). For the past four years, he has served as the deputy director of athletics/chief financial officer at Mississippi State University assisting the director of athletics with strategic planning, personnel decisions, marketing and public relations initiatives while also supervising the day-to-day operations of the athletic department and serving as the sport administrator for the football program. He will be on campus today to meet our student athletes, staff, and press, and then will host the **public and the University community at a reception from 4:30-6 p.m. today (3/9)** in the Bishop Alumni Center. Thank you again to Lisa Sweany for her leadership as Interim Athletic Director during this transition time.
- We continue to stay vigilant as we monitor the **coronavirus** in coordination with the CDC, state of Georgia, and the University System of Georgia. To be clear, Georgia Southern University has no suspected cases of coronavirus, and Georgia Southern has not been notified of any member of the campus community with the virus. We have [set up a webpage on the](#) Health Services website that has a lot of useful information. We will continue to communicate to campus as needed and will update this page.

- Legislative session continues as we watch important bills that impact Georgia Southern. Last month, we hosted a successful “**Georgia Southern Day at the Capitol**” where we highlighted our outstanding ROTC program, and specifically our ROTC nursing majors. I am also proud to share with you that four of our students were selected to present their research at the state Capitol for “**Undergraduate Research Day.**” Congratulations to Conner Clark, Justin Hall, Justin McCorkle, and Ziqi Wang for your hard work and outstanding representation of Georgia Southern.
- Our new **Performance Excellence Employee Award and Recognition program** will have its first-ever award ceremony at the end of April. I am so pleased that we had more than 250 nominations for the 25 faculty, staff and team awards. It is going to be a great day as we celebrate the achievements of our colleagues and years of service of our faculty and staff, and all are invited to attend!
- Also, part of our Performance Excellence initiative is Staff Council’s next **Staff Professional Development Conference** tomorrow (3/10) on the Armstrong campus. Faculty’s next Professional Development Conference will be held on April 17 in the Armstrong Center on the topic of “Building Momentum for Student Success.”
- Our cross-divisional commencement team continues to meet weekly to plan out our **spring commencement ceremonies**. When they come asking for help, please do your best to accommodate -- this is the university’s most important event and can leave a lasting impression on thousands of graduates and their families. We want to do everything we can to ensure our guests have a rewarding and enjoyable event. We are excited to announce that our commencement speaker for the undergraduate ceremonies will be Sachin Shailendra, chair of the Board of Regents.
- We continue to implement our new **strategic enrollment plan** and remain on track with an accompanying new brand and marketing campaign. We have had some questions about whether the new brand will change the university’s logos and/or colors. That is not what this effort is about. Our goal is to identify more effective strategies to communicate -- to message our story, our history, the unique ways we stand out, and how and why we are distinctive. This process will be important as we market our brand to different constituents — highlighting our different programs, campuses and successes.
- You may have noticed that we are in full recruiting mode for next fall, and prospective students and their families are filling up our campus taking tours. Please take a moment when you see them walking through our beautiful campuses to say hello and **welcome them to their future home at Georgia Southern!** Every engagement they experience helps and plays an important role in our efforts to attract and recruit students. We are progressing well in our applications and admissions for next fall; our efforts now are largely focusing on turning applicants into enrolled students.
- Finally, I want to start something new by ending these updates by spotlighting a member of Eagle Nation who is really soaring above and beyond. This month, I want to tell you about **Alecia Breen**, a senior from Richmond Hill. She is pursuing a double major in Operations Management and Logistics and Intermodal Transportation. She has interned and been part of a co-op at Gulfstream Aerospace in Savannah and has competed in case study competitions in California, Colorado, Florida, and Atlanta. Her topics ranged from efficient trucking routes to effective manufacturing processes and implementation. I met Alecia at the Zell Mill Foundation banquet in Atlanta, where she was the **ONLY**

college student in Georgia selected to speak about how the Hope Scholarship has impacted her career as a student. We are very proud of Alecia.

My thanks to each of you for all you do to help Alecia, and all our other students, succeed every day.

Kyle

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Growing ourselves to grow others

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