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Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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Dear Colleagues,

As we continue to experience challenging times, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the state's economy. This April, state revenues declined by more than \$1 billion (or 35.9%) compared to April of last year. Further revenue declines are expected and will likely result in serious budget reductions we must plan for now.

The University System of Georgia (USG) and all state agencies were recently asked to prepare budget plans that reduce spending by 14% in Fiscal Year 2021, which starts July 1. Nothing will be final until a budget appropriation is approved by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor. That is expected to happen in June, as legislative leaders meet for the remainder of the 2020 legislative session and finalize the FY21 state budget.

Chancellor Wrigley asked us to be strategic in our approach as we plan for this reduction at our institution. Our greatest priority continues to be helping our students complete a college education. Again, I want to reiterate that this is a plan, and final reductions will be determined in the weeks ahead.

My commitment to you was that we would communicate as early and as often as possible and that you would be kept informed of our decision-making and the methods behind those decisions. The leadership team and I held divisional meetings for discussion and input and met with the Faculty Senate Executive Council and Staff Advisory Council. These dialogues will continue until our final FY2021 Budget is approved and allocated.

Our budget reduction plan incorporated four strategies – 1) austerity in operational efficiencies/essentials (travel, operations, and equipment); 2) strategic prioritization of our 203 current vacant positions as of April 30, 2020; 3) strategic redirection of auxiliary services resources to support aligned administrative salaries; and 4) the implementation of the furlough plan as directed by USG. Our guiding principles in this process were to prioritize a) direct instruction and to ensure program and course delivery; b) student services, support and success; and c) operational sustainability and effectiveness.

Within these strategic reductions to operations and vacant positions, we prioritized the delivery of health and safety standards/requirements that will be imperative for our campuses to reopen and operate for the upcoming academic year. Additionally, technology resources necessary to provide a robust and continuously improving virtual environment for our students, faculty, and staff remained a priority throughout this process.

With these priorities in mind, we identified:

- Operational reductions totaling \$4,987,782
- 83 vacant positions to be frozen/eliminated (36 faculty and 47 staff) totaling \$7,733,493
- Redirected auxiliary support totaling \$1,475,566
- Savings as a result of the USG directed furlough plan, which totals approximately \$5,711,761

These four reduction strategies total the 14% reduction target of \$19,908,602.

FY2021 reduction planning documents submitted to the USG can be found on your MyGeorgiaSouthern homepage on the "Performance Excellence" tile, under heading of "FY2021 Budget Documents."

We know there will be questions, so we have scheduled regular meetings over the next two months with Faculty Senate Executive Council and Staff Council. Faculty may forward questions to fsoffice@georgiasouthern.edu, and staff may forward questions to gsstaffcouncil@georgiasouthern.edu, so we can address these via your elected representatives. We will also provide FAQs and a direct email address as an avenue for you to ask questions related to furlough days and the voluntary separation (retirement) plan.

I know that this was not an easy or comfortable process as we have already taken measures prior to this budget cycle to find operational efficiencies. Likewise, I recognize that each of you are making sacrifices this next year to continue to not only sustain our core mission, but to provide our students with the level of service that is indicative of Georgia Southern, even during what may be difficult personal times. Through the challenges we have and will continue to face, I remain SO PROUD of you and THANKFUL for you! Thank you for continuing to charge ahead to be innovative, resilient, committed, positive, and caring to each other.

Throughout this process, I will remind you (and myself) of the importance of our mission and belief in the transformational power of education. The impact we have on our students has been, and will continue to be, our primary goal. I will continue to remind us of the first word in our vision statement: **People**. As I've said before, I hope you have come to learn and to expect from me that in every decision we make at this institution, we are thinking first of how those decisions will impact our people. I am very proud of the fact that as difficult as this is, this plan, I believe, honors our mission, vision, and values. That's what sets us apart and will guide us through this time.

Dr. Kyle Marrero
President