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### Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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# Dear Colleagues,

June 1, 2020

While I have many updates to share with you today, I want to first acknowledge the anger, hurt, and fear that many members of our community are feeling in the face of the tragic events of the past months, and most recently, the killing of George Floyd. My heart is heavy with this somber reminder of the senseless death and violence that impact so many members of our Georgia Southern family.

While we can continue to make statements that condemn such actions, we must take measures to stand up for our shared values, and for one another. As one Eagle Nation, we must remain united in our resolve to address injustices and hatred in our community. We must continue to learn, grow, and lead in an increasingly diverse and global society, working together as agents for meaningful change in our communities.

I am proud of the steps we have made in the last year, but it is not enough. We must continue our efforts to promote a safe and welcoming environment at Georgia Southern where each and every voice is heard, where individuals feel valued and respected, and where we all strive to achieve Inclusive Excellence, together.

As we look ahead, this month marks a number of milestones in our efforts to finalize the Fiscal Year 2021 budget and begin taking steps to bring our employees back to our campuses in preparation for the fall semester.

## **Budget Planning**

As you will remember from my budget planning email on May 21, the Georgia State Legislature meets this month for the remainder of the 2020 legislative session and to finalize the Fiscal Year 2021 state budget. While we have prepared for a possible 14% reduction to the state's budget allocation, our actual reduction percentage will be realized once the state budget is passed and signed by the Governor.

To review details of our budget reduction plan and the decision-making methodology and process, please refer to my May 21 email and the FY2021 budget reduction planning documents that were submitted to the USG, which can be found on your

MyGeorgiaSouthern portal on the "Performance Excellence" tile, under the heading of "FY2021 Budget Planning Documents."

The leadership team and I continue to hold bi-weekly meetings with Faculty Senate Executive Council and Staff Advisory Council. These dialogues will continue until our final FY2021 Budget is approved. Please reach out to your representatives should you have any questions about the budget planning process: [fsoffice@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:fsoffice@georgiasouthern.edu) (for faculty) and [gsstaffcouncil@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:gsstaffcouncil@georgiasouthern.edu) (for staff). We are also still working to provide additional guidance on furlough days and voluntary separation (retirement) options and will share once they have been finalized and approved.

## **Initial Return to Campus**

On May 28, I shared with you all our Initial Return to Campus Plan, which details our phased approach for the initial return of all employees. Guided and directed by health and safety guidelines, each phase of the return details workplace expectations, staffing options, symptom monitoring, personal safety best practices, specific workplace scenarios, enter/exit control, and mental and emotional wellbeing.

The detailed plan can be found under My Messages & Alerts in the MyGeorgiaSouthern portal. Please review the plan thoroughly and review an extensive "Initial Return to Campus FAQ" that has been developed at <https://www.georgiasouthern.edu/covid-19-information/>. Please also see the HR Connection newsletter that was emailed out today for information on how to pursue reasonable accommodations and alternative work arrangements. We will continue to email updated information to all employees and post regularly to our COVID-19 information page.

Additional guidance and details as applicable for each division and department will come from your divisional leader.

As another avenue for you to receive information and ask questions, I, along with all members of my senior leadership team, plan to host a virtual town hall meeting for faculty and staff via Zoom on June 8, beginning at 10 a.m., to outline this plan and answer questions related to our initial return to campus and budget planning. Details on how to access the Zoom meeting will be emailed to all faculty and staff on Monday morning, June 8.

## **Fall Semester 2020**

As we look to the fall semester and plan for students to return to our campuses, we have created an even more detailed plan for how we will conduct university operations and execute our core mission of educating our students throughout the upcoming academic year.

In response to the University System of Georgia's guidance, eight working groups were created and directed to develop detailed plans for each functional area that account for three basic scenarios/contingencies of the reopen status. Made up of more than 130 faculty and staff members, these working groups represented a broad university community and were charged with engaging their represented groups in the process to

gather information and to ensure that all areas of the university are considered and included in the final reopening plan.

We have submitted this draft plan to the University System of Georgia to review. Upon final review and approval of the plan, we will share details with the campus community and begin to prepare for the upcoming academic year.

I know that the days and weeks ahead will be very busy as we work together to create a safe environment where we can continue quality instruction and campus vibrancy, all while adjusting to new safety and protection measures. Please contact your supervisor directly or email [hrservice@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:hrservice@georgiasouthern.edu) if you have any questions throughout the process.

I continue to appreciate your hard work and dedication to our students!

Sincerely,  
Kyle

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*Growing ourselves to grow others*

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