

Georgia Southern University

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### Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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## Dear Colleagues,

March 8, 2021

March is well underway, and we are now in our ninth week of the semester – the week leading into spring break – wow! It is hard to believe one year ago we made the decision to transition to fully online instruction. I don't think any of us could've predicted the last twelve months. We persevered through difficult challenges - adapting, innovating, learning, teaching, researching, and growing ourselves to grow others!

As you read in the announcement last week, our COVID-19 numbers, like the region, state, and country, are trending down significantly and we continue to provide vaccines to our eligible faculty, staff, and students -- anticipating expanded availability of the COVID-19 vaccine through the spring and summer months.

As institutions around the state make announcements about **Fall 2021**, we too at Georgia Southern are planning a full return to campus - resuming normal operations – with in-person curriculum delivery, full dining and housing operations, student services, activities, and events. Please understand that Fall 2021 plans remain subject to change based on adherence to GDPH and CDC guidance. **The 2021 summer semester** will look much like this spring, with our normal mix of online and face-to-face course offerings, some very innovative lab and studio delivery options for our students, and an expanding array of opportunities to engage our communities on campus.

This is all great news – but we must continue to be vigilant to ensure we complete the semester strong - following all safety guidelines and protocols and promoting vaccine participation for those who are eligible. Most immediately, we need everyone to continue practicing our "Eagles Do Right" behaviors throughout spring break, understanding that our return to campus at the end of March will help our summer and fall plans become a reality.

This is also an exciting time of year as we celebrate the accomplishments of our most distinguished Alumni. Last Friday night, we honored 11 alumni who represent the very best of Georgia Southern - who are leaders, business men and women, and continue to give back and support our Eagle Nation (see award winners [here](#)). The Talon Award, our most prestigious Alumni award, was presented to Jon Burns, Majority Leader of the Georgia State House of Representatives. Jon's legacy and impact on our region and the state continues as he helps support our institution each and every legislative session.

Speaking of the legislative session, we are grateful to the Georgia General Assembly and the Governor for the FY21 amended budget, that supported formula growth for the University System of Georgia, and for the support in the Governor's and the House's version of the FY22 budget. The Senate will be finalizing their version of the budget in the coming weeks as we move toward the final day of this year's legislative session on March 31. Our major capital project, the Jack and Ruth Ann Hill Convocation Center continues to move through the process. We are grateful to the Governor and the Legislature for supporting this project in honor of Jack and Ruth Ann Hill. We are also grateful to Representative Ron Stephens for supporting the expansion of the Logistics Innovation Corridor Map to include our entire region. This will help us continue our collaboration and expansion of Logistics Technology innovation and development from the Port of Savannah to all three of our campus locations.

Hopefully, you have all received the link inviting you to complete the Employee Engagement Survey. Remember, the purpose of the survey is to gain input from all employees about their work environment, what is working well and where there may be opportunities for improvement. The survey will remain open until close of business on

March 15. Your participation is critical in helping us create an engaging work environment. Also, we will be rolling out the institutional results of the Inclusive Excellence Climate Survey in the next few weeks providing further direction for our Inclusive Excellence Action Plan.

This week, we will be disseminating the student grant portion of the HEERF II funds totaling approximately \$11.4M in direct grant aid to students. These funds will impact more than 11,600 of our students with grants ranging from a minimum \$390 to \$1,250 based on demonstrated need through the FAFSA and by having an Expected Family Contribution of less than \$11,000. The grants will support student needs, including cost of attendance and/or emergency expenses that arise due to coronavirus, such as tuition, food, housing, health care, or childcare.

Finally, I'm excited to announce that we are very close to introducing the new Dean of our College of Education after a comprehensive national search. I want to thank Dr. Amy Heaston for her interim leadership and career impact at Georgia Southern. Also, we will be finalizing the Vice President for Business and Finance search with finalists on campus the end of March – of which you will have the opportunity to engage virtually in open forums.

As we progress through the remainder of the semester – take time to enjoy the beautiful spring weather, walk around Sweetheart Circle or the Arboretum, watch a baseball or softball game, run or walk on one of our many jogging trails or throw a Frisbee on any of our beautiful campuses. The future is bright at Georgia Southern!

Sincerely,  
Kyle

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*Growing ourselves to grow others*

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