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4-1-2019

Message from the President

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Message from the President

April 1, 2019

Hello, Eagle Nation!

Jane, Lily and I are all moved in, and I am excited to experience my first official week at Georgia Southern. I have been studying, listening, learning and gathering information over the last few months in preparation for this day and am eager to learn more. With your help, I am coming to understand and appreciate the unique and distinctive history of each campus, each community, and the value added to this unified Georgia Southern, the expectations of each of these communities, and what it will mean to the growth of this university, the region, the state, and beyond.

I do want to take a moment to thank the search committee for their hard work and efforts on behalf of the university community. They represented the institution well, its strengths and opportunities, and clearly communicated the need for a unified vision. There is a lot to do and I will be hitting the ground running. I'd like to provide you with a glimpse of what we will be focusing on these first 90 days.

First and foremost, we must finalize the budget for fiscal year 2020. As you know, we have experienced a reduction in enrollment and credit hour generation over the last 5 years, meaning our recurring revenue (earned and allocated) has decreased, resulting in a reduced operating budget. President Nickel and the leadership team have been hard at work to ensure that we navigate this challenge in the best way possible, and I appreciate the outstanding work they have done to bring us to this point. The leadership team and I will be providing regular updates as we continue to work through this process. It is important that we demonstrate transparency and open communication with the shared understanding that we are all in this together. Simply put, our goals are to: balance the budget for FY20, invest in student success initiatives (enrollment growth and retention), invest in salary equity for our faculty and staff, fund the institutional share of the proposed 2% merit salary increase, and restore our institutional annual reserves.

I have been very pleased with the great work accomplished to date of the Strategic Planning Committee – informing and empowering a new strategic plan for a unified Georgia Southern. Student success will always be at the center of what we do and it must be the lens that focuses the outcomes of our strategic plan. This plan will evidence our accountability by meeting the growing needs of the region and by clarifying each person's role in contributing to the success of the institution.

We will develop a strategic enrollment plan that will work in tandem and energize our strategic plan driving our efforts to reach multiple constituencies of diverse students across all ages and geographic locations providing the opportunity to transform their lives through education at Georgia Southern. This strategic enrollment plan, implemented and empowered across all institutional partners, will ensure that we do not find ourselves in an enrollment decline again. This will be critical to the success of our institution.

In support of these plans, we will develop and implement a strategic marketing, branding, and communication plan to ensure that prospective students, parents, and communities know our story, understand our reputation and recognize the value of receiving an education at Georgia Southern.

We also will build upon the momentum created by Dr. Damon Williams and the many others who have been working on the Inclusive Excellence efforts this academic year. I look forward to the creation of an action plan to help us foster an even more inclusive, welcoming community at Georgia Southern and to prepare students for success in a multicultural, global economy.

That's a lot to accomplish in a relatively short time, but it is essential that these initiatives all work together in order for us to define our distinctives, communicate the "value-added" in a unified Eagle Nation, define who and what we will be, and enable us to soar to new heights as one institution, one Georgia Southern!

Through all of this, we will continue to care for each other—understanding what the last years have been for many of you—remembering that each member of this great community is a vital partner in succeeding in the work we all care about most: transforming student lives.

I plan to be "out and about" on our campuses over these next few weeks. I look forward to getting to know each of you and hope that you will stop by the meet-and-greets on Tuesday and Thursday of this week.

It will be a pleasure to work alongside each of you as we accomplish great things together at Georgia Southern.

Go Eagles!

Sincerely,
Kyle