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Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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Message from the President – October 11, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

I know many of you are concerned and disappointed about the incidents that have been reported over the past two days following a visiting professor's talk on our Statesboro campus.

We believe that the ideals we have been discussing over the last year and a half have begun to take hold by our students, faculty and staff. I must say, I have been heartened by some of the reactions to this incident. For example, our student government president Juwan Smith wrote an open letter that says, in part, "Opening the door to organic conversations is essential to learning and appreciating our differences. As we develop these competencies, we become better equipped to understand to address the challenges that accompany diversity and the inclusive environments that we seek to foster."

From what we have been able to determine, the night's events were another example of freedom of expression and a continuing debate of differing ideas, which are tenets of our ongoing efforts to align with our values and initiatives encompassing inclusive excellence.

Specific to the reported events of that evening, while it's within the students' First Amendment rights, book burning does not align with Georgia Southern's values nor does it encourage the civil discourse and debate of ideas.

Yes, I wish our students had engaged in a reasoned discussion. And yes, I wish these discussions had not deteriorated or led to broad generalizations that paint an ugly picture about our university.

I continue to encourage each of us to remember to care for each other, including our university guests, and lift each person on our campuses up as one community, remembering that it is our common goal to provide the best environment for our students to learn, grow and succeed. We can, and should, work together.

For example, we had a wonderful event on Thursday night, called Protect our Nest, where more than 100 students gathered with local law enforcement officers to really engage and get to know each other as human beings. This event showed us how those relationships can be established and provide a better understanding of each other — in this case what officers face every day and the transformational power of education to our students. Events like that one will bring us closer together as a community, all under the guise of inclusive excellence. We are in this journey together.

People. Purpose. Action: Growing ourselves to grow others.

Kyle