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Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero delivers virtual State of the University address

August 20, 2020



Georgia Southern University President Kyle Marrero delivered a virtual State of the University Fall 2020 address to faculty and staff, broadcast live from the Performing Arts Center on the Statesboro Campus on Aug. 12.

Maxing out with 1,507 viewers at one point, University members tuned in from remote locations to hear the president discuss how Georgia Southern is successfully adapting during extraordinarily difficult times and will continue to be nimble during the fall semester.

“We are being asked to be innovative, flexible, nimble and willing to adapt and change,” Marrero said after welcoming all back to the three campuses. “And I want to thank you. You all have been tremendous, remarkable, heroic even, as we made it through these times and as we navigate through these uncertain times.”

Marrero touted the herculean efforts of faculty and staff, who maintained the integrity of the University’s five pillars — student success, teaching and research, inclusive excellence, operational efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability, and community engagement, in the midst of a pandemic that caused the University to move fully online in March. He cited specific examples of performance excellence since March with the following collective efforts:

- Moved more than 5,000 classes to fully online to complete the Spring 2020 Semester;
- Delivered summer term fully online while seeing credit-hour generation move up by more than 4%, compared to the Summer 2019 Semester;
- Moved 4,600 students out of housing and provided support for more than 100 students who remained on campus;
- Refunded almost \$11 million in housing, dining and fees to students;
- Held virtual Spring 2020 Commencement, viewed by more than 100,000 worldwide;
- Provided more than \$11 million in CARES Act grant funding directly to students;
- Developed and began implementation of Initial Return to Campus and Return to Campus Plans, based on input from more than 130 faculty staff across campus and public health guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health;
- Modeled a 14% state budget reduction for FY21, then completed a 10% realized reduction, totaling \$14.2

million;

- Developed and implemented flexible and remote work processes;
- Assessed and modified almost 5,000 courses for fall 2020;
- Prepared campus with signage, cloth face coverings, face shields, PPE, hand sanitizer stations;
- Formed and implemented the CARES Service Center;
- Continued communication, coordination and monitoring of community health care providers, public/private schools, municipalities and agencies.

Marrero also presented August figures showing that fall 2020 enrollment looks strong compared to this same time last year, however, he was quick to note that the figures may fluctuate based on various factors throughout the semester. Final fall enrollment figures will be released in October.

The new branding and marketing campaign also made its debut and will roll out in the coming months in tandem with a strategic enrollment plan. He was equally excited to share plans for a historic new partnership with Junior Achievement to build a Discovery Center, which will provide experiential opportunities to 15,000 middle school students on the Armstrong Campus annually. A new Regional Education Collaborative is also in the works and will assemble community partners and resources in order to identify and create solutions for area educational gaps. Georgia Southern also will have an increased role in the Savannah Logistics Technology Corridor. The University plans to energize its new learning center in Wexford, Ireland, develop an expanded nursing cohort within the Waters College of Health Professions, build out the Tactical Athlete Program in partnership with Fort Stewart, introduce a hospitality management program, and open a sleek, 135,000-square-foot engineering and research building on the Statesboro campus designed to inspire engineering innovation through education and strategic partnerships.

Marrero also discussed strides around the University's inclusive excellence efforts, highlighted by the newly established Office of Inclusive Excellence and the hiring of the University's first Associate Vice President of Inclusive Excellence and Chief Diversity Officer. Crafted by an institutional definition of inclusive excellence, the new office is aligning divisional goals and measurements with the University's strategic plan, expanding training and development, developing an expanded Advisory Council and Student Advisory Council on diversity and inclusion priorities, and creating a campus-wide infrastructure of inclusive excellence founded in an extensive Inclusive Excellence Action Plan.

Faculty and staff who earned 2019-2020 Awards of Excellence were recognized during the ceremony, highlighting achievements in student success, teaching and academic excellence, research, discovery, innovation, inclusive excellence, operational efficiency and sustainability, community engagement and collaboration, integrity, and commencement.

In closing, Marrero signed off with a message of resilience and hope.

"We can continue to move forward," he said. "We can continue to elevate and live our mission and our vision and our values even in these times. We will adapt, we'll be nimble and we'll ensure that every day that the public health and safety of our faculty, staff, students and our community is of paramount importance.

"I am confident that we are ready as we can be and together we'll assess and navigate the entirety of the fall semester with the goal and outcome of our students being successful. As a whole Georgia Southern University can make it through this together."

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/R2 institution founded in 1906, offers 141 degree programs serving more than 26,000 students through nine colleges on three campuses in Statesboro,

Savannah, Hinesville and online instruction. A leader in higher education in southeast Georgia, the University provides a diverse student population with expert faculty, world-class scholarship and hands-on learning opportunities. Georgia Southern creates lifelong learners who serve as responsible scholars, leaders and stewards in their communities. Visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu.