

Weekly notes
August 18, 2013

As Fall Semester 2013 begins, here's what's on my mind:

The activity level at EGSC this summer has been intense --- and shows no sign of abating. As fall semester begins, it's difficult for all of us to find a moment to take a deep breath, step back and witness the excitement and anticipation of the students as they return to campus. Although hard, it's important because it clarifies the reason all of us are here and reminds us of the importance of the work we do.

It is not only the start of a new semester for EGSC ---- Monday will be the very first day of the very first week of EGSC classes in Augusta. Over the course of the last few weeks, I have had the chance to speak with many of the new students and their families in Augusta. I am firmly convinced that the Augusta community understands and appreciates the long-term commitment that the USG, GRU and EGSC have made to Augusta through our new collaboration and recognizes that EGSC has come to Augusta to fill a very important need --- a need for a point of access to higher education leading seamlessly to the opportunity to admission to GRU. As a result, it is likely that our August programs will grow steadily for many years to come.

My excitement about getting to know the new students at our institution is high. Similarly, I am looking forward to the many campus events that will take place to enhance the learning experience of these students. For example, academic convocation on September 26 will set the academic tone for the coming year. Similarly, the new Vision Movie Series holds great promise. This series will present movies (free) each month followed by facilitated discussions. Convocation and the Vision Movie Series provide unique opportunities for faculty to weave out-of-class activities into the curriculum.

It is important to note this movies series is part of the College's long standing Vision Series. The new Vision Movie Series will complement and expand the Vision Series, which will continue in its long-standing format. For example, Native American Olympic gold medal 10,000 meter gold winner Billy Mills will speak this fall.

EGSC's African American Male Initiative program begins this fall. This initiative is funded by a grant from the University System of Georgia along with donations from private sources. The USG grant is matched by institutional funds. The total amount of funding is modest yet the goals of the program are high. Accordingly, I ask all of you to give careful consideration to requests for assistance from our two AAMI directors (one is Statesboro and one in Swainsboro). This initiative has the potential to significantly increase graduation rates.

I am extremely pleased that one of our key faculty members has been appointed as Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning. Mentoring opportunities for faculty, opportunities for faculty to meet and share teaching strategies and

challenges, support in the promotion and tenure process, and similar activities are greatly needed at EGSC. I anticipate that the CTL will have an excellent first year in 2013-2014 and will continue to grow and expand in future years.

On a similar note, it is difficult to overstate the importance of online education in the future of higher education in the US. The enormous challenge, of course, is maintaining both quality and the unique nature of of an EGSC education while responding to this trend. I am so pleased that another of our key faculty members has been appointed as Director of Distance Education to lead us in meeting these challenges.

The impact of online education is well-illustrated by an article in the today's NY Times. The article features Georgia Tech's new MOOC (massive open online courses). Georgia Tech will offer a masters degree in computer science via a MOOC and anticipates thousands of graduates in the years to come. This and similar online initiatives at many US institutions challenge us to respond.

In the last couple of weeks, I have had the opportunity to meet with the members of a series of new EGSC Task Forces beginning their work this fall. These tasks forces will address the following issues:

- *Review and update of our promotion and tenure process;
- *Evaluation of whether it is feasible for EGSC to implements a comprehensive recycling program;
- *Adoption of a new integrated calendaring system for all EGSC units and functions;
- *Evaluation of steps needed to give even more substance to our declaration that we are a tobacco free campus. For example, what educational programs about tobacco use should supplement this declaration?

In addition to these issues, EGSC also needs to get out in front of the rapidly emerging issue of prior learning assessment. Many US institutions are studying the types of activities for which they should award academic credit for prior experience. For example, many members of the US Armed Forces and veterans are seeking credit for military training and experience. How do we verify, assess and evaluate that experience? Competency testing? The question is, needless to say, complex and difficult. However, it is a question which must be addressed now in order to meet the educational needs of many in our service area.

The recent August Board of Regents meeting in Atlanta addressed a number of critical challenges facing higher education. In particular, I was struck by the meeting's emphasis on Federal Student Financial Aid. Since a very high percentage of our students receive this aid (as compared with other USG institutions), these issues are particularly relevant to EGSC.

For example, the USG is going to be paying a high level of attention to federal student financial aid in audits this year. In large part, this is due to the fact that a number of USG institutions have recently been required to repay significant

amounts of money due to failure to comply with the federal regulations concerning refunds due to students who stop attending classes.

This high level of attention creates a quandary for institutions such as EGSC. Our student numbers are lower than most other USG institutions and, as a result, our staffing in key areas --- such as financial aid --- is lower in number than other institutions. Although student numbers are lower, the percentage of our students who receive financial aid is very, very high. In addition, those students often come from a socio-economic background which results in a lower level of financial experience and sophistication. This means the staff time required per student is higher. The overall result is that the overall workload of the student financial aid office at a smaller access institution such as EGSC may be as large as or greater than the workload at some larger institutions with larger staffs. During the coming year, we will be placing a good deal of effort in finding a solution to this quandary.

In addition to the high level of scrutiny to be paid to financial aid, another notable aspect of the discussion of this financial aid topic at the BOR meeting was the impact of financial aid on academic success. One large USG institution presented data about the gap between the total cost of education and the total financial aid available to its students. It is clear that small deficiencies (e.g., a little as \$300) have a large and negative impact on academic success. This illustrates the importance of our upcoming capital campaign. It is essential that we find funds to make need based financial aid available in appropriate situations.

At the recent BOR meeting, another focal area was the USG's new policy about the role and mission of institutions in various sectors of the USG. This new policy specifies the sector in which each USG institution is placed and clarifies the type of degrees which should be offered by institutions in each sector. I urge you to visit the USG web site and read that new sector policy (see minutes of the August 2013 BOR meeting). It is clear that any new bachelors degrees offered by EGSC must be targeted to workforce needs of our region.

The USG also updated its strategic plan at its last meeting. I also urge you to visit the USG website and review that new plan. You will note that EGSC's strategic plan is well-aligned with this USG plan (see emphasis on retention/graduation and service in both plans). Based on the discussion at the BOR meeting, it is clear to me that even more will be expected of all USG institutions in demonstrating progress towards the measurable goals outlined in their strategic plans. In other words, in addition to having strategic goals aligned with the USG plan and adopting measurable targets of success, we will be required to produce longitudinal data demonstrating progress towards those targets.

I enjoyed the chance to meet with faculty and staff at the recent fall workshop. I look forward to a continuing discussion of the issues we began to address at that workshop.

As we discussed at the workshop, it is critical for EGSC's vision to be a shared vision. This begins with a collective understanding the changing face of our society. The United States is experiencing dramatic demographic shifts. These shifts demand that higher education respond and prepare the changing citizenry for the new environment. Consider:

* Consider the following major demographic shifts in the US:

a. Rapidly growing minority population

"New 2010 Census analysis shows an unprecedented shift in the nation's racial makeup in 14 states, one that is reshaping U.S. schools, work places and the electorate. Due to immigration, a combination of more deaths and fewer births among whites and an explosion of minority births, the U.S. is poised to be a majority-minority country sooner than predicted. Senior Fellow William Frey says we're at the beginning of an inevitable transition that affords us new opportunities. Texas, New Mexico and California are already majority-minority states reflecting a racial shift related to more deaths among whites than births. This natural decrease is happening earlier than expected." Brookings

Georgia's caucasian toddler population is now 43.1%

b. A widening income gap

"While the income gap between rich and poor has widened astronomically since 1967, the gap between the rich and the middle class has widened the most.

In 1967, those in the lowest percentile of American earners made a median salary of \$9,300. By 2010, that was up to \$11,900, a 28 percent increase (measured in 2010 dollars).

The richest Americans, those in the 90th percentile, went from making a median of \$85,800 in 1967 to \$138,900 – a 62 percent increase. Median income households saw real earnings go from \$40,800 in 1967 to \$49,400, just a 21 percent increase." FacetheFactsUSA.org

c. The county continues to experience economic distress

"Meanwhile, a September Census report shows, median household incomes fell by nearly 7 percent from 2001 to 2011. And there are now more Americans living in poverty than at any time since record-keeping began more than half a century ago."

d. The cost of higher education is growing as a share of family income

"In the past three decades, college costs have risen significantly faster than inflation and are now at roughly 25 percent of the average household's income. " US News & World Report

e. There is a burgeoning amount student debt and a rising student loan default rate

"This confluence of trends has led to higher borrowing by students.

An analysis last month by Donghoon Lee, an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, found that "student debt is the only kind of household debt that continued to rise through the Great Recession" and is now the "second largest balance after mortgage debt."

According to Mr. Lee, student loan debt is fast approaching a trillion dollars, up from less than \$400 billion in 2004, and both the number of borrowers and the average balance per borrower have "increased by 70 percent between 2004 and 2012 (7 percent per year)." A September Pew Research Center report found that "a record one-in-five households now owe student loan debt."

That report also found that student loan debt as a share of household income was 24 percent for families in the lowest income quintile. That was at least twice the share of any other quintile.

As the report put it, "The relative burden of student loan debt is greatest for households in the bottom fifth of the income spectrum, even though members of such households are less likely than those in other groups to attend college in the first place." "

"The Project on Student Debt found that two-thirds of 2011 college graduates — the most recent year for which data are available — graduated with an average student loan debt of \$26,600, or \$27,500 when adjusted for inflation. Contrast that with 1993, when less than half of students graduated with debt, and those who did averaged \$9,350, according to data from the Project on Student Debt. In today's dollars, that's about \$15,000." USA Today

f. There is a lower relative level of state support for higher education across the country

"In constant dollars, state and local educational appropriations per full-time student reached their high in 2001, at \$8,670. In 2012, those appropriations fell by nearly one third, to just \$5,896.

-growing demand for higher education" NY Times

"The 'new normal' expects students and their families to continue to make increasingly greater financial sacrifices in order to complete a postsecondary education. The 'new normal' expects schools and colleges to find ways of increasing productivity and absorb ever-larger budget cuts, while increasing degree production without, we hope, compromising quality."

Major trends in higher education" NY Times

"According to "The Great Cost Shift," states' disinvestment in public institutions over the past two decades has resulted in "an irreversible slide of U.S. higher

education being a collectively-funded public good to that of an individually purchased private good."

The report, which examines the impact of states' reduction and restructuring of financial support, is chock-full of statistics. Below is some of the more striking information:

- From 1990-1991 to 2010-2011, total state appropriations rose from \$65.1 billion to \$75.6 billion. But state funding actually declined in relative terms.
- If states had provided the same level of per capita support as in 1990-1991, they would have invested \$80.7 billion in 2010-2011.
- If states had provided the same level of funding per public, full-time equivalent student as in 1990-1991, total appropriations in 2009-2010 would have equaled approximately \$102 billion, an amount 35.3 percent higher.
- The proportion of their revenues that public colleges and universities received from state appropriations dropped from 38.3 percent in 1991-1992 to 24.4 percent in 2008-2009. Rising tuition, fees, and room and board represent a shift in support from the state as a whole to individual students and their families." US News & World Report

Corresponding changes are taking place in higher education. Consider:

- a. There is an increasing role for online education and adaptive learning systems. This is particularly true for the first two years of college.
- b. There is an increasing focus on partnerships with the private sector and other governmental bodies
- c. There is an enhanced focus on graduation, retention and career placement by policy makers
- d. Recruiting which targets minority, military and adult learners is increasing at institutions across the country
- e. There is increased focus on prior learning assessment, competency testing, and outcomes assessment
- f. Institutions, which have historically relied almost exclusively on tuition revenue and state funding, are now placing more emphasis on private fundraising -- it is critical to survival of these institutions

As U.S. demographics change and institutions across the U.S. respond, there are changing priorities for the USG. For example, consider:

*There is a shift to a budget model which rewards retention and graduation rather than enrollment and credit hour production

--Enrollment growth will continue to be critical as well because the decreasing share of the total cost from state funding makes growth in tuition revenue critical

*There is a shift towards a model which encourages cooperation among USG and DTAE institutions (technical colleges) rather than competition

*There is an emphasis on building partnerships with private sector to facilitate growth of online education

* There is a move away from use of bond debt to build capital assets and towards encouraging private investment in aspects of higher education which are not central to the mission of the institution

*There are rapidly increasing demands for efficiency in operation of the educational enterprise (such as demands for effective space utilization before new construction)

In this new environment, there are many institutions of higher education in the United States which will simply be unable to survive. We are seeing this trend already among small private liberal arts institutions.

"After years of seemingly being willing to pay whatever colleges sought, students and their families have become intensely price-conscious. As tuition continues to rise ahead of family income, fueling student debt, a record 43 percent of freshmen nationwide surveyed by the University of California, Los Angeles in fall 2012 said cost had been a major factor in their college choices, up from 31 percent a decade ago. During the 2011-12 academic year, families spent 13 percent less on college than they did two years earlier, according to the student-lending corporation Sallie Mae, suggesting that they're picking less expensive schools or getting more financial aid." Boston Globe

EGSC is uniquely positioned to not only survive, but to thrive and lead, in this new environment. What are our unique advantages? These include:

- We are affordable
- We are the USG access institution in one of the highest areas of higher educational need in the state - Savannah/Macon/Augusta triangle
- We have land to enable us to grow
- We have a long standing relationship with Ga Southern and a new and promising relationship with GRU
- We are focused on teaching and are good at it
- Our community and legislators strongly support us and encourage our growth

What threatens EGSC's ability to thrive in this new environment?

- The culture of the college tends towards resistance to change
- Our current level of state funding per FTE is lower than the rest of the USG

I am confident that we will use our advantages and overcome these threats. How will EGSC respond to this new environment and seize the opportunity to lead in this new environment? Consider some of the following possible strategies:

- *increased focus on student recruiting including military personnel, adult learners and those with some college but no college degree
- *develop and grow new programs in Augusta
- *increase student housing dramatically
- *form new partnerships with K-12 educators to increase expectations of college attendance and increase level of preparation for college
- *dramatically increase graduation and retention rates through expansion of the ACE and similar programs
- *methodically add services to support the teaching role of faculty such as the addition of advisors and tutors and development of a CTL
- *make service a signature of a EGSC degree
- * successfully initiate and complete a 5 year \$5million capital campaign

I look forward to September 26-28 as a time in which the college will build its sense of community and commitment to meeting these challenges. I truly hope all of you will participate.

Thanks, as always, for all you do for EGSC and, in particular, for your efforts to provide a high quality education for students needing access -- education with a personal touch.

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