

## **Weekly Update** **Tuesday, March 19, 2013**

Dear friends and colleagues,

Due to last night's inclement weather, I spent about 18 hours yesterday and today becoming personally acquainted with all of the power outlets in the Augusta airport as Joyce and I watched the reader boards report on one flight delay after another (ultimately resulting in cancellation and the joy of long waits on the cellphone to re-book). So I write this note a bit more bleary-eyed and sleepy than usual ....

Here are some of the things on my mind this week:

### **Visit by Regent Ben Tarbutton visit yesterday**

It was an honor to have Regent Tarbutton visit. Regents serve 7 year terms and are appointed by the Governor. A great deal of work and dedication over an extended time period is required.

Regent Tarbutton, who previously served as chair, was recently appointed to a new 7 year term. This is good news for higher education in Georgia because he is dedicated to higher education improvement.

### **Congressman John Barrow: Financial Awareness Day Planned**

During a recent conversation with a member of the Congressman's staff, I lamented the lack of financial awareness by students. I am alarmed by the debt load many students take on to finance their education combined with a lack of sophistication about managing that debt.

I was pleased to receive a follow-up call from the Congressman's office evidencing that my concerns were taken seriously. His office asked if EGSC would be interested in sponsoring a financial awareness event on campus. Congressman Barrow offered to speak at the event.

As a result, we are now planning this event for April (tentative). I will keep you posted as plans develop.

### **Vision Series: "Cowboy" Bob Searles**

Intriguing lecture. The good professor shared his insights concerning African American Cowboys in the United States.

Again, the attendance is causing me to re-think how we integrate these Vision Series lectures and performances with our academic classes. This excellent lecture could have been woven into the content of many courses so well. It could have formed the basis for a good writing assignment designed to encourage students to apply the principles learned in an academic course to a situation they have not previously

encountered. However, a very small number of students attended. We need to address this attendance issue thoughtfully.

### **NJCAA Tourney in Hutchison Kansas**

The men's basketball team and the cheering squad are in Hutchison Kansas during spring break for the national championship. I send my sincere thanks to the many members of the community and faculty and staff who helped make this trip possible through their contributions. The young men and women making the trip will help us spread the word that EGSC is, indeed, a great place to start.

### **COMPASS Testing: Working with Local High Schools**

During the week following spring break, we will be experimenting with a new approach to COMPASS testing. Many high school students from the region will be on campus to learn about the test, test and participate in remediation when needed. The test is no cost to these students. EGSC is helping the schools with transportation when needed. Participating students who apply will not pay an application fee.

This is a significant opportunity for EGSC to take a big step forward in our partnership with area K-12 schools. I will update you soon about the results.

### **Moving Forward with Augusta Plans**

We are moving forward aggressively to initiate plans to commence programs in Augusta in fall 2013. I anticipate that the BOR will consider this as early as its April 16-17 meeting. If approved, a prospectus will be filed promptly with SACSCOC for consideration at its June meeting.

In order to be prepared to commence in fall 2013 if we receive necessary approvals, we need to move forward promptly to identify a director. It is planned to post an internal announcement as early as this week.

### **East Meets West: A Partnership with Georgia SW**

As one step in the partnership with Georgia SW, the two institutions will be presenting a two day conference each fall (location to alternate each year). The first conference will be in Americus on October 17-18 (tentative) and will address the question "how can higher education work with K-12 to assure that more students expect to attend college and are prepared to succeed?" A prominent keynote speaker will set the tone for the conference. Hope many of you will participate. I will keep you posted as details develop.

### **Student Loan Default Rate**

In prior updates, I have shared my significant concerns about default rates. A bit of good news, the most recent two year rates were just released. EGSC's rate dropped a bit.

Although this is a positive development, it is not time to breathe easy. First, we still need to know the 3 year rate. Second, rates of default are simply too high by normal internal standards and we have much work to do to address this major issue.

The most recent three year rates (the new and more important measure) will be released on March 25. I will update you soon.

### **Budget Meetings with EGSC Units**

I spent much of the week meeting with each unit head to review proposed FY 2014 budgets. Of course, budgets cannot be set until the legislature adjourns (likely late March) and the USG sets the allocations to the 31 institutions in the USG (likely mid-April).

These meetings are time intensive ---- but well worth the time. I learned a great deal about the needs of the various academic and administrative units.

Suffice it to say that the articulated needs far exceed likely available funding. I have not totaled the requests yet, but they are likely at least 150% of FY 2013 budgets. Obviously, it will not be possible to meet all funding requests. Nonetheless, this process of preparing proposals and then thoughtfully discussing them enables priorities to be identified and long term plans to be made.

### **New BOR Athletics Policy**

At its last meeting, the BOR adopted a new policy about athletic oversight at USG institutions. This policy will require, among other things, a strong showing of student support for any new programs and a strong long term financial plan when new programs are proposed. I believe programs such as cross country present opportunities to increase enrollment, enhance student life and increase academic performance. In addition, programs of this type are relatively low cost. Accordingly, we will begin discussing these programs soon.

I hope your week is a good one.

Bob Boehmer