

**State of the College Address**  
**May 2, 2013 – 11 a.m.**

Good morning, members of the East Georgia State College Community. Thank you for your interest in the future of the College and the community it serves. My message to you today focuses on two themes: graduation and service ---

*East Georgia State College - EGSC - Means that our Students Will  
Earn Graduation and Serve Community.*

It is an honor to serve this community as president of the College. My role as president is to act as steward of the treasure that is known as East Georgia State College. The purpose of this address, which will be delivered each year at this time, is to provide you with my analysis of the achievements of the College, the challenges and opportunities facing the College and the strategies we will use to meet those challenges and seize those opportunities. Since I know by your attendance today that you have a stake and a strong interest in these topics, I will make that analysis in some detail today.

Let's start at the core of this analysis. Why does this special place, East Georgia State College, exist? It is here to provide access to a high-quality, affordable college education so that our graduates will commit to a life of learning and, in turn, live fulfilling lives and contribute to the economic and social vitality of the region.

Therefore, I call on all East Georgia State College students today to

*Earn Graduation and Serve Community*

As you earn that degree, you have the advantage of studying at a strong institution now in its 40th year of producing graduates to serve this region. During the past 40 years, a sound foundation has been built to make this educational experience possible for you.

Let's reflect briefly on some of the key pieces of that foundation.

The cornerstone of this foundation is the relationship of the College with the community it serves. This long-standing relationship began with a generous donation of land to the College by Luck Flanders Gambrell and continued with the community's willingness to issue bonds to build the first structures on campus. The community has firmly supported the College since those early days.

The stones built upon this cornerstone include:

- **Our physical campus in Swainsboro.** It is beautiful, meticulously maintained and provides ample room for growth.
- **Our faculty and staff.** You are experienced, talented and committed to our access mission.
- **Class sizes.** They are small and there is a culture of providing education with a personal touch.

- **East Georgia State College Foundation.** This deeply committed group of leaders from our region has long made things happen at the College – residence halls and scholarships being key examples.
- **Vision Series.** Due to the long standing support of Jean Morgan, our Vision Series offers the entire college community with opportunities for exposure to music, art and intellectual dialogue with individuals and groups from around the globe. Let's briefly relive a moment from one of those recent Vision Series performances.
- **Partnership with technical colleges.** We enjoy a long standing relationship with the technical college system. These partners in education share our belief that we are not competing for a scarce number of students pursuing higher education. Instead, we are jointly seeking creative ways to provide access to higher education for the large number of people who crave that education.
- **Partnership with the K-12 system.** We similarly enjoy a long standing relationship with the the K through 12 educational system. We are committed to working with local educators to enhance student expectations of college attendance and to better prepare students to succeed when they do attend college. As modeled by the successful Post-Secondary Readiness and Enrichment Program --- PREP, this effort must be expanded and begin even earlier in grade school.
- **Legislative support.** Our local legislators are the strongest contingent in the state. They, even more importantly, staunchly support higher education.
- **Our collective commitment to continuous improvement.** Faculty, staff and trustees are future focused. We all recognize that we must change as the higher education landscape changes if we are to continue to thrive. Although change is always difficult, we are committed to rolling up our sleeves and doing whatever is needed to meet the ever-changing needs of the region.

The capstone of this solid structure is the **Fulford Center**. This beautiful structure is the **place where college meets community**. It was donated by Ada Lee Correll, the wife of Pete Correl, in honor of her mother, Sudie A. Fulford, a long-time Emanuel County educator. Our future success depends upon our ability to assure that the points of intersection between college and community continue to expand. We must understand even better the needs of the region and deliver the new degree programs the community needs. We must work even more closely with our K-12 partners to assure that students are prepared for these programs and to raise student expectations about earning degrees in these programs. We must find new ways to inspire students to use their degrees to serve their community.

The solid foundation I have just described was built to inspire students to learn. I am so deeply proud of those students, who are so well-represented today by Tommy Green, SGA President. Just yesterday, 173 of these students participated in a Commit to Completion Ceremony. Each signed a pledge to complete college. The number of occasions this year when I have burst with pride as I have observed our students is so large. Watching our graduates walk through the corridor of faculty outside the PE building following the commencement ceremony, seeing family members watch with pride as their students received awards at Honors Night last week, observing the Gospel Choir light up the room at Mr. Jimmy Morgan's 100th birthday celebration, hearing Miss EGSC sing the national anthem, observing students in my class grasp

new concepts each week, or celebrating as the basketball team cut down the nets after winning the state championship. Our students continually inspire me.

Let's quickly observe a few examples of our students in action.

More and more of these students must

*Earn Graduation/Serve Community*

As more and more students do earn degrees, the economic impact of the College on the region will continue to grow. At the Economic Outlook Luncheon held on this campus earlier this year, Dr. Jeff Humphries of the University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth estimated that impact to be approximately \$61 million annually. There is potential to dramatically expand that impact if we stay focused on our strategic goals.

During the last year, the College reviewed our goals and decided to focus on three:

- College Completion – We will dramatically improve the number of students earning college degrees or successfully transferring to other institutions of higher education.
- Service – We will assure that every EGSC graduate leaves with a clear understanding of the need to serve their community and the skills to do that. Graduates who demonstrate these skills during their time at EGSC will soon earn a “service seal of distinction” on their degree at the time of graduation.
- Economic growth of the region – The college will be a catalyst for economic development in the region we serve.

In other words, an increasing number of our students must:

*Earn Graduation/Serve Community*

What progress was made toward these goals in the last year?

- Our Academic Center for Excellence, ACE, was established. Last summer, existing space in the Luck Flanders Gambrell Center was repurposed to create a Learning Commons comprised of the Library, the Academic Center for Excellence and the Common Grounds Coffee Shop. A full-time director of advisement and a full-time director of learning support were hired in addition to part time advisors and tutors. Faculty began to hold some of their office hours in the ACE. Corresponding changes were implemented in Statesboro. These new human resources were made possible by targeted state funding designed to enable the College to meet its Complete College Georgia goals. This infusion of human capital has already made significant improvements in the library and ACE usage rates --- and this has translated into higher passage rates in courses. Ultimately, I believe, this will be a key factor in higher graduation and retention rates.
- We became a state college. East Georgia College became East Georgia State College and welcomed the inaugural class into the College's first bachelors degree program - a biology degree. This level change was reviewed by a

visiting team of peers from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The visit went very well, indeed --- the team recommended approval without issuing any recommendations for follow up action. We anticipate final approval by SACSCOC at its June 2013 meeting. This new program is already producing major increases in the number of first and second year students studying biology --- students preparing to enter the new bachelors degree program in their junior year. These students, upon earning that degree, will be well-prepared for entry into graduate programs or for immediate employment in high demand health care professions.

- Ability to offer Associate Degrees to Students Studying at EGSC – Statesboro. For historical reasons, students studying at our campus in Statesboro have been able to prepare for transfer but have not been able to earn associate degrees on that campus. The University System of Georgia has now approved the offering of associate degrees on our campus in Statesboro. Pending approval by SACCOC, students will be able to earn those degrees beginning in fall 2013.
- Faculty Senate. Strong institutions of higher education rely heavily on a strong faculty senate to provide direction in key areas as developing the College's curriculum. For the first time in the College's history, a faculty senate was established. Thank you, Dr. Sharman, and thank you to the other officers and members of the senate for your leadership.
- Athletic success. In only their third year of competition, our mens and womens programs in basketball, baseball and fast-pitch softball are representing the College admirably. This exposure is already attracting new students to the College. The most dramatic example is, of course, the success of the men's basketball team, which won the state title and advanced to the NJCAA tournament in Hutchinson, Kansas. In addition to winning the hearts of this region, the team and the cheering squad -- which travelled to Kansas to support the team -- also won the hearts of fans from many other parts of the country due to their intense style of play on the court and the professional manner in which they conducted themselves off the court. The team, as you know well, won handily in the first round and lost on the court in the second round of the national tournament---- but their fans were as proud of the team following on-the-court defeat as they were in victory --- especially the young fan who told the team it was his birthday and received an impromptu birthday gift of autographed Bobcat basketball shoes.
- University System of Georgia awards. One of the great nights of the year for the College was at the annual University System of Georgia awards gala in Atlanta. Judge Richard McNeely received the system's Distinguished Alumni Award and Dr. Paul Cerpovicz received the Regents Excellence in Teaching Award. Let's watch as Dr. Cerpovicz delivered the commencement address at fall graduation. It is most unusual for one of the system's 31 institutions to receive two of the major awards at this event. Shortly after this event, Dr. Jimmy Wedincamp received the outstanding alumni award from the biology program at Georgia Southern University.
- Dr. John Derden's publication of book about nearby Camp Lawton. Another academic achievement, which has brought notoriety to the College, is the publication by Dr. John Derden of his work concerning Camp Lawton, the world's largest prison. In addition to this achievement, Dr. Derden directs the highly successful Vision Series for the College. His book has already been

nominated as the Georgia Book of the Year in History by the Georgia Author's Association.

- African-American Male Initiative. The College was recently awarded a start-up grant from the University System of Georgia to become one of the participating institutions in the African-American Male Initiative. This is a major opportunity to raise the graduation and retention rates of our African-American male students and we will seize this opportunity.
- New Faculty and Staff Positions Were Added by the College. Early in the year, we identified a number of critical functions for which the College did not have a corresponding staff member. These included, for example, a student conduct officer, an auditor, and a graphic designer. Also, we identified a need for new faculty positions such as biology professors. Positions were created, searches were held and positions were filled. Each of these new positions is already having a significant and positive impact on the learning environment at the College.
- In-House food service. The more time students spend on campus engaged in the life of the College, the more they will learn. As you all know well, the availability of quality food on campus is a key ingredient in getting students to stay on campus. This year, the decision was made to provide food service in-house. This has been a big hit on campus to say the very least. All of our lives have been improved due to the quality of the food available and students are clearly spending more time on campus as a result.
- Art Explosion. During the last year, an art on campus task force worked to identify art created by faculty, staff and students over the years. These works of art have, for many years, been kept in storage. The task force cataloged and framed many of these works and displayed them on the Swainsboro and Statesboro campuses. There is still more art to be rescued from storage this summer and placed across campus for all of us to enjoy. A next step will be the creation of a virtual art tour so that others can enjoy this from a distance.
- Improvements to the physical campus. The already beautiful physical campus saw many upgrades last year. Listing all of them would extend this address beyond its limits and exhaust us collectively. However, the common thread is that interior improvements such as the repurposing of space just outside this auditorium to create the ACE and exterior improvements such as the addition of a cross county course, a volleyball court, a basketball court and enhanced lighting are causing students to spend more time on campus and are attracting many others to campus.

What challenges do we face as we strive to achieve our goals?

- The nation's new normal is and will continue to be a steady decline in the percentage of the total budget for public institutions of higher education funded by direct state allocations. This will be combined with continued pressure to keep the tuition rates low. This means that all institutions, and East Georgia State College is no exception, must raise a larger portion of their budgets from private funds. This is one reason, among many, that our East Georgia State College Foundation is so important to the future of our college. On behalf of the entire college, I extend my thanks to outgoing foundation chair Bill Rogers, new chair, Denny Key, and all of the members of the board of trustees for their outstanding service. In addition to this need for increased

private giving, the college must manage its budget even more carefully and must continue to increase enrollment in order to thrive and survive.

- Although fiscal year 2014 budget will remain tight, the Fiscal Year 2014 allocation of state funding received by the college is a significant move in the right direction and deeply appreciated. For example, funding has been awarded which will enable us to further enhance the advising, tutoring and learning support in our Academic Centers for Excellence. Although this new funding is a significant step in the right direction, East Georgia State College must continue to advocate tirelessly in the years to come for a state allocation which puts us on par with our peer institutions. As enrollment has risen steadily over the years, the College has relied on steadily increasing enrollment --- i.e., tuition revenue --- to meet its increasing budgetary needs. However, the College at the same time has fallen behind its peers in the level of direct state funding per full time equivalent student. Remedying this situation will require advocacy for the College over a multi-year period.
- One key reason that this increased funding is so greatly needed is to make the College's salary structure competitive. This is one of my top priorities. Remedying this situation, however, is also a multi-year task. As you all know all too well, the state's economic situation in recent years has resulted in a number of consecutive years without raises. Fiscal year 2014 is another year in which the state will be unable to provide funds for a raise pool – i.e., across the board salary raises for faculty and staff. There is not a quick and easy fix for East Georgia State College or any other public educational institution in Georgia. I can assure you, however, that finding ways to address this issue is at the very top of my priority list.
- For a long period of time, the College's enrollment grew dramatically. In fall 2012, the College experienced its first enrollment decline in many years. Many of our peers in Georgia and across the nation experienced a similar decline. Certainly, the long period of economic distress our nation has faced is one factor. However, our decline resulted in large part from the increased entrance standards required for all access institutions in the University System of Georgia and the enhanced federal standards concerning “satisfactory academic progress” as a condition of retaining federal student financial aid eligibility. Again, this is the new normal. We must counter the downward enrollment pressure from these trends by working even more closely with our K-12 partners to assure that students are adequately prepared to meet these new standards. We must, in addition, do even more to assure that students in the region are aware of the opportunities available at East Georgia State College --- simply put, we are a great place to start at an excellent price --- and more people need to know this.
- As the College's enrollment grew, so did its student loan default rate. This same trend took place at many similar institutions in the country. That does not make this situation acceptable. Our efforts to raise the financial awareness of our students and their families and to assure responsible management by those students of their student loans must be redoubled. I have created a task force to aggressively attack this problem and I am confident that it will be solved. However, solution to this challenge is the responsibility of the entire College community --- not just the members of the task force.
- Many of our students at East Georgia State College are first generation college students. We need to reach even more potential students in the region who

would become the first in their families to attend college. This needs to take place continually from grade school through high school. It is important to the economic health of our region for these students to attain college degrees. It is important to the long term health of the College that these students choose East Georgia State College as the place to do that.

- There is simply not enough student housing available in Swainsboro. The 200 beds available in our new residence hall are full and we have a waiting list. In the short term, I believe the best approach to increasing capacity is to encourage private development of property adjacent to the College. This would enable a private developer to have both the financial upside and the risk. Ideally, the developer and the College would enter into a contractual arrangement providing that the resident assistants from the College would live on-site, that the College's police would patrol the property, and that the College's conduct standards apply to the property. An increase in housing would, in my judgment, spark growth of private businesses in Swainsboro and we are working aggressively to obtain approval from the University System of Georgia for an arrangement of this type.
- We do not have a similar need for housing space in Statesboro. However, we do have a need to find additional instructional space as enrollment grows. The physical campus in Statesboro does not provide room for expansion and is several miles away from the location of key resources such as library space.
- We must build on our past efforts to develop online courses and programs and assume a statewide leadership role in online education. This is not a call to replace face to face instruction with online courses. A large number of students will continue to flourish through a college experience on a college campus. However, institutions failing to see the need of many prospective students to pursue online courses and degrees--- military personnel and adults preparing for new careers, for example -- do so at their own peril. We will not be one of those failing to recognize this important need.
- We offer a broad array of associate degrees and one exciting new bachelors program. However, this menu needs to be expanded greatly by developing targeted certificate programs, additional targeted associate degree programs and additional targeted bachelors degree programs. All of these must be designed to meet the needs of our graduates and employers in this new economy.
- Our course schedules must be updated to meet the needs of students --- many of these students have significant college credit but no degree. We must reach out to these students by offering courses at times of the day when they can attend classes. Courses will need to be offered in hybrid formats in many cases. For example, some programs will need to be offered in short intense periods of residency combined with online study.
- We do not have a strong financial basis for continued growth of our athletic programs. As demonstrated so vividly this year, a strong and well-managed athletic program improves the overall life of the college community. We must build on this year's success. In my opinion, this will require a modest boost in the student athletic fee for FY 2015 and beyond to provide an adequate financial base to support current programs and allow us to add new low cost programs which will attract excellent student-athletes and other students who want to study at an institution offering such programs. We will be working with Student Government on this issue and will then seek BOR approval.

- There are a large number of current and former military personnel in the region. Many of these heroes need access to the education East Georgia State College has to offer. In order to address this need, I have created a Military Friendly Campus task force to adopt a strategy to address these needs. In the next academic year, we will be establishing a military resource center in the Academic Building on the Swainsboro Campus as a first step in this strategy.
- We need a Center for Teaching and Learning to assist faculty in their efforts to meet emerging student learning needs. Based on the recommendations of a special task force, we will establish a center on a modest scale in the coming academic year.
- The College does not have a comprehensive recycling plan in place. This misses an opportunity to lead the local community in this critical area. That is what colleges should do --- be on the cutting edge of meeting community needs. I have created a special task force to advise me about how to tackle this matter --- and how to produce a stream of income as we do it.
- Finally, East Georgia State College is a secret that is too closely guarded. We have top quality faculty teaching in relatively small classes. We provide a high quality educational experience. We have excellent facilities. We are the best bargain in the state. Yet, I regularly encounter potential students and parents who simply do not know what we have to offer or where we are. This will require a strategic communication strategy implemented over a period of years.

These challenges, I admit, can be daunting. However, we will meet them with simple hard work and energy.

Between today and the first day of fall semester 2013, significant effort will be expended getting ready for the classes in Augusta. Pending final Board of Regents approval at its May meeting, we will implement a new partnership with Georgia Regents University in Augusta in the fall. This presents the College with an enormous opportunity to use its expertise and experience to meet the access needs of the Augusta area. We are fully committed to assuring that we meet that need and greatly appreciate the foresight and collegiality of Georgia Regents University in this new partnership.

In implementing this partnership, we will be using the experience gained from 1997 through the present from our relationship with Georgia Southern University in Statesboro. We deeply appreciate that special relationship with Georgia Southern University.

Both of these collaborations --- EGSC Statesboro and EGSC Augusta -- will move the College forward in meeting our goals of retaining and graduating more students. We believe these collaborations will also move our partner institutions towards that same end.

These collaborations, and our commitment to expanding the Academic Centers for Excellence, are key examples of our commitment to the goals of Complete College Georgia. As we work toward those goals, we will never forget the importance of the individual student. The history and culture of the College demonstrate the high value

placed on the relationship between professor and student and upon the education of each student as an individual. We cannot and will not lose that focus.

Meeting our ambitious goals will require that we come together as a community from time to time to celebrate our successes and envision the future that awaits us. For example, we will come together as a community at the end of September of this year to focus for three days on the future of the College. I hope that many of you will serve on one of the committees planning these important events and will mark these dates on your calendar today.

- **Convocation** - On Thursday, September 26 the College will restore the tradition of beginning each academic year with a convocation -- a day of activities focused on a topic important to student learning and the College's future.
- **Investiture** - On Friday, September 27 at 11 a.m., my formal investiture as president will be held.
- **Parents/Family/Alumi Day and 40th Anniversary Celebration** - Saturday, September 28 will begin with a 5K run on campus and will continue with events welcoming parents and alumni to campus and celebrating the College's 40th anniversary.
- **Capital Campaign Kickoff** - the College will kick off its capital campaign on Saturday evening, September 28.

Thanks for spending this time with me to consider the future of the College. Let's roll up our sleeves and get this done together. What are we going to do?

*Earn Graduation/Serve Community*