

Weekly Notes by East Georgia State College President

February 01, 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This busy week has reminded me of the tremendous importance of the work that all of you do. The range of activities on campus this week was impressive: a Vision Series lecture by a noted author; regular classes; basketball, baseball and softball games; a Faculty Senate meeting; preparations for next week's SACSCOC level change visit; SGA and Student Affairs personnel preparing for the Miss East Georgia State College scholarship pageant on Saturday; meetings of task forces concerning the Art Explosion on Campus, Military Friendly Campus, Threat of Imminent Harm, and Student Loan Default Rate; preparations for the College's impending budget meeting with the Chancellor; In all of these activities, and many more, I saw one common thread --- EGSC faculty, staff and students working cooperatively to find ways to further improve the learning environment.

For example, I met with a group planning a student event for March 2nd. This event will be a "scavenger hunt" using smart phone technology and Instagram. Look for details soon on posters around campus. The event will cover most of a Saturday and will include teams taking photos downtown, judging and digital display of the photos, a marshmallow roast and music by a live band. Obviously, it sounds like great fun. However, the opportunities presented to our students to learn about and connect with the Swainsboro community are tremendous. In addition, the celebration of art and creativity sends an important message.

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

Plant Operations and Police Force

The positive impact of the physical environment upon learning is significant. As I enter campus each morning, I am reminded of the excellence of our physical campus, the outstanding work of our plant operations division in maintaining the campus and the importance of that work to EGSC's attainment of its mission. Also, I am reminded of the importance of the work of the EGSC police force in maintaining a safe and secure environment. I hope that each of you will join me in

taking a few minutes out of your day this week to extend special thanks to members of our plant operations division and police force.

Faculty Senate

As you know, the College's first Faculty Senate was established this year. I have been meeting regularly with the Faculty Senate officers for informal discussions prior to their regular meetings. These discussions have been extremely helpful to me in understanding the challenges facing the College. For example, the officers and I had an extended discussion this week about the overall salary structure of the College. Frank and open communication of this type with the Faculty Senate, the members of Cabinet, and Staff Council are essential to finding long-term solutions to major challenges of this type. I intend to continue keep those channels of communication open and hope that all of you will continue to give me your input.

Student Engagement

Students who engage with faculty and staff members through co-curricular activities are academically more successful. The range of these activities continues to grow at the College. As we strive to increase rates of academic success, we will need to even further expand these co-curricular activities. Some areas in which we need to grow include the following:

- Infusing the concept of service into these activities whenever possible. In addition, these service activities need to be intentionally connected to the academic curriculum at every opportunity;
- Extending opportunities to reach returning military personnel, students who are working while attending college, and students of non-traditional age.

Student Loan Default Rate

The increasing default rate is a national problem. Every institution of higher education in the country has a responsibility to address this issue directly.

For example, the US Department of Education released (in fall 2012) the official two year and three year federal student loan cohort default rates. This was the first time that three year rates have been released.

Consider the following:

- The FY 2010 2 year default rate for Georgia was 9.2%. For Georgia 2-3 year public institutions, this rate was 13.4%;
- The FY 2009 3 year default rate for Georgia was 14.6%. For Georgia 2-3 year public institutions, this rate was 18.3%;
- EGSC's rate was higher than the above rates.

The special task force I have created at EGSC to address this issue is facing a significant challenge. However, it is essential that we meet the challenge and I sincerely appreciate the work the task force is doing to find ways to increase our educational efforts at every stage of the process (at time of admission; during each student's academic career at EGSC; at time of graduation; during each student's loan repayment period).

As always, thanks for all you do for EGSC. We are facing many challenges. However, EGSC is a special institution uniquely positioned to meet these challenges and to take advantage of the corresponding opportunities.

Sincerely,

Bob Boehmer

President

East Georgia State College