

## **Weekly Notes by East Georgia State College President**

**February 23, 2013**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

### **Complete College Georgia Summit in Athens, Georgia**

I was privileged to be part of an EGSC team at the two-day Complete College Georgia Summit in Athens this week. The team included a representative of the local community and a representative of the local school district in addition to four EGSC team members.

One of the presentations at this summit, which I found to be particularly useful, was a presentation by a representative of NCHEMS. That presentation included information concerning an “educational needs index” for each county in the state. The index was based on a large number of factors such as educational attainment in the county. As you might suspect, the educational needs index for our area was very high. The information from this presentation will soon be posted on the USG web site and I will provide you with a link as soon as it is available. As an access institution, this information highlights the unique responsibilities which we have to the region to find creative ways to meet the needs reflected by this index.

As I listened to the many presentations about ways to improve the retention, successful transfer and graduation rates in Georgia’s colleges and universities, it became clear to me that one strategy likely presents the greatest opportunity for improvement. That strategy is forming more robust and effective partnerships with K-12 educators in the region. We simply have to find ways to assure that more students develop the expectation at an early age that they will attend college and that they do more at an early age to adequately prepare themselves for the rigor of a college experience. Although there are many strategies we can employ once these students come to EGSC to improve the likelihood of their academic success, we will be fighting an uphill battle if we do not work to find creative ways to work with our K-12 partners to increase the number of students who both recognize the need for a college degree and the need to prepare themselves for college.

The College submitted its Complete College Georgia plan last year. A key element of that plan is the creation of new K-12 partnerships. This plan is, however,

intended as living document. It must be updated continually based on our experience. The following is the timetable for update of that plan in 2013:

- June 1, 2013 – updated draft due
- July 2013 – receive feedback from USG
- September 01, 2013 – final updated plan due to USG.

### **East Georgia State College Men's Basketball Game at Gordon College**

Following the CCG Summit in Athens, my wife, Joyce, and I travelled to Barnesville to watch the EGSC/Gordon College men's basketball game at Gordon College with the Gordon College president and his wife. As they have done throughout the year, the team not only won but presented an excellent image of the College.

### **Budget for the College**

Later in the week, I was part of another EGSC team which met with the Chancellor and other USG senior administrators to discuss the proposed FY 2014 budget for the College. We will, of course, not learn our final FY 2014 budget until after the conclusion of the current legislative session. In our presentation, we were requested to address the College's funding priorities in the event any new funds become available. The priorities we identified included:

- Funds to continue to enhance the academic support services provided by our Academic Centers for Excellence;
- Funds to commence academic programs in Augusta if these programs are approved by the USG;
- Funds to enable us to offer associate degrees in Statesboro;
- Funds to "catch up" EGSC with other institutions in our sector in the level of state funding per full-time equivalent student

### **USG President's Meeting in Atlanta**

I attended the USG president's meeting in Atlanta on Thursday. One of the topics of discussion was the cuts to this year's budgets for all USG institutions. As you know, all institutions were required to give back 3% earlier this year. In addition, all institutions were told to be prepared to give back an additional 2%. We have not yet been directed to give back that additional 2% --- but anticipate this directive in the next few weeks. Although it is possible that we will be directed to return less (maybe a half percent less), I am operating on the assumption that we will be required to return the full 2%. Due to good financial management by our office of Business Affairs, we will be able to do that without the need for furloughs or similar action.

As I have told you earlier, these cuts are permanent. In other words, we anticipate that the 5% cut will be continued into FY 2014.

Another topic of discussion was the report of the Governor's Higher Education Funding Commission released December 12, 2012. In the past, the "formula" for funding for higher education in Georgia has been driven largely by enrollment and credit hours. The new approach to the "formula" will be implemented in Georgia for FY 2016. This will be driven by outcomes. In other words, it will reward progression degrees conferred and service to the institution's region. This new formula presents opportunities and challenges for EGSC. For example, a challenge for EGSC will be to assure that efforts to increase graduation rates do not reduce quality. Correspondingly, an opportunity is presented by the fact that there is significant room for improvement in our retention, successful transfer and graduation rates.

### **East Georgia State College Gospel Choir**

It was an immense pleasure to be able to make it back to Swainsboro on Thursday evening to hear the performance by the College's gospel choir.

This choir has achieved a high level of excellence in a very short period of time. They produce an intense, powerful, exciting and excellent sound. I am extremely hopeful that they will accept my invitation to perform in September of this year on the weekend when the College holds my investiture, celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and kicks off its capital campaign.

### **Sherman's March Tour**

On Saturday, Dr. John Derden led the Sherman's March Tour as he has for many years. I understand that the group may have been the largest group ever to participate in the tour. During the course of the day, I had the opportunity to speak with many of the participants. Many travelled from outside our region to participate in this tour. All left at the end of the day with a significantly enhanced understanding of history and an extremely favorable impression of the College.

### **Homecoming**

We did not make it back to campus on Saturday in time to see either the men's or women's basketball game or the crowning of the Homecoming King and Queen. Nonetheless, it was a great end to the week to return to campus at around 6pm to learn that both the men's and women's teams won ---- and that the week of Homecoming activities were culminated by the crowning of excellent representatives of the College as Homecoming king and queen.

### **Vision Series – Camp Lawton**

I am hopeful that faculty will encourage students to attend this week's Vision Series Lecture. Professor Derden will deliver a lecture about Camp Lawton, the world's largest prison. As you likely know, Dr. Derden has just published a major new book on this topic. Having visited that site as part of the Sherman's March Tour this week and heard Dr. Derden's insights. I can attest that this will be an hour well-spent for everyone who attends. I personally gained significant insights into the intellectual process used by historians and gained insights about the impact of wars on society. I believe our students will similarly benefit from this lecture.

### **Student Loan Default Rate**

I have previously mentioned my strong concerns about the College's student loan default rate. As mentioned, the default rate until recently has been a two year rate. Recently, the federal Department of Education established a new three year default rate. The College's two year default rate has been rising for a number of years and the College's first three year default rate was disturbingly high.

We anticipated that the newest three year default rates for all institutions in the country would be announced next week. However, the federal government just announced a delay in the release of the latest three year default rates. The government did not state the reason for the delay nor the date upon which the new rates will be released. I will let you know when the new rates are released.

In the meantime, I am working closely with the task force I created to address this issue. The approach taken by the task force will approach the problem in many ways. We will need to work more closely with students and their families to educate them about student loan planning from the point of their admission to the College and continuing through their graduation and repayment period. This will require a great deal of hard work over an extended period of time. However, this is an important issue deserving this level of attention.

Have a great week.

Sincerely,

Bob Boehmer

President

East Georgia State College