Governors State University’s Weekly Newsletter

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“What on earth is that supposed to be? An ‘I’ between the ‘N’ and the ‘V’? It looks like one of those heads on Easter Island. Really, what is it?”

Overheard commentary on new GSUniverse masthead

A Hole in the Heart of the GSU Community
Dr. Mary Arnold, professor in the Division of Psychology and Counseling, passed away Saturday, October 4. At Convocation on October 9, President Stuart Fagan remembered Dr. Arnold. “She was well-versed in teaching others how to care, how to help, and how to heal. Mary Arnold brought those qualities through the doors of this university every time she walked through them. We’ve lost a great colleague. We’ve lost a great friend. But we will never lose the example of her strength, her caring, and her courage. Those things will stay with us. Always.”

Convocation: GSU Discovers the Path to the Future – Look to the Past!
In his remarks at Convocation, Fagan spoke to the earliest manifestations of GSU’s renegade spirit: open bays, the “academic shopping mall,” competencies instead of grades, and mechanisms for an absolute egalitarianism. Visionary concepts that deliberately flew in the face of the academy. Visionary experiments that are often labeled failures today. Fagan reminded the audience that, contrary to being failures, those things were part of a larger and successful experiment called Governors State University.

Likening first president William Engbretson’s determined spirit to Harry Truman’s, Fagan said that Engbretson and the university’s founders intended to create a university that would guarantee social, economic, and racial justice. “It may not seem so radical today, but that’s because the experiment is a success,” Fagan said. “It’s because Governors State is a success. When we think of a college student today, we don’t automatically think of a generationally-driven, white, upper-middle class male anymore. We think of African American scholars. We think of women. We think of blue-collar families. We think of those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. We think first generation college students, and we think of the freedom to move through – to break through – economic barriers. We had our own Harry S. – he was William Engbretson, the first president of the university. He knew the viability of the real experiment lay in our ability to adapt and to see it succeed and continue to succeed. He knew there would be challenges. He knew that we would have to be prepared to accept those challenges and meet them head on.” Fagan said that GSU faces new challenges now, but that the university will meet them in the same spirit as Engbretson and GSU’s founders.

Convocation: Reorganization of Enrollment Services
At Convocation, Fagan said, “Increased enrollment and improved customer service are priorities,” before announcing that effective immediately, Admissions, Processing, the Registrar’s Office, and Financial Aid, will report to Chuck Connolly, Interim Executive Director of Marketing and Communications. Connolly will report to the President. He will continue to have responsibility for Marketing and Communications and Public Affairs. A search for his permanent replacement in Enrollment Management will soon begin.
Convocation: Layoffs in the Cards?
Fagan said, "We are not planning any layoffs at this time. We’ve had them. We’re operating on a very tight budget. We’ve prepared for a mid-year rescission of $961,000. As long as the rescission is not greater than we’ve planned for, and as long as we continue to be prudent in managing our affairs, we do not anticipate any reductions in staff."

Convocation: Outsourcing in the Cards?
Fagan confirmed that, given the current financial situation, GSU will look into outsourcing functions ranging from ITS to Marketing to Legal to Purchasing to Maintenance, and on... Fagan said, “In a worst case scenario, if our appropriations are cut again next year, we’ll have already identified some options; we’ll be prepared to make an informed decision about the best ways to reduce spending without jeopardizing the mission of the university.”

Convocation: Program Eliminations in the Cards?
The Provost has asked the deans to review existing academic programs and identify those which might be eliminated. Fagan reminded the audience that in years past, the state has asked for program eliminations. Of the current situation, he said, “I’ll be darned if I’m going to leave GSU exposed to the very real possibility that we’ll get a fax one morning instructing us to eliminate programs in, say, 30 or 60 days. We’re going to take control of our destiny. We’re going to do the ground work today and be prepared for what Springfield may tell us tomorrow. But let me clear. I have made no commitment to eliminating academic programs.” He added, “This review may surface some programs that should be considered for elimination or reorganization. If that’s the case, the programs will be referred to the Academic Review Committee, and we’ll proceed according to established procedures.”

Where the Focus Lies
Fagan said, “We’re a university, and a good one. Our focus should be on academics not administration. On learning — not budgets. On scholarship — not organization. On education — not politics. On service — not outsourcing. On students — not politicians.” He stated that GSU’s potential to create first class programs lies with its faculty, saying, “To the entire faculty I say thank you for your service to students, for your teaching, your research, your service to the community, and for your continued commitment to the mission and ideals of Governors State in these difficult times.” Fagan said administration will press IBHE to place faculty salary increases at the top of its priority list and work to secure resources to improve facilities for research and teaching.

Provost Challenges GSU to Continue Academic Innovations
At Convocation, Provost Paul Keys spoke to the issues of continuing budgetary shortfalls and a national movement toward university cost controls. Bringing it home to GSU, Keys said the university “needs to adopt a new paradigm” to grow despite the current challenges it faces. Citing examples of faculty and staff who have already implemented new measures, Keys said this new paradigm should be entrepreneurial in spirit. “We have to explore the practices of successful private universities, use new types of extramural funding in creative ways, and explore the use of contract income to supplement state budget losses.” He cited the flexibility afforded higher education in the State of Pennsylvania, where state universities are allowed significant autonomy in securing resources. A similar thinking, he said, is burgeoning at GSU: “The College of Health Professions’s use of the new discretionary GSU Indirect Cost Formula incentive is just one example.” Keys said CHP is using this external funding for scholarship and research. The funds are also used for travel and specialized equipment. He continued, “The College of Business and Public Administration has used a Cost-Benefit approach to develop a new degree program on the campus of Kankakee Community College, where start-up courses are planned to pay for themselves. CELCS is securing funding to develop similar programs at Joliet Junior College.” Keys said that CELCS is also carrying over fees to buy used national television network equipment at a fraction of the original cost and that the Information Technology Planning Council is focusing on earmarks to supplement and speed the development of smart classrooms.
Convocation: Springfield's Not the Only Game in Town. Take I
30th President Fagan and Provost Keys said GSU would aggressively seek funding for academic initiatives from other sources. Fagan reported on ways the $1 million generated to date by the Strategic Initiative fee would be invested: smart classrooms, on-line courses, community spaces, renovation of the ACS student computer labs, and two science programs that will serve GSU students as well as teachers in the area and their students.

Convocation: Springfield's Not the Only Game in Town. Take II.
Both President Fagan and Provost Keys reported on increased efforts to secure funding for projects from grants. Since September, 2002, GSU has received over $10 million in grants. Keys said that grants coupled with the revised GSU Indirect Cost Formula (made effective September 1, 2002) make more indirect funds available to the colleges and programs that submit successful grant applications.

Convocation: Lisa Hendrickson Wins Baysore Award
When Provost Paul Keys announced that Lisa Hendrickson won the Baysore Award for 2003 because of her integrity, knowledge, and dedication, the audience exploded! As Hendrickson walked to the stage, Keys read glowing commentary from one of her nomination letters, and the applause went on well after she reached the stage. When Keys presented the award, Hendrickson received a standing ovation. Hendrickson thanked the Admission staff and everyone she works with at GSU for making her award possible. When she left the stage, the applause was loud and sustained. Even the cynic and the curmudgeon who jointly edit this newsletter were touched by the outpouring of support. Paul Keys said later, “People were crying. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the house.” The cynic and the curmudgeon agree, “Cream rises.”

Convocation: Students Have Their Say
Linda Williams, CHP student and President of the Student Senate, talked about the commitment adult students make to education and the support students receive from faculty and staff. A high point of Convocation: Williams presented six GSU flags to the university. Student Senators brought the flags onstage. President Fagan said the flags would fly high and proudly.

Convocation: Faculty Have Their Say
Senate President Mike Demitroff reminded the audience of the quality of professors at GSU. Faculty Excellence Award Winner Sandi Estep reminded the audience to care about students.

Coming to The Center for Performing Arts November 14, 2003, at 8 p.m.
The Chicago Jazz Ensemble, in residence at Columbia College Chicago