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Memo Regarding New Year's Resolutions

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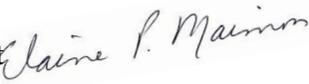
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MEMORANDUM

Date: January 9, 2012
To: The GSU Community
From: Elaine P. Maimon, President 
Re: New Year's Resolutions

A warm welcome back to GSU after a much deserved holiday period and time for reflection. January is symbolized by the Roman god Janus, looking backward and forward. It is a month to learn from the past and make resolutions for the future.

As the December Board of Trustees meeting made clear, GSU is at a tipping point. We have never been in a better position to realize the dreams of our founders for a different kind of regional public university, committed to experimentation and innovation, serving students who are generally not well served by higher education, and establishing strong relationships with our larger community.

At the December holiday party one of our new faculty members told me that he now understands what it means to aspire to be a “model twenty-first century university.” With new science labs, Kresge support for the Dual Degree Program, planning for a state-of-the-art freshman program, and the initiation of student residential living/learning communities, we are poised to create a university that others will want to emulate. We have it in our power to reinvent higher education for the twenty-first century, not only for Illinois, but for the nation.

As Professor Rashidah Muhammad, our Faculty Senate President, told the Board of Trustees, great opportunities come with great challenges. And great challenges require courage and resolution.

In the spirit of the New Year, I would like to share six resolutions for GSU, if we are to make the most of the opportunities before us:

- Let's remember, as the saying goes, change is inevitable; growth is optional. No one – even if it were desirable to do so – can turn back the clock to the twentieth century. Because of GSU's founding commitment to innovation, we are in an ideal position to contribute positively to the state and national goals of increasing the percentage of citizens holding bachelor's degrees.

- Let's face the fiscal realities. Like every Illinois university – and most universities around the nation – we confront serious financial challenges. But we have the advantage of the university's youth and ability to grow strategically. We must resolve to make the best use of these circumstances.
- Let's hire new colleagues who are excited about building a model twenty-first century university. Unlike many universities that must make serious cuts in faculty and staff, we are still hiring. We must be courageous and patient enough to ensure that all new hires contribute to the university's needs, rather than fitting a preconceived pattern. We can and will attract bright, diverse individuals who are inspired by our mission.
- Let's build community and enjoy each other's company. Let's resolve to participate in campus lectures, panels, art exhibits, and Center of Performing Arts productions. The One More Night series and "The Color Purple" are particularly suited to intentional community building. Optional or extra credit assignments will encourage commuter students to take part in campus cultural activities. And need I mention the joy of Commencement—the culminating community-building event?
- Let's take advantage of the many campus leadership opportunities. Shared governance depends on stepping up, taking responsibility, and contributing creative ideas.
- Finally, let's take a few moments each day to appreciate our beautiful campus and the opportunities before us.

Every good wish to each of you for an inspiring and fulfilling 2012.