



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A Briefing for Faculty & Staff of the University System of Georgia No. 4, February 2, 2009

“Creating a More Educated Georgia”

USG Digging Deep to Handle Budget Reductions, Chancellor Tells House Subcommittee

Chancellor Erroll B. Davis Jr. continued to present the Governor’s budget recommendations for the University System of Georgia (USG) to legislators last week with an appearance before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education, chaired by Rep. Bob Smith.

Per Smith’s request, Davis’ presentation focused on the USG’s strategic priorities, as well as the Fiscal Year 2009 Amended Budget and the System’s capital projects. He explained that the USG’s strategic funding priorities are closely tied to its Strategic Plan, which has six goals: undergraduate excellence, increasing enrollment capacity, supporting the state’s economic development, strengthening partnerships with the state’s other educational agencies, maintaining the affordability of college and increasing efficiency.

When the Board of Regents adopted the plan in August 2007, the University System had just over 270,000 students and a 49 percent graduation rate, the chancellor said. The System produced 1,700 nurses per year and only 29 percent of the state’s new teachers. The goal of the Strategic Plan is to raise the graduation rate to 60 percent and to increase the number of nurses produced by 50 percent, he noted, while hiking production of the state’s new teachers to 80 percent.

Turning to the USG’s FY 2009 Amended Budget, Chancellor Davis outlined for legislators how the University System is handling the \$219 million in reductions to the mid-year budget. For example, System officials made difficult decisions to:

- ◆ increase employee health-care premiums by 20-115 percent;

- ◆ eliminate 802 administrative positions in areas such as accounting, budgeting, plant operations, custodial and counseling;
- ◆ lay off 62 employees serving various functions and provide no salary increases for 284 University System Office staff;
- ◆ eliminate 498 faculty positions;
- ◆ eliminate low-enrollment academic programs and delay launching new programs;
- ◆ terminate 28 academic programs/majors in FY 2008; and
- ◆ institute temporary mandatory student fees.

The chancellor took time to provide the subcommittee members with some perspective on the University System’s formula funding. On the surface, one could conclude that the System is adequately funded by observing that total formula funds have risen from \$1.35 billion in FY 2000 to \$1.97 billion in FY 2009, an increase of \$614 million, he noted. However, since FY 2000, the System has been subject to prior reductions of \$283 million, and now an additional reduction of \$178 million will be levied in the FY 2009 Amended Budget. That will result in a net funding decrease of \$87.6 million. Meanwhile, the System’s enrollment has increased by 79,000 students since FY 2000, Davis said.

In answer to legislators’ questions about efficiencies, the chancellor noted that the University System, with its mission of teaching, research and service, is a very different culture than the profit-driven corporate world in which he spent most of his career. The tools employed



At his commissioning ceremony on Dec. 13, 2nd Lt. Richard Ingram (right) was sworn in by his longtime friend, 1st Lt. Robert Morris, a 2005 graduate of North Georgia College & State University.

Senate Salutes NGCSU Grad on Officer Commission

Sen. Seth Harp introduced a resolution in the Georgia Senate last Wednesday commending North Georgia College & State University (NGCSU) alum **Richard Ingram** on having earned a commission as Second Lieutenant in the United States Army despite a major disability acquired when he was severely injured in Iraq in 2005.

Ingram, an amputee, is the first member of the Army’s “Wounded Warriors Program” to earn an officer commission. With help from **Sen. John Douglas**, for whom he interned after recovering in 2007, Ingram convinced the Army to change its long-time policy of refusing officer commissions for severely injured soldiers by proving he has the physical ability to lead a platoon despite his disability.

Ingram joined the Army National Guard in 2002, while attending NGCSU. In 2005, Lt. Ingram’s 48th Infantry Brigade was called to Iraq and he put his studies on hold to serve his country. While patrolling the town of Yusufiyah, just south of Baghdad, on July 20 of that year, Ingram’s vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb, causing injuries that forced the amputation of his left arm.

After returning to the United States, Ingram retired from the National Guard on medical grounds and resumed his studies at North Georgia, but he refused to let his dream of having a military career end. While interning with Sen. Douglas, he shared with the senator his desire and determination to return to the Army and commission as an officer. The two made a visit to the Army Inspector General in Washington, D.C., and made a case that resulted in the Army reversing its policy.

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by the latter – such as profit sharing – are not available to a state agency.

“We’re doing a great deal to improve our efficiency,” Davis said, listing the System’s shared-services project, energy-efficiency measures, the training of more than 800 USG employees in Lean Six Sigma efficiency strategies and the existence of

more than 100 process-improvement projects under way across the System. “It’s not impossible to increase efficiency in the public sector – it’s just more difficult.”

However, the chancellor noted, with budget reductions of 9 percent and enrollment increasing by 10 percent, operating more efficiently is a must. ■

USG Campuses in Savannah, Albany, Urged to Consider Mergers

The state Senate is considering a resolution urging the University System of Georgia (USG) to merge Armstrong Atlantic State University with Savannah State University, retaining Savannah State as the name, and Darton College with Albany State University, retaining Albany State as the name, “in order to ensure the state is not in violation of federal law which prohibits a state from maintaining segregated public education facilities.”

Sponsored by Sen. Seth Harp, Senate Resolution 84 states that “Georgia should not be in the business of maintaining segregated schools – the Board of Regents must merge Savannah State University with Armstrong Atlantic State

University and Albany State University with Darton College in order to close the ugly chapter of segregation in this state’s history.”

In addition, Harp’s legislation is intended to reduce administrative costs and eliminate the duplication of similar services and programs provided by the paired institutions. “These four higher education institutions are located in close proximity to each other and offer students similar academic programs and education,” the resolution reads. “The delivery method of running four separate institutions that could be easily transformed into two is proving inefficient and wasteful of the public dollar.” 🏠

House Resolution Urges USG to Expand Entrepreneurial Education, Science/Tech Instruction

Two resolutions sponsored by Rep. Bob Smith were read in the Georgia House of Representatives last week that aim to help make Georgia the No. 1 destination for entrepreneurs in the U.S. by developing and expanding education for the support of science, innovation, technology, energy (SITE) and new Georgia entrepreneurs.

SITE “is the key for successful economic growth in Georgia,” says Smith in House Resolution 165. “Georgia loses massive potential return on its educational investment to other states that have established competitive college and university courses to support the growth of technology driven entrepreneurship.

“The University System of Georgia, and particularly those campuses with existing bachelor’s, master’s and non-degree programs in business administration, science and computer technology, are uniquely situated to provide instruction and help for the growth of science, innovation, technology, energy resources and for Georgia’s future entrepreneurs,” Smith continues.

The resolution concludes, “The University System of Georgia must do more to make Georgia the No. 1 destination for entrepreneurs in the United States by developing and expanding comprehensive programs to provide education and training for potential entrepreneurs and support the growth of science, innovation, technology and energy in ways that will more effectively promote the establishment of new technology driven businesses in this state.”

A companion piece of legislation, House Resolution 166, would establish a Joint SITE to Grow Georgia, Alternative Financing and Entrepreneurship Study Committee. The purpose of this committee would be to explore ways to achieve the goal of making Georgia the No. 1 destination for entrepreneurs in the U.S. 🏠

NGCSU Grad

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Ingram attended the Leadership Development Assessment Course in Fort Lewis, Washington, a required 35-day course in which an Army cadet must demonstrate physical fitness, land navigation, marksmanship, and leadership. Receiving no special accommodations for his injury, Ingram finished second in his platoon of 50 cadets, using his high-tech prosthetic arm to perform expert marksmanship and do almost 80 push-ups in two minutes.

Ingram is one of nearly 4,000 men and women in the Army’s “Wounded Warriors” Program, soldiers classified as severely wounded by at least a 30 percent disability. They include those who have lost a limb, suffer from traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, paralysis, permanent disfigurement, severe burns or post-traumatic stress disorder. Only 113 Wounded Warriors have continued with military service as either active duty or reserve, and Ingram is the first to have restarted his career as an officer. He graduated from NGCSU and took an oath of office on Dec. 13, left for training at Fort Benning, Ga., on Jan. 11 and hopes to complete Airborne and Ranger school. He will eventually lead an engineer platoon in the 10th Mountain Division and is quite likely to see combat again in Afghanistan.

“Whereas a driven and dedicated soldier with sheer perseverance on the battlefield and back home, Lt. Ingram serves as a role model not only for disabled veterans, but for all Americans,” reads Senate Resolution, which was sponsored by Sen. Douglas. “This remarkable 25-year-old embodies the spirit of service, willing to find meaning in something greater than himself and serving as a guardian of this nation’s liberty.” 🏠