



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A Briefing for Faculty & Staff of the University System of Georgia No. 9, March 17, 2005

“Creating a More Educated Georgia”

New USG Institution In Gwinnett Clears Legislative Hurdle

The Board of Regents’ strategic goal to establish a stand-alone institution in fast-growing Gwinnett County cleared the final legislative hurdle on Tues., March 15, with the House adoption of a resolution on the issue.

The resolution, which was approved initially by the Senate in February, passed the House 161-2. The path is now clear to create Georgia’s 35th public institution of higher education, the first new institution in three decades.

“We are extremely pleased with the General Assembly’s and the Governor’s support of this proposal,” said Chancellor Thomas C. Meredith. “We identified a clear and growing need for a new state college in Gwinnett, and our funding partners agreed.”

Meredith said the Board would adopt a transition plan this spring for the new state college, which will build upon the existing *Gwinnett University Center*. Currently, the Center is jointly operated by *Georgia Perimeter College*,

which handles lower division courses, and *the University of Georgia*, which is responsible for upper division courses and graduate degree programs. *Southern Polytechnic State University* and the *Medical College of Georgia* also offer specific degree programs and courses at the Center.

The new state college will be responsible for all undergraduate academic offerings and will grant two-year and targeted baccalaureate degrees under its own auspices. UGA will continue to offer graduate degree programs in Gwinnett County.

University System officials are planning a multi-year transition period during which the Center will transform into a self-standing state college. The transition planning will include:

- ◆ the creation and approval of a mission statement for the college;
- ◆ approval of an organizational structure;
- ◆ the development of a budget plan;
- ◆ the hiring of a president;

- ◆ approval of academic programs; and
- ◆ approval of required policies for the institution.

With more than 8,000 students, the Gwinnett University Center’s current size makes it the ninth-largest University System site. More important, enrollment at the GUC is exploding at a current pace of more than 1,000

students per year – a 123 percent increase over the last five years.

The U.S. Census Bureau projects that Gwinnett’s population will top one million people by 2020. Gwinnett has the largest school system in the state and is the largest county east of the Mississippi without a stand-alone, four-year public college or university. 🏠

Budget Update: Senate Approves Its Version of FY06 Budget

As the end of the 2005 session draws near, the FY06 Budget continues to move forward, with the Senate approving its version on Monday, March 14. The budget is now in conference committee.

University System officials noted that the House and Senate versions reflect the strong support of Gov. Sonny Perdue’s recommendations. “We have received a high level of support for the System during this session,” said Senior Vice Chan-

cellor for External Affairs and Facilities Tom Daniel. “We are grateful for the efforts of the Governor and the General Assembly as seen in this budget.”

Daniel said that he and other System officials would continue to work closely with members of the General Assembly over the remaining days of the session.

The Senate version of the FY06 Budget, as it relates to the

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University System of Georgia, includes:

- ◆ Full funding of the formula increase of \$103.5 million;
- ◆ A two percent merit salary increase for USG employees;
- ◆ Funding for the top four projects on the Regents' Major Capital Priority List, as previously recommended by the Gov. and the House;
- ◆ \$5 million for the *Medical College of Georgia* and its research efforts;
- ◆ A reduction of a \$1.9 million cut to the System's base budget recommended by the House to \$1.4 million;
- ◆ The restoration of \$180,000 in funding for the Bamboo farm;
- ◆ The addition of \$80,000 for the Formosan termite research program;
- ◆ The transfer of \$100,000 in funding from the Department of Corrections for the Vidalia Onion project;
- ◆ The restoration of a \$24,794 reduction to the Forestry Research program;
- ◆ The restoration of a \$26,486 reduction to the Office of Minority Business Enterprises;

- ◆ The restoration of an \$8,377 reduction to the A.L. Burruss Institute;
- ◆ The restoration of a \$193,153 reduction to the Public Libraries;
- ◆ A \$2 million addition to the Public Libraries for repairs, renovations, equipment and media materials;
- ◆ A recommendation to transfer of various special funding initiatives identified by the Gov. to the formula;
- ◆ A recommendation that the USG health plan not be combined with the state's health plan;
- ◆ A reduction in funding for the Advanced Wood Products Lab at the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access by \$325,000;
- ◆ The removal of \$60,000 in funding for the program coordinator for the Georgia Landscape Professional certification program; and
- ◆ The removal of \$200,000 for the Greenbelt Study (originally added by the House).

In addition, the Senate made a number of recommendations and changes to the

House recommendations on the Regents' minor capital projects list. These are:

- ◆ Supported the House's version that includes a new dining facility at the Rock Eagle 4H Camp, a fine arts facility at *Georgia Southern University*, a library and classroom addition at *Waycross College*, a civil engineering building at *Georgia Tech*, the renovation of the Social Science, library and Wilson buildings at *Kennesaw State University*, an energy plant distribution system at the *Medical College of Georgia*, and a student center at *Gainesville College*.
- ◆ Adds minor projects, including phase two of an academic building at the *Gwinnett University Center*, infrastructure improvements at *East Georgia College*; animal and dairy livestock facilities in Oglethorpe County for *the University of Georgia*; a vocational tech building at *Dalton State College*; renovation of Jenkins Hall at *Armstrong Atlantic*

State University; and funds for the Tyrone Public Library.

In the FY05 budget, the Gov. deferred some minor projects approved by the General Assembly. In the current session, the House supported the Gov.'s deferral, but the Senate in its recommendations has made some changes:

- ◆ \$277,000 was added back for the Success and Retention Center at *Gordon College*;
- ◆ \$5 million was added back for the rehabilitation of Davis Hall and equipment for the Science Building at *South Georgia College*;
- ◆ \$2.5 million was added back for a project at *Southern Polytechnic State University*; and
- ◆ Funding for a minor project at *Columbus State University* was approved by the General Assembly last year and was not on the Gov.'s deferral list. The Senate recommended that the \$4 million project be deauthorized. ■