

June 2020 COVID-19 Updates from the EGSC Office of the President

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The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Declaration ended at midnight on May 11, 2023.
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Message to the EGSC Community

June 01, 2020

Dear friends of East Georgia State College,

As each of you recalls vividly, in mid-March 2020 the University System of Georgia (USG) directed all 26 USG institutions to transition to fully online delivery of educational programs. This directive was given to protect the health and safety of faculty, staff and students as the COVID-19 pandemic intensified. EGSC carried out that transition successfully including a virtual Honors Night and Commencement. Since mid-March, most EGSC employees have been telecommuting --- teaching classes, processing applications for admission, registering students and carrying out all of the other activities necessary to keep the college running smoothly. They have done an outstanding job!

More recently, the USG directed all USG institutions to submit a plan for the initial summer 2020 return to campus of faculty and staff. EGSC submitted its plan. EGSC's plan was crafted by 11 subcommittees made up of EGSC personnel. The plan provides for a gradual and staggered return to campus of faculty and staff to campus over the course of summer 2020 with the intent to commence normal operations at the beginning of fall semester 2020.

EGSC is now implementing that plan for the initial return to campus of faculty and staff. Some elements of our spring 2020 plan will remain as we implement this summer 2020 plan. For example, the EGSC police will remain at the main entry at both Swainsboro and Statesboro. Only authorized EGSC employees and individuals with a specific need to be on campus and an appointment will be permitted on campus.

Everyone who is on campus this summer to work or to meet with an EGSC employee will be expected to follow procedures designed to keep all of us healthy and safe. Wearing a protective facial covering whenever socially distancing is not possible will be strongly encouraged. Compliance with social distancing standards will be required. We will continue to conduct meetings via Zoom or telephone whenever possible.

All of this is, of course, designed to assure that our community remains as healthy and safe as possible. I thought you would want to know that we are taking this responsibility with the highest level of seriousness and care.

You should also know that the USG has directed each USG institution to submit a detailed and extensive fall 2020 return to campus plan. EGSC has done that. As soon as we have feedback from the USG, I will update you about that fall plan.

Until then, please stay safe and healthy.

Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Students

June 01, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Students,

As each of you recalls vividly, in mid-March 2020 the University System of Georgia (USG) directed all 26 USG institutions to transition to fully online delivery of educational programs. This directive was given to protect the health and safety of faculty, staff and students as the COVID-19 pandemic intensified. EGSC carried out that transition successfully including a virtual Honors Night and Commencement.

Since mid-March, all of you have been taking wholly online classes. Most EGSC employees have been telecommuting --- teaching classes, processing applications for admission, registering students and carrying out all of the other activities necessary to keep the college running smoothly. Students, faculty and staff have been remarkably flexible and effective in responding to this unusual situation!

More recently, the USG directed all USG institutions to submit a plan for the initial summer 2020 return to campus of faculty and staff. EGSC submitted its plan. The plan provides for a gradual and staggered return to campus of faculty and staff to campus over the course of summer 2020 with the intent to commence normal operations at the beginning of fall semester 2020. The intent of this plan is to get campus ready for your return in fall.

EGSC is now implementing that plan for the initial return to campus of faculty and staff. Some elements of our spring 2020 plan will remain as we implement this summer 2020 plan. For example, the EGSC police will remain at the main entry at both Swainsboro and Statesboro. For the most part, only authorized EGSC employees will be permitted on campus this summer. Others will be allowed access to campus only when they have an important need and have scheduled an appointment in advance.

Everyone who is on campus this summer to work or to meet with an EGSC employee will be expected to follow procedures designed to keep all of us healthy and safe. Wearing a protective facial covering whenever you are not in an enclosed private work space is strongly encouraged. Compliance with social distancing standards will be required. We will continue to conduct meetings via Zoom or telephone whenever possible.

All of this is, of course, designed to assure that our community remains as healthy and safe as possible. I thought you would want to know that we are taking this responsibility with the highest level of seriousness and care.

You should also know that the USG has directed each USG institution to submit a detailed and extensive fall 2020 return to campus plan. That is the date we are all anticipating so eagerly --- the day all of you may return to campus!! EGSC has submitted its plan to the USG. As soon as we have feedback from the USG, I will update you about that fall plan.

Until then, please stay safe and healthy.

Bob Boehmer

President

East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Faculty/Staff

June 02, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Faculty and Staff,

As each of you recalls vividly, in mid-March 2020 the University System of Georgia (USG) directed all 26 USG institutions to transition to fully online delivery of educational programs. This directive was given to protect the health and safety of faculty, staff and students as the COVID-19 pandemic intensified. Together, we carried out that transition successfully including a virtual Honors Night and Commencement.

More recently, the USG directed all USG institutions to submit a plan for the initial summer 2020 return to campus of faculty and staff. EGSC submitted its plan. EGSC's plan was crafted by 11 subcommittees made up of EGSC personnel. The plan provides for a gradual and staggered return to campus of faculty and staff to campus over the course of summer 2020 with the intent to commence normal operations at the beginning of fall semester 2020.

It is now time to implement that plan for the initial return to campus of faculty and staff. This is not a process of simply turning a switch from off to on. The plan explicitly provides for the unique role and needs of each EGSC unit by establishing unique schedules for each unit. Your unit head will be in contact with you about the time and manner of your individual return.

Some elements of our spring 2020 plan will remain. For example, the EGSC police will remain at the main entry at both Swainsboro and Statesboro. They will have the schedules of all employees authorized to be on campus each day. Please understand that they are carrying out the plan to protect our health and safety.

When each of us is on campus this summer, we will each be expected to follow procedures designed to keep all of us healthy and safe. Wearing your own protective facial covering whenever you are not in an enclosed private work space is strongly encouraged. Compliance with social distancing standards (maintaining a least a 6 foot space between you and any other person) is required. We should all continue to conduct meetings via Zoom or telephone whenever possible. We should disinfect our own work spaces and tools (such as phones) and use the hand sanitizer stations around campus and hand washing procedures recommended by the CDC and the Georgia Department of Public Health. In the unusual circumstance requiring a face to face meeting, social distancing standards should be met. Plant operations will be installing plexiglass shields in areas specified by the plan.

Some of you may be a member of a group which is considered to be at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to your age or a specific health condition. If you are a member of such a group and want the college to modify the terms of your own summer 2020 return to campus, you should contact EGSC's HR office to discuss the process to address that situation.

All of this is designed to assure that our community remains healthy and safe to the greatest extent possible. It will require that we each continue to demonstrate a high level of respect for our colleagues and a high level of personal responsibility. For example, I still find it uncomfortable and a bit awkward to put on my protective face

covering. However, each of you should insist that I do wear a face covering to protect you. I will do it out of my respect for you.

You should also know that the USG has directed each USG institution to submit a detailed and extensive fall 2020 return to campus plan. EGSC has done that. As soon as we have feedback from the USG, I will update you about that fall plan.

Until then, please stay safe and healthy.

Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

A video message from Dr. Boehmer

June 02, 2020



Having trouble viewing the video? [Watch on YouTube!](#)

Message to EGSC Students

June 08, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Students,

Addition to Student Center on Swainsboro Campus

The addition to the JAM Center on the Swainsboro campus is complete. I thought you would want to see the interior space. Please click on the link below for a brief tour: <https://youtu.be/NAgY-A4cYdk>

Update on the College's Return to Campus Plans

As I mentioned last week, the college has prepared two detailed plans: one for the return to campus of faculty and staff this summer; and another for our highly anticipated return to normal operations this fall. The initial return to campus plan is now

available on the college's [COVID-19 page here](#).

The plan for return to normal operations in fall will be posted to the same site as soon as it has been reviewed by the University System of Georgia.

A key component of both plans is the role of personal responsibility by all members of the college community: faculty, staff, students and visitors to our campuses. As an example, think for a moment about my personal responsibility to each of you. Joyce and I will be visiting our daughters, son-in-law and grandsons in Oregon soon. We will fly to Portland from Savannah. When we return to campus we will, hopefully, have stayed safe and healthy as we have walked through the airports of Savannah, Atlanta and Portland. But we all know that navigating those airports and the planes and those cities will bring us in contact with a lot of people. We could return to campus having contracted COVID-19 but remain asymptomatic. That means I have a high level of responsibility to each of you to socially distance on campus, to wash hands frequently, to use the hand sanitizer stations regularly and to wear a protective face covering whenever social distancing is not possible. I owe it to every one of you to protect your health and the health of those you will encounter, like your family when you go home to visit, to do this.

In the video I shared with you last week, I wore a protective face covering even though I was outside to demonstrate the type of situation in which I would choose to wear a face covering – sitting at a table where others are likely to join me in close proximity. I will keep one in my pocket at all times out of respect for you – out of a sense of personal responsibility. I hope that, when you come to campus this fall, you will bring your protective face covering to use when needed to protect others on campus. Stay healthy. Stay safe.

Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Faculty and Staff

June 08, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Faculty and Staff,

Addition to Student Center on Swainsboro Campus

The addition to the JAM Center on the Swainsboro campus is complete. I thought you would want to see the interior space. Please click on the link below for a brief tour: <https://youtu.be/NAgY-A4cYdk>

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Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to the EGSC Community

June 09, 2020

Dear friends of East Georgia State College,

Addition to Student Center on Swainsboro Campus

The addition to the Jean Anderson Morgan Student Center on the Swainsboro campus is complete. I thought you would want to see the interior space. Please click on the link below for a brief tour: <https://youtu.be/NAgY-A4cYdk>

Update on the College's Return to Campus Plans

As I mentioned last week, the college has prepared two detailed plans: one for the return to campus of faculty and staff this summer; and another for our highly anticipated return to normal operations this fall. The initial return to campus plan is now available [on the college's website](#)

The plan for return to normal operations in fall will be posted to the same site as soon as it has been reviewed by the University System of Georgia.

A key component of both plans is the role of personal responsibility by all members of

the college community: faculty, staff, students and visitors to our campuses. As an example, think for a moment about my personal responsibility to each of you. Joyce and I will be visiting our daughters, son-in-law and grandsons in Oregon soon. We will fly to Portland from Savannah. When we return to campus we will, hopefully, have stayed safe and healthy as we have walked through the airports of Savannah, Atlanta and Portland. But we all know that navigating those airports and the planes and those cities will bring us in contact with a lot of people. That means I have a high level of responsibility to each of you to socially distance on campus, to wash hands frequently, to use the hand sanitizer stations regularly and to wear a protective face covering whenever social distancing is not possible. I owe it to every one of you to protect your health and the health of those you will encounter, like your family when you go home to visit, to do this.

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Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Students, Faculty and Staff

June 16, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

The CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) provides U.S. colleges and universities with funds to address needs created by the coronavirus pandemic. The funding was announced by the U.S. Department of Education in two phases:

- Phase 1 funding is commonly called the “student portion.” This phase was, as required by the law, strictly devoted to student emergency grants. I wrote to you on May 5, 2020 about these emergency grants. These grants were designated to eligible EGSC students enrolled in Spring Semester 2020, Maymester 2020 and Summer Semester 2020. (see summary below).
- Phase 2 is commonly called the “institutional portion.” The law allows these funds to be used to address certain college needs created by the pandemic. This letter, in addition to summarizing how phase 1 funds were used, describes how these phase 2 funds will be used. EGSC, as described below, has chosen to use these funds to meet 6 specific needs, including smaller, additional student emergency grants for eligible fall 2020 students.

FIRST PHASE OF CARES ACT FUNDING PROVIDED STUDENT EMERGENCY GRANTS IN MAY 2020

On May 5, 2020, I wrote to you about the first phase of CARES Act funding to colleges and universities across the United States. That first wave of funding, which was announced on April 09, 2020, **allocated funds to colleges and universities to provide emergency aid to college students whose lives and educations have been disrupted by the coronavirus outbreak.**

Each college and university receiving these funds was required to prepare its own plan describing how these funds will be used to meet emergency needs of students, subject to US Department of Education guidelines. The plan that EGSC created for the use of the CARES funds was submitted to and approved by the USG to ensure it was in conformity with federal guidelines. My May 05, 2020 described EGSC's plan to you:

"Not all students will receive these funds. The federal guidelines mandate that these funds be distributed only to students who **are or could be eligible** to participate in federal financial aid programs (Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act, as amended) Eligibility to participate in federal financial aid programs for this academic year require students to complete a **2019-2020 FAFSA**. This FAFSA may be filed until June 30, 2020.

EGSC's plan will make funds available to eligible EGSC students enrolled in Spring Semester 2020, Maymester 2020 and Summer Semester 2020.

Funds will be distributed directly to students using EGSC's financial aid refund process, Bank Mobile, to be used as the student deems necessary to cover expenses related to the disruption caused by COVID-19 and the transition to wholly online schedules. The student will not be required to report to EGSC or account for the expenditure of the emergency funds."

SECOND WAVE OF CARES OF FUNDING WILL ENABLE EGSC TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL STUDENT EMERGENCY GRANTS IN FALL 2020 AND TO MEET INSTITUTIONAL NEEDS

On April 21, 2020, a second wave of CARES Act funding was announced. A smaller, additional amount of CARES act funding was also announced for Minority Serving Institutions. Funds from these sources must be used to address needs directly related to coronavirus.

Again, each college and university receiving these funds was required to prepare its own plan describing how these funds will be used to address needs directly related to the coronavirus pandemic, subject to US Department of Education guidelines.

EGSC has adopted a plan which provides for the use of the second wave of funding for six important purposes:

- **Transmit emergency funds to EGSC students with demonstrated need;**
- **Initiate a laptop loaner program to increase technology access among EGSC students;**
- **Increase online tutoring services to ensure student success;**
- **Purchase virtual classroom technology for hybrid classes in Fall 2020;**

- Enhance EGSC’s network capacity to address significantly increased utilization by EGSC students and faculty for accessing EGSC’s online courses in Georgia View D2L Brightspace system and other EGSC online academic systems and services; and
- Reimburse the institution for amounts refunded to students during the COVID-19 crisis.

The exact amount of the Fall 2020 student emergency grants cannot be calculated until fall semester arrives and we know the exact number of eligible students. Students that received awards in Spring 2020 and/or Summer 2020 and re-enroll for Fall 2020 and are Title IV eligible with a current FAFSA on file will receive an award. You may click [here](#) to see detailed information about which students will be eligible and how their grants will be calculated.

Please stay safe and healthy.

Bob Boehmer, President
East Georgia State College

Message to the EGSC Community

June 16, 2020

Dear Friends of EGSC,

Each week during this coronavirus pandemic, I have written to you to keep you up to date about how the college is addressing the situation. This week’s letter focuses on how the college is using the funds made available by a federal law called the CARES Act.

The CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) provides U.S. colleges and universities with funds to address needs created by the coronavirus pandemic. The funding was announced by the U.S. Department of Education in two phases:

- Phase 1 funding is commonly called the “student portion.” This phase was, as required by the law, strictly devoted to student emergency grants. These grants were designated to eligible EGSC students enrolled in Spring Semester 2020, Maymester 2020 and Summer Semester 2020. (see summary below).
- Phase 2 is commonly called the “institutional portion.” The law allows these funds to be used to address certain college needs created by the pandemic. This letter, in addition to summarizing how phase 1 funds were used, describes how these phase 2 funds will be used. EGSC, as described below, has chosen to use these funds to meet 6 specific needs, including smaller, additional student emergency grants for eligible fall 2020 students.

FIRST PHASE OF CARES ACT FUNDING PROVIDED STUDENT EMERGENCY GRANTS IN MAY 2020

The first wave of funding was announced on April 09, 2020. **Phase 1 allocated funds to colleges and universities to provide emergency aid to college students whose lives and educations have been disrupted by the coronavirus outbreak.**

Each college and university receiving these funds was required to prepare its own plan describing how these funds will be used to meet emergency needs of students, subject to US Department of Education guidelines. The plan that EGSC created for the use of the CARES funds was submitted to and approved by the USG to ensure it was in conformity with federal guidelines. That plan will provide emergency grants to eligible EGSC students enrolled in Spring Semester 2020, Maymester 2020 and Summer Semester 2020.

SECOND WAVE OF CARES OF FUNDING WILL ENABLE EGSC TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL STUDENT EMERGENCY GRANTS IN FALL 2020 AND TO MEET INSTITUTIONAL NEEDS

On April 21, 2020, a second wave of CARES Act funding was announced. A smaller, additional amount of CARES act funding was also announced for Minority Serving Institutions. Funds from these sources must be used to address needs directly related to coronavirus.

Again, each college and university receiving these funds was required to prepare its own plan describing how these funds will be used to address needs directly related to the coronavirus pandemic, subject to US Department of Education guidelines.

EGSC has adopted a plan which provides for the use of the second wave of funding for six important purposes:

- **Transmit emergency funds to EGSC students with demonstrated need. Students that received awards in Spring 2020 and/or Summer 2020 and re-enroll for Fall 2020 and are Title IV eligible with a current FAFSA on file will receive an award.**
- **Initiate a laptop loaner program to increase technology access among EGSC students;**
- **Increase online tutoring services to ensure student success;**
- **Purchase virtual classroom technology for hybrid classes in Fall 2020;**
- **Enhance EGSC's network capacity to address significantly increased utilization by EGSC students and faculty for accessing EGSC's online courses in Georgia View D2L Brightspace system and other EGSC online academic systems and services; and**
- **Reimburse the institution for amounts refunded to students during the COVID-19 crisis.**

Please stay safe and healthy.

Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Faculty and Staff

June 22, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Faculty and Staff,

Accreditation Update

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the college is moving steadily forward with its decennial accreditation process. The goal of this process is, of course, **reaffirmation of the college's accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC)**.

Successful completion of this process is one of the college's top priorities during the coming 2020-2021 academic year. It is critical to our reputation as a high-quality institution of higher education. It is a condition precedent to our ability to offer federal student financial aid to our deserving students.

As you know well, this rigorous process takes over 2 ½ years from start to finish. The process culminates with a visit to the college by a SACSCOC reaffirmation committee composed of approximately 8 of our colleagues from peer institutions in the southern United States. The committee is chaired by a college president. **The reaffirmation committee will be here in the first week of October 2020.** During that visit, members of the committee will visit Swainsboro, Statesboro and Augusta. During the visit, the committee members will want to meet with many of you. We, of course, do not know who they will choose to interview until their arrival so it is critical that all of you understand the process. The following presents a brief overview.

A high percentage of the college's faculty and staff are now actively engaged in completing one of the two major components of the process:

- Demonstration of the college's **compliance with the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation.**
- **Completion of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)** which will focus the college's attention over the next five years on achieving the goals of the plan. This requirement of a QEP is an element of the accreditation process which makes the process in the southern United States unique and rigorous. This element is not commonly found in other regions of the U.S.

Demonstrating compliance with the Principles of Accreditation, is a multi-step process. The first step in this process was completed in March of this year: Our compliance certification was filed. This document, hundreds of pages in length, was filed with SACSCOC. As required, it addressed each SACSCOC Principle in depth and provided documentary evidence of compliance with each Principle. For example, official transcripts of all faculty who taught courses in each of two semesters were provided to document their qualification to teach the courses assigned to them.

The next step in the compliance process is review of the compliance certification (**called the off-site review**) by a group of our colleagues at an off-site location. This review occurred later than originally scheduled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Accordingly, we received the **report of the off-site committee** only a couple of weeks ago – later than originally planned. We must file a response to this report in the first week of August. This means that many faculty and staff will be intensely engaged in preparing our **focused report** over the next few weeks. I deeply appreciate the hard work and effort going into preparation of this focused report with a compressed

schedule. This is critical and important work because it will shape the reaffirmation committee's visit this October.

Preparation of the QEP is the other key step in the process. This QEP must be filed with SACSCOC at the same time as our focused report. This is critical for two reasons. First, it focuses our college on a critical aspect of student learning for a 5-year period. In EGSC's plan, this will focus our efforts on creation of **learning communities**. Second, it is critical because the completion of a QEP meeting the standards set by SACSCOC is a condition precedent to reaffirmation of the college's accreditation. Again, I deeply appreciate the hard work and effort going into the preparation of this QEP. I strongly believe this work and effort will pay dividends for the college over the next five years.

All of this is to say that many of our faculty and staff have been and will continue over the next several months to pour many hours of time and extraordinary effort into this SACSCOC reaffirmation effort. This final stage of preparation for a SACSCOC reaffirmation committee visit is always an intense and stressful period. This year, it is particularly so because we are doing this in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accomplishing both a successful return to campus in fall 2020 and a successful reaffirmation committee visit in October is a lot to ask. However, I know that our EGSC community is up to the task and I thank all of you in advance for working through this challenging period with collegiality and good humor. We will get it done together.

Thanks for all you do for EGSC.

Please stay safe and healthy.

Bob Boehmer

President

East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Students

June 22, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Students,

Accreditation Update

As you return to campus in fall, one of the major initiatives underway will be the college's accreditation process. This is a process which is important to each and every student because it has a direct impact on the value of the degree you are pursuing. **EGSC is now accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC)**. This accreditation must be "reaffirmed" every 10 years. As explained below, a committee of experts will visit all of EGSC's locations this fall to make a report about that "reaffirmation" of accreditation.

That is why I am focusing my weekly letter on this accreditation process. It is important that all of you understand why this group is visiting our campuses and how you can contribute to a successful visit.

Successful completion of this accreditation process is one of the college's top priorities during the coming 2020-2021 academic year. It is critical to our reputation as a high-quality institution of higher education. It is a condition precedent to our ability to offer

federal student financial aid to our deserving students.

This rigorous process takes over 2 ½ years from start to finish. The process culminates with a visit to the college by a SACSCOC reaffirmation committee composed of approximately 8 experts from peer institutions in the southern United States. The committee is chaired by a college president. **The reaffirmation committee will be here in the first week of October 2020.** During that visit, members of the committee will visit Swainsboro, Statesboro and Augusta. During the visit, the committee members will want to meet with students. We, of course, do not know who they will chose to interview until their arrival so it is critical that all of you understand the process. The following presents a brief overview.

A high percentage of the college's faculty and staff are now actively engaged in completing one of the two major components of the process:

- Demonstration of the **college's compliance with the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation.**
- **Completion of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)** which will focus the college's attention over the next five years on achieving the goals of the plan. This requirement of a QEP is an element of the accreditation process which makes the process in the southern United States unique and rigorous. This element is not commonly found in other regions of the U.S.

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Stay healthy. Stay safe.
Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to the EGSC Community

June 23, 2020

Dear friends of East Georgia State College,

Accreditation Update

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the college is moving steadily forward with its decennial accreditation process. The goal of this process is, of course, **reaffirmation of the college's accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).**

Successful completion of this process is one of the college's top priorities during the coming 2020-2021 academic year. It is critical to our reputation as a high-quality institution of higher education and is required to allow us to offer federal student financial aid to our deserving students.

This rigorous process takes over 2½ years from start to finish. The process culminates with a visit to the college by a SACSCOC reaffirmation committee composed of approximately 8 experts from peer institutions in the southern United States. The committee is chaired by a college president. The **reaffirmation committee will be here in the first week of October 2020.** During that visit, members of the committee will visit Swainsboro, Statesboro and Augusta.

A high percentage of the college's faculty and staff have been actively engaged in helping the college complete the two major components of the process:

- Demonstration of the college's **compliance with the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation.**
- **Completion of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)** which will focus the college's attention over the next five years on achieving the goals of the plan. This requirement of a QEP is an element of the accreditation process which makes the process in the southern United States unique and rigorous. This element is not commonly found in other regions of the U.S.

Demonstrating compliance with the Principles of Accreditation is a multi-step process. The first step in this process was completed in March of this year: **Our compliance certification, hundreds of pages in length, was filed with SACSCOC.** As required, it addressed each SACSCOC Principle in depth and provided documentary evidence of compliance with each Principle. For example, official transcripts of all faculty who taught courses in each of two semesters were provided to document their qualification to teach the courses assigned to them.

The next step in the compliance process is review of the compliance certification (called the **off-site review**) by a group of our colleagues at an off-site location. This review occurred later than originally scheduled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Accordingly, we received the **report of the off-site committee** only a couple of weeks

ago – later than originally planned. We must file a response to this report in the first week of August. This means that many faculty and staff will be intensely engaged in preparing our **focused report** over the next few weeks.

Preparation of the QEP is the other key step in the process. This QEP must be filed with SACSCOC at the same time as our focused report. This is critical for two reasons. First, it focuses our college on a critical aspect of student learning for a 5-year period. In EGSC's plan, this will focus our efforts on creation of **learning communities**. Second, it is critical because the completion of a QEP meeting the standards set by SACSCOC is a condition required for reaffirmation of the college's accreditation.

All of this is to say that many of our faculty and staff have been and will continue over the next several months to pour many hours of time and extraordinary effort into this SACSCOC reaffirmation effort. This final stage of preparation for a SACSCOC reaffirmation committee visit is always an intense and stressful period. This year, it is particularly so because we are doing this in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accomplishing both a successful return to campus in Fall 2020 and a successful reaffirmation committee visit in October is a lot to ask. However, I know our EGSC community is up to the task and I thank all of you in advance for supporting EGSC during this challenging period with collegiality and good humor. We will get it done together.

Stay healthy. Stay safe.

Bob Boehmer

President

East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Students

June 30, 2020

Dear EGSC students,

Impact of COVID-19 on Budget

As I write this letter, I know that a discussion of the budget tends to cause eyeballs to roll. However, you are making an investment of our valuable time and money in earning a degree from East Georgia State College and you are entitled to know what impact the college's budget will have on your educational experience. So, please hang in there with me for a few moments as I describe next year's budget and how we got there.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on East Georgia State College's budget for the coming fiscal year (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021). The extent of that impact became even more clear during the last week.

In order to clearly describe to you the budget developments of the last week, we have to look back to what took place earlier this spring.

As tax revenues in Georgia dropped precipitously this spring due to the pandemic, the University System of Georgia (USG) directed all USG institutions to submit detailed plans for a possible reduction in state allocations of 14% for the year. All plans were required to include a furlough plan for all employees. Lower compensated employees were allocated a smaller number of furlough days than higher compensated employees.

Subsequently, the Governor of Georgia made the Georgia Legislature aware of his analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on state revenue during the coming fiscal year. He asked the legislature to adopt a budget based upon an 11% decline. It is, of course, hard to think about a 11% decline being good news. That was, however, excellent news.

The legislature then reconvened in June and began to work on the final state budget. As the House and Senate performed this tedious and difficult process of making tough choices in the face of limited funds, the Governor announced that an approximate 10% decline in revenue should guide the legislature in forming a budget. That was, of course, even better news. Ultimately, a budget was adopted and approved by the Governor based on this new estimate of state revenues.

This state budget, of course, required all state agencies including the USG, to adopt a budget reflecting the reduced budget and the revenue declines anticipated during the coming fiscal year. The Board of Regents met last Friday and adopted a budget based on a state funds operating budget for the USG of \$2.29 billion, a decrease of 10.8% from FY 2020.

In addition to this overall reduction, a key component of the USG's FY 2020-2021 budget is the legislature's decision not to include furloughs for employees in the public education sector as part of the budget. This, of course, has two primary effects on the EGSC budget. First, our faculty and staff will not suffer the loss of income from furlough days. Second, the college will not have the budget savings which come from furlough days and it will be necessary to identify other means of cutting costs.

If we put all of this together, what does it mean for FY 2020-2021 for EGSC. EGSC's base budget (state allocation) was \$10,125,579 for FY 2019-2020. It will be \$8,936,643 this year. This includes the overall reduction in the USG budget, increased expenses such as retirement benefits and a reduction of approximately \$140,000 due to FY 2019 enrollment ("formula funding").

As we think about what this budget reduction means for the EGSC community during the coming year, we all need to consider the following:

- We, obviously, need to be very frugal during the coming year. First, we have about \$1,200,000 less of state allocated funds to cover our expenses. Second, we all know that the pandemic is not over and that we do not know whether the estimate of a 10% reduction in state revenues will prove to be accurate. We must proceed based on our budget with the clear understanding that a mid-year budget reduction could become necessary if the pandemic hits us harder than expected.
- Our state allocation is one of two major components of our budget. The other is tuition and fee revenue. We must remain laser-focused on maintaining our enrollment to assure that this other element of our budget remains stable. This means communicating with prospective new students and returning students regularly from now until the start of Fall semester about the importance of their college degree. It then means working with these students diligently during Fall semester to assure that they return for Spring semester despite the challenges created by the pandemic.

As I reflect on this budget situation, I think it is important that all of us let our state legislators know that we appreciate the work they have done in crafting a state budget during this challenging time. Our state budget must by law be balanced so they had very difficult choices to make. The budget they adopted will enable higher education to continue to thrive and survive even though we must all be frugal. Also, if enrollment remains stable in the coming year, it is likely that EGSC will be able to manage these cuts without the need to terminate existing employees. This is not an accident. Our financial leaders began to plan for the possibility of these cuts very early and it is that proactive planning which makes this possible. We should let them know that this vision and hard work is appreciated.

Bottom line: It is going to be tight this year. Also, we have an unusually busy year facing us due to factors such as our upcoming SACSCOC reaffirmation process (which I described to you in last week's letter). Yet, we are going to get through this together and emerge even stronger.

Stay healthy and stay safe.

Bob Boehmer

President

East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Faculty and Staff

June 30, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Faculty and Staff,

Impact of COVID-19 on Budget

As I write this letter, I know that a discussion of the budget tends to cause eyeballs to roll. However, I also know that we cannot accomplish our mission unless all of us understand our budget. So, please hang in there with me for a few moments as I describe next year's budget and how we got there.

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Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

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The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Declaration ended at midnight on May 11, 2023.
Information for archival use only.