

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

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Message to EGSC Faculty/Staff

May 05, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Faculty and Staff:

During this COVID-19 pandemic, one of my commitments to you is to be open and transparent about new developments at the earliest time possible. This weekly letter summarizes recent developments, including the announcement about the Governor's direction to all state agencies to submit budget reduction plans. It also summarizes key events of the coming week, including the distribution to our students of CARES Act emergency grants and the college's virtual commencement on Friday.

Statewide Budget Reduction

All state agencies, including all USG institutions, have been **directed to submit budget reduction plans. EGSC must submit its plan by May 09, 2020.** The following is an excerpt from the Chancellor's letter about this budget reduction.

Letter from the Chancellor May 01, 2020

"Your hard work has continued to keep all of our 26 institutions and the University System Office (USO) accessible and responsive in an extraordinary time, even as you have had to juggle your own personal challenges. I am grateful and proud of the way each of you has responded to our rapid shift in operations.

The challenges thrown at us by the COVID-19 pandemic are unprecedented. The health and safety of our students and employees are our greatest priorities.

As you are aware, the state of Georgia is facing a significant drop in revenue from the coronavirus that has caused the news I must now share.

Today, the state Office of Planning and Budget, House Budget and Research Office, and Senate Budget and Evaluation Office directed all state agencies to develop new spending proposals for fiscal year 2021, which begins July 1. In doing so, all agencies including USG must submit proposals that include a 14% reduction of their base budget.

I have instructed all institutions and the USO to prepare a plan to address these 14% reductions. These plans must be submitted to the state no later than May 20th.

This will not be easy work. We have asked everyone to be strategic in their approach to meeting this reduction, therefore across the board cuts are not permitted. Our priority continues to be helping our students complete a college education. Our mission is more critical than ever as we take a leading role in helping all Georgians recover.

Right now, institutions are only submitting plans to address the 14% reductions for FY21. It will be some time before we will know the specifics of these plans and how they will be implemented. Among actions that may be taken include furloughs and layoffs. Additionally, we are placing a hold on all vacant positions not deemed essential, and remain committed to a critical hire process for the few that are. We will be faced with some uncertainty until the FY21 budget is adopted and approved.

The state will continue to monitor the financial impact of COVID-19 and adjust as circumstances require. Any budget plans submitted to the state must also be finalized and approved by the Georgia Legislature, and signed by the Governor.

I know this is hard news to hear. Please keep in close contact with your supervisor for further guidance and if you have any questions. We will provide updates as quickly and as transparently as possible.

Above all, know you are making a difference at a critical time for the University System. There is no question this will be tough. But we will get through it, and be stronger. Thank you for all you do to support our students and the state of Georgia."

Detailed Guidance from the USG on 05/01/2020

In addition to the above letter from the Chancellor, the USG sent detailed guidance about the plan each USG institution must submit. This included clear instructions that the budget cuts must be **"strategic." Across the board cuts are not permitted.**

CARES Act Funding – Institutional Portion

As discussed in my prior weekly letters, the federal CARES Act divides the funding for each institution under that federal stimulus bill into two equal portions. One portion is to for the institution. The other portion is for emergency grants for students. This section of my letter addresses the institutional portion. The student emergency grants are addressed in the section of this letter immediately following.

The U.S. Department of Education has announced that the CARES act funding for use by institutions is now available. These funds must be used by each institution for costs first incurred on or after March 13, 2020. Also, each institution must have "a reasoned basis for concluding such costs have a clear nexus to significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus."

The following lists specific permitted uses and prohibited uses of these funds issued by U.S. Department of Education as outlined in a letter from the USG:

- "Institutional Funds **CAN** be used for:
 - Refunds to students for room and board, tuition, and other fees as a result of significant changes to the delivery of instruction, including refunds to students for housing, food, or other services that institutions could no longer provide. This includes allowing institutions to reimburse themselves for COVID-19 related refunds that were provided to students on or after March 13, 2020.
 - Other costs that have a "clear nexus to significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus."
 - Costs to purchase equipment or software, pay for online licensing fees, or pay for internet service to enable students to transition to distance learning to include reimbursements to the institutions for hardware, software, or internet connectivity that institutions may have purchased on behalf of students or provided to students.
 - Payment of a per-student fee to a third-party service provider, including an

Online Program Management (OPM), for each additional student using a distance learning platform, learning management system, online resources, or other support services; however, institutions may not use funds to pay third-party recruiters or OPMs for recruiting or enrolling new students at the institution.

- Additional Student Grants using the same process and requirements as for the prior round of Student Grants.
- Institutional Funds **CANNOT** be used for:
 - Payment to contractors for the provision of pre-enrollment recruitment activities.
 - Endowments.
 - Capital outlays associated with facilities related to athletics, sectarian instruction, or religious worship.
 - Senior administrator and/or executive salaries, benefits, bonuses, contracts, incentives, cash, or other benefit.”

East Georgia State College is now in the process of preparing a plan for use of these funds to be submitted for approval to the USG.

CARES Act Funding – Student Portion

Today, a letter is being sent to EGSC students, faculty and staff about EGSC’s plan for distribution of the student portion of the CARES Act funds. That letter provides, in part:

“On April 9, 2020, U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced the first wave of CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) funding to colleges and universities across the United States. The funding is available through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund authorized by the CARES Act and **allocates 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 must prepare its own plan describing how these funds will be used to meet emergency needs of students, subject to US Department of Education guidelines.”

It is EGSC’s intention to begin distributing funds by **Thursday, May 7, 2020.**”

Governor’s Executive Order 04/30/2020

As widely reported in the news, the Governor of Georgia issued an executive order on May 01, 2020. That order ended the statewide shelter in place order. However, as summarized below in a letter from the USG on 05/01/2020, “little has changed: for USG institutions (including EGSC) as a result of that executive order:

“Today the Governor issued an Executive Order (an “EO”) impacting sheltering in place and the Public Health Emergency. I have summarized relevant provisions of the EO below

Pursuant to today’s EO the Public Health Emergency is extended for 30 days until June 12.

At midnight tonight the statewide shelter in place expires, except for the shelter in place provisions for higher risk populations previously provided in the Governor's April 23 EO. Today's EO extends those shelter in place provisions for higher risk populations until June 12.

While the statewide shelter in place expires at midnight, the Governor's April 23 EO remains in effect, which still requires social distancing, limited gatherings, and limited business openings, among many other things. **This April 23 EO that remains in effect continues to classify the USG as "Critical Infrastructure," allowing us to continue remote instruction and limited social interaction related thereto. The April 23 EO is currently set to expire on May 13, but additional portions of it may be extended in the future.**

In short, with the expiration of the statewide shelter in place provisions at midnight tonight - other than greater mobility allowed for our students, faculty and staff - little has changed for the USG, as we have been operating pursuant to the Critical Infrastructure and limited social interaction provisions of the April 23 EO and will continue to follow those provisions until it expires on May 13 or is extended.

Consistent with this approach, the Governor's Chief of Staff today sent a memorandum to agency heads reinforcing strict social distancing for state offices and for agencies to continue to use all alternative means of delivering services, including telecommuting and alternative office hours, among other things. The memo stated that further guidance should be expected during the week of May 11. "

Virtual Commencement on May 08, 2020

The virtual Honors Night Ceremony held recently and the virtual 10th anniversary celebration for the Fulford Center were highly successful. Thanks for joining in those celebrations. I hope you will also join us this Friday evening for a virtual commencement ceremony.

I look forward to seeing all of you soon in person. In the meantime, please be healthy and be safe.

Thank you! You are the best.

Robert G. Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to the EGSC Community

May 06, 2020

Dear Friends of East Georgia State College:

During this COVID-19 pandemic, one of my commitments to you is to be open and transparent about new developments at the earliest time possible. This weekly letter summarizes recent developments, including the announcement about the Governor's direction to all state agencies to submit budget reduction plans. It also summarizes key

events of the coming week, including the distribution to our students of CARES Act emergency grants and the college's virtual commencement on Friday.

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Thank you! You are the best.

Robert G. Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Students

May 06, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

On April 9, 2020, U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced the first wave of CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) funding to colleges and universities across the United States. The funding is available through **the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund authorized by the CARES Act** and allocates 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 must prepare its own plan describing how these funds will be used to meet emergency needs of students, subject to US Department of Education guidelines.

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.

It is EGSC's intention to distribute funds by **Thursday, May 7, 2020.**

Please [click here](#) to see *EGSC's Eligibility Criteria, Calculations and Award Amounts.*

Bob Boehmer, President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Students

May 11, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Students,

Happy Mother's Day! Some of you are Moms. I hope you take satisfaction today in your ability to both be a great mother and pursue a college degree. That is impressive. I trust, also, that all of you are taking time today to tell your own mother how much you appreciate her.

This week's letter is brief. (Ok, I do realize some of you are saying "thankfully!"). The reason for brevity today is that I want to focus on one very important event --- commencement.

Last week was a special one for East Georgia State College. Our spring 2020 commencement celebrated the accomplishments of our graduates. Although virtual, the ceremony sent a clear message to our graduates:

We are deeply proud of your accomplishments. You are important to us.
Congratulations graduates!

If you were unable to join us for the virtual ceremony on Friday evening, please take the time to enjoy the celebration --- and then send a text or email of congratulations to one or more of these special graduates.

<http://www.ega.edu/2020-Spring-Commencement>

Please join me in a shout out to the people who made this possible. This was a labor of love for each of them. They each wanted to assure that our graduates had the celebration they deserved.

Let's all begin looking forward right now to our Fall 2020 Commencement. Colonel George Frederick, who was scheduled to speak at our Spring 2020 Commencement (and who appeared on the video) will be our speaker in fall. As Colonel Fred announced, all of the Spring 2020 graduates and their supporters are invited to join our Fall 2020 graduates in a face-to-face commencement. It promises to be a truly exciting day. All of these graduates will "walk" across the stage to accept our congratulations in person. It is going to be an amazing event.

Stay healthy. Stay safe.

Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Faculty/Staff

May 11, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Faculty and Staff,

Happy Mother's Day! Many of you are Moms. I hope you take satisfaction today in your ability to both be a great mother and serve EGSC. That is impressive. I trust, also, that all of you are taking time today to tell your own mother how much you appreciate her.

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Bob Boehmer

President

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May 11, 2020

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that truly special role. I trust, also, that all of you are taking time today to tell your own mother how much you appreciate her.

This week's letter is brief. (Ok, I do realize some of you are saying "thankfully!"). The reason for brevity today is that I want to focus on one very important event --- commencement.

Last week was a special one for East Georgia State College. Our spring 2020 commencement celebrated the accomplishments of our graduates. For many of you, that group included your own children or relatives or friends. Although virtual, the ceremony sent a clear message to our graduates:

We are deeply proud of your accomplishments. You are important to us. Congratulations graduates!

If you were unable to join us for the virtual ceremony on Friday evening, please take the time to enjoy the celebration --- and then send a text or email of congratulations to one or more of these special graduates.

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Stay healthy. Stay safe.

Bob Boehmer

President

East Georgia State College

Message to the EGSC Community

May 18, 2020

Dear friends of East Georgia State College,

Although it seems like a lifetime ago, I left the private practice of law in Oregon in 1989 to head to Georgia with Joyce and our two daughters to come to take a teaching position at the University of Georgia in Athens. Initially, it was a temporary position. I loved the position and, luckily, it became permanent. I say "luckily" because a position at a college or a university gives you the privilege of being part of a community in which learning is at the heart of the community. Each day, your ideas are challenged and explored. You encounter new people of all ages and ethnicities from places unlike the one from which you came. You share events of many kinds from the arts to athletics and celebrate accomplishments. In short, an academic community --- like East Georgia State College --- is a special place.

Over the years since 1989, I admit, I allowed myself to become a bit complacent about this simple fact. Suddenly, in March of this year, much of this was suddenly taken from all of us by the coronavirus. Students moved out. Faculty and staff worked from home. The community sheltered in place. I am no longer complacent about what was taken away from all of us so suddenly.

So, that leads to the point of this brief letter. The University System of Georgia has directed all 26 colleges and universities in the system to prepare detailed, written “return to campus plans.” As devastatingly detailed as that sounds, it isn’t. It is very real. It means that we are actively planning for a return to campus at the start of fall 2020.

Many things will be different when all of us return. But the essence of the college will return. All of us will, again, be together and focused on learning. I am not ever going to take that for granted again.

The faculty and staff and students of East Georgia State College look forward to having you visit us soon!

In the meantime, stay healthy. Stay safe.

Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Students

May 18, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Students,

Although it seems like a lifetime ago, I left the private practice of law in Oregon in 1989 to head to Georgia with Joyce and our two daughters to come to take a teaching position at the University of Georgia in Athens. Initially, it was a temporary position. I loved the position and, luckily, it became permanent. I say “luckily” because teaching at a college or a university gives you the privilege of being part of a community in which learning is at the heart of the community. Each day, campus is filled with students like you. Each day, your ideas are challenged and explored. You encounter new people of all ages and ethnicities from places unlike the one from which you came. You share events of many kinds from the arts to athletics and celebrate accomplishments. In short, an academic community --- like East Georgia State College --- is a special place.

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The East Georgia State College faculty and staff look forward to your return.

In the meantime, stay healthy. Stay safe.

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President
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I am looking forward to having everyone back on campus soon.

In the meantime, stay healthy. Stay safe.

Bob Boehmer
President
East Georgia State College

Message to EGSC Faculty and Staff

May 27, 2020

Dear East Georgia State College Faculty and Staff,

I am writing to ask each of you to do something for the East Georgia State College Bobcat family today. Could you send a message to a few of your EGSC students who you have not seen since the end of spring semester to let them know you are looking forward to having them return to campus this fall to earn their degree? I am sending a similar request to students today asking them to reach out to other students.

Some of the students you contact may be doing well and will simply enjoy the fact that someone from the college remembers them and is concerned about their future. Others are likely to be going through a tough time due to the coronavirus. Family members and close friends of theirs may have lost jobs. Others may have people close to them who are very sick. They may be fearful about their future. They may feel isolated. Hearing from you may just be a nice end to the Memorial weekend. But for one student, it may be the thing that tips the scale in a positive direction.

I hope you had a good Memorial Day. Joyce and I spent the day working at home on a college project and thinking about fall when we all plan to be back on campus together. It's not that far away.

Until then, stay healthy. Stay safe.

Bob Boehmer
President
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Message to the EGSC Community

May 27, 2020

Dear friends of East Georgia State College,

I sent a brief message today to EGSC students ask each of them to do something for the East Georgia State College Bobcat family today. I asked them to send a message to a few EGSC students who they have not seen since the end of spring semester to let them know they are looking forward to seeing them on campus soon. I made a similar request of faculty and staff.

I told them that some of the friends they contact may be doing well and will simply enjoy the fact that another Bobcat thought of them today. I told them that others are likely to be going through a tough time due to the coronavirus. Family members and close friends of theirs may have lost jobs. Others may have people close to them who are very sick. They may be fearful about their future. They may feel isolated. I told them that, although receiving a message may just be a nice end to the Memorial weekend for most, for one person it may be the thing that tips the scale in a positive direction.

You likely know a college student who would be helped by a contact from someone who believes in their future. It would be great if you would reach out to them.

I hope you had a good Memorial Day. Joyce and I spent the day working at home on a

college project and thinking about fall when we plan for students, faculty and staff to be back on campus. It's not that far away. We hope you will visit EGSC this fall.

In the meantime, stay healthy. Stay safe.

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