

Capital Campaign Kickoff Introductory Comments
East Georgia State College September 26, 2013, 6:30pm
Begin speaking around 7:45 – Goal length: 15 minutes

Good evening,

Isn't the art on display this evening beautiful? I hope many of you are taking home a special item from this collection. Thanks to Desmal Purcell, assistant professor of art, for coordinating the auction.

I know that some of you can still picture the land we sit on tonight as it was in the early 1970s. At that time, did it perhaps seem unimaginable that this beautiful campus would exist, that 200 students would be living on campus in residence halls, that a bachelor's degree in biology would be available right here in Swainsboro, that we would be cutting down the nets in this building and heading to the national junior college championship basketball tournament?

All of that did happen and the College now has an annual economic impact of \$70,000,000 on this region.

Thanks for coming to beautiful East Georgia State College to celebrate what you have built during the last 40 years and to envision what this special place will become. That is why the East Georgia State College Foundation exists – to bring that vision to reality. Thank you, Denny Key and all of the members of the foundation for believing in that vision and working so hard to make it happen.

Tonight, the foundation wants all of you to share their excitement and optimism about the future of the college. To make that possible, Elizabeth Gilmer and the other members of the planning committee have worked for months to plan this dinner. In fact, many of these people have been here so many hours during the past several months that they have now approached me asking for academic credit for the experience.

Our excellent food service staff has also gone above and beyond the call of duty. Although I do hold the food service staff personally responsible for my weight gain, I thank them for their tireless efforts to make this dinner special.

As we begin this special evening, may I take a moment to introduce you to my wife and daughters, Joyce, Megan and Beth, and to my brother, Gabe, my sister in law, Jenny, and my niece, Amelie. Also, may I introduce you to a gentleman who I grew up with in Seattle, Washington and whose photographic art you have enjoyed this evening – Chris Fox. It means a great deal to this community to have all of you with us this evening as we envision a bright future for the college.

As I have come to know and love this area, I have learned that to envision the future of the college it is imperative to appreciate its unique and special relationship with this community. **This community fought for this college, paid and burned the bond to build it, and now**

supports it every day in every way. That relationship between college and community is unique. It is the reason our vision will become reality.

Tonight, we take a big step forward in building on that relationship. This step would not be possible without the support of these sponsors. When you see these folks around town, please say thanks:

Altamaha EMC,
Blanchard Equipment,
Cadle Carriage Company (Jerry and Paula Cadle)
Georges Florist,
Atlanta Postal Credit Union (Matt Baum – he will be at the dinner),
Brown’s Jewelry,
C-Netics (Craig Thornton – will NOT be here),
Enterasys (Jim Finger – will NOT be here),
Flat Creek Lodge,
One Path Systems (Chad Merrill – will NOT be here),
Meadows Regional Medical Center,
Randy Roderick and Associates at Herff Jones,
Walgreens,
Wal Mart,
Whitfield Farms and Nursery,
Harvey’s.

In addition to appreciating the unique relationship with the community, understanding our unique student body is the key to envisioning our future. Would all East Georgia State College students who are present please stand? Many of these students are members of Student Government Association and many are Ambassadors. **They all love this college and have worked very hard to make this special night possible. If we can bring even more students like these to the college, assure that they graduate and instill in each one a spirit of community service, the future of this region is indeed bright.**

Swainsboro/Emanuel County, all of this means that **it’s now time to take it to the next level.** Imagine the vitality of this region when the number of students living on campus rises dramatically, when we add more bachelor’s degrees targeted to the workforce needs of this community attracting students from around the state to our campus, when new faculty and staff teaching in those new programs are members of your churches and service clubs, When we all say, **“Remember when the economic impact of the college was ONLY \$70,000,000.”**

Accomplishing this will require more than state funding and tuition. It will require significantly enhanced private fundraising.

I have thought about this long and hard and I would not ask the college and the community to do this if I did not believe with all my heart that it is possible and that it is necessary to our continued vitality. That is why we are announcing tonight that, beginning with Fiscal year 2014 - -- the annual fund goal will be set at \$1 million annually for each of the next five years.

Achieving this goal will require a major shift in our fundraising strategy. We will, of course, not attain this goal by simply asking our current donors to increase their giving. Instead, we need to dramatically increase our donor base. For example, the College has over 20,000 alumni --- students who enrolled for at least 30 hours of credit at the college. These alumni have not been asked to give annually in a systematic manner. Consider this: what if 20% of those alumni --- 4000 --- each contributed an average of \$100 in FY 2014. That alone would add \$400,000 to our annual giving base. In addition, the college has strong supporters outside the Emanuel County area who have not been systematically asked to give.

As we build this donor base, all of us must be able to articulate the reasons that annual giving is necessary to the College's continued vitality. Here's an example: This semester, a typical semester, for example, over 200 students left due to inability to pay tuition and fees. We need to help each potential donor understand the importance of need based financial aid in addition to merit based scholarships. The lack of this aid has a dramatic impact on our enrollment.

We must, also, tell these new donors over and over about the impact of the College upon the social and economic well-being of the region. Consider that the economic impact of the college on the region was less than \$60 million dollars before our residence hall was built. It is now \$70,000,000.

While we are increasing our annual giving base, we will be simultaneously and systematically work with potential donors interested in making large capital gifts.

An example of these capital needs, consider that the college's residential capacity is likely grow steadily in the years ahead. You have already seen or heard about new private housing developments in the community. By summer 2015, we anticipate more on campus housing as well. This growth in housing creates a need for more student space on campus --- **an expansion of the student services building is a top capital need.**

Similarly, our new ability to offer bachelors degree programs puts an exclamation point on the **need for an expansion of the academic building. That is yet another of our top capital needs.**

As we think about this "Strategic Projects List", I need to share with you my concern about the transition of the young people in our community when they complete high school. This concern highlights another one of our key capital needs.

We all know that the first few months after high school is a tough transition period for most young people. It is particularly difficult for many in our community due to long-standing economic reasons. A very small percentage of these young people are choosing to go on to our Southeastern Tech, to Georgia Southern or to East Georgia State College. In too many cases, this is not due to lack of talent but to lack of a clear path. It is really tough for students, many of whom would be first generation college students, to get through maze. Each one that fails to reach the end of the maze is a lost opportunity for our community. **We need a "Take it to the Next Level" Center on this campus designed to provide young people with the tools to**

make good choices and take it to the next level. Imagine the economic impact on our region if more of our young people were chose college, earned certificates or degrees and then worked in our community. This is the type of project – and it is only one example --- which will only become a reality if private funds are raised to take this important step.

This strategy will keep our campaign focused squarely on the mission of the college – and has the potential to provide the resources necessary to provide students with access to opportunity. This type of campaign is in line with the campaigns of our sister institutions – both within the University System of Georgia and nationally.

Implementing this strategy requires expert assistance. To help us set the tone for the upcoming campaign, we have a very special guest with a great message tonight. I am pleased to have the honor of introducing you to my friend and University of Georgia colleague, Dr. Bill Crowe.

Dr. Crowe is the former President of Tyler Junior College in Tyler, Texas, one of the largest community colleges in the nation. Under Dr. Crowe's leadership, Tyler Junior College ranked among the top 50 fastest growing community and junior colleges in the U.S. In the decade prior to becoming president, he held various administrative posts at Tyler JC, including vice president for instruction and student services, dean of business and technology, and dean of liberal arts. When Dr. Crowe first became president of TJC, the college faced a financial crisis. I suspect that he brought with him to the crisis the competitive skills and work ethic which came from his days on the U of Texas Longhorns football team. He implemented new financial management practices that transformed the college's bottom line from yearly deficits to annual surpluses exceeding \$1 million. Within seven years, endowed funds also increased from less than \$100,000 to more than \$30 million and annual giving from less than \$50,000 to more than \$6.5 million.

Put simply, Dr. Crowe has been there and done that. He knows what is possible because he has done it himself. He knows what is necessary to make it happen because he has done it himself.

We are extremely honored to have Dr. Crowe with us this evening.