

President Bonita C. Jacobs

Faculty-Staff Assembly

August 12, 2014

Welcome... what a wonderful opportunity to gather to celebrate our work and see the potential of the year ahead. This past year was an exciting time for UNG. We have built a community and created shared goals that will position us to accomplish more than we might have imagined possible.

Over the past year I've been reminded of a comment Henry Ford once made. He said, "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

Clearly, our success is not measured by the production of cars or other widgets. It is demonstrated through the lives we change and by the communities we strengthen through education. And, we are doing that very well.

It is important to remember our many successes:

- For the 4th year, Kiplinger Personal Finance magazine named UNG as one of the 100 Best Values in Public Colleges in the nation. We are one of only four Georgia schools to be on this list.
- UNG is one of the top five public universities in Georgia to be on Money magazine's recent ranking of Best Colleges.
- We are one of the top 25 public universities in the South as ranked by U.S. News and World Report.
- The Mike Cottrell College of Business was the only business school in Georgia to be named to the Military Times' "Best for Vets" list.

This recognition of academic excellence and value is well deserved.

Last year at this time, I announced an initiative to be more purposeful about helping qualified students attain nationally competitive scholarships. We had amazing success:

- Mark Stiles and Cody Bijoux each received a \$10,000 scholarship to study in China for one year. Only 10 students each year receive this award, which is given by AASCU and the Chinese Scholarship Council under China's Ministry of Education.
- John Dees, a student in the Institute for Environmental & Spatial Analysis, was named a Udall Scholar. Only 50 of these scholarships are awarded each year.
- Michael Cort and Noah McDaniel, both majoring in Arabic, each received Boren Scholarships to study in the Middle East this year.

- Ryan Blanchard, Zachary Hanvey, and Nathan Patterson won prestigious Gilman International Scholarships to study abroad.
- Jessica Murray, a biology student, was named a Newman Civic Fellow.
- Most recently we learned that Joshua McCausland secured one of 16 spots in the NIH Undergraduate Research Program. He will receive \$20,000 toward his educational expenses this year, a paid summer internship at the NIH, and one year of employment with the NIH following graduation.

These scholarships are life-changing opportunities for these students, and they would not be possible without your involvement. Across the institution, faculty and staff have mentored students, conducted mock interviews and helped with applications, financial aid processes, travel arrangements, and much more.

I want to especially thank Stacy Turner, Daniella Martinez, and staff of the Center for Global Engagement. We all know that faculty mentoring is a must-have in these efforts. Thank you, all, for your commitment to their academic and personal success.

As an institution, UNG has been recognized for its success in fulfilling the goals of consolidation. In April, we were honored to host the Board of Regents for their meeting. Only two institutions per year are selected to host their off-site meetings, and I was very grateful for the time and opportunity to highlight some of our achievements with the board.

- Unlike many universities, UNG continues to see steady growth. With nearly 16,000 students, UNG is now the sixth-largest university in the University System of Georgia.
 - Enrollment was up on every campus last fall. We were officially up 2.5 percent, but an apples-to-apples comparison tells us we were up 4.3 percent. That is very significant since two-thirds of Georgia campuses were down in enrollment.
 - It is also significant that graduate enrollment grew by almost 11%.
- Our students are also geographically diverse. For fall 2013, UNG students represented:
 - 139 Georgia counties
 - 46 states, plus District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico
 - 67 countries, and the number of international students studying on our campuses increases every year.
- We are excited, too, that our exchange programs and study abroad opportunities continue to grow to support our mission of educating globally prepared leaders.
 - 257 students took advantage of study abroad programs.
 - We initiated seven new international partnerships with other institutions in Peru, Oman, Latvia, Italy, Taiwan, and two in Germany.

- And, in support of the governor's statewide initiative to increase college completion – Complete College Georgia – UNG is making a substantial impact.
 - We have increased dual enrollment for high school students through the Accel program – by 24% last year and we are significantly up again this year.
 - We increased online credit hours by 9% last fall, with the largest jump occurring in graduate hours.
 - This spring, we became an eCore affiliate, and UNG students enrolled in 555 courses through eCore.
- This progress positions us to increase persistence and graduation rates significantly. Remember that, in 2015, USG institutions will begin operating under a performance-based funding model that integrates these measures. Based on our performance success, we stand to fare very well from this new model.
- Through administrative cost savings from consolidation, we redirected \$1 million to add critical faculty and staff positions to academic areas and student success programs.
- The Corps of Cadets is stronger than ever.
 - Cadet enrollment was up 8% last year, retention is up this year, and cadets attending the Army's Leadership Development Assessment Course at Fort Knox have far exceeded all performance measures from last year.
 - Last year, 26.9 percent of our cadets earned an overall "excellence" rating, surpassing all other senior military colleges. This year, 51.3 percent of UNG cadets achieved an excellence rating. This is about 23 percent higher than the national average!
 - On top of that, 14 UNG cadets graduated in the top 5 of their platoon... 6 of them as number 1.
 - This is extremely impressive! Please join me in congratulating our military science department, our commandant's office and the Corps of Cadets.
- I am very excited that we have expanded baccalaureate programs in Gainesville from 8 to 20, to increase access and opportunities for students. The Gainesville campus is poised to significantly impact the region through increased visibility, growth and programs.
- Our first Scholarship Ball in 2013 raised nearly \$213,000. This year's Scholarship Ball raised over \$340,000 – a 56% increase over the previous year – and helped us reach a new fundraising record of more than \$1 million for student scholarships in a single year. There are some who believe that the Hope Scholarship and financial aid fully cover student costs. But, we see every day the demand for need-based and merit-based scholarships for our students.

So, we are continuing our fundraising efforts. Very recently, we received the second-largest donation in the university's history. Col. Jack Peavy, a 1964 alumnus who passed

away in January, bequeathed the UNG Foundation \$5.2 million to be used to support the Corps of Cadets. Col. Peevy was an impressive man and an outstanding alumnus, and we are grateful for the opportunity to honor his life and legacy with these resources.

- Of the 4 consolidating institutions, we are the only one to merge our philanthropic foundations. This is an outstanding achievement that will strengthen our fundraising efforts to increase support of student scholarships and university needs. Rich White, former president of the GSC Foundation, is the first president of the new UNG Foundation and he is aided by Mary Helen McGruder as vice chairman and 23 other outstanding community leaders who are singularly focused on the University of North Georgia.

Consolidation is still an ongoing process, and we will continue to make adjustments to streamline operations and improve organizational communication. I know that even the little things can make a big difference. Take our forms, for example. They can be cumbersome and difficult to complete.

Therefore, I am pleased to announce today that we are undertaking a comprehensive project to simplify all of our forms, making it possible for most of them to be completed online. We will evaluate forms for readability, ease of use, and functionality. Expect huge changes.

Last year, we were able to make very positive investments in faculty and staff. We implemented the second year of our salary equity adjustment plan and provided the first merit increase in over 5 years. Providing fair, market-based compensation is absolutely necessary to continue the level of excellence for which we are known.

Also, this time last year, I announced an unprecedented \$200,000 internal grants program to support professional development and continued scholarly engagement and to encourage innovation in teaching, learning and student success.

Through a competitive, peer-reviewed process, we awarded more than 80 grants across all disciplines and all campuses that are supporting research and professional development.

25 Presidential Professional Engagement Awards of up to \$2,000 enabled faculty to remain state-of-the-art in their work, attend conferences or conduct research to support teaching or student success initiatives. Allow me to share some examples.

- I know you will all share my excitement for Joanna Kim. She couldn't be with us today as she is in Vienna, Austria, where she is participating in a classical music festival and will make her debut this afternoon at Haydnsaal Hall, one of Europe's best performance halls. She sends her regrets for not being with us, but is relishing her experience in Austria.
- Shannon Gilstrap, of the English department, has just returned from the East-West Center in Hawaii, where he participated in the Infusing Institute, a program on infusing Asian Studies into the Undergraduate Curriculum.
- Elaine Taylor, of the nursing department, participated in the annual meeting of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners in Boston.

- Martin Blackwell, associate professor of history, presented his research about Kiev, Ukraine's history after Nazi occupation, in San Antonio at the conference of the Association for Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies.
- Karen Redding, of the English department, attended a seminar at the Gunn Institute for the Study of Science Fiction.

I have highlighted just a few of these awards. Will all of the recipients of the Presidential Professional Engagement Awards who are with us now please stand so that we may recognize you?

I hope you all take notice of those who are standing and talk with them afterward. I am sure they have had fascinating experiences that will enrich our community. Congratulations to you all, and thank you for your enthusiastic interest in these endeavors.

Taking this a step further, to support academic innovations and partnerships that promote institutional best practices and support student success, we funded 10 Presidential Academic Innovation Awards of up to \$5,000 and 40 awards of up to \$1,000 for faculty and staff.

- For example, in a cross-disciplinary project that involved visual arts and physical therapy, Alison Alhadeff [all-hä-deff], Jon Mehlferber [mel-furb-ur] and Terrie Millard [mil-lard] used a 3-D printer to create adaptations for bicycles so that children with severe physical limitations can ride them.

They also created a device that improves safety for children and side-walkers during hippo-therapy. I particularly like the collaborative effort across disciplines, which supported student research and promoted creativity in solving clinical problems. Their research will be presented at a national physical therapy conference in October.

- Lee Barrow in our music department assigned iPads to students in a music technology class to deliver course content. The students arranged a selection of music and used the iPads to perform that selection live at a recital this spring. The iPads will be given to a new class this fall, and the process will be repeated. This one grant will help dozens and dozens of students.

Anjana Freeman and Carly Redding integrated human services delivery research and service learning into a study abroad trip to India. They led 12 students in a research project designed to decrease the number of human victims trafficked in impoverished Indian communities. The project aimed to improve the quality of maternal interactions and to increase the potential of children to stay in school, where the average drop-out occurs in the second grade.

- Mary Carney, of UNG's Center for Teaching Learning and Leadership, and Laura Ng, of the English department, developed a two-year faculty academy that focuses on improving teaching and learning practices.
- Mark Spraker in physics and April Nelms in teacher education collaborated to develop a physics education undergraduate concentration in the secondary education

program to train educators in STEM education thus benefitting many public school systems in Georgia. It's important to note that UNG has incredible strength and opportunity in STEM education.

- Of all USG institutions, UNG is #2 in the number of physics graduates, behind only Georgia Tech, and, in proportion to student population, UNG has the highest percentage of physics graduates.
- In proportion to student population, UNG has the highest percentage of math graduates.
- Proportionately, UNG is fifth in biology graduates and 12th in chemistry graduates.
- Further, our physical therapy post a consistent 100% pass rate on the Doctorate of Physical Therapy Licensure Exam, and our nursing students have a 91% average pass rate over the last 4 years on the National Nursing Licensure Exam.
- It should be noted that, not to be outdone by those in STEM fields, our education majors have a 97% pass rate on the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators exams and 93% of the College of Business graduates are either employed or attend graduate school.

The faculty and staff who received Presidential Academic Innovation Awards have expanded their personal expertise and strengthened the UNG educational experience, and I am very proud of their work.

Will all of the faculty and staff who received Presidential Academic Innovation Awards please stand so that we can applaud your work?

Finally, in a category that gives new meaning to the question, "What did you do this summer?," six faculty members received Presidential Summer Scholar Awards, which provided up to \$10,000 and the opportunity to devote their summer to research and scholarly and creative activities.

- Andy David created a studio recording with the David Brothers Jazz Trio, which will be shared with jazz studies scholars and critics throughout the world.
- Chris Dockery, of our visual arts department, researched the Lynn Bachman School and its significance to Appalachia. Using her research, she has created a series of hand-printed, hand-bound, illustrated books that expand our understanding of Appalachian education before public education was introduced to the area. Her work will be showcased in future exhibitions and presentations.
- Victoria Hightower, of the history and philosophy department, went to London for 2 weeks, where she researched the influence of the British Empire on the Persian Gulf in the 19th century. She will present in November at the Southern Historical Association

Conference in Atlanta, and will submit a proposal for the World Historical Association Conference in 2015.

- Johanna Luthman, of the history and philosophy department, completed a biography of Frances Coke Villiers, a 17th-century English noblewoman with a very dramatic life, and has submitted a book proposal to potential publishers. We hope to see that in print soon!
- Tim May, a nationally recognized scholar on the Mongol Empire, continued his research in the field. His research and photographs from Mongolia will be used in the book he is writing for Edinburgh University Press. He is also using the materials in a future book on steppe empires and, as its editor, in *The Encyclopedia of the Mongol Empire*.

Also, his proposal for a festschrift he is co-editing has been accepted for publication. We look forward to celebrating that release soon!

- Glen Smith, assistant professor of political science, studied the effect of partisan media outlets on viewer attitudes and opinions of political leaders. He completed a book and two journal articles that are currently under review. This kind of moment-in-time research can be quite informative!

The faculty release time allowed concentrated time for in-depth and productive research and writing that has resulted in amazing contributions to their disciplines that will have a tremendous impact on them individually and on UNG as an institution. Will our Presidential Summer Scholar Award recipients please stand?

During consolidation, I issued a challenge to you to “imagine what we could become... to imagine the educational, cultural and economic impact on our region... and to imagine the legacy for generations of students.” And imagine you have.

Over the past 18 months, we have created a new model in higher education. Through the scope of our degree programs, leadership development opportunities, and multiple campuses, UNG offers a rare educational experience that builds on our tradition of excellence while preparing for future opportunities.

High quality teaching and a commitment to student success are established strengths at UNG, and they will remain our hallmarks. Our faculty and staff mentor students and promote their personal and professional development. They know their students by name and generously share their time and expertise.

That type of instruction and relationship defines the student experience at all University of North Georgia campuses. We stand by that reputation and will continue doing that very well.

One of the outcomes of our consolidation has been our increased role in the region for economic development and educational attainment. About 85% of our students come from a 30-county area that we have outlined as our immediate service region.

Within that area, 14 counties have a college completion rate under 20%. Through the Regional Education & Economic Development, or REED, initiative we launched last year, we are engaging this region in a much more comprehensive way than ever before.

We are leveraging the role of the university and the expertise and leadership of our faculty and staff to support economic development efforts and improve educational access and opportunities.

For example, we received \$100,000 in funding from Georgia Student Finance Commission to pilot the state's first summer Accel dual enrollment program in critical languages and STEM areas. This was geared specifically to students in counties where these educational opportunities are limited and provided a residential experience to facilitate their participation.

One of the most recent achievements supported by the REED initiative is a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to increase Internet connectivity and "bridge the gap" to some of our northernmost communities to connect schools and businesses in those communities with university resources and classes.

These two examples highlight the attainment of external resources that support our mission, as well as the region.

As one of only two public universities in Georgia to earn the Carnegie Foundation's classification for community engagement, many of our programs have been very successful in building mutually-beneficial partnerships with a wide range of public, private, non-profit and government entities.

To continue this momentum in external engagement and to encourage research opportunities that can generate new financial resources for the university, this year we will create a new position in Academic Affairs – an associate provost for research and engagement.

This position will support a more robust research structure that intertwines engagement, scholarship and innovation. This position will be posted next week, and we will conduct a comprehensive search. I am confident that we can increase the amount of external funding that will benefit our faculty research projects, staff initiatives, and – ultimately – students. But, we must be ever mindful of the tools needed to accomplish this.

These tools include a continuation of support for faculty and staff, and I am pleased to announce today that we will further enhance the educational experience we offer by increasing our investment in you. Provided funding is made available, we will complete our third year of our three-year equity adjustment plan for faculty and staff salaries.

We will invest \$350,000 in faculty and staff initiatives and awards to impact our own campuses and our communities through research and innovative teaching and learning practices. We must provide opportunities for grand ideas to come into fruition.

- Like last year, we will grant 6 Presidential Summer Scholar Awards of up to \$10,000 to provide for significant summer release time for faculty.
- Additionally, this year, we will award 6 new Presidential Semester Scholar Awards that provide one semester of release time – fall or spring – to focus on research and external engagement opportunities.

All of these awards will include an expectation of outcomes that result in progress toward external grant proposals or, in some cases, other significant scholarly contributions.

- Further, there will be 20 grants of up to \$5,000 each for Presidential Innovation Awards. Open to both faculty and staff, these awards will support opportunities to improve institutional practices in teaching, student success or other functional areas within the university.

We all know that student success is commonly measured by what transpires in the classroom, and that is as it should be. But, we also know that student engagement is paramount to student success and that how students are engaged differs from one student to the next.

Data indicate that good teaching and faculty mentoring certainly matter, and they also indicate that student engagement includes programs, services, and activities to enable students to embrace their community and to better perform in the classroom.

Take, for example:

- the coaches and trainers who reinforce self-discipline and time management and had 127 student-athlete make the Peach Belt Conference Presidential Honor Roll;
- our health services professionals who provide campus wellness programs;
- tutoring professionals who provide invaluable support;
- business office and financial aid professionals who help students persist in school;
- internship supervisors who help students apply their knowledge and prepare for career opportunities;
- and student organization advisors who help students develop leadership skills.

I am hopeful that the Presidential Innovation Awards will yield a wide, collaborative range of ideas for further research and study that will help our students succeed in the classroom, compete for and secure meaningful careers, and become civic-minded leaders in a global community.

- To underscore the value of staff members to student success and their diverse and indispensable contributions, this year, I will award seven Presidential Excellence Awards. We will recognize seven staff from separate HR categories who have demonstrated excellence through outstanding performance in accordance with the strategic goals of the University.
- Additionally, I am working with Staff Council to ensure they have appropriate resources to support professional development programs and opportunities for staff.

Engagement defines our overall mission as a public institution, as well as our working relationships with each other. The projects and work I have noted today, as well as numerous others, provide clear evidence that we are truly an "Engaged University."

In just a moment, Pat Donat, our provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, will present, "Engaging UNG" – the inclusive and comprehensive planning process that engaged campus and community stakeholders across our region. The resulting strategic plan outlines inspiring goals that will help define our future as an institution.

J.B. Sharma and Andy Leavitt, unfortunately, are unable to be here today, but I want to recognize them. They did a tremendous job in leading our strategic planning steering committee – a group composed of more than 60 faculty, staff and students from our four campuses – in a valuable planning process. We owe them a great debt for their visionary leadership and commitment to this task.

Will the members of the strategic planning steering committee who are present today please stand?

When the steering committee completed its work, one member of the group commented on the experience as pleasant and productive. He said, "I'm proud to have been a part of this terrific group of people who are so committed to improving the lives of the young people of our state. Gives you hope, doesn't it?"

We have a shared purpose across our four campuses and that allows us to seek new and better ways to achieve our goals.

The strategic plan envisions a bright future and bold aspirations for the University of North Georgia. I have every confidence that with a shared purpose the strategic plan marks the beginning of great things for the University of North Georgia.

In his 1990 report, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Ernest Boyer defined four critical areas of scholarship:

- Teaching, where the teacher connects their own understanding and the students' learning
- Discovery, where new knowledge is generated
- Application, where new knowledge is used to help solve societal problems
- And, integration, where new relationships among disciplines are discovered.

He expanded on this concept in his 1997 update on the subject, advocating for a deeper commitment to teaching and civic engagement as driving values for higher education.

Boyer called this "engaged scholarship," through which an institution can leverage faculty expertise, research and scientific advancement to enhance teaching and to inform the lives, work, and problems of people in its community.

This year will be marked by an increasingly productive exploration of our responsibilities to our students, our colleagues, and to our region. To highlight this shared sense of

commitment and purpose as a public institution, it is only fitting that we designate the current academic year as, "The Year of Engagement."

As we embark on this journey, I will charge a committee to explore, document and share our engagement activities with the UNG community. As we have seen with our initiatives from last year, I know this deliberative approach will produce great results toward our continued success in teaching, scholarship and service.

I am so excited that Dr. Karen Holbrook is able to join us today to share her insight on higher education and the future of UNG. She has been a valuable friend and adviser, and I know you will enjoy find her fascinating.

Again, thank you for a wonderful year filled with exciting new projects. I look forward to the new year, and I wish you every success in your endeavors.

It is now my pleasure to invite Pat Donat forward to share with you the details of "Engaging UNG."

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