



Notes From The President

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Notes from the President provides an opportunity for me to focus on campus achievements. It is also important, however, that I write with candor on critical issues. One such issue is the action of the Board of Regents to provide language in faculty contracts enabling, but not mandating, the implementation of furloughs.

The system office has made it clear that enacting furloughs would be a tactic of 'last resort.' The authority would be used only in the event of budget reductions that could not be accommodated by further efficiencies. As you know, reductions are connected directly to the loss of tax revenue as a consequence of declining economic activity. Sadly, it looks like there will be additional reductions in June as revenue projections are well below expectations. It is difficult to determine if further reductions will carry into the new year.

There is some ambiguity regarding the scope of authority and procedures for implementation. I strongly favor the view that each president and institution be able to exercise independent authority in choosing to implement, or not implement, furloughs. Some officials have suggested that, for legal reasons, furloughs must be implemented uniformly throughout the system with no discretion at the campus level. I have communicated my view in support of campus autonomy to the Chancellor and he has been receptive. We will have to wait to see the final decisions related to need and process.

Our faculty and staff have been diligent in creating the efficiencies that make a local decision to adopt furloughs highly improbable. Our budget plan provides sufficient flexibility to absorb cuts beyond the savings that would be achieved by furloughs. Much of this strength is due to sacrifices by students who have accepted an additional fee, staff who have aggressively pursued process improvements and accepted responsibilities beyond their job description, and faculty who have created seats for additional students at minimal additional cost.

My hat goes off to all who have put us in this relatively strong financial position. I am particularly pleased that faculty members have exerted leadership in creating sections that are uncharacteristically large for our university. Our faculty have done so voluntarily and in areas that are complimentary to 'large section pedagogy.' If it is true that people vote with their feet, early enrollments in large section classes confirm that the initiative has the support of the student body.

I am excited to see the initial response to the 2010 initiative process. We discussed the approach with more than 200 faculty and staff at a number of open forums. This followed an extensive series of discussion that led to the selection of enrollment, retention, and support for scholarships as priorities.

It may seem counter-intuitive to offer strategic budget enhancements during times of financial challenge. I am reminded, however, that a farmer buys seed and plants his or her fields even in the worst financial times. As you will see from emerging proposals, the 2010 initiative process is a direct parallel to spring planting. The fruits of the process will enhance our prospects regardless of economic circumstances. In many cases, they will countervail against worsening economic times.

I have begun working on the annual convocation. The format involves highlighting the past year's accomplishments, while focusing on objectives for the year ahead. The convocation is a celebration of your work, your achievements, and your aspirations. Please email pschloss@valdosta.edu goals and achievements that would enhance my address. I hope that everyone see themselves in the comments that I share.

Have a great summer!

Patrick J. Schloss, President