



**BOARD OF REGENTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

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May 12, 2022

Greetings Faculty,

I hope this letter finds you well and catching your breath as you finish the spring semester. As much as our students are happy to finish out the semester, I know each of you feel the same. I wish for you some time to relax and wind down during the coming weeks as you prepare for summer classes, study abroad courses, intensive research or whatever your plans may be for the summer.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with the University System of Georgia (USG) Faculty Council. During our meeting, it was suggested that I should open a direct line of communication to faculty across the system. So, please consider this the first communication directly to each of you that I will prepare on an ongoing basis.

Communication that goes through layers of individuals may sometimes lose its intent or its context. It's my hope that these direct communications will keep our lines of communication open. While I understand this is a two-way street, I may not be able to answer all of the concerns you send me and address you back personally. I will accumulate your communications and answer what I can in this format. I thought this first edition would be a good opportunity for you to learn a little more about me and my perspective.

Let me start by saying that it is an honor and privilege to serve as your Chancellor. Many people have asked why I would want this position. I can think of no better way to round out a career of public service than by leading Georgia's public system of higher education. The future of the state of Georgia is inextricably linked to the success of USG and our 26 institutions. As goes the success of USG institutions, so goes the future of Georgia. I am thrilled to contribute to this important mission.

In USG, our purpose is knowledge – to create it through research, share it through teaching and apply it through service. I am committed to this purpose and to advancing our priorities of degree attainment, affordability and efficiency.

During my recent meeting with the USG Faculty Council, a few issues came up and I wanted to share my perspective with each of you directly. These issues framed the dialogue of my conversation with the council, and I thought it may be helpful to share these ideas more broadly.

The Value and Relevancy of Higher Education

First, as I come into this role, I am cognizant of the national dialogue around higher education, its value proposition and its relevancy. Many people are asking whether higher education holds the same value as it has historically. I am confident that the same value exists. In fact, I posit that the work you all do on our campuses has never been as important as it is today. But, we must tell our story and engage in a conversation more broadly

to dispel myths, identify opportunities to do things better or differently and work to demonstrate our value to the students and families we serve. This will be no easy task but it is one I am prepared to take on.

Students

Following up on students, I want to be clear students will be my priority as I lead USG. Decisions will be guided by what is best for students and their success. Do not take that to mean we will sacrifice quality and rigor but, rather, we will meet students where they are and ensure they have the resources necessary to be successful. The pandemic has changed so much of our lives, and it has left an indelible mark on students in K-12 education. Many of our students lost ground during the pandemic, and we are seeing the consequences of that in our entering classes. It is critical that we understand the needs of these students, who come to us with different needs than students who came to us in 2019.

Creation of Responsive and Nimble Organizations

We learned through the pandemic that higher education can be responsive and nimble under extreme circumstances. We must now use those lessons learned to become responsive and nimble in a strategic way as we adjust to the changing demands of our economy through education. We must be able to do this while also advancing the underlying premise that education has value beyond meeting workforce needs. These concepts must work hand-in-hand.

Tenure

During the Faculty Council meeting, I was asked what tenure meant to me. I think it fitting that I use this opportunity to share my commitment to tenure, to ensure academic freedom and to assist in the recruitment of the best faculty to our institutions. Tenure is the protection a faculty member is afforded after demonstrating excellence in their discipline and in the classroom. It also promotes academic freedom. However, I want to be clear: I support academic freedom for both tenured and non-tenured faculty. I am a strong supporter of the First Amendment, and while the First Amendment and academic freedom are not the same thing, the principles are. Academic freedom is imperative to the pursuit of truth and the creation of knowledge. Tenure may protect academic freedom, but it is my hope that faculty enjoy academic freedom throughout their career, not only when they are tenured.

Post-Tenure Review and AAUP Censure

It seems appropriate for me to now share my thoughts on the recent changes to post-tenure review and the American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) censure on the University System of Georgia. My understanding is that the crux of the issue of censure rests in the concept of due process and how it is afforded to a faculty member. AAUP insists that a hearing during which the faculty member may call witnesses is the only way in which a faculty member can be afforded "academic due process."

The Board of Regents has carefully included standards of due process in the post-tenure review procedures, while not specifically following AAUP's narrow definition. A faculty member will only fail a post-tenure review if judged as failing by the faculty committee established by the institutional policy. This process is still faculty-led, as it always has been. The inclusion of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) as a developmental process follows an unsatisfactory post-tenure review with the goal of advancing the faculty member's professional performance. If the faculty member fails to satisfactorily complete the PIP, action may be taken. This process does not include a single formal hearing; rather, it includes engagement in an interactive process over the course of multiple years, with numerous notices of the professional deficiencies and numerous opportunities to be heard in response and to remedy them. Any action taken against a faculty member will follow multiple peer-led reviews.

Some have asked me to work with the Board to change the new policy and get us removed from censure, yet the Board is committed to the new policy's level of development and accountability. We may not agree, but I think the narrative on this should change. I recommend the faculty in the University System of Georgia begin petitioning the AAUP to remove USG from the censure list by assuring them that each of you who will be involved in the post-tenure review process will commit to affording due process as a concept to every faculty member who fails to meet expectations. Ultimately and appropriately, it is the responsibility of the faculty-led post-tenure review committees to ensure a fair and unbiased process.

Changes in the Presidential Search Process

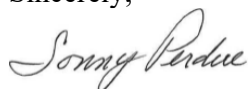
As many of you are aware, the Board of Regents chose to amend the policy on selecting new presidents at its meeting Tuesday. The new policy includes naming Regents to institutional search committees, with a Regent chairing the committee. I want to explain that the change reflects two things. First, it reflects a desire of the Board to be involved earlier in the process in selecting a new president. I have heard many Regents say they feel their most important role is to select presidents for our campuses, and this allows them to be involved from the beginning of the process and not at the end. Additionally, our research institutions have always had Regents involved in the search process from the very start – it was a different search process from our other institutions – and that is second reason for the change. The Board wanted a process that was consistent across all sectors. There is no nefarious intent to diminish the voice of any group in the selection process. The Regents simply want to be involved in the process from the beginning and to have a consistent process across all sectors. I want to be clear, this change is not reflective of any issues we have seen in recent searches but is based on a desire of the Board to be more involved in what they view as one of their most important duties.

New USG Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new chief academic officer and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs, Dr. Ashwani Monga. Dr. Monga will join the system from Rutgers University—Newark, where he has worked for a number of years and is currently provost and executive vice chancellor. More importantly, he is a longstanding faculty member who has taught in university classrooms from Minnesota to South Carolina, among other places. As he joins us, he will also hold a faculty appointment in the Scheller College of Business at Georgia Tech. When I say I want to make sure I and the system more directly communicate with you as faculty, part of that is making sure there is someone here who understands and has experienced the work you do so well. I believe Dr. Monga is such a person, someone who is as committed to the classroom and students as he is to working on good policy that advances knowledge and the system's mission. He will start July 1, and I look forward to introducing him on our campuses.

I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you through this letter. I hope to meet you in person as I begin to visit more of our campuses and meet with faculty, staff and students. I commit to continuing to share information with you and hope that you will find me to be an open and transparent chancellor. I am excited about the future of public higher education in Georgia and look forward to what we can accomplish together.

Sincerely,



Sonny Perdue
Chancellor