



November 6, 2017

Dr. Ellen Martin, Chair
CSU Faculty Senate

Dear Dr. Martin:

I'm sorry that I could not be there for your meeting, but I'm traveling to Washington D.C. where I will be meeting with a US Senator from Iowa who is a CSU alumna. I also will be meeting with Georgia's new congresswoman, Karen Handel, and several other members of Georgia's federal congressional delegation. Our agenda includes talking about the great things happening at Columbus State University, reinforcing our partnership and support for Fort Benning, and explaining the need for continuing federal support of programs such as Pell that are so important to our students.

I hope these written notes will suffice as an update.

- First an update on our provost search: We recently brought in 8 candidates for an initial screening. Some of you participated in that process and I greatly appreciate your time and your input. We are checking some references now and plan to bring in two or three candidates later this month for a more public review, including open forums. We are trying to be deliberate but also hoping to have this process fairly complete before we get into the holidays and the end of the semester. Look for more information soon on opportunities to meet the finalists we will bring to campus.
- You may soon see position advertisements posted for two positions that report to me. Our internal auditor, Michael Johnson, is retiring and we are now looking to fill that position. The internal auditor has a dual reporting line directly to me and the chief auditor for the University System of Georgia. Secondly, we will soon be advertising for a Chief Inclusion and Engagement Officer. This is a position that was clearly identified as a need in the inclusion survey we did last year. I have talked about this position before, but we are finally ready to post after vetting the position description with several groups on campus and with officials at the USG.
- You may have heard about a recent University System of Georgia decision to phase out the distance learning tuition differential for undergraduate programs over a two-year period. All undergraduate distance learning tuition differentials will be reduced by 50% effective fall 2018 and eliminated by fall 2019. For CSU, this means a reduction in our budget of about \$1 million next year, and an additional \$1 million in 2019.

We are told that online education is still a priority of the USG. The elimination of the distance learning tuition differential does not indicate a lesser commitment to online

education. This adjustment is part of a major priority of the University System of Georgia to ensure affordability and efficiency.

- This budget adjustment will certainly be problematic, but we will collaborate, focus on our priorities and figure out the wisest path forward. Even in times like this, we are all grateful to do what we do.

- Finally, a bit of good news. The Foundation recently received a \$1.7 million estate gift from a donor who had never before contributed to Columbus State University. As our Foundation Board of Trustees Chairman Wade Burford said, this gift is a powerful testament to our ability to impress people based simply on what we do every day. No one ever made a pitch to this donor, nor did we spend any time trying to educate him on what we do or what we need. The Foundation Trustees have decided to use this money as challenge to CSU alumni and friends, so they can also be a part of the *First Choice* campaign. Our hope is that we can drive participation and match that \$1.7 with hundreds - maybe thousands - of smaller gifts that get more people involved in finalizing this campaign.

Thanks,



Dr. Chris Markwood
President