

Jan. 29, 2020

Good afternoon,

Welcome back to many from our winter break. I hope everyone is ready to have a successful spring semester. I encourage students to reach out to your advisors and student service offices for any needed assistance as the semester gets under way.

Here are a few updates:

**Welcome.** Welcome to Dr. Artie Lee Travis, our new vice president for Student Affairs, who starts at FSU today. If you see him around campus, please give him a warm Frostburg greeting! Read more about him [here](#).

**Construction.** We'll be starting construction on the new Education and Health Sciences building next week. Much of the work will be "below ground" as we get ready to work on the foundation. We hope to have a formal groundbreaking ceremony in May. As for the new residence hall, I will be contacting the leadership from the faculty and staff senates and SGA on the process for coming up with name for the new residence hall. The ultimate decision-making body for the name is the USM Board of Regents.

**Retirements.** Like other state agencies and state universities, we had more retirements at the end of the year than usual. Many of those who left did so because of changes in retiree benefits. Of our 16 retirements, which included housekeepers, administrative staff, faculty and others, two have already been filled, several have been advertised and others will be advertised this coming semester. In a few instances, vice presidents are taking the opportunity to recast the positions to address their division's needs, consistent with what he heard from the Sibson Consulting briefing last year and in accordance with our strategic planning goals on deploying university resources.

**Strategic planning and assessment.** This is a busy time for many units and departments as they work on their annual assessments and evaluations. We will continue to emphasize outcomes that bring us closer to our 2023 [Strategic Plan](#) goals. While faculty and staff must take the lead and responsibilities for the first three [goals](#) and their associated [action items](#), I continue to work with the division vice presidents and the provost to adjust resources to address the strategic planning actions. I will be reconvening the Strategic Planning Task Force in early March to ask the members to review our progress toward outcomes associated with the plan's goals.

**Enrollment.** Student recruitment and persistence leading to graduation continue to be the major priority for us. I have asked VP Arlene Cash to begin providing regular updates to the university community as we shape next year's class and work to ensure success of our current students.

**Presidential update.** I want to share three items with the university community that are on my agenda.

- First, we are optimistic that we will get the capital funding for the first full fiscal year of construction for the Education & Health Sciences building. I will be attending legislative hearings in March to secure that funding. (We will need two years of construction funding for the building to be ready for occupancy and use in September 2022.).
- Second, along with several others, I attended the annual NCAA convention as part of our requirements to become full DII members. I am pleased that women's acrobatics and tumbling, which we begin offering next year, was approved as an emerging sport in the NCAA. Our conference, the Mountain East, will be the first DII conference to offer a championship in that sport.
- Lastly, I attended a dinner in Washington, D.C., that brought together academic leaders and business leaders to talk about educational credentials needed in today's work environment in the Baltimore to Richmond corridor. We were one of five USM schools at the dinner (along with UM-College Park, UMBC, Towson, and Bowie State). Business leaders from Northrop Grumman, Amazon, Google, T. Rowe Price, Stanley Black & Decker and others shared their opinions about meaningful educational-business partnerships. I will be sharing some takeaways from that discussion with the faculty and staff senates and SGA.

Thanks for reading this update, and wishing you the best of luck in the new semester!

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