

Budget Announcement, November 18, 2010

When I spoke to the College community at Fall Convocation, I pointed out that the 2010-11 academic year will be very challenging. We will need to work together to solve the financial problems we – along with every SUNY campus -- face. I made two promises to the community: First, we'll be as careful and open as possible in making decisions regarding the College budget and in keeping all of the College informed. Second, we will always keep the mission and long-term interests of the College in mind and measure our decisions against Geneseo's fundamental values.

I have tried to keep those promises, through regular memos and monthly budget forums, within the constraints of the SUNY budget process and our obligations under various state-wide collective bargaining agreements. Today, I am here to announce some exceedingly difficult actions we have decided to take in response to the state budget crisis and in order to address the major structural budget deficit we face.

Throughout the past year, we have consulted on a regular basis with college-wide representative bodies, consisting of students, faculty and administrators: the Strategic Planning Group, Budget Priorities Committee, College Senate leadership. We have consulted both on budget issues and in developing criteria for making the decisions we must make. The criteria regarding programs included: centrality to mission; inter-relatedness with other programs; program sustainability; quality; relative cost; and enrollment trends. The College administration has taken them all into account in the painful discussions we have held in recent weeks. Above all, we have tried to be mindful of the College's mission and its long-term future.

As I mentioned at the October budget forum, and again in my follow-up memo, the College's structural deficit currently stands at \$7.2 million. To close that deficit, we have turned first to retirements and vacancies. We have made what we believe is maximum use of these measures. We will eliminate 45 non-instructional lines all across the College, in every area of the College's operations. And in addition, we plan to eliminate 9 full-time faculty lines vacated through retirement. We have looked at all other options throughout the college to close the budget gap and have identified significant additional savings. But now, sadly, it is clear that further actions will be required.

Over the past three years, as you know, we have balanced the College budget essentially through temporary expedients: freezing lines, holding lines vacant, cutting departmental budgets by 10-15%, and using several million dollars in College reserves for the past three years (and more this year) to maintain programs and cover expenses. These measures are simply not sustainable over time. The fact of the matter is that the College cannot support the current number of programs we offer on the budget we have or will have in the near future. We must bring down the level of the base budget in order to maintain the quality of our college, in order to maintain our credibility with our students and, in essence, to ensure our future as a public liberal arts college.

In order to address the crisis, we have reluctantly decided to deactivate three academic programs: Communicative Disorders & Sciences, Computer Science, and Studio Art. What this means is that the programs will remain in operation for three more years. They are not discontinued; they are de-activated. However, effective immediately, no further students will be

accepted in the programs. All currently enrolled students will be able to complete degree requirements and graduate from Geneseo. We are planning over a three-year period to minimize the impact of these actions, not only on students but also on faculty and staff in the involved departments. We will be as creative as we can in maintaining lines and maintaining program continuity.

Within the past hour, the Provost and I met with faculty and staff in each of these programs. At that time, we stressed that these are actions taken with painful regret and, certainly in my case and hers, great sorrow. In fact, every fiber in my being rebels against taking these actions. All these are programs that we value, and in some cases, they are distinguished programs with a long history on our campus. We are simply unable to maintain all the programs we offer without endangering the quality of Geneseo and the Geneseo education and our ability to carry out the fundamental mission of the College going forward. The unavoidable fact is that budgetary actions by the state of New York have real consequences. Our state – the legislators and the governor – have cut the SUNY budget by \$680 million in the past three years, and it is reasonably clear that the prognosis for next year's budget is even worse. According to the State Comptroller, even after all the cuts that were made, there is a further \$1 billion deficit in *this* year's budget. Today, sadly, we are experiencing the very real and painful impact of those actions. Ultimately, however, I believe these actions will enable the College to emerge stronger from the current crisis and to continue our work as an outstanding public liberal arts college.

Geneseo has been entrusted to our stewardship by those who came before us; and at critical points in the College's history our predecessors had to take decisive actions to secure its

future. We are obligated to do the same now, no matter how difficult it is—especially given the depth and duration of New York’s budget crisis. This is the most wrenching decision I have taken in my fifteen years as president; but, having considered all possible options, it is clear that these actions are absolutely necessary for Geneseo’s future.

Thank you all for being here. I realize this is a lot to take in. As I pointed out, the affected departments have only recently been informed. We all need time to process this information, work together as a community, and seek to move beyond the current crisis. Thank you for your continuing support for Geneseo.