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PENLEY

A POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP



UGA and the State It Proudly Calls Home

JERE W. MOREHEAD

As president of the University of Georgia, I am often asked to describe the institution's vision for the future. What are its strategic priorities and goals? How is the university seeking to evolve in the long term? What are the best opportunities for growth and development?

These are some of my favorite questions to answer because they invite commentary on the powerful partnership between the two entities I have devoted my life to serving: the state of Georgia and its flagship university. I have lived in Georgia for more than 45 years and served UGA, in a variety of roles, for more than 30. Georgia is my home. The University of Georgia is my passion. I care deeply about the future of both, and their futures—now more than ever—are intertwined.

But to understand UGA's vision for the future, it may be helpful first to look back at its rich past. The University of Georgia was chartered by the state in 1785. It is the birthplace of public higher education in America, and it is humbling to consider that our nation's tradition of world-class public higher education was launched right here in Georgia.

The founding document of the university made plain the purpose of its establishment: "to form the youth, the rising hope of our Land." That is to say, in the language of today, the institution was designed "to educate the



next generation of leaders for this state." Indeed, educating Georgians is UGA's first principle, and even as it has transformed over time from a small liberal arts college to a major research university with global reach, this noble endeavor has remained at the heart of the organization's mission. I believe the founders of the university would be pleased to know that more than 85 percent of UGA's undergraduate population hails from Georgia and that over 70 percent of our graduates who enter the workforce land jobs in this state.



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

There is another significant milestone in the university's history that bears mention—the founding in the late 19th century of the institution's College of Agriculture during the land-grant movement, a federal initiative to align higher education more closely with the public good. This event marked the beginning of what would eventually become a special connection between the university and the state's vital agriculture industry, a connection that today helps to feed peo-

ries-long commitment to the citizens of Georgia that UGA faculty, staff, students, and alumni—a community of more than 350,000 across the globe—have embraced a bold vision for the future. That vision, articulated in the simplest terms, is to expand the positive impact of the University of Georgia on the world, starting at home—with the individuals, families, communities, and businesses that make Georgia the extraordinary state that it is.

aim of creating more than 400 endowed, need-based scholarships to support students from low-income families. In the short time since the program began, alumni and friends have established more than 220 Georgia Commitment Scholarships. Because they are endowed, these scholarships will provide grants every year—in perpetuity—to academically talented students with unmet financial need. The lives and futures of countless Georgians will be changed forever.

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—PRESIDENT JERE W. MOREHEAD

ple across Georgia and around the world. I am reminded of the great strength and impact of this partnership each September during my annual farm tour across the state.

The land-grant movement also introduced a new concept into the mission of the university: state-wide service. One of the earliest champions of the service mission was the 11th president of the university, Walter B. Hill. Speaking to an audience of Georgians in 1905, President Hill stated that “the university of the 20th century will be differentiated from its predecessors in this: It will connect its activities more closely with the business and life of the people.” Hill was right, and UGA evolved as he predicted. Today, through a vast network of programs and services—from Georgia 4-H to the Small Business Development Center—the university serves every single county in Georgia. I am proud of that fact. It is inspiring. But we can—and we must—do more in the years and decades ahead.

It is against this backdrop of centu-

ries-long commitment to the citizens of Georgia that UGA faculty, staff, students, and alumni—a community of more than 350,000 across the globe—have embraced a bold vision for the future. That vision, articulated in the simplest terms, is to expand the positive impact of the University of Georgia on the world, starting at home—with the individuals, families, communities, and businesses that make Georgia the extraordinary state that it is.

How does the university achieve this vision? The answer lies in three strategic priorities: 1) increasing scholarship support for students, 2) enhancing the learning environment at UGA, and 3) helping to tackle the biggest challenges facing society.

First, it is imperative that academically qualified students from Georgia, regardless of their financial background, have access to a UGA education. Georgia's generous HOPE Scholarship Program and federal and private grants provide critical financial support to students, but for many, a gap still remains to cover the full cost of attendance. This gap can be particularly challenging for students from low-income families, deterring some from even applying to UGA and driving others to institutions out-of-state where more competitive need-based financial aid packages are available.

The university launched the Georgia Commitment Scholarship Program in January 2017 to tackle this issue, with the

Second, the University of Georgia must continue to enhance its superior learning environment to ensure students are prepared for the careers, challenges, and leadership opportunities that await them as alumni. Every UGA graduate—regardless of career aspiration—must be able to innovate, to communicate effectively across different platforms, to think critically, to analyze and interpret various forms of data, and to see difficult problems from multiple perspectives. In today's economy, these competencies are not optional for success; they are required. Over the past five years, the university has introduced several major initiatives to strengthen undergraduate education in these vital areas.

The best example, perhaps, is UGA's nationally recognized experiential learning initiative. Experiential learning, or “learning by doing,” teaches students to apply their coursework to issues beyond the classroom walls. Through internships, faculty-mentored research, community service projects, and other experiential learning activities, complex subjects ranging from international trade policy to urban infrastructure come to life as students hone their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

UGA is now the largest public university in America to require each of its undergraduate students to complete an experiential learning activity. With pioneering initiatives such as this one, it is no wonder that UGA consistently ranks as one of the very best public universities in the nation (landing at number 16 on *U.S. News and World Report's* most recent list).

ECONOMIC VITALITY



\$5.7 Billion

In 2017, the university's economic impact on the state was estimated at \$5.7 billion.

Research conducted at UGA has resulted in
675+ PRODUCTS NOW
IN THE MARKETPLACE

160 COMPANIES HAVE
BEEN STARTED
based on UGA research

89
PERCENT

*of undergraduate students
 are from the state of*

GEORGIA

72
PERCENT

*of graduates entering
 the workforce land
 jobs in the state of*

GEORGIA

Finally, as an institution firmly rooted in the land- and sea-grant traditions, the University of Georgia must continue to elevate its role in solving the grand challenges of our time. While the best universities of the 20th century may have been distinguished by their new commitment to public service and outreach, as President Hill predicted in 1905, I believe the best universities of this century will be defined by an even higher standard. They will be the universities that respond more quickly to the emerging needs of society, that find solutions more efficiently to the toughest problems of the day, and that devote even more time and energy to the people and the communities they were created to serve. Lest there be any doubt: UGA aspires to be known, when the history books of the future are written, as one of the greatest public universities of the 21st century.

The CyberArch program was born out of this commitment. Designed to address the growing threat of cybercrime to small businesses in Georgia, this new initiative will help business owners and community leaders across the state protect against the devastating economic effects of cyberattacks. Hart County and Griffin/Spalding County are now serving as pilot sites. CyberArch is the newest addition to the university's expansive economic

development enterprise, which touches every county in Georgia—from its rural areas to its urban centers and all points in between—and produces an estimated annual economic impact of \$5.7 billion on the state.

As impressive as that figure may be, in the eyes of the university, it is not enough. There is capacity—and determination—to do more. That is why UGA is exploring a long-term strategic vision for an innovation district on campus to foster entrepreneurship and collaboration with industry and to accelerate technology-based economic development throughout the state. This effort has the potential to align even further the university's booming research arm, which has sent more than 675 products to market, with Georgia's broader innovation ecosystem. I look forward to seeing the plans take shape in the future.

I will close in the same way I began, with a question: What is the University of Georgia's vision for its future? The answer is straightforward: to grow its impact to a scale never before imagined. Increasing scholarship support, enhancing student learning, and solving big challenges are the keys to success. The state of Georgia is the launching pad. Serving its people is the inspiration. The commitment to this vision is unyielding.