Welcome to all of you. It’s great to see you here at the start of the 2003-2004 Academic Year. This is going to be a great year for West Georgia!

All those of you who are here for the first time, please rise and be recognized….

We regard it our duty to make you feel welcome to UWG.

Before I talk with you about the year that is just starting, let me update you about the State of the University for the year that has just ended.

1. Please read the State of the University Letter on Web – it’s a link off the Home Page. It speaks of your many great accomplishments, and those of our students.

2. I will touch on just some of the highlights:

Our students continue to demonstrate significant accomplishments at the national level:

- For the fourth time in six years, UWG has topped the nation in terms of presentations accepted at the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC).
  - NCHC has place for only approximately 100 papers/posters (this year, they accepted 97). Their acceptance rate is approximately 10% (number of papers accepted divided by number of papers submitted). This year, UWG had a 100% acceptance rate.
  - Fourteen of the 97 accepted papers are from UWG. So, 14.4% of the nation's best undergraduate research projects at NCHC come from one University -- UWG!
  - Two major Research Universities are tied for second place with five papers each; added together, they do not equal the performance of UWG.
  - Presenters included 15-year old Cathy Tran making a presentation, and 18-year old Brian Bockelman co-authoring one in Social Sciences/Marketing and authoring a separate Math one on his own.

- For the third time in six years, a West Georgia student has been awarded the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship. Brian Bockelman, a math major, received the Goldwater Scholarship which is one of the premier undergraduate awards in the United States for students majoring in the sciences, mathematics or engineering. Brian was also named one of the top 10 research presenters at the joint meeting of the American Mathematics Society & the Mathematics Association of America.

- A team of West Georgia undergraduate students received the award for the Best Student Research Paper at the annual meeting of the National Social Science Association. Rhett Bridger, chemistry major from Albany, Amanda Bradley, psychology major from Carrollton, and again, Brian Bockelman presented a
semester-long marketing research study. In earning this award, UWG’s undergraduate research team beat every other undergraduate and every graduate research submission in the United States, including those from major research universities.

National and State-level recognition for our Faculty included the following:

- Dr. Terrie Kielborn in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction was awarded the 2002 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching for the state of Georgia.
- The Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology was recognized as a pioneer and national leader in school counseling reform by the Education Trust, a nonprofit educational organization that promotes high academic achievement among students at all grade levels.
- Dr. Cecilia Lee of the Foreign Languages and Literature Department was named Teacher of the Year by the Georgia Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.
- Our Department of Modern Languages and Literatures was recognized as the most internationalized department in the University System of Georgia.

3. Budget Challenges:

Last year, fiscally conservative budgeting and revenue from our increased enrollment enabled us to weather the impact of the cuts. After a 10% budget cut, we have been told to prepare for an additional 2.5% this year, and 5% next year. We hope that these will not be necessary. Be assured that my senior colleagues and I continue to present a strong case to the Chancellor and our Legislators, and be assured that the Chancellor makes an excellent case to the Governor and the Legislature.

These budget issues pose serious challenges, but we will not allow them to detract from our mission and our vision of Educational Excellence in a Personal Environment. We will continue to move forward and do the great things you do.

4. Growth of UWG:

We continue to grow in stature and in numbers. Since the local newspaper reported that we are likely to reach the 10,000 student mark this Fall, while they also reported accurately that I have resisted from making any predictions, I will say that I expect this year to be a watershed event in the history of the University. While we all recognize that increased enrollment places considerable strains on all of us, I still believe it to be good because of at least three reasons:

a. We are helping educate the region – a region that has one of the lowest educational attainment levels in the State, and of course, Georgia being one of the low attainment states in the nation, we cannot be in the business of turning away qualified students. Our region of the State has a long way
to go, and it is our duty to help educate Georgia. The Chancellor has made it clear that limitations on enrollment are not in the best interests of the state and the USG, and has stated that that decision rests with him and the Board. He is right.

b. Increased enrollment is an indication of students and parents being attracted to this great place. It is the equivalent of investor confidence, and a just tribute to your excellent work.

c. Increased enrollment brings in additional revenue, both tuition revenue in the immediate term, and state allocations through formula allocations two years from now. This increased revenue is what we need to reduce the negative impact of the budget cuts.

5. Facilities Master Planning:

UWG is conducting an ongoing, extensive assessment of its current and future facility needs. This "Facilities Master Planning" process is required by the University System of Georgia (USG) for all State institutions. Our University was selected to be one of the first institutions to conduct this cyclical, five-year review because of UWG's growth potential, recognized academic programs, and national successes in faculty-directed research for undergraduate and graduate students. The USG has engaged Sasaki, a national consulting firm for their (System-wide) work, and we have engaged the same firm, essentially because of their national experience and credibility. The consultants have been on campus, have examined all our data, and have engaged in detailed conversations with many constituencies. The steering committee includes representation from faculty, students, staff, and the broader community.

The USG and Sasaki are looking at significant growth plans for UWG, as the population extends in our direction and as research universities place caps on their enrollment. The objective is to prepare for the campus growth to take us to 12,700 and 15,700 in the unspecified future. There was an open meeting held for faculty, students, staff, and the broader community in July. Another one expected shortly. I encourage your participation.

6. American Democracy Project:

We are truly excited about UWG's participation in the American Democracy Project: Civic Engagement, Higher Education, and the 21st Century. We were extended an invitation to participate this past summer, and were announced as one of the charter members in the New York Times just a few weeks ago. While Dr. Hynes will propose some activities during the coming year, and ask for your participation, I want to give my enthusiastic endorsement. We have all wistfully called for the engagement of our students in their academics, their university and in their world. But as the program is described by AASCU and its partners at the New York Times
and Carnegie Foundation, "The American Democracy Project rests on a core belief that civic engagement is critical for the preservation and vitality of American Democracy."

7. Movie on Cheerleading story:

We hope that, subject to the attraction of funding, there will be a movie filmed on campus this Fall, to tell the story of our cheerleading team going from tragedy five years ago to the winning of two back-to-back national championships in 2001 and 2002. It is not certain whether Tom Cruise or Rodney Dangerfield will play the President!

8. Campus mascot / identity:

We expect to have campus-wide discussion on a campus mascot / identity. There may be NCAA and marketing reasons to re-evaluate the long-term viability of the Braves. Submissions will be invited from all concerned, and a student-staff-faculty committee will examine and shortlist entries. Discussion and debate will be invited on short-listed items. I encourage all to participate in the discussions.

CLOSING REMARKS:

You are invited, courtesy of Aramark and Mr. Bill Gauthier, VP for Business & Finance, for a lunch on the house at Z-6: 11 a.m. -2 p.m.

Please remember to vote on the amendments as you leave.

I am first a faculty member. My business card and letters say “Professor and President” in that order. I teach every year, I am engaged in scholarship, and I participate in faculty-directed student research. I say all this only to make the point that I am very proud to be part of the Faculty at the University of West Georgia, and be part of you.

Thank you for all you do.

HAVE A GREAT YEAR!