September 2015

Happy start of the fall term! I’d like to share with you some very exciting news. Our fall enrollment has reached a record 12,764 students. These numbers include a record freshman class that is roughly 100 students larger than last year’s, and totals 2,288. Please note that these numbers are unofficial and will not be final until the system’s official census in October – but “woo-hoo” and congrats to all of those students and parents who have made the great choice to “Go West!” One of the major contributing factors of our enrollment success was made possible by the need-based scholarship gap funding. We raised these much needed funds at last year’s Scholarship Gala and will have the opportunity again this month to help in this impactful effort.

I’m very proud to be part of UWG during this exciting time and I hope you are, too. As we begin a new academic year and continue preparations for our first-ever capital campaign, I’d like us all to begin thinking about ways in which we can share the story of the great work UWG does every day, particularly as it regard our commitment to need-based scholarships. As I mentioned above, this month features an excellent opportunity for us to support our students.

When we began planning last year’s presidential inauguration events, I immediately knew that I wanted a scholarship fundraising gala to be a key component – and that I’d like to see that event become an annual tradition. After all, need-based scholarships are critical to UWG’s ability to promote student success and student success is the main reason each of us comes to work every day. Last year, the gala raised $55,000 through the generosity and commitment of community business partners and individual ticketholders. We hope to exceed that amount with this year’s event.

As some of you may know, we are deep in preparations for this year’s event. As with last year, all proceeds will go to fund need-based scholarships. These include “gap funding” scholarships used to help students fill the gap between funding from other sources and total college costs, assistance dollars for first-generation students, and scholarships that enable high-achieving high school students to make UWG their school of choice.

Please know that the need is great. In Carroll County, nearly 19 percent of the population lives below the poverty level and only about 18 percent of individuals over 25 years of age hold bachelor’s degrees or higher. Statewide poverty statistics are similar and less than a third of Georgians hold bachelor’s degrees or higher. The correlation between income and higher education is no coincidence. Financial access is one of the greatest barriers to education that today’s students face.

Forty percent of our students are the first in their families to attend college. Many of our students work 40 or more hours per week – while attending classes. Nearly 50 percent of UWG students qualify for Pell Grants; 65 percent qualify for other Federal financial aid and subsidized loans.

In order to make this event successful – not only in terms of dollars raised for the evening, but in terms of creating awareness of student need – information about the gala must reach as many ears and eyes as possible. Please consider sharing this exciting event through your social media channels and within your personal and professional networks. Full information is located at westga.edu/gala and you can also share photos from last year’s event from our Flickr account, located at flickr.com/photos/128938273@N08/sets/72157656155031020.
Thank you for taking a moment to help spread the word about UWG’s commitment to student success and for participating in the creation of that success through your work each and every day.

Best,

Kyle