

August 23, 2007

Dear Colleagues,

Over the past year I have held many conversations with students, staff, faculty, Associate Deans, Department Heads, Georgia superintendents, and members of the community to crystallize three major initiatives to better meet our mission. Each of these themes grows out of our ongoing efforts to maintain excellence. Darlyne Bailey, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development at The University of Minnesota, describes these initiatives as “neighborhood themes.” A neighborhood “pulls together the talents and strengths of the college toward a commonly shared focus of action.” The three themes around which I hope that we can come together as a college community are these:

1. BUILDING OUR RESEARCH CAPACITY
2. FOCUSING ON ACTION IN OUR DIVERSITY EFFORTS
3. ENGAGING WITH SCHOOLS IN A NEW AND COMPREHENSIVE MANNER

Let me outline for you what we have done this past year and what we hope to do relative to each of these neighborhood themes.

#### *Building our Research Capacity*

The college increased its research activity from 9 to 19.2 million in less than ten years. In the past few years, we have created a strong pre and post-award support infrastructure, added 2200 square feet of dedicated research space primarily through the removal of the escalators in Aderhold, hired a renowned scholar to hold the Goizueta Endowed Chair in Latino Teacher Education, added capacity in our centers with new research faculty in each of the major college-wide research centers, and created a new Education Policy and Evaluation Center. We have provided seed funding for faculty grant development efforts.

This coming year a number of faculty will come together to talk about issues related to the doctoral preparation of education researchers in the college. These conversations will build in part on what has been learned through the involvement of the Department of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology in the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate. In addition, Vice-President for Research David Lee and Provost Arnett Mace have launched a university-wide task force to make recommendations to help the campus build its research capacity. These college and campus efforts will also be the focus of our Fall College of Education faculty meeting to be held September 28, 2007. Please join us at the Fall faculty meeting to learn how you can become part of this neighborhood.

#### *Focusing on Action for Diversity*

Over the past several years, the college has become a major voice in the university and beyond for our work in celebrating diversity. We have more faculty of color than any other college on campus and than most of our peer and aspirant colleges of education. In

the last few years, we have also hired a growing number of international faculty so that we now have faculty from most continents including faculty from Korea, Lebanon, Russia, France, India, Cuba, and Kenya. We have worked to continue to admit a diverse corps of students and to attend to how we and the rest of the campus can make this a welcome environment for diverse students. We have sponsored a campus-wide conference on Black Issues in Higher Education. The Fall Fling for Diversity has become an annual event as well as monthly lunch-time seminars on various diversity topics. This past year, our college helped create a new international conference with broad campus participation to celebrate our global campus neighborhood. We continue to have study abroad programs in Kenya, Ireland, Peru, Russia, and Mexico.

Over the next year, we have launched a number of new Diversity Action Teams drawing on faculty from throughout the college to examine curriculum, professional renewal, recruitment and retention, partnerships and community action, and international programs to make recommendations on strategic actions that we can take to continue to evolve our efforts to celebrate diversity and help ensure that every student leaves our college well-prepared to work in a diverse educational or health context. We will be broadening the scope and membership of the Dean's Council on Diversity to embrace these various activities. Again, I hope that you will want to become part of this very special college neighborhood.

### *School Engagement Initiative*

The current issue of the college magazine well describes our ongoing efforts to partner with Clarke County School District [CCSD] and to explore what it means to be an effective partner. Through our efforts with two elementary schools in CCSD, we have seen achievement gains and broad-based school and community support. Going forward, we hope to significantly increase our involvement with our local communities. Because the college has a major role in both the Gwinnett and the new Griffin campuses, we are now located in more communities and we will seek ways to partner with school districts in these counties. As we reach out to serve our many communities, we have also explored a number of models of best practice to ensure that our work will be effective. From these efforts and conversations with community and school district personnel, we have begun to build the scaffolding of a new school engagement initiative that will build on the former CCSD partnership.

Cornerstones of our approach will be a mutually beneficial partnership that is funded through credit-bearing programs focused on leading edge concerns in teacher preparation located in a diverse school context. We will offer a curriculum of programs from service learning courses for undecided and intended majors, to pre-service programs taught within the school district to on-line and in-district professional development courses to address critical current issues.

This Spring we held a meeting of interested faculty and I was very pleased with the response. In fact, I was sufficiently encouraged by the response to provide funding for a faculty director to help staff this effort and funds for faculty who become part of our

planning team. We will be holding another session early this Fall to invite you to become part of this neighborhood.

As you can see, it has been a very productive year—and we have used this year to create the groundwork for some very exciting initiatives. Our faculty continue to excel, achieving top rank in their discipline in U. S. News and World Report's annual ranking of graduate schools, continuing to be a national leader in education publishing, and doing this while serving a population that is 49% undergraduate- unlike almost of our peer and aspirant institutions. We continue to work with NCATE as it makes improvements in the quality of its Research I BOE teams. In October, we have a special focused review pertaining to Standard 2: Unit Assessment and in its review processes for complex, comprehensive institutions. I am optimistic that we will have a successful visitation with your help and support.

We are one of the campus leaders in efficiency--- not only because of our innovative business processes, but particularly in cost per credit hour. These new neighborhoods ask us to engage above and beyond these exemplary efforts to make us an even stronger college. One of the great joys of my career here at Georgia has been the willingness and leadership of this faculty and staff to go that extra mile to ensure that we will continue to be among the leading colleges of education in the country.

Over the course of the next year we will also be making a number of plans related to the fact that on June 13th, 2008 we will celebrate one hundred years of serving the state of Georgia in producing education and health professionals and scholars. This too will be a momentous occasion for which we invite your participation.

I want to welcome our twenty-one new faculty to the college – you have joined an extraordinary group of faculty-- and to welcome all faculty and staff to a new academic year. I look forward to meeting you in the neighborhood of your choice over the coming year.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Louis A. Castenell, Jr.", written in dark ink.

Louis A. Castenell, Jr.  
Dean