USG Chancellor Addresses Joint Appropriations Committee

GOV’T AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

University System of Georgia (USG) Chancellor Hank Huckaby addressed the Joint Appropriations Committee recently regarding the state of fiscal affairs at the University System. While it’s clear the economy is on an upward trend, state leaders are still cautious about spending. With this mind-set, Huckaby told the committee that the System has endured $1 billion in cuts, and he has advised presidents to continue to use their funding as efficiently and effectively as possible because a return to previous funding levels is unlikely.

Huckaby also noted that affordability for college is a grave concern for the System, and to address these concerns, Chairman of the Board of Regents and Tech alumnus Ben Tarbutton III (MGT ‘94) has created a Committee on Affordability. The Regents also plan to closely assess fee increases at institutions around the state. “Campuses will have to make a very strong case to have one approved,” said Huckaby. The ultimate goal, as set out by Gov. Nathan Deal, is a more educated Georgia to meet the demands of a changing workforce. The Chancellor assured the committee that the System and the Regents are working to meet that goal in the face of smaller budgets.

Vice Chancellor of Fiscal Affairs John Brown was on hand to cover specific items in the Governor’s budget recommendations, which were released the first week of the legislative session. While the proposed budget consists of $38.2 million in reductions between the FY2012 Amended and FY2013 budgets, the Governor’s recommendations included full funding of the formula for FY13. Formula funds are used for day-to-day operations. The total formula funding for the FY13 budget is $113.9 million, including $72.6 million for enrollment growth.

The Governor’s capital budget recommendations for the System total $232.6 million, including funds for equipment, construction, and $45 million for Major Repair and Renovation (MRR). Construction funding for the Engineered Biosystems Building on Georgia Tech’s campus is included in these proposals. A primary concern for the System is the need for MRR funds. “MRR meets the major repair and renovation needs in instructional buildings and associated infrastructure. These type of repairs maintain the safety and integrity of critical facilities systems and components,” said Brown.

The budget is now in the House Appropriations Committee where it will be analyzed before heading to the full House for consideration.

GT Selected for Nat’l University Transportation Center

Dr. G. P. “Bud” Peterson joined Gov. Nathan Deal, U.S. Rep. John Lewis, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed and University System of Georgia Chancellor Hank Huckaby to announce that Georgia Tech has been designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation as one of 10 National Tier One university transportation centers (UTC). The Georgia Tech UTC will focus on important transportation issues throughout the region and nationwide such as highway safety and how the transportation network impacts economic competitiveness.
Get to Know Your State Capitol: Legislative Counsel

This new section will feature the inner-workings of the State Capitol. Staff offices that aid Georgia Tech and our state leaders in conducting daily business will be highlighted as well as interviews with legislators regarding their roles in shaping our state.

The Office of Legislative Counsel was created as part of the Legislative Branch in 1959 after an attempt to create a Bill Drafting Unit in the Attorney General’s Office failed. Legislative Counsel Wayne R. Allen serves as director of the office and explains that “the Office of Legislative Counsel serves as the in-house law firm for the General Assembly. We have an attorney-client relationship with the General Assembly and provide services to all members of the House and Senate in their official capacities on a strictly confidential, nonpartisan, and non-advocacy basis.

Our primary responsibilities include drafting legislation, counseling legislators and legislative committees, preparing legal opinions on statutory interpretation and constitutionality, legal research, and legal editorial work. Although we provide those services year-round, the legislative sessions are, of course, our busiest time of the year.”

The office has grown over the years. “For the 2011 regular session, for example, our office of 11 attorneys and 17 support staff prepared more than 6,200 bills, amendments, and resolutions for the members,” says Allen. During the 1986 session, the staff in the Office of Legislative Counsel drafted 4,574 bills, resolutions and amendments. The Legislative Counsel is elected by the Legislative Services Committee, which is composed of 16 members, including legislators. The Speaker of the House serves as chairman and the Secretary of Senate serves as secretary.

Bill that would Increase Bond Funding for College Facilities Moves Forward

Senate Bill 302, introduced by Sen. Cecil Staton (R-Macon) would raise the amount of bonds the Georgia Higher Education Facilities Authority can issue from $300 million to $500 million. These funds are used for construction of non-academic buildings and facilities on college campuses. Chancellor Huckaby answered questions related to the bill during the Senate Appropriations Committee meeting, where the bill passed.

- Please remember to mail or fax a handwritten note to your state representative and ask them to support the EBB funding in the House version of the budget.

- Thank you to the Steering Committee for leading the charge in thanking the Governor for including our priorities in his budget proposals.

Find your legislators and their district mailing addresses by visiting www.gov.gatech.edu and selecting “Find Your Legislator” from the “Important Links” on the right. We would appreciate notification of any communication with our state leaders so we can be aware of all advocacy efforts on behalf of Georgia Tech.