COMMENTS BY TIM BURGESS AT THE
F&A RECOGNITION CEREMONY
MAY 16, 2013

Good morning. Welcome to the Eighth Annual Finance and Administration Recognition Ceremony. As I’m sure you all know, this occasion marks the last time that I will speak to you collectively as the leader of this great division. After seven years at the helm of Finance and Administration and nearly 35 years in public service to the State of Georgia, I have decided to retire at the end of the fiscal year on June 30.

While change can always be a bit unnerving, I want to assure you that my departure from Finance and Administration is simply part of a natural evolution. Presidents and Chief Financial Officers have come and gone over the 228-year history of this institution, and they will continue to do so.

But one essential component remains permanent: this place itself. The University of Georgia is stronger today than it ever has been, and it is poised to achieve new levels of excellence. I am proud of the collective effort that we all have played in helping the institution to reach this point.

It hasn’t always been easy. I’m not going to stand here and remind you today of the challenges we’ve faced; most of them have been budget-related, and we’re all keenly aware of them. But I do want to accentuate the positives of this experience.

Throughout all the challenges, we have persevered. We have remained focused on our core values of Stewardship and Service, and we have found better ways to deliver the fundamental support that the University requires from us to achieve its academic mission. Rather than cut back on our services, we have developed innovative ways to deliver them more efficiently, cost effectively, and with the customer foremost in mind. We have received accolades for best practices in departments across the division over these past seven years, and the credit for those achievements belongs to each of you.

Before you become too concerned over the changing of the guard among the senior administration, you need to realize that the strength of this University extends far beyond the influence of any one person or any handful of persons. The collective commitment of each and every one of you in this room is what sustains the excellence of the University of Georgia.

The fact is, each of us has followed someone who came before us, performed our responsibilities before we took them over, and paved the way for us to be successful. Therefore, each of us has the responsibility to do our job and structure our workplace so that it is ready when we move on and someone else takes our place.

In just a few minutes, we’ll begin recognizing the loyalty and dedication of men and women who have devoted practically their entire professional careers to UGA. The friends and colleagues you honor today are commemorating 25, 30, 35, 40 and even more than 45 years of service! Considered together, their service to UGA totals 1,245 years. My personal years represent merely a drop in the bucket compared to the commitment that these individuals represent.
It is upon these individuals’ shoulders that we all stand. They are among those who have paved the way for all of us and who have played a major role in the reputation of excellence that our Division enjoys—and therefore by inference we all enjoy. This legacy of commitment and dedication, generation after generation, is a hallmark of what makes Finance and Administration and this University such a successful and significant place to invest your work and efforts.

Our division is made up of literally hundreds of what I think of as servant leaders. I have always tried to conduct my career following this creed, and today I stand here filled with pride as I watch so many of my colleagues—servant leaders—honored and recognized for their commitment and sacrifice.

And that’s what I want us to celebrate.

When July 1 rolls around, some people will move into new offices and the organizational chart will be altered. But the University will still rely upon you and our division to continue to quietly and effectively do all of those tasks that are vital to the day to day operations of the University. Without you and your efforts, the organizational chart means very little.

In just a few more weeks, I will step down from this post and begin a new chapter in my life. My wife, Carla, and I have a nine-year-old son, who seems to be growing up in front of us much too quickly. Life is short, and the next few years of his become more precious to us each passing day. I don’t know exactly what comes next, but I have lived long enough to know that some of the most interesting and compelling opportunities in life present themselves at those moments when you are least looking for them.

Life is a journey, and the occasional change in course offers the opportunity for renewal and revitalization. That’s true for all of us, even this very stable institution that we all know and love.

As I leave, I take with me a treasure trove of wonderful experiences to which I owe all of you a debt of gratitude. You have made a permanent impression on my career and life, and I thank you for it. Together, we have much of which we can be proud.