EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD: 2014 is a renaissance year for GSU

JANUARY 12, 2014 12:00 AM • BY ELAINE MAIMON

2014 is finally here. At Governors State University, the New Year has special significance. We call it Renaissance 2014.

"Renaissance" means "rebirth" and originally refers to a European cultural movement, spanning the 14th to 17th centuries. Starting in Italy and then spreading across Europe, the Renaissance revived the big ideas of ancient Greece and Rome and transformed the arts, sciences and humanities, establishing a new era of achievement.

Just so, GSU in 2014 is reviving big ideas and bringing fresh life to the university in ways appropriate to the 21st century.

Visit our redesigned website: www.govst.edu. Our homepage announces: "Big Ideas Live Here. When you’re on a campus that surrounds you with Big Ideas, one thing is clear — we’re always moving forward. It’s been like that since 1969 when GSU opened its doors to provide exceptional and accessible education.

Today Big Ideas are transforming GSU. Our first freshman class. Our first on-campus residence. Our newly renovated Science Wing."

Welcome to Renaissance 2014.

GSU has always been ahead of its time. Today, national leaders are talking about classes without walls. Decades ago, GSU experimented with this idea before the technology to make it happen was invented. In 2014, we break down walls by creating virtual classes on the Internet — for example, GSU’s MBA in supply chain management.

Another big idea, competency-based education, pioneered at GSU in the 1970s, is taking 21st century form nationally with the support of the Lumina Foundation.

Contemporary technology allows for the compilation of e-portfolios to demonstrate students' capacities in writing, critical thinking and civic engagement. The Degree Qualifications Profile, published in a beta version by Lumina in 2011, outlines what
students should know and be able to do at each degree level, associate, bachelor’s and master’s. The American Association of Colleges and Universities has recently announced a Gates-funded planning project, to follow up on Lumina’s work.

Last month, I was honored by the invitation to serve on the national working group for this planning project, GEMs (General Education Maps and Markers). Participation will offer opportunities to continue GSU’s tradition of innovation in Renaissance mode.

The higher education community has finally caught up with GSU in its commitment to educating working adults. From the beginning, GSU has provided new horizons for what were then called “non-traditional” students. In 2014, we are a true 24/7 campus.

Our classrooms — and parking lots — are filled to capacity in the late afternoons and evenings. During daytime hours, we provide full-time students with state-of-the-art undergraduate education, while also serving a neglected adult population — parents of school-age children — with classes that fit their schedules.

The Dual Degree Program, our nationally recognized completion program for community college transfer students, brings university/community college partnerships into the 21st century.

And in August, we will admit our first freshman class to an innovative program, featuring learning communities, block scheduling and “high-impact” practices.

Renaissance 2014. Come share the excitement at GSU.

As we said on our holiday card, “May your New Year be filled with Big Ideas and Bold Actions.”