

State of the University - Fall 2007

ALBANY — Everette Freeman's first State of the University address Monday focused on everything from technology to Ray Charles to visibility as he expanded upon the present and future of Albany State University.

Freeman, who is in his second year as the school's chief, said that ASU took the University System of Georgia's invitation to boost technology through the latest banner hosting and infrastructure upgrades while working toward becoming a wireless campus.

As reliance on computers increases, Freeman said the university is pursuing creating individual e-portfolios for students. Those electronic portfolios would do more than list students' academic history.

It could be, he said, "a capstone where the students will say, 'This is what I did and this is what I got.'"

The e-portfolios, proposed as part of the university's Quality Enhancement Plan, could be used as a reference point for graduate schools and potential employers, he said.

The QEP is part of the process toward reaccreditation, which ASU is undergoing with the Southern Accreditation of Colleges and Schools. A response should be ready in the spring.

Updating the audience on the proposed \$27 million Ray Charles fine arts center, Freeman was proud to say that the University System of Georgia's Board of Regents in August approved \$1.5 million, to be awarded in fiscal year 2009 for the building design.

On Wednesday, Freeman will give a presentation to state Sen. John Wiles, chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education, about the need for capital funding.

Monday evening's address was part State of the University and part town hall-like meeting. While the former allowed the president to update the audience on all things Albany State, the latter opened the door for students, faculty and staff to question Freeman.

Students, and at least one retired faculty/staff member, criticized Freeman for a perceived lack of on-campus accessibility and visibility.

Nathan Johnson, the junior class president, said, "He does stay busy. ... I know how things go on without being noticed."

Although he acknowledged that Freeman is often out in communities touting the accolades of the school, Johnson — one of the few students present at the 5:30 p.m. address — said it's equally important for students to feel his presence, "to know that the person over your institution cares."

Freeman said that making himself more available — he noted he already has an open- door policy — will be a priority.

“I’m going to have to find a way to connect,” Freeman said. “I’m going to get with my cabinet and see what we can do by way of creating hot spots for folks just to talk to us.

“I’m not Portia Shields,” he said, “but I’m available to you.”

Freeman did earn praise from Albany Mayor Willie Adams, who has seen ASU through four presidents.

“There’s always going to be friction,” Adams said. If you don’t have friction of forces, “you have no energy.”

“The measurement of a leader is not what you see now; it’s what you see when you leave,” he said. “I applaud you for the fine job that you do.”

Despite the critical tone of the town hall-like meeting, Freeman said it was a good conversation and not one during which he felt attacked.

“College is a conversation,” Freeman said.

Courtesy of the Albany Herald