September 2, 2015

Dear Parents of SSU Students:

A senseless act of violence claimed the life of a Savannah State student, Mr. Christopher Starks, on Thursday evening, August 27, 2015. Our deepest, heartfelt condolences are extended to the family of Mr. Starks and to his university family and friends.

In the days since the tragic shooting, I have been spending a great deal of time talking with, and listening to our students. We have received numerous emails and calls from parents and family members of SSU students offering condolences and wanting assurances for the safety of their loved ones. I want you to know I understand and appreciate each of your concerns.

This is a period of mourning for all of us. I am extremely proud of the way our community has come together during these difficult days to support each other and to remember and honor Mr. Starks. Our leadership team, faculty, and staff have also been available to all of our students. I am proud of our students and how they have handled this serious incident. While some students are grieving and expressing their fears and concerns, university life is moving forward with exams, preparations for freshmen elections, athletic competitions and more.

I assure you additional steps are being taken to enhance campus safety. The following measures are in place:

- All persons entering the campus via any entrance will be required to produce government or university issued photo identification. This applies to pedestrians, drivers and all vehicle passengers.
- To assist with easy identification, students, faculty and staff are encouraged to have their university IDs visible.
- With assistance from local law enforcement agencies, additional public safety personnel will be present at the King-Frazier Student Center Dining Hall, Tiger Express Diner and Student Union Food Court.
- Beginning this week, only students, faculty and staff with proper university ID will be able to enter the Student Union and other dining facilities after 4 p.m.

With assistance from the SSU Police Department, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation is leading the investigation to apprehend the person or persons responsible for Mr. Starks’ death. However, we each play an important role in keeping our campus community safe. Please remind your son or daughter to report any suspicious activity to campus police, security or a responsible staff or faculty member immediately. Information can be shared by contacting SSU Campus Police, SSU Hotline, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and Savannah Crime Stoppers. Also, students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to request a safety escort at any time from public safety. We are still asking our students who witnessed the incident to continue to come forward with any information they can provide. The university has made counseling services available for students, and will continue to do so as long as is needed.
The Savannah State University students, staff, faculty and administration invite you to join with us as we stand united and resolute. We are a part of a great community that for 125 years has transformed lives. We will continue this proud legacy of educating smart, bold and proud young men and women for the roles that await them.

To follow our updates and find answers to frequently asked questions, please visit the Campus Incident Information page of the SSU website using the link: http://www.savannahstate.edu/incident/. Also, questions and concerns may be addressed to the Office of the President, 912-358-4000.

Thank you for your continuous support and prayers!

Sincerely,

Cheryl D. Dozier
President