

GSU Joins Sun Belt Conference

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One of the most dominant teams in Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) history is making the move to the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). Georgia

Southern University has announced it has accepted an invitation to join the Sun Belt Conference.

“This is a milestone day for Georgia Southern University, and we are very excited to be joining the Sun Belt conference,” Georgia Southern President Brooks Keel, Ph.D., told a standing room only crowd in the Williams Center during the official announcement. “This decision was made with the long-term interest of our University in mind. The Sun Belt will provide our student athletes with an outstanding opportunity to compete at a highest level, and we are excited to contribute to the conference's success both on and off the field. I am equally excited about the opportunity that it will provide Georgia Southern and the more than 75,000 alumni that make up the Eagle Nation.”

Sun Belt Conference Commissioner Karl Benson visited Georgia Southern Wednesday morning to welcome the Eagles as President Keel formally accepted the Sun Belt invitation. “We have built our reputation around a focus on the student, and this move will allow us to partner to provide our student athletes with the opportunity to compete on a national stage,” said Georgia Southern Athletics Director Tom Kleinlein. “Today, I invite the entire Eagle Nation to stand up and join us on this journey.”

Georgia Southern's football team has been part of the Southern Conference (SoCon) since 1993 and won ten conference titles during that time and six national championships since 1985. The Eagles' football schedule for this fall will not change; however, Georgia Southern won't be eligible for the FCS playoffs. The Eagles will begin playing Sun Belt games and will be a revenue sharing member of the conference in 2014 and eligible for the Sun Belt conference title, but will not be eligible to play in a bowl game. In 2015, Georgia Southern will become a full member of the conference and be bowl eligible. With the exception of men's soccer, all other Georgia Southern teams will begin Sun Belt play in 2014 and eligible for the conference championship. Since the Sun Belt does not field a men's soccer program, Georgia Southern is negotiating to find a conference home for the team.

The move to FBS comes after 65 percent of Georgia Southern University students voted to pay \$75 a semester to support the move to a new level of competition for Eagle Athletics. That fee will be collected starting in the fall. Ground will also be broken in a few weeks to add 6,300 additional seats to Allen E. Paulson Stadium and build a new Football Operations Center in the east end zone.