



**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**  
*Staff Council*

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*Making a great place to work even better!*

**Staff Council Report to University Council, April 25, 2018**

This is my final report to University Council as President of Staff Council. The last four years have been a whirlwind of learning, research, and doing. Now that I feel I have finally gotten the hang of it, term limits kick in.

Nearly five years ago, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, Jere Morehead's first day in office as the president of the University of Georgia, he invited me to discuss staff needs and concerns. I had three: A Staff Appreciation Day celebration, widening the scope of shared leave so a caregiver could be eligible, and radical change to the classification system such that staff would no longer have to find a new job in order to get a minor promotion.

To the first, he instantly replied, "That is something my office could be helpful with." Helpful, indeed. Working with Matt Winston and lots of people from the Office of Special Events, we held the first Staff Appreciation Day celebration that May, and have every May since, with the next coming up May 10<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 – 2:00 at the Intramural Fields.

We also immediately set about to enhance the Shared Leave Program eligibility, eventually adopting the same program used by USG, which does enable caregivers, like the mother of a two-year-old undergoing a heart transplant, to use shared leave donated by others so she could care for her child.

As to the third, well, that is a tall order. While high on the priorities list, various other issues (like FLSA) have pressed it aside, but we are now working on it in earnest, first with the Staff Salary Administration Guidelines Advisory Team. Much more work is required before this comes to fruition. However, creating a career path within a position should markedly reduce turnover and the costs of staff recruitment and retention.

Staff Council has had several other successes, too. We are proud of the recent Staff Resources Fair, our new Staff Networking Program, the Lot Full sign at the Tate Parking deck, and, in cooperation with SGA, getting some bus stops relocated to help decrease traffic congestion. We serve a very important function as another communications pathway to get important information to people where they work.

Toward this end, we enjoy having guests address the council and answer questions. We have scheduled meetings with the president and the provost where every question is answered with clarity and respect. We invite various vice presidents, associate vice presidents, and executive directors from time to time. These

relationships are invaluable to both a better understanding of the entire university, addressing issues and concerns, as well as providing a foundation for workable suggestions for improvements.

Of course, part of our work is on certain University Council committees, where the voice of staff can be a persuasive and needed input from another perspective. As a member of the Executive Committee, I have seen every motion to come before council (and a few that didn't) over the last four years.

Many motions are merely housekeeping, such as cancelling a program because it hasn't had a student this century. Some at first can seem a bit silly, like changing the name from basket weaving to weaving baskets, but when presented with evidence that all of our peers and aspirants now use the newer term, it becomes obvious that we must, too, lest we be perceived more as archaic than honoring tradition.

Then there are the surprises. I'm sure you have all heard the old maxim, "In academia, the fights are so fierce because the stakes are so small." A motion that may seem simple, straightforward, and of minimal scope, suddenly becomes extremely controversial due to an unexpected impact somewhere no one thought to examine. Those are the ones that make this process worthwhile; preventing mistakes from happening. Good governance requires the governors be cognizant of the governed. This university is so large, so diverse; it is nearly impossible to be aware of all of its aspects. This body's efforts are critical to ensure that all voices are heard and considered.

It has been my pleasure to serve both the Staff and University Councils, to have gotten to know many of you, to gain a far better understanding of how things work at this great university, and, as charged by university statute, "advising the President and by recommending to and consulting with the University Council in the establishment of rules and regulations deemed necessary or proper for the promotion of the general welfare of the University."

Thank you for the opportunity.

Michael Lewis,  
President, Staff Council