




May 18, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fiona Liken
University Council, Secretary

CC: David Shipley, University Council Executive Committee Chair
Barbara Biesecker, University Council Executive Committee Chair-Elect

FROM: Jere W. Morehead 
President

RE: Response to the Resolutions from the Executive Committee
Subcommittee on Baldwin Hall

The management of the University's physical space is an administrative function, and the University has diligently sought to address the challenges created by the Baldwin Hall discovery since 2015. I have elected to receive the resolutions presented by the Executive Committee Subcommittee on Baldwin Hall. These resolutions were approved by the University Council on April 21, 2021. The resolutions make the following requests of the administration:

- That the administration identify a point person in the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) prior to the retirement of Dr. David Lee to oversee the ongoing genetics analysis of the Baldwin Hall remains.
- That the administration retain an Independent Cultural Resource Manager to facilitate consultation and decision making with the African American descendant community regarding the genetic analysis; and that this consultation begin as soon as possible to help prepare the community for the completion of the analysis.
- That the administration investigate the feasibility (*vis-à-vis* the UGA internal document, state law, and the Historic Preservation Master Plan) of converting the part of the burial site currently covered by a parking lot and truck delivery area into a memorial space, and report back to the University Council within six months.
- That the administration engage the services of a Cultural Resource Manager to facilitate discussion and decision making with the African American descendant community and all appropriate communities and/or constituencies regarding what is to be done with this portion of the cemetery.

I will address these resolutions below:

The retiring Vice President for Research, Dr. David Lee, has already appointed a representative in the Office of Research, Dr. Shelley Hooks, Associate Vice President for Research, to serve as the University

of Georgia's sole authorized point of contact with the genetics researcher, Dr. Deborah Bolnick. Dr. Lee has recently confirmed with Dr. Bolnick the status of her ongoing analysis, which has been slowed by the move of her lab from the University of Texas at Austin to the University of Connecticut, and a shortage of supplies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the early stage of her research, it is premature to consider retaining a consultant to engage with members of the local African American/Black descendent community. We hope that Dr. Bolnick will be able to make more significant progress this year.

Ms. Gwynne Darden, Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning, and her team have carefully considered the options for transforming the parking lot behind the building into a memorial space, and there are several limitations. First, the Athens-Clarke County Fire Chief has informed the University that emergency fire truck access must be maintained behind the building, and maintaining that access significantly reduces options for a garden-like setting. Second, installing a traditional memorial garden has a high probability of causing ground disturbance in a sensitive area where there are likely more remains. Third, and related, a memorial garden would generate increased foot traffic in this resting place.

Given these limitations, the University has not been able to pursue a memorial garden behind Baldwin Hall. I would note that some of these same limitations led the University in 2018 to select the front of the building as the site for the Baldwin Hall Memorial, which was developed by a university-community task force to serve as a sacred place for remembrance and reflection.

In addition, the University has prohibited general parking behind Baldwin Hall since the remains were discovered. Going forward, however, I have instructed Ms. Darden to limit access to this area to emergency vehicles in further recognition of the solemn nature of this space. The ADA parking spots will be relocated to another parking lot near the building, and unauthorized vehicles will be prohibited from entering. We are now focused on relocating the ADA parking spots and prohibiting unauthorized vehicles from entering by use of a gate.

I appreciate the work of the Executive Committee Subcommittee on Baldwin Hall, specifically the recommendations outlined for productive collaboration and communication with faculty and members of the Athens community going forward. Several key administrators now have this as a focus of their ongoing work. We look forward to strengthening our relationships and lines of communication with the Athens-Clarke County community.