



Thank you, President Morehead.

Good afternoon, fellow members of the University Council.

As UGA's representative to the University System of Georgia Faculty Council, I want to update you on three major items we have been working on.

First, the formation of the Commission for Public Higher Education, or CPHE. The USG Faculty Council has been providing feedback on CPHE's draft accreditation standards. Drawing on conversations here at UGA and my own close reading of the drafts, I submitted comments that were included in a meeting on September 8 led by CPHE President Cameron Howell. That meeting brought together faculty and administrators from across multiple southern university systems.

The focus was on how principles such as academic freedom, viewpoint diversity, shared governance, institutional independence, and student success will be built into the standards. Key takeaways included:

1. On academic freedom and viewpoint diversity, we agreed on the importance of preserving faculty autonomy while remaining open to diverse perspectives.
2. On shared governance, we stressed the need for a clearer definition and stronger protections for genuine faculty participation, independent of external influence.
3. On student success and return on investment, we recommended flexibility in definitions that account for the wide range of student populations and programs, while maintaining affordability and transparency as priorities.
4. On accreditation reform, there is strong interest in streamlining processes compared to current agencies—standards must remain rigorous but also practical and efficient.

I should note that UGA remains accredited by SACSCOC through 2032, with no plans to change agencies.

Second, the posting of syllabi and CVs. All USG schools are now working to comply with the Regents' May 2025 decision requiring public posting of course syllabi and faculty CVs. Since UGA has done this for years, I fielded many questions from colleagues at other institutions—most of them echoing the ones we had when this policy was first implemented here.

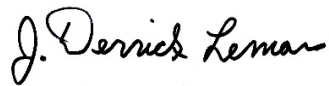
Third, changes to the USG Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment (NDAH) policy. In November 2024, the Regents expanded the policy to prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, or veteran status. As various USG schools—including UGA—align with this new wording,

some categories such as pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ethnicity were consolidated under the broader categories of sex and race.

In discussions with USG Faculty Council members, colleagues noted that while the unified wording ensures consistency across institutions, at some schools it created the perception that protections were being removed. Legally, all federal protections remain fully applicable and state law has not changed. The changes continue to be discussed within the Faculty Council as faculty raise questions. For now, we are monitoring the issue closely to ensure that all institutions are upholding federal and state laws related to non-discrimination and harassment. Importantly, no one reported any cases of individuals being denied protection.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your representative. I will continue to bring regular updates, and I encourage you to share any concerns with me so I can carry them forward in Faculty Council conversations.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Derrick Lemons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

J. Derrick Lemons

Professor and Department Head of Religion

UGA Faculty Representative to the USG Faculty Council