



## GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY STAFF COUNCIL

### Meeting Minutes

September 16, 2009

Sinclair Suite, Student Center

**Attending:** Katina Akins, Amber Amari, Collen Blanchard, Amanda Brown, David Caudill, Kevin Chappell, Sandra Garber, Melody Harris, Nigel Harris, Anjelica Lymon, John Medlock, Kevea Mickey, San Miller, Trelley Murray, Bill Prigge, Rene Presti, Mike Raderstorf, Andria Reddick, Preeti Sagar, Lisa Shepard, Anne Simmons, Keneé Stephens, Jowanna Tillman, Tawanna Tookes, Susan Vogtner, Anita Webb, Rhonda Williams, Shelly-Ann Williams, Lillian Winfrey

**Excused:** Randall Albers, Menetha Alston, Bess Blyer, Gloria Brooks, Gretchen Cannon, Gregori Faroux, Cindy Forrest, MaryAnne Gaunt, Kimberly Moore, LaRose Raston, David Smart

**Absent:** James Amann, Kwaku Andoh, Eric Ashford, Cassandra Burney, Stephanie Echols, Sharon German, Casey Heath, Carla Hines, Elisha Jarret, Keisha Jones, Karmen Milton, Kristal Perkins, Beverly Peters, Teresa Rucker, John Streater, Angela Turk, Kimberly Walker, Henry Winston

**Guests:** Leon Staples, Deb Rupp, Oyin Jones Mitchell, Lindy Parker, Janaia Moore, Carla McCoy.

#### Opening Business

David Caudill called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. The minutes from the August meeting were approved with one correction.

#### Staff Scholarship

Amanda Brown, chair of the Staff Recognition committee, announced the winners of the fall Staff Scholarship Awards. The recipients are Carla McCoy, Lindy Parker, Kevin Chappell, Colleen Byrd, Janaia Moore, and Sarah Hunsberger. The Scholarship funds are provided through contributions from the GSU Foundation and the university community.

#### Benefits Fair

The Benefits Fair and Employee Information Day will be held on Thursday, October 22, from 10 to 3. Volunteers are needed for the Staff Council table and as event greeters. All council members were encouraged to attend the event.

#### New Council Member

Caudill welcomed Anne Simmons to the council as a new representative from IS&T, replacing Joe Amador.

#### Pandemic Flu Update

Mike Raderstorf announced that the university flu website had been launched at [www.gsu.edu/flu](http://www.gsu.edu/flu). The site includes an FAQ on H1N1 issues and an email link for those with

unanswered questions. H1N1 vaccines would be available on campus soon, but high-risk groups including students would have priority. Seasonal flu shots will be available at the Day in the Park event, Thursday, October 15. It is still to be determined if they will also be available at the Benefits Fair/Employee Info Day. Raderstorf indicated that the university is taking additional steps to help prevent the rapid spread of H1N1, such as posting signs that encourage people to wash their hands and adding hand sanitizer dispensers to many restrooms.

### **Service Component in Staff Performance Evaluations**

On behalf of the Work-life committee, Lisa Shephard proposed that the council support an effort to have service responsibilities clearly acknowledged in the annual staff performance evaluation. The committee has had preliminary discussions with HR staff on this issue and would like to send a letter to HR Assistant VP Linda Nelson indicating the full council's support of this idea. Although a formal motion of support could not go forward because a quorum was not present at the meeting, a majority of the council members in attendance voiced their support for the committee's plan. As part of the discussion, several council members asked for a definition of service. David Caudill indicated that the final letter, which would include a general definition, would be sent to council members for feedback before going on to HR.

### **Staff Council Bylaws Discussion**

The council could not officially consider a proposal from the Administrative Committee to revise the organization's bylaws since a quorum was not present. After some deliberation, the group agreed to use the gathering to informally discuss the proposal and to vote on the change motions at the October meeting. Shelly-Ann Williams provided an overview of the proposals on behalf of the Administrative committee. They are as follows:

1. Define the staff senator term to start at the beginning of the University Senate year. During the time between the election and the start of the term, the senator would be asked to attend Staff Council meetings, but would not have the rights of a staff council member (voting privileges) until his or her term started.
2. Change the staff senator elections to the February meeting and require applications in January.
3. Require each ballot for staff senator elections to have one vote for each seat and disqualify incomplete ballots. (i.e., If there are three vacant seats up for election, the ballot would need to have votes for three people on it.)
4. Limit the terms for staff senators to two consecutive terms at which time the staff senator must not serve for one year before he/she can be able to be re-elected.

Council members discussed a variety of issues relating to each proposal, briefly summarized as follows:

- David Caudill indicated that the council Executive Committee had discussed the proposals at length and had chosen to formally indicate that they supported proposals 1 and 2 but did not support proposals 3 and 4.

### **Proposal One:**

- Pro: The primary justifications for the first motion was that the current bylaws do not clearly indicate the terms of senators. Additionally, the second bylaws proposal, if approved, will create an interim period of two months between the election of senators and the beginning of the senate term. The change clearly defines the expectations for the incoming senators during this period.

### **Proposal Two:**

- Pro: In support of the second proposal, it was noted that senators are currently elected at the April council meeting, often only one day before the start of the Senate term. As a result, there is little time to deliberate about senate committee assignments or to discuss putting staff candidates forward for the Senate Executive Committee. This change will clarify the voting role of senators whose term is expiring; At the time of the February election, they will still be voting members of the Staff Council because their senate term will not end until April.
- Alternative: As an alternative to the second motion, it was suggested that the April council meeting be moved earlier in the month.

### **Proposal Three:**

- Pro: 1) The Administrative committee developed this proposal to provide an opportunity for new staff members to serve as senators. This would allow for more people to be involved in the senate and have a diversity of ideas and talents. 2) Being a senator for a long period of time could benefit a single person or that person's department more than it benefits staff or the staff council. 3) Additionally, staff senators may be elected solely because of name recognition. 4) A person could serve as the chair or vice chair of the staff council and continue to be a staff senator even if he/she is not elected because of term limits.
- Con: 1) The imposition of such election restrictions was undemocratic and could go against the will of the majority of the Staff Council. If some of the same people are re-elected, it shows a confidence in those people or a recognition of the benefits of their serving in the senate. 2) Although there may be a perception that the same people have served for a long time, records do not show that this is always the case. We have several senators that are serving their first or second terms. 3) No other university organization uses term limits for elected members, including Staff Council representatives. 4) Being in the senate over time can have benefits such as recognition in the senate or valuable positions such as serving as a senate committee chair. It may take a staff member several years just to build the credibility and knowledge needed to serve effectively in the senate. A staff senator may be in a very important role in the senate, but not able to continue due solely to term limits. This could be detrimental to staff and the staff council.

### **Proposal Four:**

- Pro: The Administrative committee developed this proposal to add fairness to the election process. The fewer votes cast on a ballot, the greater weight it has.
- Con: 1) Again, this election restriction was characterized as undemocratic in that it inhibited the choice of council members. 2) It could also put council members in the position of having to vote for a candidate they did not truly support because only a limited number were in the running. While recently the council has seen an abundance of potential senators, this has not always been the case. We could run into a situation in which a person who may not be as qualified or enthusiastic about running is elected just because another staff member was not eligible to run.

As part of this discussion, David Caudill indicated that several procedural changes for the annual staff Senator elections were also discussed and approved by the Executive Committee at the 9/08/09 meeting. These procedural changes are to be forwarded to the Administrative Committee for inclusion in the planning process for the next election for staff Senators. The committee

supported these changes in hopes that they would strengthen the election process regardless of the outcome of the bylaws revision process.

- Create a new election form/questionnaire for both new candidates and incumbents. The new form would allow all candidates to talk about their background, their service accomplishments, and the issues that matter to them most.
- Post the candidates' completed answers to a web site – perhaps along with a picture of each candidate – to allow voters a chance to compare candidates in-depth.
- Hold a forum - separate from the regular Staff Council meeting – to allow candidates to present themselves and answer questions.

Deb Rupp also expressed a desire for the council to pursue increasing the number of staff members in the senate and to consider electing them as representatives of their administrative unit, much like is done for council representatives. Many expressed support for exploring such issues, particularly in light of recent changes in the upper administration.

Caudill encouraged all present and absent members to attend the October meeting so that the council could vote on the current proposals and move forward with consideration of alternatives if warranted.

#### **Committee reports and announcements**

- Kevin Chappell was announced as the new chair of the Administrative Committee.
- Everyone was encouraged to attend any or all of several upcoming events: Day in the Park (10/15), President's Investiture (10/19), and the Benefits Fair/Employee Info Day (10/22).

*Recorded by John Medlock*