



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, Faculty Senate
Mary Frances Early College of Education, Faculty Senate

August 19, 2020

Dear Franklin College Senators, Early College Senators, and Early Staff Representative Group:

We write to you, jointly, in response to the Senate sessions both Colleges have held regarding UGA and USG's reopening plans during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Your service to the faculty, students, and staff of both the Franklin and Early Colleges, as well as to the wider University community, is much appreciated. We cannot overstate how thankful we are for your attendance and thoughtful deliberation at meetings during the summer, especially when many of you have additional responsibilities, obligations, and pressures because of the pandemic.

As most of you are aware, the jointly sponsored Resolution stating concerns about reopening sent to Chancellor Wrigley and President Morehead on July 28 has received significant attention and support. Most notably, the University Council brought forward the Resolution to be considered for adoption by their governing body. **Sixty-four council members voted to endorse our resolution.** This is significant, and the collaboration between the Early Staff Representative Group (SRG), our Senates, and the University Council is unprecedented. The Council's efforts underscore the important and brave step that you all took in voicing the concerns that so many in our University community hold. Thank you all for being willing to do this hard work, and to stand up for our moral obligation to protect UGA students, staff, and faculty, as well as the broader Athens community.

We are deeply disappointed that upper administration at UGA continues to dismiss and delegitimize our Faculty Senates as lacking the "authority" to have an opinion or make requests on matters of concern to our Colleges and University at large. Article X. of the University Statutes, Section 5: Academic Freedom directly outlines our authority. We are equally disappointed in the lack of frontline staff and student input in the planning process. Our groups consist of members who have dedicated significant time and effort towards representing their colleagues' concerns, as well as sharing their very relevant experience and expertise on this

issue—experience and expertise that has largely not been consulted throughout the re-opening planning and implementation process. We believe it is more important than ever that our groups continue to engage in the thoughtful deliberation that is part of our governing processes. We are hopeful that administration will come to see the value of considering and including our thoughts in their work. We are only stronger when we work together. We hope that you all will continue your valuable and important work, and are not discouraged by recent responses from administration to our Resolution.

With regard to next steps, we would like to provide the opportunity for both Senates to process the events over the summer and discuss a plan moving forward for academic year 20-21 in separate meetings to be held as classes convene for fall 2020. It is more important than ever that the Deans of our respective Colleges continue to engage in this process with us. We invite Dean Dorsey and Dean Spangler to continue to support and foster strong faculty and staff governance mechanisms. Specifically, we hope they will continue to carry the message of our Senates and the SRG regarding reopening concerns to higher levels of administration, and encourage those decision-makers and leaders to more thoughtfully engage with our groups—recognition of our legitimate and important role in the collective project of making UGA the best institution it can be by upper administration is well overdue. Furthermore, the Deans can continue their efforts to determine clear guidelines for supervisors to follow as they expand flexible work schedules and telecommuting decisions by providing a timeline for reevaluation, establishing a clear and transparent process for staff requests, and developing internal outbreak thresholds for staff transition to fully online operation.

When our Colleges come together and focus on the best interests of our students, staff, and faculty, people listen and appreciate our efforts. Attempts to divide us will continue to fail so long as we maintain open and honest communication. This focus on communication must extend to our College leadership so they can continue to represent our best interests to upper administration. We have been presented with opportunities to solidify the trust of our College communities for years to come, and we will continue to work with you all to advocate for the safety of our people as part of this trust.

Finally, but most importantly, we want to recognize that our discussions regarding reopening of UGA and this global pandemic are *literally* matters of life and death, and this process of engagement has not been easy for many of us. We know that many of you have your own vulnerabilities to this disease, or loved ones who do, and the loss of housing employee Ana Gabriela Cabrera Lopez is tragic and unacceptable. Our sincerest condolences go out to her family members and loved ones. We have a responsibility to uphold the request of Cabrera

Lopez's family to "honor her life and maybe save one or two others" through thoughtful and flexible implementation of our plans for continued operation.

We look forward to our continued work with you all. Take care and be safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer L. Rice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Jennifer L. Rice
President, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate
Associate Professor, Department of Geography
University of Georgia

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Mojock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Chris Mojock
President, Mary Frances Early College of Education Faculty Senate
Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology
University of Georgia