

USG Staff Council Business Meeting Summary

Date: Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

Location: Microsoft TEAMS

Agenda Summary

Welcome & Call to Order

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees

Roll Call

A roll call was conducted via TEAMS to identify institutional representation. The following institutions were represented:

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College
Atlanta Metropolitan State College
Augusta University
Clayton State University
Columbus State University
College of Coastal Georgia
Dalton State College
East Georgia State College
Georgia College & State University
Georgia Gwinnett College
Georgia Highlands College
Georgia Southern University
Georgia Southwestern State University
Georgia State University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Gordon State College
Kennesaw State University
Middle Georgia State University
Savannah State University
South Georgia State College
University of Georgia
University of West Georgia
Valdosta State University

Adoption of the Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was adopted following a motion by Trudi Vaughn and second by Khristopher Hobbs.

Icebreaker

Holiday movie poll conducted. Home Alone won vote by 52%.

Review and Approval of October 2025 Minutes

Meeting minutes were reviewed and approved first by Jessie McGinty and second by Hadley Cottingham. Minutes were with no corrections.

2025 Conference Recap (Valdosta State University)

The consent agenda was adopted following a motion by Trudi Vaughn and second by Khristopher Hobbs.

- Report provided by Lynette Hepburn-Richardson.
- Conference received strong overall feedback.
- Suggestions for future conferences included:
 - More in-depth, leadership-focused speakers.
 - Improved payment processes (journal entries vs. checks).
- Valdosta State commended for a successful conference.
- Feedback will be shared with the 2026 host for continuous improvement.

2026 Conference Announcement

- 2026 USG Staff Council Conference will be hosted by Georgia State University.
- Tentative timing: 3rd or 4th week of September 2026.
- Planning committee formation underway with strong administrative support.
- Emphasis on keeping registration costs affordable.
- Goal to have the conference website live by June 2026 to allow use of current fiscal year funds.

Treasurer's Report

- **Current Balance:** \$2,874.75
- Report provided by Richard Rogers (Parliamentarian, former Treasurer).
- Council currently without a treasurer.

Treasurer Position – Candidate Presentations

- LaShai Campbell (Georgia Southern University) presented live.
- Yvonne Leroy Landers (Valdosta State University) unable to attend; statement of interest read aloud with consent.
- Vote to be conducted via poll following candidate presentations. – LaShai Campbell won the nomination. She is the newly elected Treasurer.

Foundation Account Update

USG Foundation will no longer hold Staff Council funds due to staffing constraints.

- Interim plan:
 - Funds to be temporarily housed at Augusta University Foundation.
 - Once a treasurer is elected, funds will be transferred to that treasurer's institution.
- Deadline to move funds: before December 30.

Bylaws Review

Richard Rogers and Will Jimerson are leading comprehensive bylaws revision; the goal is to align bylaws with current practices and future operations. Draft revisions expected during the current fiscal year. Members are encouraged to submit feedback to the Executive committee.

New Business

- Annual dues, which will remain at \$100 per institution. Invoices will be sent in January once the foundation account is settled. It was noted that two invoices will be issued during the 2026 calendar year, as they will correspond to two different fiscal years. Additionally, dues have historically not been payable by P-card, though this is still pending confirmation.
- New USG Staff Council Microsoft Teams site launching in January.
- Purpose:
 - Centralized document retention.
 - Improved continuity during leadership transitions.
 - Enhanced communication and collaboration.
- Delegates and alternates will be added.
- Support for New Leaders. Discussion on mentoring and onboarding for new and vice chairs.
- Future plans include:
 - Role-based breakout sessions during meetings.
 - Resource documents housed in Teams.
 - Potential mentorship program between institutions.
- Meetings are held every other month on the third Wednesday:
 - February 18
 - April 15
 - June 17 (proposed in-person transition meeting)
- Institutions interested in hosting the June meeting (preferably Middle Georgia) encouraged to contact Will Jimerson or Keisha Whittaker.

Open Enrollment & Benefits Update – Joe Strong

- Open Enrollment showed higher employee engagement despite a slight decrease in total employees.

- The percentage of employees who took no action during enrollment dropped to 37%, a 6% improvement year-over-year.
- Defaults tied to tobacco and working-spouse surcharges were reduced by 48%, indicating better employee awareness and action.
- A new online self-service surcharge tool improved the post-open enrollment experience, with more employees using it than calling the service center.
- Call center volume decreased significantly (20–30% reduction during peak days), improving wait times and service quality.
- A Virtual Benefits Counselor pilot was highly successful:
 - Nearly 700 appointments scheduled, ~600 completed.
 - Provided deeper, one-on-one support and reduced complex call center inquiries.
 - Leadership is considering expanding this service to support new hires.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Overview

- EAP provides confidential support for employees and families, including:
 - Up to four counseling sessions per issue
 - Work-life, family care, legal, and financial consultations
 - Extensive online resources, mobile app, chat options, and 24/7 access
- Utilization is good but awareness remains a challenge.
- EAP services extend beyond counseling to include:
 - Elder care and childcare referrals
 - Pet care, relocation support, scholarships, travel discounts, and more
- Managers can access 24/7 leadership and HR consultations, including guidance for employee concerns and team issues.
- Critical incident support is available for a wide range of situations, including proactive support for training or stressful events.

On-Site Counselor Pilot

- A one-year pilot places an on-site EAP counselor at select metro-area campuses:
 - Georgia State (Atlanta & Clarkston/Perimeter)
 - Clayton State

- Kennesaw State
- Goals include increased utilization, education, morale, and visibility.
- Employees can schedule appointments or walk in.
- Early feedback is positive, and weekly evaluations are ongoing.

Recognition & Wellness

- Gordon State College was recognized for winning the Fall 10K-a-Day Challenge.
- More wellness challenges and engagement opportunities are planned for spring.

Institutional Highlights

- **Gordon State College:** Homecoming activities, staff climate survey (600+ responses), staff forum, professional development fund via crowdfunding, planning for 2026 Staff Council Conference.
- **Augusta University:** Brown Bag Lunch & Learns, staff appreciation events, professional development conference planning for May 2026.
- **Other Institutions:** Website updates, staff recognition initiatives, surveys to increase staff council engagement across multiple campuses.

Closing

- Leaders expressed appreciation for staff council members, emphasized collaboration, and encouraged rest during the holiday season.
- Optimism was shared for the upcoming spring semester and continued engagement across USG.