

4-30-2019

Notification of Death in the University Community

Faculty Welfare Committee

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Faculty Welfare Committee, "Notification of Death in the University Community" (2019). *Faculty Senate Index*. 706.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/faculty-senate-index/706>

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Senate Executive Committee Request for Information

Notification of a Death in the University Community

Submitted by: Jonathan C Hilpert
4/30/2019

Question(s):

1. The "Notification of a Death in the University Community" motion is approved by the Georgia Southern Faculty Senate on October 29, 2007 and approved by the University President on November 14, 2007:

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1225&context=faculty-senate-index>. Why is this motion no longer protocol?

Rationale:

An email dated November 5, 2018, from the VP for Armstrong and Liberty Campus Operations indicated that it is not part of Georgia Southern's protocol to send out a general announcement of employee or student deaths. However, this protocol is in conflict with the Faculty Senate Motion, "Notification of a Death in the University Community" approved by the Senate on October 29, 2007 and approved by the University President on November 14, 2007:

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1225&context=faculty-senate-index>, which states that: "an announcement of the death be issued by the President's Office, subject to the wishes of the individual and family; a notice of details regarding final arrangements be made to the University community should family members wish such details be made public; the counseling center be notified so that adequate staff may be available to help other members of the University community begin the grieving process and provide ways for emotions to be recognized and expressed; the individual's department head or department representative, after issuing condolence to the family, consult with them about an appropriate form of remembrance/memorial service from the GSU community should the family so desire; University administrators allow family members adequate time to collect the individual's personal belongings."

Response:

SEC Response: "Why is this motion ("Notification of a Death in the University Community") no longer protocol?" The SEC found that this question had been answered a previous motion during the discussion of the motion at the February Senate meeting, and during the update to the motion at the March meeting.

However, the SEC requests that the university protocol be published, in clear terms, on a publicly-facing site. The SEC also requests clarification on:

- who is able to send announcements of faculty deaths,
- to whom they can be sent,
- the appropriateness of holding memorial services on campus, and
- who is allowed to arrange such services.

Forwarded to Director, Human Resources; Chief of Staff; Vice Provost; VPSA; VPSMC

From John Lester, 5/21/2019:

There have been several meetings on this topic since it was brought up in Faculty Senate earlier this year, and we think this is a good idea -- we will publish this information and university protocols on employee death notifications on the HR website. The student affairs website already has a detailed protocol for student death notifications, but we may add to that, as well.

As noted in an email to the university on Nov. 5, 2018 and confirmed during Faculty Senate in the Feb. 5 2019, it has not been part of our protocol to send out a general announcement to the University community because of the varying circumstances of death and the diverse wishes of each family. Similarly, the University will not use its campus-wide listservs to distribute notice of such memorials. A meeting on Feb. 20 with the General Counsel, Dean of Students, Associate VP for Human Resources, and the interim Vice President for University Communications and Marketing confirmed there are too many concerns about privacy, fairness, liability and precedent for this to be adopted as a practice. The same applies to organizing or holding any memorials that could be considered as "university-sponsored." Memorials should be organized by students or colleagues and follow normal event-planning protocols.

However, individual employees, supervisors, chairs, etc. may send out notices to various groups, friends, colleagues, classes with verified information about the death

and/or arrangements (see suggested template below). Social media posts by individuals or departments also are acceptable, as appropriate. (These suggestions should never impact the protocol to be followed by academic affairs or student affairs in terms of official notification to roommates, students in the class of a faculty member who died, teammates, etc.)

For a student:

Dear XXXX,

It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death of Jane Doe, a junior English major from Atlanta, Ga. She was an excellent student and a frequent local volunteer. We extend our deepest sympathy to Jane's friends and family. As always, counselors are available for students who need assistance. Please call 912-478-5541 (Statesboro) or 912-344-2529 (Savannah) or go online to <https://students.georgiasouthern.edu/counseling/>

We are not aware of funeral arrangements at this time.

Sincerely,

XXXXXX

For an employee or staff member:

Dear XXXX,

It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death of John Smith, a professor in the Psychology department since 2015. He was regarded as an excellent teacher and a respected researcher. We extend our deepest sympathy to John's friends and family. Any faculty or staff member who needs support or counseling can call the Statesboro Campus HR Office (912) 478-5468 or the Armstrong Campus HR Office at (912) 344-2587.

Funeral arrangements can be found online at XXX

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

John