

Staff Senate Fall Survey 2009  
**Staff Senate Executive Committee - Survey Summary**

**The Basics:**

- 240 Staff Members Responded. There are 205 nonclassified, 506 classified, and 120 extra-help Staff at UCA.
- 49.2% said that social events like the Winter Feast are important for Staff morale.
- More than 50% of Staff that responded are mostly satisfied or completely satisfied with the Staff Senate's past performance in planning and implementing social events (73.4%); representing Staff concerns to the administration (56.9%); representing Staff in budgeting and University governance (50.8%); and providing Staff development and recognition (55.4%).
- Staff believe Staff Senate priorities with regard to time should be ranked in the following order from most important to least important:
  - Presenting Staff concerns to the administration
  - Representing Staff in budgeting and University governance
  - Providing Staff development and recognition
  - Planning and implementing social events for all Staff members
- Staff believe Staff Senate priorities with regard to money should be ranked in the following order from most important to least important:
  - Providing Staff scholarships
  - Providing Staff development and recognition
  - Providing Staff dependent scholarships
  - Planning and implementing social events for all Staff members
- Staff believe the priorities of the current administration should be ranked in the following order from most important to least important:
  - Staff raises
  - Building financial reserves
  - Increasing Staff morale
  - Campus renovations
  - Filling vacant positions
  - Campus beautification

## Purpose of Survey

The Staff Senate requested a survey of all Staff including part-time, classified, and nonclassified to help inform the decision making process of the Staff Senate. The key questions were about social events and their priority for Staff Senate. In addition to questions about the past performance of the Staff Senate, Senators were interested in finding out what other priorities Staff members feel the University and the Staff Senate should focus on. There was also a question that asked the Staff to assign a letter grade to the current administration along with a reason for that grade. Finally, Senators requested that Staff members be able to leave comments, concerns, and questions that could later be addressed.

## Survey Questions

1. How important are social events like the Winter Feast and the end of year Staff Picnic to the morale of staff members?
2. What is the maximum you are willing to pay to attend events like the Winter Feast and the Staff Picnic?
3. How do you rate the past performance of the Staff Senate in the following areas?
  - a. Planning and implementing social events for all Staff
  - b. Presenting Staff concerns to the administration
  - c. Representing Staff in budgeting and University governance
  - d. Providing Staff development and recognition
4. How should the Staff Senate spend its time? Rank the initiatives below in importance with regards to time.
  - a. Planning and implementing social events for all Staff
  - b. Presenting Staff concerns to the administration
  - c. Representing Staff in budgeting and University governance
  - d. Providing Staff development and recognition
5. How should the Staff Senate spend its money? Rank the initiatives below in importance with regards to money allocated.
  - a. Providing Staff dependent scholarships
  - b. Providing Staff scholarships
  - c. Planning and implementing social events for all Staff
  - d. Providing Staff development and recognition
6. What grade would you assign to UCA's current administration?
7. What should the priorities be for the current administration? Rank by importance.
  - a. Staff raises
  - b. Building financial reserves
  - c. Campus beautification (exterior enhancements)
  - d. Campus renovations (roofs, structures, deferred maintenance)
  - e. Increasing Staff morale
  - f. Filling vacant positions
8. Do you have any ideas, comments, or concerns that you would like to share with the Staff Senate?

## Survey Findings

The basics listed on the first page give the most easily read and distributable information; however, comments that were given for many of the questions provide a much richer picture of the Staff's opinions, expectations, and feelings about the current state of the University and the past performance of the Staff Senate.

### *Staff Senate Performance, Priorities, and Perception*

While the survey results show that most Staff members are satisfied with the performance of the Staff Senate, there is definitely room for improvement. Staff Senate was ranked lowest in areas of representing staff in budgeting and university governance and providing staff development and recognition. Comments solicited for this question ranged from, *"There is only so much the staff senate can do, limited by others"* to *"Staff Senate should not be afraid to comment on any subject as they represent the staff and are our voice."* Many comments were simply, *"Improve communication."*

Several of the comments seem to indicate that there is a perception that Staff Senate does not have an equal voice in the governance of UCA. This could also be complicated by the perception that Staff Senate does not properly communicate Staff Senate's part in UCA governance.

Staff members clearly indicate that the Staff Senate should focus on, in priority order, governance, staff development, providing staff scholarships, and then social events. It should be noted that several Staff members commented that even though ranking put social events at the bottom of the priority list, that providing social events for the staff should still be a priority. One Staff member commented, *"Priority wise, of course the others will fall before social events, but that does not mean that social events do not rank up there with 'most important.'"*

There were many comments to the Staff Senate about rumors that the University will be moving to a 5:00 p.m. closing time. All of the comments indicated that the Staff would be highly against this change. Most comments highlighted the currently low morale as the primary reason and indicated that it would lead to even lower morale. Several comments centered on the facts that some Staff have not received raises in three years and that there are many unfilled vacancies that are increasing everyone's workload. An additional 30 minute work time is in theory a 6% pay reduction.

### *University Priorities, Current Administration*

While the main purpose of the survey was to find ways to improve the performance of the Staff Senate, it was decided to include questions about University priorities, as well as to ask for a grade for the current administration. Comments were solicited for each of these questions in an attempt to get a comprehensive picture of the Staff's feelings on these subjects.

Staff members are concerned about the lack of raises for nonclassified staff and the continued inequities for some classified staff. The practices of the past administration did help with this matter; however, many Staff members feel something has to be done to fix the continued inequality that the past decisions created. There were many comments about the pay that some staff receive that others do not. This, coupled with the many unfilled positions across campus, is cause for continued low morale.

Needless to say, the top priority according to the survey should be staff raises. The priorities in order from most important to least important are building financial reserves, increasing staff morale, campus renovations, filling vacant positions, and campus beautification. It should be noted that over 73.2% of those responding believe that campus beautification, defined as exterior enhancements, should be the least important task for the current administration.

The comments for this question continue to highlight the morale problems of the Staff. From comments like, *“actually listening to staff concerns instead of just pretending”* to comments about broken promises regarding retiree benefits, the Staff at UCA had many things to say about the priorities of the University. It is also clear how much farther the University has to go to shake the problems of the past. Words like openness, honesty, transparency, and ethics were present in many comments that serve to provide a prescription to help the administration gain the trust of the Staff.

The current administration received a 2.013 or a C from the Staff. This question also garnered the most comments. 130 of the 229 respondents left a reason for their grade. Many people are very confident that President Meadors will lead us out of the current situation or that he should at least be given the chance. Some are waiting to make a judgment, and frankly, a few still need convincing that there has been a change at all. Most of the ‘negative’ comments referenced salaries; money spent on beautification; a fear that we’re still a part of the *“good ole boy system,”* and a general sense that, as one comment says, *“the current upper administration doesn’t give a flip about us ‘little people.’”*

### **Survey Analysis and Recommendations**

As has been stated, the general purpose of this survey was to try to find ways that the Staff Senate can better represent the Staff at UCA. In addition, we wanted to get a picture of how Staff members view the current state of affairs. We believe that the survey will help to guide the decisions of the Staff Senate and the Staff Senate Executive Committee. The analysis that follows is a general discussion based on the survey results and reflect the interpretation by the Staff Senate Executive Committee.

It is important to note that we understand that the survey represents only three months of the current administration, and represents a point in time. This survey will be given again during the spring semester and hopefully the analysis of that survey’s results will show an improvement from today.

There is no doubt that the Staff Senate has an important role to play in the shared governance of UCA. However, the perceptions of the role and purpose of the Staff Senate is a bit unclear. Not only do Staff members want the Staff Senate to focus on the governance responsibilities, but they also want social events, Staff development, and Staff scholarships to be high priorities. Is it still reasonable for Staff Senate to represent the staff’s governance needs and provide the ‘services’ that the Staff also desire. Are the resources available to provide the opportunities for professional development, social activities, and Staff scholarships? More importantly, can those two things (governance and service) be accomplished with the dedication to quality and high standards that the Staff and the University deserve and require? The Staff Senate will need to decide how to move forward with the knowledge that resources are becoming limited while expectations are increasing.

The survey highlighted great concerns among Staff that their views are not heard, or that they’re ignored. This applies to the Staff Senate and the administration. The Staff Senate has already initiated a few programs to help with this concern. We have set internal requirements for the answering of

comments, concerns, and questions submitted to Senators and through the Staff Senate website. Additionally, the Staff Senate is working on improving the notification process for Staff about the Staff Senate agendas, minutes, and other activities. Finally, the Staff Senate is working with the administration to host forums as necessary to address concerns with different departments and divisions.

The Staff Senate is also working to make sure that the administration does listen to the concerns of the Staff. Senators represent the Staff on many University Standing Committees and often present concerns to the President and other administrators as necessary. The Staff Senate will stand with the Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association to assert that the shared governance structures be used for their purpose and recommendations respected and considered. We hope that more communication will show what has been accomplished through Staff Senate suggestion and intervention.

On the topic of Staff Senate intervention, there was one comment that said the Staff Senate should stay out of departmental issues and another that said the Staff Senate should not be so critical about things that do not concern us. The Staff Senate and its Senators will research and address the concerns brought to it. It is our responsibility to represent the staff in any and all matters that affect the welfare of the University as is stated in our Constitution and ratified by the Staff and Board of Trustees. We will work to increase the trust and respect of the Staff Senate to competently handle the complex issues our University faces.

In regards to priorities, the survey provided evidence to support the Staff Senate's desire to increase the dialogue with all levels of administration, faculty, and students to work on both a short-term list of priorities and a long-term strategic plan. The current economic situation and budget constraints only increase the necessity for such a plan. The Staff Senate is eagerly awaiting the start to this process.

One recurrent theme from the survey comments is that the Staff Senate needs to work with the administration to open dialogue and communication. This is important not only to support shared governance but also to increase Staff morale. The Staff Senate stands by the assertion that the morale at this University is unprecedentedly low; however, we also assert that a few minor, yet high impact changes can help to increase the morale of the Staff.

We understand how rumor and gossip only create problems, but we also understand that in an information vacuum rumor and gossip flourish. We hope that more open communication about the current spending, budget, and decision processes can take place. We will not always agree with the decisions, but we can at least share the information that is presented with our constituents. It has been said that the issues are complex and we can see how there might be a concern that they are so complex that they cannot be explained. The Staff Senate believes that any communication and explanation with the Staff will help to increase morale and more importantly extinguish many of the rumors that have filled the information void.

The Staff Senate maintains that the Staff of this University can rise to handle any situation, no matter how complex, if we are presented with accurate, complete and timely information. The administration needs to trust that the Staff, Faculty, and Students are just as able to understand the complexities of budgeting, long-term planning, and administration as they are. This is necessary if the administration is to ever gain the trust of those same constituencies.

Trust: that's what brings this analysis to a close. In order for this University to grow and move forward, trust must be reestablished. Loss of trust does not necessarily mean that someone was dishonest or deceitful; it can just mean that a confidence is lacking. The Staff of this University lack confidence in the administration. The members of the past administration, including the Board of Trustees, are still a part of the current administration, save a few people. Unfortunately, the mistakes of the past have shaken the collective confidence in the administration of UCA.

A basic tenet of shared governance is that we have a voice in the good and the bad of the decisions made. In our case we had no voice during the Hardin administration. The Staff Senate did not stand up and question when it needed to. The Staff Senate did not assert itself when the University required. So, we must ALL work to return trust and confidence to the administration of UCA. The installation of a new President does not do that. It will take small things like town hall meetings, open communication, information sharing, trust by the administration in the staff's, students', and faculty's knowledge, skills, abilities, and motivations, and most importantly, time to restore the trust of the Staff.

The Staff Senate will work with the administration to better this University. We will not nit-pick, but we will question. The Staff Senate will work with Faculty and Students to hold the administration and each other accountable. It will take a concerted effort from the Board of Trustees, Staff, Faculty, and Students to return UCA to its ideal. We all wait for the day when Staff, Students, and Faculty can all hold their head up high with not only love for this University but the confidence and trust that it will continue to prosper.