University Senate Update, October 2012 meeting

Before the Senate meeting, the Employee Council Senate representatives met to discuss the effect that some university-wide activities are having on our constituents. This was the first meeting of this group and included Kathy Troyer (President), LaDonna Cherry (President-Elect), Nelson Shaffer (representative for University Administration), Carol Moser (rep for Academic Affairs, Oxford), and Jonetta James (rep for Academic Affairs). We mostly discussed the BPI (Business Process Improvement Initiative) and the different effects it is having. We also decided it was a nice idea to all meet together before the Senate meeting. It gives us an opportunity to catch up on business and go to the Senate meeting as a unified group.

The Senate meeting was rather brief, since the State of the University address followed. The President of SGA (Student Government Association) talked about the SGA’s meeting with President Wagner. President Wagner gave an update of university affairs, similar to the update he gave Employee Council last month. And Provost Earl Lewis gave his last speech as Provost.

The State of the University address followed. President Wagner gave an update on university business similar to the one he presented to Employee Council and Senate. This included discovering the anti-Semitic admissions process surrounding the dental school years ago. It also included mention of the program cuts, as well as ethical discussions surrounding Chick-fil-A. The President also mentioned the discovery that Emory had reported the SAT score issue.

The Question & Answer period that followed featured many questions about the transparency involved with “the program cuts”. [Emory recently announced that it would be closing certain departments within the next few years and not admitting students within these departments. These included ILA, Economics, among others.] The ILA Dept. was very vocal; the Chair of the Dept., in particular, challenged the idea that the process was transparent and said that many professors had no idea this was going to happen. One of the featured questions was how students should view their next few years at Emory if they know their department has been dismantled.

There were more questions about the ethical decisions surrounding keeping Chick-fil-A. This situation is in reference to comments that the CEO of the company made concerning his personal feelings about the LGBTQ community at large. This resulted in boycotts around the country, with the idea that we should question our involvement with companies that not only do not support all types of people, but actively fund organizations that work against some groups of people, particularly the LGBTQ community. So, many on campus have been questioning whether Emory should allow Chick-fil-A to remain on campus. President Wagner explained that the administration and a recently formed policy committee are working on forming policy about responding to these questions. His sentiment was that the university is very good at including groups, but has a difficult time deciding when to exclude groups. In the meantime, financial support (purchases at Chick-fil-A) has dropped significantly and the President is comfortable allowing their financial situation to guide whether Sodexo allows Chick-fil-A to remain on campus.