

Beth Orcutt
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19 August 2010

RE: WUOG 90.5fm broadcast

Jessica Smith, WUOG General Manager
Justin Pohl, WUOG Graduate Advisor
Marc LaMotte, WUOG/University Union Advisor
Ed Mirecki, UGA Director of Student Activities and Organizations

Dear WUOG advisors,

On behalf of the WUOG Alumni Association, we are writing this letter to present our concerns regarding the current operation of the student-run radio station at UGA, WUOG 90.5 FM - a treasure that we alumni passionately value. It is our belief that recent changes in the operational philosophy of the station, as outlined below, could jeopardize the standing and reputation of the station as a community service and effective training ground for students. We hope that in presenting these concerns we can motivate leadership within Student Activities and at WUOG to help address these issues. The WUOG Alumni Association is very thankful for the open dialogue we have had with current leaders and mentors at WUOG, and it is our hope that this relationship will continue to grow into the future.

Our foremost concern regards the change in commitment of the station to operate 21-24 hours a day nearly year-round. Throughout the decades since the inception of the radio station, broadcasting 21-24 hours a day, even during school breaks and holidays, was a cornerstone of the operation of the station. Station program managers and the station executive staff committed to arranging deejay staffing all throughout the year. Indeed, in many years, because of the strong sense of community at the station, deejays often were eager to volunteer for break radio shifts (i.e. deejay shifts during school breaks and holidays) as a chance to broadcast specialty shows, even in the middle of the night. Until about six years ago, there was also a monetary incentive for late night shifts during break radio, to help encourage staffing to keep the station on the air in times of break. This commitment to stay on the air as much as possible helped make WUOG a stronghold in the radio market of Athens and a solid community service for a town known around the world for its exceptional music scene.

However, this culture and commitment has been eroding over the last few years, to the detriment of the reputation of the station in the Athens community and the radio industry. We believe that there are two main causes for this. First, a few years ago, the requirements for the Graduate Advisor to the radio station were changed to only allow students in the College Student Affairs Administration program to qualify, which doesn't necessarily ensure that the Graduate Advisor

has any relevant experience for radio broadcast (although we recognize that they do bring many other organizational talents to the station). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, prompted by a change a few years ago in FCC regulations regarding minimal operation of non-commercial educational radio stations*, we believe that there was a philosophical shift in Student Activity mentoring of the radio station, to the effect that incoming student leaders of the station were no longer given the charge from Student Activities that it was important to keep the station on the air 21-24 hours a day year-round. For example, we are aware that funding for break radio was removed from the station budget a few years ago. We believe this helped to create a situation where student leaders of the radio station were not encouraged to try to keep the radio station on the air as much as possible.

We believe that this shift in mentoring has led to fundamental, detrimental changes to the station. In the years since these changes began, there has been a noticeable decline in the broadcast hours of the station. Radio broadcast is commonly cancelled during school breaks and holidays. For example, the station did not have regular programming at all during the month of May 2010 because Maymester is not considered regular school time. We are aware that equipment updates were also performed during this period, but we believe that this was an excessive period of time to be off air.

With WUOG off the air with such increasing frequency, the student body, the Athens community, the independent music and media industry, and WUOG-alumni worldwide are increasingly viewing WUOG as becoming irrelevant and uncommitted. This perception is a devastating development for the legacy of WUOG as one of the most respected college radio stations in the world - a legacy that WUOG alumni committed much sweat and tears into maintaining and promoting. Furthermore, with decreasing community opinion of the station, the opportunities for students working with the station begin to disintegrate, diminishing the educational and experiential level for all involved. Considering that UGA also is home to the revered Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and the prestigious Peabody Awards, the deterioration of broadcast at WUOG may also reflect poorly for incoming students interested in broadcast. The alumni also believe that by allowing the station to be on air only when it's convenient to those who operate it, the students are missing on opportunity to learn firsthand the requirements of what fiduciary responsibility means as a broadcaster in the professional broadcast arena.

Given these negative developments in broadcast hours, we, as committed alumni of the radio station, feel compelled to request a change in commitment and mentorship of the station to bring about a return to 21-24 hour-a-day broadcast. Without strong encouragement from mentors at Student Activities and commitment from WUOG leadership to keep the station on the air 21-24 hours a day year-round, WUOG will continue to suffer. We recognize that such obligations are not required by FCC license rules, but we strongly feel that they are required to keep the station in good standing in the Athens community, college radio industry, and among passionate alumni. We would also like to point out that other college stations around the country do manage to stay on air 365 days. For example, WRAS in Atlanta, KVRX in Austin, TX and even WVUR in Valparaiso, IN, just to name a few, all maintain 24 hour on-air coverage, 365 days a year. We recognize that some of these stations utilize automation to augment their broadcast hours; while

we are not advocating a switch to automation, we point it out as one of many potential solutions to filling in broadcast gaps.

Of course, we recognize that the transition of the station to its new home in the Tate Center may also be partially to blame for some of the observed gaps in broadcast quality over the past two years, due to the prolonged time in setting up the new facility. At the same time, we also recognize the significant contribution and support that the university has given to WUOG during this time with the purchase of new broadcast equipment for the station. We think it would be a shame to waste such an investment in the new station by allowing a continued deterioration in station broadcast operation.

The WUOG Alumni Association is committed to working with the current station staff and Student Activities to rectify this situation and to bring about a return to regular, high-quality broadcasting by WUOG. Members of the WUOG Alumni Association have accumulated years of experience in broadcast media, and we are more than willing to work with Student Activities and the station staff to offer advice and help develop a plan for improving current operations. We sincerely hope that you are open to the concerns and suggestions posed in this communication, and we welcome your feedback on these matters. We'd like to help the students get the most out of their experience, but also preserve the quality of WUOG so that future students can also share in the station's success. We sincerely appreciate the commitment and dedication of everyone involved in the station's operations – our request through this communication is to help ensure that WUOG lives up to its potential for future generations.

Sincerely,

Beth Orcutt, WUOG Alumni Association Chair
Lynn Harris Medcalf, WUOG Member at Large
on behalf of the WUOG Alumni Association

And the following signatories, alumni of WUOG:

Anita Ammons Sales, WUOG DJ 1984 - 1988
Thomas Benefield, WUOG DJ 1991 - 1993
Mark Blount, WUOG Operations Director 1981-1983
Kristi Boyd, WUOG DJ 1998-2001, WUOG Sports Director 1999-2000
Mark Bullock, WUOG News Director 1993-1995; *Currently news anchor at WSFA-TV, Montgomery, AL*
Heather M. Conger, WUOG DJ 1991-1993, WUOG Operations Director 1992
Stephanie Counts Skinner, WUOG DJ 1990 - 1992, *Currently Director of Business Development, Happy Hour Creative (LA based creative agency)*
Emerson Dameron, WUOG DJ 90s-2000s, Music Director 2000.
Bill Davis, WUOG DJ 1972 - 1976, Program Director/Music Director
Lee Echols, WUOG Program Director 1981-82
Cindy Foster Grace, WUOG Public Affairs Director 1981 - 1982. *Currently working as a freelance journalist in the Grand Rapids area.*
Jeff Frey, WUOG DJ 1989-1992, *Currently a film producer*

Elliott Garstin – WUOG DJ 1999 - 2001, WUOG Program Director 2000 - 2001, *Former Music Director at 99X in Atlanta, Mid-Day host at KROX in Austin, TX., Current host of Radio Undefined on WMLB in Atlanta*

Bonnie Gillespie, WUOG DJ/public affairs dept./promotions dept./news dept. 1988-1991, DJ/promotions director 1991-1992, DJ/graduate advisor 1995-1997, DJ 1997-1998.

Lars Gotrich, WUOG DJ 2000s; *Currently NPR All Songs Considered correspondent*

Anthony Hamlet, WUOG DJ 1998-2002, WUOG Operations Director 2000-2001

DJ Hammond, WUOG DJ 1996 - 2000. WUOG Program Director 1999 - 2000

Iris Horowitz Levin, WUOG DJ 1973-1976

Joshua Houk, WUOG DJ 1989-1993, WUOG Music Director 1992-1993

Manfred Jones, WUOG DJ 1986 - 1991, Graduate Student Advisor, General Manager, Program Director, Assit Program Director, *Currently produces show for SiriusXm Channel 25, Little Steven's Underground Garage*

Keith Koziacki, WUOG DJ 1975-1978, News Director

Michael V Marcotte, WUOG DJ 1978-1984, *Currently Media Trainer/Consultant*

Daniel J. Matthews, Jr., WUOG DJ 1983-86, *has worked locally in AM & FM professionally*

Rob Maynard, WUOG DJ 1979-1982. *20 year broadcast professional*

Andy Miller, WUOG DJ 1988-1992, News Director, Music Director.

Michele Minchew, WUOG Public Affairs Director 1982-1984

Cheri Mohr Drake, WUOG DJ 1981 - 1984, Operations Manager 1985. *Currently Assistant Production Director for Cox Radio Athens*

Jesse Nieminen, WUOG DJ 1992-1997, Promotions co-director

David C. Owen

Kenneth Rogers, WUOG DJ 1981-1983, *Former producer WSB-AM, Atlanta*

Rob Seay, WUOG Graduate Advisor 1993-95, *15 years work in student affairs administration*

David Schimmel, WUOG DJ 1990-1992, Local Music Director 1991-1992

G. Bryant Stowe, Jr., WUOG DJ 1992-1994, Training Director. *Formerly worked at WSSX and WAVF (Charleston, SC).*

Don Sylvester, WUOG DJ 1972 – 1975, Music Director, Programming Director, General Manager.

Randy Tatel, WUOG DJ 1979-1982, Music Director 1981.

Kim Underwood Lyons, WUOG Public Relations Director, 1982-1983, WUOG News Reporter 1981 – 1982, *Former broadcast/cable positions: Executive Producer CNN, Supervising Producer CNN International, Producer WXIA-TV, News producer, reporter, anchor in TV stations in Montgomery and Birmingham, AL*

Richard Warner, WUOG DJ 1975-1977, Public Affairs Director & News Director, *Currently CEO of What's Up Interactive.*

*: FCC regulations state that noncommercial educational FM stations are required to operate at least 36 hours per week, consisting of atleast 5 hours of operation per day on at least 6 days of the week; however stations liscensed to educational instutions are not required to operate on Saturday or Sunday or to observe the minimum operating requirements designated on the official school calendar as vacation or recess period