

A conversation with UGA President and Georgia Law Alumnus Jere Morehead

On July 1, 2013, Georgia Law 1980 alumnus Jere W. Morehead became the 22nd president of the University of Georgia. Recently, he took some time to answer a few questions and share his thoughts about his new role at the university and his goals.

You are only the second Georgia Law graduate to lead the University of Georgia in its 229 year history. What does that mean to you?

I am honored and humbled to be only the second Georgia Law graduate to lead the University of Georgia. I believe the skills I learned as a law student, to think critically and carefully, have served me very well in this new role. I also believe that the law school faculty provide an excellent example of what we expect from our university faculty – a strong and balanced approach to teaching and scholarship.

What is the primary objective you would like for the university to achieve under your leadership?

The university needs to have a highly successful comprehensive campaign to raise private contributions to new levels of support from both our alumni and friends. We need to increase the size of the endowment which supports our academic programs, faculty and students, and we need to increase our alumni participation rate that has been declining for several years. We have a great story to tell about a national university on the rise, and we will need the ongoing support of our alumni to keep getting stronger.

How has UGA's presidency been different from what you anticipated?

There simply are not enough hours in the day to get everything done that I would like to accomplish. I enjoy spending quality time with our alumni, students, faculty and staff, and I relish the opportunity to sit around a table solving problems and finding solutions. However, I have learned to be deliberate and recognize I cannot accomplish everything in the first year of the job.

How important is the law school to the overall university? What type of role should a law school play within a major research university?

The law school is very important to the University of Georgia. Professional and graduate programs drive the academic reputation of an institution like UGA. We are very fortunate to have an outstanding law school with a strong tradition of excellence. We need to do everything possible, working with Dean White and the superb law school faculty and alumni, to move it even higher in the national rankings. I am confident we can do so in the coming years.



Photo by UGA Photographic Services' Rick O'Quinn.

The 1992 National Moot Court championship team of Mark Lewis (J.D.'92) (sitting left), Greg Gunter (J.D.'92) (standing center) and Julia Lynch Bassett (J.D.'92) with advisor Jere Morehead (standing left) and Dean Ron Ellington.

What do you think distinguishes the University of Georgia in higher education today?

UGA is a land-grant institution and the flagship institution of Georgia. We have a unique responsibility to serve the people of Georgia and beyond. Parts of our institution exist in every county in the state of Georgia and in many countries around the world. How many other institutions can cite both a strong local and international influence? I think it is very exciting and something to be proud of as an alumnus.

Please describe the last time something on campus – a student, a colleague or an event – truly surprised you.

I am heartened by the deep and abiding love that our students, faculty and staff have for this institution. I sense the excitement and anticipation everyone has about our future. Everyone knows we are an institution on the rise, and they are very proud of what is going on at UGA. When the law school's moot court program won another national championship recently, I enjoyed reading all the emails to Director of Advocacy Kellie Casey (J.D.'90) congratulating her on this significant accomplishment. There was nothing but pride and happiness for Kellie and her team. As a former moot court advisor, and her former professor, I shared in that pride and excitement for the law school.

What's the best advice you have ever received?

The best advice I have ever received is being told to listen more than I talk. When I enter a meeting, I like to hear from everyone and understand what concerns or motivates them. Individuals in positions like mine have to be careful that they continue to receive good advice and counsel. I need to know what others know in order to make sound and principled decisions.

Morehead has said, "My core belief about the University of Georgia is a simple one: What we do here matters. It is important, and not just to the students and faculty and staff; it is important to the citizens of Georgia."



Photo by UGA Photographic Services' Andrew Davis Tucker.

Keith Hall (right) poses with UGA President Jere Morehead after winning the 2014 Richard B. Russell Moot Court Competition and receiving the Jere W. Morehead Best Oralist Award. The award is named for Morehead in honor of his service as the law school's moot court faculty advisor from 1986 to 1995. Morehead served as a justice during the final round of competition in April with U.S. District Court Judge Steve Jones (J.D.'87) and U.S. District Court Chief Judge Lisa Godbey Wood (J.D.'90).

What is one thing you would like to do before you die – the top item on your "bucket list?"

I would like to have a very successful presidency, raise the academic profile of UGA even higher, complete a record-setting comprehensive campaign, and then return to the faculty and have a few good years left as a professor.

If you could travel back in time and give the younger you one piece of advice, what would it be?

I would have advised me to be more patient and recognize that change comes more slowly than you sometimes would like. Patience is something you learn as you get older and wiser.

Which individuals in your life have influenced you the most? In what way(s)?

Several individuals have influenced my life in a positive manner. Certainly my loving parents who always supported me and several great friends and mentors who have helped me along the way. You cannot underestimate the importance of having wonderful friends and mentors, and I have been fortunate to have had many, including the current and former law school deans and many faculty members.



Photo by UGA Photographic Services' Dot Paul.

Morehead highlights

HONORS & AWARDS

- Selected for *Georgia Trend's* Most Influential Georgians List, 2014.
- Appointed to a one-year term on the Committee of Research Intensive Public Universities by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, 2013.
- Josiah Meigs Award for Excellence in Teaching, 2001.
- Lothar Tresp Outstanding Honors Professor Award, 1999.
- Teacher of the Year Award, Terry College of Business, 1998.
- Richard B. Russell Undergraduate Teaching Award, 1995.
- Best Oralist Award for the law school's Russell Moot Court Competition named in Morehead's honor, 1995.
- Teacher of the Year Award, Terry College of Business, 1988.
- J.D., University of Georgia, 1980.
- B.A., Georgia State University, 1977.

PREVIOUS POSITIONS HELD AT UGA

- Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, 2010–2013.
- Vice President for Instruction, 2007–2009.
- Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, 2004–2006.
- Associate Provost and Director of the Honors Program, 1999–2004.
- Faculty Member at the Terry College of Business, 1986–present; current title: Josiah Meigs Professor of Legal Studies.
- Adjunct Professor and Moot Court Program Faculty Advisor at the School of Law, 1986–1995. The Moot Court Program had a 288–103 record under Morehead's leadership, which included international, national and state championships.

At his investiture, Morehead said he was equally humbled and excited and that he was certain that the university's best days lie ahead. Regarding Morehead's selection as UGA president, University System of Georgia Chancellor Hank M. Huckaby said the Board of Regents concluded that "having searched the country east to west, we found the person that we wanted and needed right here on campus." Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal was quoted as saying Morehead is "the perfect choice" for president of UGA.