



## 2018-2019 GVATA Executive Board

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# GVATA Update

August 2018

## President's Message

Hope this update finds you all well and that your school year has gotten off to a wonderful start! One of my goals this year is to provide you with a monthly update to keep you abreast of current issues and evaluate the status of our organization's activities. **The focus of this update will be reviewing the 2018 Summer Conference.**



I would first like to thank the GVATA Executive Board for their outstanding leadership and execution of Summer Conference. A special thank you to Hannah Elrick for her service as President this past year and also to Melissa Riley for her endless work in what is oftentimes a thankless job as Executive Secretary. I am thankful and honored to work with such a hardworking group of individuals who truly care about this organization.

Before addressing summer conference, I would like to mention that interviews have been conducted for a new Program Manager, and Dr. Wall will be recommending that person to the State School Board on August 23rd. Upon approval, she will formally announce who that person is, and they can move forward with hiring a new South Region Coordinator and Georgia Young Farmer Executive Secretary. We had several agriculture teachers on the interview committee, and I appreciate Dr. Wall for allowing us to have those representatives as a part of the decision making process.

I know that many of you had concerns about summer conference, and we shared those same concerns. Going to a new place brought forth many challenges, some of which we could not predict or prevent. We have discussed ways to improve our experience, and some of those are outlined in the conference survey summary on the next page. We are also working to adjust the overall conference agenda to meet your needs.

Additionally, we had an exit meeting with the Lake Lanier staff to express our concerns. They understood that our expectations were not met and many verbal promises were not upheld. They deducted over \$7,000 from our final bill, and we are working with them to ensure that they can more appropriately accommodate us next year. Please understand that many of the things we were "promised" were not outlined specifically in our contract. If we were to break our contract to move to a new location, we would be responsible for 70% of their expected revenue - an estimated \$117,000. We will continue to work diligently with the Lake Lanier staff to make sure the 2019 conference is a more enjoyable experience. We will also be looking carefully at location options as we plan ahead for 2020-2021 conferences to be voted on at Mid-Winter in January.

Thank you to each and everyone that completed our post-conference survey. We had 246 responses representing almost half of our organization. The board made sure to read each response that was submitted, and we appreciate the feedback. I have summarized the survey results on the following pages.

Thank you for all you do! Please reach out to the board if you ever have any questions, concerns, or comments. We are here to serve and represent you.

## GVATA 2018 Summer Conference Survey Summary (On a 1-5 scale)

### OVERALL EXPERIENCE: 3.76

#### Summary of Comments

- Great location but too small for our group
- Expensive accommodations
- Not enough restaurant options on site

#### Feedback

We are working with the Lake Lanier staff to adjust for next year, but some things we cannot change. Although the location did not meet our expectations, the majority vote was for a resort location and prices will naturally be higher. They cannot add additional restaurant options, but we did request them to keep the existing locations open longer.

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### REGISTRATION: 4.70

#### Summary of Comments

- Positive comments on new system
- Fast, easy, smooth, efficient
- The registration link “takes over” the GVATA page when using a mobile device

#### Feedback

The new registration system has made the process much more efficient, and we will continue to use it for all future conferences. We will move the registration link to a new page to prevent it from taking over the mobile view of the conference page.

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### HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS: 3.71

#### Summary of Comments

- Were not clear about accommodations offered
- Nice hotel, but small rooms for price
- Expensive breakfast options

#### Feedback

We were unaware of the discounted water park tickets until halfway through conference, and the fliers they had were misleading. This will be corrected and communicated better. We requested a “grab and go” breakfast option this year, but did not get it. We expressed that during the exit meeting.

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### HOTEL RESERVATION PROCESS: 3.94

#### Summary of Comments

- Friendly staff, easy to work with
- Hotel block was full and could not stay on site
- Liked the option of villas and lake houses

#### Feedback

We were told that we had all of the rooms at the lodge, but we will work to better protect our room block for next year. Just a reminder to book early!

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### AWARDS LUNCHEON MEAL: 2.83

#### Summary of Comments

- Varying comments about how terrible the food was, except for dessert
- Would prefer a buffet

#### Feedback

We were told three weeks before conference that we could not have a buffet due to space. We were given limited options for a plated meal. If we are at a different venue for the awards lunch, we should have space to do a buffet lunch with multiple options.

## GVATA 2018 Summer Conference Survey Summary (On a 1-5 scale)

### AWARDS LUNCHEON LOCATION & FACILITIES: 3.16

#### Summary of Comments

- Too small of a space; not enough room to move around
- Not enough servers, service was slow
- Some felt disconnected sitting in the “spillover” room; others didn’t mind

#### Feedback

We were originally planning to have the luncheon at Peachtree Pointe, a larger venue located just inside the Islands entrance. When Margaritaville purchased the property, they began renovations preventing us from using the location. We will be able to use this venue next year, and everyone will be in one room. Although the venue will be bigger, it is not located close to the lodge. There is room for parking, and our plan is to have the hotel provide transportation also to and from the lodge.

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### PARKING: 3.19

#### Summary of Comments

- Not enough parking, including at villas
- Not enough staff to accommodate the crowd
- Many were unaware that the valet was free, but those that utilized the service were pleased
- Shuttle service helped at times

#### Feedback

We expressed that they needed more valet staff for our conference to help accommodate parking issues. Obviously they cannot increase their parking lot, but we will work on increasing shuttle services from other larger parking lots on the property.

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### BREAKOUT SPACE LOCATION: 2.94

#### Summary of Comments

- Too cramped, had to leave sessions because of no room
- Too hot
- Congested hallways between meetings
- Need tables for some of the hands-on sessions

#### Feedback

Part of the issue goes back to being at a new location and not knowing logistically how things are going to work. We have already rearranged rooms for next year to utilize larger spaces and spread the sessions out to prevent crowded rooms and congestion in the hallways. We will also set some rooms aside with tables for those hands-on sessions. Some sessions will always be crowded due to popularity, but I know we have a much better plan in place for next year.

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### BREAKOUT MEETING CONTENT: 4.20

#### Summary of Comments

- Best year of breakouts, good variety
- Loved the roundtable discussions, but need a set agenda
- Liked hearing from industry, but some just seemed like sales pitches
- More middle school and CDE content

#### Feedback

Huge shout out to Marcus Pollard for organizing a great schedule of breakout sessions! We will continue to ask for your input as we schedule for future conferences. If you have an idea to share or would like to present a session, please let us know!