

OCTOBER 17, 2019

A RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI DECLARING NO CONFIDENCE IN THE MISSISSIPPI BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING (“IHL BOARD”) AND THE CHANCELLOR SELECTION PROCESS.

Preamble:

The University of Mississippi is a nationally-regarded institution of higher education and R1 research university, and it is clearly in the interest of the University and the State of Mississippi to maintain and enhance the regard that the University currently enjoys. The prestige and effectiveness of the office of Chancellor of the University is of critical importance both to the development and support of the University’s internal activities, and to the preservation of its reputation and standing among institutions of higher learning, current and potential students, faculty, staff, alumni, private donors, foundations, and federal grant managers.

WHEREAS, it is therefore essential that any search for a new Chancellor be focused on seeking out and selecting the most highly-qualified candidate from among a broad pool of competitive applicants; and

WHEREAS, it is therefore essential that any search for a new Chancellor be conducted according to the principle of shared governance which is crucial to unifying the community in establishing the legitimacy of the search process and the authority of its results; and

WHEREAS, to achieve these ends, any search for a new chancellor must be conducted with transparency and integrity; and

WHEREAS, the IHL BOARD’s decision to suspend its own bylaws and rules (§301.0510D) demonstrates a disregard for the board’s role as a public body accountable to its constituencies and furthermore violates basic principles of fair and equitable hiring; and

WHEREAS, the premature termination of the search according to the IHL BOARD’s publicly-announced procedure, the de-selection of the qualified applicants previously put forward to University constituencies and determined to be finalists for the position, and the appointment of a non-applicant who was serving as a paid consultant to the search process and who has close ties to the IHL BOARD creates the perception of impropriety on the part of the IHL BOARD; and

WHEREAS, this appearance of impropriety engenders concern that this search process has ignored the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges’ (SACSCOC) guidelines calling for the “absence of undue influence from external sources,” thus jeopardizing the University of Mississippi’s accreditation; and

WHEREAS, the IHL BOARD has failed to satisfactorily respond to a resolution of the Faculty Senate on October 8, 2019, which requested “A complete accounting, including a detailed timeline, of all actions taken by the IHL [BOARD] and any groups or individuals working with the IHL [BOARD] on the recently completed search for the next chancellor of the University of Mississippi”; and

WHEREAS, this abortive and irregular process has caused harm to our institution and endangered its reputation, not least in creating distrust in the University’s rules of governance; and

WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate acts as part of the University’s shared governance model in conjunction with the Associated Student Body and other representative campus bodies, such as the Black Student Union, and affirms the importance of the resolutions passed by these bodies;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE FACULTY SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI VOTES

- 1) “NO CONFIDENCE” IN THE PROCESS EMPLOYED BY THE IHL BOARD IN SEARCHING FOR AND SELECTING A NEW CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY; and
- 2) “NO CONFIDENCE” IN THE IHL BOARD BY REASON OF ITS CONDUCT IN CONNECTION WITH THAT SEARCH PROCESS.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE SENATE OF THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI CALLS UPON THE IHL BOARD TO WORK WITH STAKEHOLDERS OF THE EIGHT MISSISSIPPI STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING TO REVISE THE POLICIES GOVERNING THE HIRING OF INSTITUTIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS.