

Action Plan on Consultant Reports and Update on the Work of the Sensitivity and Respect Committee

To: All Who Love The University of Mississippi

From: Dan Jones, Chancellor

Aug. 1, 2014

In the summer of 2013, an expanded Sensitivity and Respect (S&R) Committee completed its review of the university's environment on race and related issues. Following the committee's report, two consultants with relevant experience at major universities were assigned separate but complementary tasks. One was charged with evaluating the University of Mississippi's organizational structure related to diversity and inclusion, and the other explored issues the committee raised concerning building names and symbols. (Both consultant reports are attached.)

We are grateful for the good work of the S&R Committee and our independent advisors. Consultants Ed Ayers and Christy Coleman have been leaders in Richmond, VA, in establishing a more balanced view of history for that community, where symbolism has been a prominent topic. Their recommendations encourage us to broaden the visible symbols of our history to be more intentionally inclusive. Greg Vincent offers insight about our organizational structure out of his own experience reorganizing the approach at the University of Texas, where they adopted several time-tested practices implemented at other flagship universities, including creation of a new senior level leadership position with a focus on diversity.

Both of these reports are candid in suggesting that more can be done here to improve our environment for diversity and inclusion. Both also note the good work and positive spirit for continued progress in our university. Our success in improving diversity within our faculty and student body has been dramatic, but we can do more. And despite negative publicity related to recent bias-related incidents, it is good news that the number of minority applicants to the university continues to increase each year. In addition, the improvement in diversity within our faculty has been extraordinary, placing us among the top three flagship universities in the nation in percentage of African American faculty members. Still, we can and will do more.

It is my hope that the action plan outlined here – reflecting the hard work of the S&R Committee and our consultants – will prove valuable in making us a stronger and healthier university, bringing us closer to our goal of being a warm and welcoming place for every person every day, regardless of race, religious preference, country of origin, ability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or gender expression. We know that the issues discussed here are associated with many evolving attitudes and opinions. There were and will continue to be differences of opinion among us. But I am encouraged that while our discussions over recent months were frank, even tough, they also were civil and

respectful. My very sincere thanks go out to all of those who demonstrated these values throughout the process.

People with different views will likely find parts of this action plan they like and other parts they do not. Some will agree or disagree with individual comments reported by our consultants. As our consultants noted and as readers should remember, the comments reported here did not result from scientific research or a random sample. They are thoughts from people who felt strongly about the issues we have faced as a university, people who were encouraged to be candid. To whatever degree they do or do not reflect majority opinion, they are important views to air. It was important that we hear from everyone who loves this university. Too often when viewpoints are wide-ranging and emotional, the easy answer for leaders is a non-decision, freezing people at a point in time and putting progress off to another day. To me, that is not leadership. And our mission as a university is to lead.

Whatever the views may be on different aspects of this report, I am hopeful that people who read it and find places to agree or disagree will honor a process that encouraged honest dialogue and valued every idea. I am also hopeful that with decisions made, we have found common ground to move this university forward.

With many months of hard work behind us, we now have a strong foundation for the work ahead. I'll count on your help in making this plan the success I know it can be.

Following are the six specific recommendations from our consultants and the action plan for each:

1. Create a vice chancellor level position for diversity and inclusion at The University of Mississippi.

The Provost is charged with creating a specific position title, portfolio, set of responsibilities, and initial budget for this new administrative position. He will work within policy for creating a new position, including consultation with the faculty and approval by our governing board. He will appoint a search committee to begin work within the Fall 2014 semester.

2. The University of Mississippi should establish a portfolio model of diversity and engagement.

See response to recommendation 1.

3. The University of Mississippi must deal squarely with the issue of race while also addressing the other dimensions of diversity.

This point is important for all of us to grasp. We look forward to a day when it is the norm to embrace and celebrate our differences, when our country and state have become a truly post-racial society. But that day has not yet arrived. Clearly, there are still issues

regarding race that our country must address. And we will need to continue a dialogue on race at our university. Our unique history regarding race provides not only a larger responsibility for providing leadership on race issues, but also a large opportunity – one we should and will embrace. The faculty group focusing on our history with slavery began its work during the last year, and it is a healthy example of the kind of scholarly leadership we can provide. The work of the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation must and will continue, as well. And with advice and support from the new vice chancellor, important work (such as the Critical Race Studies Group) can be supported further and encouraged. This will be an important part of the responsibilities for the new vice chancellor.

4. The University should consider a symbolic and formal dedication of all new students to the ideals of inclusion and fairness to which the University of Mississippi is devoted.

The UM Creed was adopted by our community for this purpose – as a means of communicating and cultivating our community’s core values. Even though as a public university we cannot require any sort of pledge or oath as a condition of enrollment, working with current students and others we will pursue ways to elevate and imbue our community with the values of the Creed through a variety of means, ranging from the formal and ceremonial to the common and pervasive. The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs is charged with implementation of this recommendation.

5. We recommend that the University offer more history, putting the past into context, telling more of the story of Mississippi’s struggles with slavery, secession, segregation, and their aftermath.

Decisions made in the city of Richmond, VA, offer an enlightened example for us. Without attempts to erase history, even some difficult history, and without removing existing statues and building names, the city has moved toward balancing the way its history is represented by offering context for symbols and adding meaningful new symbols. Some of this kind of work began on our campus with the erection of the Meredith statue. Further opportunities lay ahead.

The new vice chancellor will be charged with the long-term management of this recommendation. Until that selection is complete, the Provost and the Assistant to the Chancellor for Multicultural Affairs are charged to lead this effort.

These university leaders should seek suggestions from various interested constituency groups regarding future naming opportunities for centers, buildings, etc., that will lead to a fuller expression of our history. These constituency groups might include, among others, the Faculty Senate, Staff Council, the Associated Student Body, Black Student Union, Alumni Association, Black Alumni Association, the Isom Center, The Winter Institute, and the Center for Inclusion & Cross Cultural Engagement.

They also should initiate an effort to provide contemporary context for some of our existing symbols and names, which are too often viewed as an endorsement of ancient ideas. Any and all symbols and buildings may benefit from this, but some to consider in the early stages include Vardaman Hall, the ballroom in Johnson Commons, and the Confederate Statue. This might be done in a number of ways, including accompanying plaques that provide context and an educational opportunity for students and campus visitors who are interested in our history.

Some immediate steps are being taken to begin the process:

- The entrance of the newly named Manning Center was recently designated the Williams-Reed Foyer. This designation recognizes Ben Williams and James Reed, the first two African American football players at the university. Thanks to Ross Bjork, Hugh Freeze, and others in athletics for their leadership in creating this recognition.
- The new Center for Inclusion and Cross - Cultural Engagement will open in fall 2014 in Stewart Hall and later in the renovated and expanded Student Union, enhancing the quantity and quality of programming and leadership initiatives for underrepresented students. Our students have been and will continue to be instrumental in developing this campus resource.
- We will move forward with changes to two street names. Coliseum Drive will need a new name when the Tad Smith Coliseum is replaced with our new basketball arena. On a recommendation from the University of Mississippi Alumni Association and the M-Club, at the appropriate time the street currently known as Coliseum Drive will be renamed “Roy Lee ‘Chucky’ Mullins Drive.” The spirit of Chucky Mullins is a great unifying force for our university. A second street name change will extend the use of “Chapel Lane” to the single block on the opposite side of Fraternity Row previously named “Confederate Drive”.

6. We recommend that the University consider the implications of calling itself “Ole Miss” in various contexts.

Our longstanding nickname is beloved by the vast majority of our students and alumni. A few, especially among our faculty, are uncomfortable using the term “Ole Miss” – some at all, and some within the academic context. Some object simply because it is a nickname and prefer the more formal name, and some express concern about its origin, believing that the term is racist.

Some of what was learned about the “Ole Miss” name over the last year or so, in a purposeful evaluation, includes:

- The vast majority of current students of all races embraces the name and does not attach any meaning to it other than an affectionate name for the university.
- National research revealed that there is no greater association with negative racial history for either “University of Mississippi” or “Ole Miss.” In fact, a significant

margin likes and prefers the “Ole Miss” name. And a very small percentage of respondents associate the university with negative race issues, whatever the name.

- Regardless of its origin, the vast majority of those associated with our university has a strong affection for “Ole Miss” and do not associate its use with race in any way. And the vast majority of those who view us from a distance associate the term “Ole Miss” with a strong, vibrant, modern university – and the Manning family, *The Blind Side*, The 2008 Presidential Debate, and great sports teams.

We are fortunate to have a highly favorable national reputation for our university, especially our fine academic programs. Applications and enrollment continue to soar. The quality of our applicants improves every year. And the affectionate term “Ole Miss” is and will continue to be an important part of our national identity.

To address some concerns, the Provost and Chief Communications Officer are charged with developing a plan to provide guidance on best uses of the terms “The University of Mississippi” and “Ole Miss.” This plan should broadly follow traditional convention that the term “Ole Miss” is strongly associated with athletics and the broad “spirit” of the university (e.g. the alma mater), and “The University of Mississippi” is strongly associated with the academic context.

University Communications will continue to offer a choice of stationary and name cards that reflect only the use of “The University of Mississippi” without reference to nicknames.

Additional Work of the Sensitivity and Respect Committee

The work of the Sensitivity and Respect Committee has continued on several fronts, with important progress to report.

- The Bias Incidence Response Team (BIRT) was created during the summer of 2013, with a charge to affirm the Creed when incidents of bias arise. This inter-disciplinary team investigates, reports and offers educational outcomes when legal or conduct options are not available. Its goal is to promote educationally driven outcomes that enable students, faculty and staff to learn about discriminatory behavior and language.
- The University of Mississippi Police Department (UPD) provided diversity training for 67 employees, involving experts from the U.S. Department of Justice, and established a process for diversity training for all new hires.
- The Student Affairs division partnered with the Winter Institute to expand diversity training initiatives, with 32 percent of staff having now completed training and all scheduled to complete the program by 2015. Other divisions across campus are being encouraged to schedule training, as well.
- Renderings are being developed to incorporate a National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) garden between Northgate Drive and the new residential facility being constructed beside Crosby hall. This student-centered area will be a visible monument that represents the important history and critical campus engagement opportunities

afforded by our historically black fraternities and sororities. The timeline for completion is uncertain at the early part of the planning phases, but our hope is to begin work after the residence hall opens in fall 2015.

- The Diverse Learning Environment Survey was administered to all sophomores and juniors in the spring of 2013. It will be repeated every three years as a means of measuring campus climate; results will be presented to the S&R Committee.
- A variety of student-focused efforts have been initiated, including enhanced academic advising and support for participants in the Ole Miss Opportunity (OMO) program, increased focus on building relationships with high schools having a high minority concentration, and mandatory “Respect the M” sessions at Orientation, covering both academic and behavioral expectations. EDHE 105 and the related text have been enhanced, resulting in a common curriculum across all sections to uniformly discuss race and sexual orientation. An extended orientation and leadership development training program will be offered as a pilot beginning in the fall of 2015, focusing on diversity training, team building, university history and leadership development.
- To create a culture of research excellence related to race, the Critical Race Studies group invited as its keynote speaker the author Craig Steven Wilder, who wrote *Ebony and Ivy*. In addition, our faculty is creating an inventory of University of Mississippi race-related research. With the assistance of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, a group of 10 UM investigators spanning seven academic and administrative units are collaborating to develop a National Science Foundation Research Traineeship (NRT) proposal. This certificate program that would prepare STEM graduate students to take culturally responsive, multi-method, and interdisciplinary approaches in research, addressing racial and other disparities in disaster readiness and response.

April 8, 2014

Dr. Daniel W. Jones, Chancellor
The University of Mississippi
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Dear Dr. Jones,

Thank you again for the invitation to join the University in a series of conversations to reflect upon the impact of Confederate symbols, segregationist history, and racially insensitive incidents that have recurred on your campus. We are grateful for the opportunity to share some thoughts occasioned by our visit and to offer suggestions about how best to move the community closer to its core values. We heard many times that those values include respect for all individuals and groups, inclusiveness in its student body, faculty and staff, and a civil community of shared governance and collaborative endeavors.

Allow us to begin with a few words of background. As we mentioned to each group, we are by no means organizational, diversity, or crisis management consultants. Instead, we have simply worked in our own community to raise the conversation about how the historical past plays an active role in how those within and outside the community view it. For decades, Richmond was marketed and identified as the “Capital of the Confederacy” and the anchor of the “Glorious Lost Cause.” As such, our city has vast monuments devoted to the Confederate heroes, with numerous roads, schools and public buildings named for them as well. It has only been in the past ten to fifteen years that Richmond has begun to honor its richly diverse past.

On the eve of the Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, Richmond’s cultural, academic, tourism and nonprofit organizations wanted to seize the opportunity to ensure that any commemoration of this seminal event reflected the highest levels of scholarship, had a comprehensive historical narrative, and shared with the world that Richmond is a dynamic and desirable place to visit and live in the twenty-first century. A series of community conversations focused on history and contemporary issues led to a number of important public initiatives, cultural programs, and dynamic partnerships. While there is certainly much more to be accomplished, Richmond has emerged a stronger place. Named by Frommer’s as a “must see” destination for 2014, Richmond’s historical narrative and cultural assets have placed it among fourteen cities worldwide to earn this distinction.

We applaud the University of Mississippi for the steps taken over the years to begin a series of conversations around how its symbols have shaped and limited its community. The decision to bring outsiders into your process could be perceived as risky, but it may also enable participants to be more candid. During the course of our visit, it was abundantly clear that the community of faculty, staff, students and alumni are passionate and dedicated to creating a campus environment that is not just diverse but truly inclusive. Through the course of our conversations, a common theme emerged that reflects a desire by all to work with administration to find

meaningful solutions to the ongoing issues that plague the University. There was also frustration, however, that current efforts seemed slow and ineffective in ensuring that those who breach the social contract by their discriminatory actions are dealt with appropriately.

We thank you again for the invitation to listen and to reflect on what we experienced. The following pages represent our recommendations on how you may move forward.

Sincerely,
Edward L. Ayers
Christy Coleman

Three recommendations to the University of Mississippi

Our recommendations respond to what we heard during our conversations with various groups at the University, conversations described later in this document. While individuals in each conversation voiced different perspectives, in the aggregate the conversations pointed toward several kinds of changes that might help the University move beyond the cycle of dispiriting and disturbing events that have recurred over the years despite heartening improvements in many facets of the University's life.

Our charge was to focus on history, on symbols, and on monuments and so we have shaped our recommendations around those issues while recognizing that other kinds of changes could also bring improvement. Everyone at the University recognizes that symbolism matters, for good and for ill.

Our first recommendation is that the University consider a symbolic and formal dedication of all new students to the ideals of inclusion and fairness to which the University of Mississippi is devoted. We envision a public, solemn, and meaningful ceremony at which new students sign a pledge that they will abide by the highest principles of their schools. The pledge's words, in turn, will appear in every classroom at the institution and serve as a touchstone for all who belong to the University, including current students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

While such a pledge is no panacea, of course, its creation would offer the University an opportunity at the outset of every student's time at Mississippi to make clear just how seriously everyone in the University community takes these principles. Powerful speakers—including students, faculty, and alumni—could honestly confront the issues that have torn at the University of Mississippi for the last half century and tell students that they have the opportunity and the obligation to stop the cycle.

The Creed is an excellent start, focusing on the positive attributes the University instills. Its language of "I believe," however, lacks the more active language of "I pledge" or "I promise." A stronger pledge could reinforce the courses that entering students take at Mississippi, providing a more engaged way for students to respond to the information and insight conveyed in those classes. It could be adopted and promoted by the fraternities and sororities, by athletic teams and student organization, by alumni groups and staff organizations in which many in the Mississippi community locate their identities. It would give these groups that need to lead the opportunity to do so, among and beyond their own constituencies.

Many details would need to be determined about the pledge, of course, but the very process of debate would be healthy. At the very least, the most recent and sophisticated scholarship on this issue demonstrates that a university-wide code or pledge, repeated in many places and at many times, creates an awareness and an impact that radiates throughout the institution's life. Whether the code would be expanded to include academic honor or other ideals could also be a productive topic of discussion.

Our second recommendation grows directly from our charge to think about symbolism embodied in names, monuments, and other historical symbols. We recommend that the University offer more history, putting the past into context, telling more of the story of Mississippi's struggles with slavery, secession, segregation, and their aftermath. Such work would provide a more coherent narrative than currently exists, in which several isolated monuments, including the Confederate Memorial and the James Meredith monument, seem to stand at polar opposites, with vast blank spaces of time and struggle missing. People are not told in any meaningful way about the world of slavery in which the University began, the decision for secession that shaped everything that followed, or the segregation that dominated life in the South for a century after the Civil War. People are not shown how white and black Mississippians lived with these institutions and decisions, what their implications were, how people fought against racial division and for the ideals the University now embodies.

We can imagine interpretive panels at important places around the University, made interesting and engaging with photographs and well-written text, that tell of the way things used to be and how they have changed. Panels are commonly used in different kinds of settings throughout the nation to interpret public spaces in ways that enrich them. The panels can offer humane connections with actual people with actual names who struggled with their own times just as we struggle with our own.

The tours of the campus offered to prospective students, visitors, and alumni could also do a better job of interpreting the history of the place in a coherent and powerful way. The University needs to tell its story in an open, honest, and compassionate way. Simply trying to put its past behind it or to pretend that only the welcome parts existed will not work.

Our third recommendation involves the nickname of the institution, a symbol evoked thousands of times every day. Some see the nickname of “Ole Miss” as a kind of glue that binds people together across divisions of age, race, gender, and time. Others see the nickname as a symbol that holds the University back; building a dialect version of “old” into an institution that is built to prepare for the future strikes them as inherently problematic. Some of those who love “Ole Miss” recognize that the name grew from an antebellum past of slavery; some think it has been transcended by the progress of the decades since the University’s integration while others think that it continually pulls Mississippi back into the past. Many people we met are reluctant to talk about the name, regardless of their own thoughts, knowing that it is beloved by many alumni and inscribed in the University’s popular identity.

Recognizing these differences, we recommend that the University consider the implications of calling itself “Ole Miss” in various contexts. A nickname cannot carry the weight and gravity of the state’s name or convey the seriousness of purpose that an important institution of research, health care, and social mission deserves. In interactions involving grant proposals, job applications, or letters of recommendation in particular, we were told, faculty, staff, and students chafe at having the email address read “olemiss.edu.” They think the University should identify itself as “umiss.edu” in such contexts. This does seem worth considering for official University business and the University might well consider making “Mississippi” or the “The University of Mississippi” the default. The nickname could be reserved, as it is for almost all other universities, for athletics and alumni relations.

These three recommendations are not the only things that could and should be done, of course, but they will be challenging and prompt action on them would demonstrate good will, honesty, and a sense of purpose by the University. Over time, we believe, meaningful outcomes from these recommendations could shape the culture and daily life of the University in helpful ways. This seems a propitious time for the University of Mississippi to embrace the best that it represents, symbolically as in other ways.

Summaries of conversations

In order to frame our recommendations, it is important that we share the substance of the discussions as well as other themes that emerged within each group. It is also important for the reader to understand that these groups were invited to meet with us because of particular work being done by each, or because of concerns previously expressed. It may be helpful to consider each a sample versus a comprehensive overview of sentiment held by the University community at large.

Southern Studies:

Faculty members wanted to make clear that the department is devoted to documenting southern culture, not “preserving it.” They emphasized that this distinction is critical because they believe that, outside the academic community, others incorrectly view their work as somehow reflecting the culture of “The Old South.” They noted that some students are drawn to their courses thinking that views of southern white heritage will be enhanced and reinforced, while other students avoid the department’s course offerings because of an expectation that “southern culture” is coded as white. The faculty and staff in Southern Studies believe that they can be a partner with the administration to reverse these mindsets through scholarship and community outreach. They would like to create more opportunities for collaboration with the African American Studies program, working on shared course offerings, programs and symposia.

On the specific questions that brought us to the University, faculty in Southern Studies believe that University should rename several of its streets, especially Confederate Way and Rebel Drive. They also find the name “Ole Miss” problematic, preferring to use “The University of Mississippi” instead. This was the first time we heard, but not the last, that some resented the fact that “olemiss.edu” was used for the email system versus “UMiss.edu.” They viewed the email address as a signal to the outside world that the university is a place that embraces notions of the old south and its historically exclusionary practices. This was the first time we heard, too, that the recurring racial incidents lead faculty and staff to feel that the campus is not a safe and nurturing place, but it would not be the last.

Student Leaders:

As the conversation began, this large, diverse, and impressive group of students were very positive about their impressions of campus life. They acknowledged the historical origins of the “Ole Miss” name yet believed that they now own the term and have attached new meaning to it. For them, “Ole Miss” is a community of people devoted to each other, to diversity, and to academic excellence. Therefore they had no desire to see the (nick)name changed.

When asked about symbolism, the students did want to see some street names changed as well as Vardaman and Johnson Halls. They made a useful distinction between symbols and monuments, with symbols representing what is valued now and monuments representing what the past considered valuable. One student even poignantly suggested that after 50 years, they wondered if “we love our symbols more than we love individuals.” As the conversation went on, a number of disturbing revelations began to emerge that gave us pause.

The majority of the students participating in the discussion were Mississippians, and they blamed the bulk of the racially insensitive flare ups on “outsiders.” They attributed this pattern to misconceptions held by out-of-state students who mistakenly assume the University is a place that embraces a racist ideology. The students viewed recent incidents as a form of lashing out brought on by the realization by those outsiders that their racist mindset and behavior are not acceptable to the majority.

Students told us that the proverbial elephant in the room was the Greek system. A number of students believe that the traditional fraternities and sororities serve as attractors, incubators, and protectors for students wedded to the symbols and beliefs of the South’s racist past. With few exceptions, the majority of the group, white and black, nodded in agreement. The African American students shared examples of indignities they have been subject to or witness of that involved the fraternities and sororities. Every black student in the room said that they had been called the “N-Word” at least once on campus.

From rejection of people of color into the organizations, chanting “The South will rise again” at sporting events, to hurling racist and sexual epithets at innocent passersby, the Greeks are viewed as a major problem. The group agreed that the Greeks are protected by generational wealth and privilege, with parents and older alumni demanding that new members adhere to the customs of the past. Effective policing of the fraternity’s behavior, students believe, is left to national organizations, with the University rarely stepping in to curb abuses.

As they considered how to improve the situation, the group recommended rethinking freshman orientation. Many of the students serve as ambassadors of one sort or another to help share what the university has to offer with others. They all expressed a desire to emphasize the university’s history, accomplishments and creed—to make clear that it is a thriving and modern university that is open and inclusive—despite the racial flashpoints. The student body president noted that they had taken upon themselves to reinforce the ideas expressed by the University Creed by hosting Creed Day, a celebration of the diversity of campus life. This effort was applauded, but students felt more could be done because they acknowledged a disconnection between the creed and tradition. The good news is that all prepared to help start new traditions.

Sensitivity and Respect Committee:

Given the work done by this committee, we felt it most useful to get feedback from them about what had been shared with us by the previous groups. We shared that the predominant themes heard at that point were a general comfort by students about “Ole Miss,” a desire by all to rethink university symbols, perceptions of “outsiders” as the source of trouble, and unregulated fraternities and sororities. After our remarks, Dr. Cole asked each attendee how they viewed the feedback given. Again, their responses were quite telling.

Several committee members were upset to learn that the students with whom we spoke, regardless of ethnicity, embraced the term “Ole Miss” and made a distinction between symbols and monuments. When asked if this could be simply a generational divide, several members of the group questioned the veracity of the students’ comments. When asked to speak more about

campus symbols, several suggested that these symbols have a twofold impact. First, they attract students who embrace the ideology the symbols embody, or second, they keep broad-minded students from even considering Mississippi. The majority of the group believed that all divisive symbols should be removed without further delay. Some members also wanted to see new monuments or art work that counterbalances those symbols. New symbols should not just be directed at the historical or racial past, they said, but represent recent accomplishments made in education, research, medicine, and the arts at the University.

During the course of the conversation, an African American male student shared that he is in danger of losing a scholarship that he earned from a minority organization in his home community in Mississippi. He said the group no longer wanted to see their money spent at what they perceive to be an institution intent on protecting its racist elements by inaction exemplified by the continuing rash of incidents. He further explained that he has spent considerable time trying to get them to understand that the incidents, while disturbing, are not reflective of his experience at the University, but his sponsors are looking for tangible acts to correct these problems.

Several committee members said that they do not feel empowered nor do they believe the committee's recommendations will be implemented. They would like to see the University take bold steps to make it known that these behaviors will not be tolerated. They want to see evidence that the University's Creed enjoys support and benefits from enforcement. They would like to see more forums to stress the importance of an inclusive community that respects everyone. Most felt nothing substantive has happened since they issued their report. They are frustrated.

Athletics, Development and Alumni Affairs

Among all the groups with whom we met, this was perhaps the one that has the most consistent contact with "external" communities that feel a connection to the University. The Athletics Department stated that they have been on the cutting edge of challenging the divisive symbols for quite some time. As such, their view is that things have been progressing. They acknowledged that incidents crop up from time to time, but attitudes are changing. A member shared that during a televised football game, they noticed a group of students preparing to unfurl a Confederate flag, but they were able to get to them and remove it. They said there are die-hards that want Colonel Reb and the flag, but those are no longer the university's symbols. They are committed to that change.

The Development and Alumni Affairs staffed noted that Colonel Reb and the flag continue to be sore spots for them when they are out meeting with and soliciting donors. They stated that devoted alumni feel that the removal of these symbols was an assault on the history and heritage of the University. They said that alumni feel as though there is a gradual process of taking away the things they value and often ask staff, "what's next? Ole Miss? Rebels?" Therefore they view any change in those two names as real deal breakers that could irreparably harm the University.

When asked to discuss other symbols on campus, the group felt there was great opportunity to name new facilities to honor exceptional people and diverse options were named. They also said there are ways in the athletic facilities to showcase much-beloved athletes in more prominent

cases at the stadium and other facilities. They had little issue with renaming Vardaman Hall and feel that renaming the roads was really a non-issue; they thought it could be done without much resistance. They recommended that rather than take away monuments, the university should add more that reflect where the university is today. As we submit our report, we are pleased to hear of the renaming of the entrance of the athletics performance center for Ben Williams and James Reed.

When asked to respond to the suggestion of initiating an honor code of some type, the group as a whole was very supportive of having one. They said that students are ready and willing to be involved in such an effort. There are a number of groups on campus and among the alumni with a real hunger to do something positive to show the world that the University of Mississippi is a stellar community. By taking these types of steps, they felt it could show the world that they are serious about change.

Community Leaders and Alumni

This diverse and impressive group was eager to hear some of the feedback from the other meetings. In the course of the conversation, they said that the University has a responsibility to tell its full story, especially its progress in its diversity initiatives. They also stressed that it is important that the university not rest on mere statistics of success but recognize that the statistics don't fully reflect the reality of life on campus for students.

The group also recognized the frustration that faculty, staff, and students have regarding their perception of the pace of change. They expressed their own concerns that the University seems to be in a reactive mode. They think that University communications should do a better job of getting in front of and controlling the narrative as well as the interpretation of the campus symbols. They believe that purposefully naming new facilities will help. But ultimately it is up to the university to tell its full story and develop a full plan of communication within and beyond the campus.

The group was very receptive to the idea of an honor code, student-led with faculty support. These leaders believe that the Creed is a valuable and underutilized asset that can be placed at the heart of that honor system. With the help of the Winter Institute, they told us, forums can educate faculty, staff, and students in how best to stand firm and fight for the values expressed in the University Creed. They are confident that there is unity among a variety of groups in the University community that can be leveraged to make this happen. Among other suggestions, the group said that in the short term the Creed should be prominent on the website, it should be given special note during parent and new student orientations, and that better use of social media to take advantage of the emphasis.

Dr. Neff and Graduate Students

As we spoke with this group, it became apparent that they shared sentiments similar to those of the Center for Southern Studies with regard to symbols, monuments, and names on campus. Students agreed that the University may inadvertently be a magnet for those who believe it is a beacon for "southern heritage," defined as white and exclusionary. The students believe that the

Confederacy is central to the identity of the University in ways that are not as apparent at other southern colleges.

Within this context, the students shared stories of indignities to which they have been subject, witnessed themselves, or had been told about involving racial and/or homophobic name-calling. One PhD went so far as to say the recent event made him feel unsafe not only for himself but for his young family. Several said that after the incident they received calls from friends and colleagues around the country asking if they were okay. This led to further discussions about whether or not the school would be able to attract the best and brightest given these recurring incidents. One student noted that the University seems healthy and vibrant in many ways, but is tragically trapped in recurring patterns, habit, and forces.

As academics, they feel that the name “Ole Miss” trivializes the seriousness of their scholarly work, with all preferring the formal name University of Mississippi. They also expressed a desire to have an “UMiss.edu” email versus the assigned “OleMiss.edu,” arguing that if alumni and athletes want it, so be it, but give the option to those who do not want it.

The conversation shifted to one about “outsiders.” The graduate students argued that blaming people from outside is a long-standing tradition at the school. They felt that it was the same language (or excuse) used during segregationists’ fights or anytime something unsavory happened at the University. They argued that there are no outsiders—all choose to become members of the University community—regardless of their states of origin. They further argued that those coming into the community need to understand what that means in terms of acceptable and intolerable behaviors.

When the idea of an honor code was introduced, the group endorsed it. They recognized that there could be legal challenges to such a thing, but noted that it works well at other campuses all over the country, including the South. They also said that they would stand firm and believe others would as well in unity with the administration if such a step were taken. They believe that the University’s actions to date had been tepid when swift and decisive action is needed. They believed acting more boldly would send a strong and clear message to the outside world that such behaviors would not be tolerated whether or not an actual crime had been committed.

Summary

During the course of our series of conversations, we were struck by the intensity of emotion all groups feel about the University. This is a community of students and staff that truly love their school, their home. They were disheartened by the continuing rash of incidents and want desperately for them to cease. All groups expressed a willingness to be partners with the administration to find viable solutions, and to take risks to do so. It was clear to us that there is adequate good will to create long-term solutions that move the University community closer to its stated ideals.



DIVISION OF DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement
110 Inner Campus Dr • Stop G1050 • Austin, TX 78712-1700 • (512) 471-3212 • Fax (512) 471-0819

May 15, 2014

Lee Tyner
General Counsel
Chief of Staff to the Chancellor
University of Mississippi
P.O. Box 1848
209 Lyceum
University, MS 38677-1848

Re: University of Mississippi Report

Dear Mr. Lee Tyner:

Enclosed is my report and recommendation for the University of Mississippi's diversity operations.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information provided.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Vincent".

Dr. Gregory J. Vincent
Vice-President for Diversity and Community Engagement
W.K. Kellogg Professor of Community College Leadership
Professor of Law
The University of Texas at Austin

CC: Daniel W. Jones, M.D. Chancellor
Morris H. Stocks, Ph.D. Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
DIVISION OF DIVERSITY AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

I was honored to visit the University of Mississippi (U of M) from March 4-6, 2014 and provide advice on the appropriate structure for the university's diversity operations. I was immediately impressed with the commitment from the senior leadership and the level of engagement on this critical issue from the faculty, staff, students and alumni. I understand that you also commissioned a study on the racial imagery on campus so I will limit my remarks to structure and scope of the diversity portfolio. It is evident to me that the University of Mississippi community is ready for a comprehensive effort to address diversity issues on campus and ensure that there is a healthy institutional culture for the entire campus community. I trust that my recommendation will make the U of M a model university for addressing race and other compelling diversity issues.

RECOMMENDATION # 1- CREATE A VICE CHANCELLOR POSTION FOR DIVERSITY AND ENGAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

My first recommendation is that the U OF M creates a Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement. This executive officer & Cabinet level position will serve as the chief diversity and & engagement officer for the campus and will provide both strategic and operational leadership for these efforts on campus. Creating a CDO position at the vice chancellor level is consistent with the practices of other public flagship universities such as the University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University, University of California Berkeley, University of Minnesota and the Ohio State University. This level is also appropriate given the exponential growth of the student body in recent years and the comprehensive breadth and depth of the degree programs ranging at the bachelors, professional and graduate degree levels.

Consistent with the senior level of the position, I advise that you require that the person hold a senior faculty rank and have some experience in university administration. At the very least, the person must hold credentials that garner the respect of the faculty and the U of M community. This model is consistent with other major universities and has proven to be very effective for other public flagships. Senior faculty status, coupled with university leadership experience will signal to the campus community that the executive leadership team is taking this position seriously and will help to ensure that this person will have credibility across the campus. I can speak from firsthand experience that being a tenured full professor makes the daunting task of serving as a chief diversity officer much easier, and opens doors, especially at the school college level.

I also recommend that this position report to the Provost with a strong connection to the Chancellor. Given the scope of responsibilities for the position (described in recommendation #2), it is appropriate that this position report to the chief academic officer. This will also ensure that diversity issues are embedded in the schools and colleges. This strategy is the most effective way for diversity to be institutionalized on campus and have comprehensive buy in. I am also confident in this strategy because of the current provost's demonstrated commitment to diversity and excellence. It is my understanding that other vice chancellors report to the provost, so this provides appropriate symmetry.

This new Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement will also need to have a strong formal and visible relationship with the Chancellor. This is especially true given the important external work this position will take on in partnership with Chancellor Jones. In fact, some universities have the chief diversity officer serve as both vice chancellor and vice provost. I don't think this is necessary given the very fluid and collaborative institutional structure at U of M. I advise that this vice chancellor meet with the Chancellor on a regular basis and define some projects to work on jointly. This will send the message that this position is plugged in at the highest level of the university.

Recommendation # 2- THE UNIVESITY OF MISSISSIPPI SHOULD ESTABLISH A PORTFOLIO MODEL OF DIVERSITY AND ENGAGEMENT

It is very important that the U of M connect a robust portfolio to the new Vice Chancellor Position. At least since 1998, many universities have established chief diversity officer positions to address culture and climate issues on campus. The first groups of CDO's were usually advisors with a limited / no portfolios and budgets. While these positions had some success, they were hindered by a lack of resources and had to rely almost exclusively on their advocacy and support of other senior officers. Fortunately a new trend was established where very well qualified chief diversity officers were given both strategic and operational responsibilities for diversity and at times other related functions. This portfolio model ensures that this new vice chancellor position looks and acts like other senior level positions on campus and will greatly aid in establishing credibility. Functions for the position could include but are limited to the following

- 1) Faculty recruitment (with established funded faculty lines in the portfolio)
- 2) Graduate student recruitment (again with an established budget)
- 3) The new Multicultural Center
- 4) The Center on Race
- 5) International Affairs
- 6) K-12 Partnerships and engagement with Mississippi communities that have been underserved by the U of M
- 7) Academic Service Learning and Student volunteerism

This portfolio would make this new Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement one of the most comprehensive unit of its kind in higher education and I am confident that you will attract a very talented applicant pool. Again I speak that this portfolio model makes the daunting task of addressing diversity much easier.

RECOMMENDATION # 3 THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI MUST SQUARELY DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF RACE WHILE ALSO ADDRESSING THE OTHER DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY

One of the most challenging issues facing the U of M is race relations on campus and the state. The long troubled history of race relations is known to all; and given the recent on-campus incidents'; it is still a sore spot for many in the community. I also believe that the U of M has the right leadership to make substantial progress on this issue and the CDO position will go a long way to healing some of the wounds. I advise that the university turn this liability into strength. The U of M can do this by devoting resources to building a world class faculty for the study of race. The University of Texas employed this approach with very positive results.

The U of M must also address the other dimensions of diversity as well. Although race is very much at the center issues of, socioeconomic status, gender, international affairs, differing ability and religion, it will play an increasingly important role at U of M and Mississippi. It is clearly an economic development issue and of course we all are firmly connected to the global community and society. It is obvious, but critically important to point out that the U of M must deal with vestiges of state-sponsored racial discrimination and the compelling dimensions of diversity affirmed by the United States Supreme Court. I believe that by taking this head on, the U of M will meet it strategic goals and effectively compete with the other flagship universities in American higher education.