

**Jackson State University**  
**President Search Listening Session No. 1 Faculty & Staff**  
**Wednesday, April 19, from 10-10:45 a.m.**  
**JSU Student Center Ballroom B**  
**Jackson, Mississippi**

Dr. Steven Cunningham, chair of the search committee for the 13th president of Jackson State University, welcomed faculty and staff to the listening session held by the Institutions of Higher Learning Board of Trustees. He indicated that the sessions allow stakeholders a voice in the desired qualities and qualifications they want to see in the next president of Jackson State University. Cunningham shared that he was a proud graduate of JSU, class of 1994, and he met his wife, a class of 1997 alum, at JSU. He informed the audience that his daughter is a future 2025 graduate of JSU. His late father, his wife's five uncles, and his brother-in-law are all JSU graduates from 1972, 73, 75, 78, 80 and 1991.

Cunningham recognized his fellow trustees in attendance as Dr. Ornella Cummings (Tupelo), Teresa Hubbard (Oxford), Chip Morgan (Leiland), Gee Ogletree (Madison), Bruce Martin (Meridian) and IHL Commissioner Dr. Alfred Rankins, Jr.

Cunningham identified board members present via Livestream, including Alfred McNair, and Walt Starr. He advised attendees to stay up to date on the search via the IHL website; the process will include developing a candidate profile; discussing the position of candidates, narrowing candidates to a small pool; conducting first interviews, selecting the finalists for second interviews; and ultimately the selection of the 13th president of Jackson State University.

The info collected in the listening session and through the online survey will be used to prepare the profile. He emphasized that participants' input is valuable and participation in the process is important to the board. A candidate profile is only possible by hearing the expected qualities and qualifications attendees believe are needed in a JSU president.

There is an online access component for members of the JSU family unable to attend or wish to submit written comments. There is an online survey available on the JSU President's search page on the IHL website at [www.mississippi.edu](http://www.mississippi.edu). The survey will remain open until midnight on April 26.

Noted how individuals should provide input during the listening sessions, approach microphone, state name and affiliation with the university. Reiterated Sessions are being Livestreamed. Advised to keep comments useful, constructive and forward focus for the benefit of potential candidates who will be viewing sessions at some point.

Premature to discuss any potential applicants. Please refrain from doing so at this time.

Accented that the future of JSU continues to be bright and urged people to share their thoughts about the type of leader needed to help JSU flourish.

**Please note: The below remarks and comments from the listening sessions are paraphrased and also include direct quotes.**

## **Session No. 1 Faculty & Staff:**

**Faculty/Staff** – We are at an all-time low in terms of morale. We are losing extremely good people who were student-centered, but because there is no administrative support for faculty. Faculty have experienced instances of bullying, intimidation, threats, and for some of us, it feels like we are being destroyed from the inside out.

**Faculty/Staff** – My hope is that we will find a leader for Jackson State who best serves this community, faculty, students, and staff, but who is going to be here and provide stable leadership for the long term. We need strong long-term leadership for this university.

**Faculty/Staff** – Worked at JSU for more than 17 years. This is my seventh president. (Expressed concerns over students cheating and competency of administration) I want to see the next president emphasize that the quality of education in this university is very important, not just the number. We are not graduating numbers. We want to graduate students who can get a job and fulfill their dreams.

**Faculty/Staff** – Someone with a strong fiscal management background. Jackson State has been in a place where finances have been struggling; someone with integrity; strong integrity, a person with a fiscal or financial management background to help this university move forward, not just on what they feel like, as a president, needs to happen, but what is in the best interest of students, number one, faculty and staff.

**Faculty/Staff** – Someone the city of Jackson, Mississippi and the nation respects. Someone the faculty respects. Someone with a strong moral code. Someone who works with everyone and will listen and hear the faculty. We do not always need a leader that does everything the faculty wants, but we at least need to be heard.

**Faculty/Staff** – Scholarship and the ability to do research. If we want to become a research one institution, which is the goal, we need the researchers to be able to do that. And that includes researchers like databases, and right now, even the students complain about not having access to those types of things. So a leader able to move those things forward so we can do the scholarship that we're capable of doing, we need the researchers to be able to do it.

**Faculty/Staff** – Looking for a candidate who has a comprehensive understanding of the student affairs roles and the challenges student affairs professionals face and advocates for additional resources and support for those professionals. Someone that is forward-thinking who can help generate a master plan that will help expand the bed count and generate partners that can address housing challenges faced in previous years.

**Faculty/Staff** – Someone who is focused on longevity and the ability to work cohesively. They would also have a vision, and that is what's most important, a vision for why they are accomplishing or why it needs to be accomplished.

So, when you seek a candidate, seek someone who is a visionary and who intends to have some longevity here on this campus and make an impact. This really is the lifeblood of this community. So whoever steps into this leadership position needs to be prepared to lead on campus and have the vision to allow this campus to lead the community. The quality of students

we produce matters, and we need someone with the vision to produce some of the highest quality students. So, in your search, we want somebody who intends to be here for an extended period and has a vision for taking the university to another level.

**Faculty/Staff** – We all know that the largest room in the world is the room for improvement. So that being the case, have you all really taken the time to look at the state of the university right now, looking at our plight, our possibility and potential to see what kind of traits you all want to see in the next president? When you all get those traits, share those traits with us. I think that's very important.

This university needs to give back to the basics—our core values. The first thing is integrity. Integrity needs to come back to this campus. Our core values include tradition, respect for tradition, institutional knowledge, and respect for each other. Accountability. We have to hold people accountable for their roles. People must be held accountable for their roles, leadership positions, policies, and procedures. We have to make sure we hold to those policies and procedures.

We have labs that need to be updated in our science building. We want our students to get the opportunity to be with the researcher at an R1 (institution) where the university has much of the resources allocated as far as class times, class structures, enrollment sizes, and nurturing our students.

**Faculty/Staff** – Twice a year, we as faculty and staff have to set aside several hours to do training on bias, ethics, sensitivity, and things like that. I want a president who participates in those things, too, and shows the faculty, staff and students that he or she did that training and sends evidence that he or she has also done that training.

**Faculty/Staff** – My family is pretty much devoted to the progress and history of this institution. What I'd like for this committee to consider strongly is identifying a person committed to educating our students, as well as preparing our teachers from other programs or colleges that do not have the experience or training to teach.

Please look at a person who has compassion and is committed to education, mainly the College of Education, from which all other programs grow.

**Faculty/Staff** – Good work is happening here. Many of the people, everybody sitting in this room, have thankless jobs. Everyone sitting in this room has committed time that is not associated with the hours that they're supposed to work to the responsibilities of their role.

And so, I would like to see a leader who is familiar with our story, not only the specific and nuanced history. Dr. Cunningham, you mentioned how special this place is. It is special and it has always been special. But I also want a leader that is familiar with the work that is happening behind the scenes, and someone who is willing to champion that work, who is willing to engage the stakeholders who are in this room, and those who stayed back in the office because we couldn't leave those spaces unattended.

Someone who understands how critical and integral Jackson State University is explicit to the history of this state and education, not only within this state, but across the region and the nation

who does not come here to pity this space but comes here understanding that they are standing on the shoulders of giants who have built something out of nothing and all of us who are working here every single day, to ensure that our students know that they are appraised, that they are privileged and that they deserve the highest level of education.

In summary, someone who actively and deliberately engages this community, the stakeholders right here on campus, frequently, often, and with sincerity and also our surrounding community, that also makes up our campus environment. Someone who understands our story and is willing to advance it with efficacy and sincerity and believes in that story themselves.

**Faculty/Staff** – I've been here 22 years, and this is my academic home. Jackson State has been good to me, and I have tried to return those things to the campus and our students.

I recalled a gentleman by the name of Fred Rogers. I think he was more commonly known as Mr. Rogers. He said these words, and I will paraphrase them. 'Trust is the first thing a child learns in a healthy environment, home environment.' We've all been children. So, we carry that with us looking for it if we didn't see it, and I think that's one word that we need to keep in mind.

Another thing is professionalism, respect and understanding. It's tough being a human being, and we make mistakes, and it's good to have people who understand that. And we work together to get over those mistakes and move forward.

The last thing I would like to say is I, and I'm going to read it, so I don't get it wrong. A gentleman named Paul said, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and reputable. If there is anything, excellent or praiseworthy, think of all those things."

**Faculty/Staff** – Dr. Cunningham, I think that when you mentioned the awkward silence, it is important for the board to know that some of that may be from a place of exhaustion and frustration.

This is my seventh year and my fifth president. What I would like to charge the board with, first and foremost, is to keep this from being a routine. Do not let this be an average run of show that we've continued to do over the past five years. We deserve better. Additionally, what we want to see is progress. We want to see progression in our aesthetics and our academics and focus on staff inclusion, and transparency.

Lastly, I want to let you know that we want somebody whom we can count on to be stable here in this environment and who will get in that boardroom and advocate for what is happening here at 1400 J.R. Lynch Street.

**Faculty/Staff** – We need a person who can show leadership, not just act on it, but show leadership. We need someone committed to the university, to the procedures and actions of this university. We also want (him or her) to speak up for us on all occasions. We will not always agree, but we at least need someone to communicate effectively with us.

So, I need you all to be sincere about selecting a person. I have no problem with due process. I want somebody to be able to stand on their own, communicate with us, and be honest with us. They have to understand the culture here.

We are here today because we want the process to work to select a leader that has a passion for Jackson and who is strong-willed. Don't run that person off because sometimes I see that happening. Be willing to take a chance with someone who wants what's best. You know, a visionary does not have to be a certain age. They just have to have a true vision.

**Faculty/Staff/Alumni** – I graduated from Jackson State in 2004. This is not the same university I graduated from years ago, and it's very disheartening. I do not necessarily know if I come to you directly today as a faculty member, more so than a parent of two daughters ages 15 and 17. Their names are Ivy and Kilby.

Ivy wants to be a biochemist. Jackson State has a biochemistry program. Kilby wants to be an attorney. Jackson State has a political science program. However, as a parent, I have to consider some things for Ivy and Kilby. Most importantly, their safety.

So, when we consider leadership when we consider people to hold these positions, we want someone who considers the safety of our students, our community, and our future generation, such as my daughters Ivy and Kilby.

**Faculty/Staff** – I am also a two-time graduate, so this university is near and dear to my heart. What I think we need to see in our next leader is someone who is visible. Someone who is not only student-centered but also faculty and staff centered. Someone who is going to prioritize mental health. Mental health is a crisis across the nation, so we need someone who will prioritize mental health when it comes to policies, procedures, and funding.

**Jackson State University**  
**President Search Listening Session No. 2 Students**  
**Wednesday, April 19 from 11-11:45 a.m.**  
**JSU Student Center Ballroom B**  
**Jackson, Mississippi**

**Session No. 2 Students:**

**Student** – We have had several issues this past year that I feel our future president has to be student-centered to address. It's always helpful when someone understands and you don't have to explain things to them. I think that this means it would be great if we could have a pick that understands HBCU culture, understands Jackson State culture, and can really speak to the future of where we're going.

Also, I would like to see a president with a background or an understanding of university operations so that when they are developing their strategic plans, they know exactly who to pull on and what to do to implement those plans.

**Student** – Proud legacy of JSU. Mother is a graduate, class of 99. The oldest sibling is a graduate, class of 2019. Brother was at Jackson State and had two different presidents during his matriculation. I would be having my second president upon your pick.

So, how are we picking a president to have longevity for our university?

It's not a good thing when we're switching leadership roles multiple times during student matriculation. When my mother was here, she had the same president from when she was a freshman until she graduated and was here for a five-year span.

I've only been here for two years, and I'm about to be my second president. So, when we're making these picks, think about the longevity of our university. Think about the longevity of life. Are they going to continue to grow with the university?

I think we're starting to modernize a lot, and we need a president that understands that.

**Student** – One of my concerns is building structure problems like (the building where) my abnormal psychology class (is located). We have missing tiles off the wall and only two toilets per student. So my main concern is building structure for Jackson State

**Student** – Very appreciative and grateful for my department and the faculty, the students, and all the mentorship I've gained while at Jackson State University. Leadership. Wants to see a president who understands it's important to have transparency in themselves and understands the power of collaboration through different departments like the graduate school or the undergraduate school. Harmonizing and integrating those two schools would promote the development of students and thought-generating leaders as professionals and students. So, I really hope that the president will understand the importance of safety on campus for all students to develop an academic environment conducive to their achievement at the highest levels in academia.

**Student** – The president should be more than a name and face, making sure the work is being done and involved in the community.

**Student** – Jackson State University means a lot to me. We need a president who has a vision, structure, and backbone and they know what they want for their students.

Wants a president with structure and a backbone to fight for what the students truly need, not just for personal gain. Most importantly, they have a vision for the student body.

**Student** – Looking for a president that understands data analytics. I want a president that will be able to take those numbers, take the advice and engagement from the student body and translate that into action.

**Student** – Legacy student; Grandparents, mother and father are JSU graduates. There are a lot of things going on with housing and people trying to select their rooms, so we need a better system and buildings as well. A lot of buildings need some work. Need a president to address the housing situation.

**Student** – We need more night instructors for the science department because people work during the day and trying to finish their degrees like I am. We don't have that many classes to choose from or we have to wait over a year for somebody to decide they want to take that position and offer that class.

**Student** – Would like to see quality professors and customer service.

What I would like to see in the next president at Jackson State University is someone who has trust, can communicate to the university, is compassionate, is a communicator, and is a listener. Also, a president who is welcoming and open to suggestions. Someone who will make their presence known to the campus and community. Someone who will walk this campus and see what's going on, talk to the students and talk to people.

**Student** – Regarding the president, I was hoping there would be some possibility of an extensive background check to ensure that we get a president with the right mindset going in, with the right ideals and things of that nature.

Also, I was wondering if it would be possible to have more student involvement in the selection process of our president and to get more information about whom we are selecting since that is who (if you're) coming in as a freshman is going to be over us for the next four years.

The last thing, some of the buildings on campus are not in use, and I know that a lot of health science students have to go off campus to take their classes. So that has been a concern. It would be very useful even to reutilize or reconstruct the buildings we already have on campus.

**Student** – So, I have two questions or concerns that I would like the next president to answer. So, the first one is, do they plan to enhance the student experience as far as safety and transformation of the university? The second one, we know that Jackson State is strong on tradition. But we want somebody who's not scared to push the needle and transform the university for the students.

**Student** – I want a president who encourages faculty to stay here.

**Student** – A first-generation college student. I would want somebody who is engaging, who is not afraid to get to know the students, and who make us feel like we came here to get that (personal) experience. I'm from Ohio. This is my first time being in Mississippi. So, I want somebody who's engaging, cares for us, and pushes for the students and faculty.

I feel like we need a good foundation system. We need to be a team. Everybody needs to be welcoming. I just think the next president needs to definitely be engaging.

**Student** – For the next president, I want them to have a cultural background so they understand us and also show empathy because it's a lot of stuff going on in students' lives.

**Student** – Hoping that we can find a president who cares about (customer service) and (faculty and staff) is understanding of when we are in situations and addresses us as students but also young adults, but also with them being less judgmental or harsh.

Hopefully, with the president, we can just kind of get someone who cares about the safety of the students and also the mannerism of the staff that's tending to the students.

**Student** – When hiring professors, expressed difficulty in understanding what they're teaching. Wants to make sure students are able to understand what they're teaching.

**Student** – When it comes to the next president, under their leadership, there is more cohesiveness amongst who they are and everyone underneath them or works with them. From faculty and even students, there can oftentimes be a lack of communication between the higher-ups and administration—even the people on the department level. The next president should have effective communication.

**Student** – Block off the campus to have more security.

**Student** – Someone who respects student leadership and does not work against us. Being a student leader is not an easy job. It's not an easy task, but it makes it 10 times harder when your administration does not want to work with you. All we want is the best interest of the student body and the continuing student body. So my next ask for the president would be that he understands his student leaders, he has a relationship with them, and that they are working together and not against each other for longevity.

**Student** – As a president, we need somebody to follow up with the student body and administration. Our town hall meetings, I feel those are very essential things with the campus, but very often, matters get addressed, but they don't ever get followed up. So, we need a president who will take those problems and ensure they get addressed.

**Student** – Another thing. When we experienced a shooting on campus last semester, I did not realize the whole floor had to be cleared, and the university did not provide them anywhere to go. So I was hoping, if possible, this doesn't have to do with the president, but in a sense, it would because he is the leader. So, I was hoping that there would be some type of policy in place for such, God forbid, an incident was to happen. Well, in general, if such an incident like that were to happen again, the students would have a place to go and can't be in their rooms for that moment.

**Student** – Communication could have been more specific during the water crisis. I would like to see a president that communicates with the whole student body and not just last minute. I'm from Georgia, so my parent cannot come and get me at the spur of the moment, and we don't have any water.

What are we going to do for our students that they're able to be comfortable and flourish and still do their academics in times of crises. I just would like to see a person that's very active, proactive with communication and definitely engaging with the student body. So I would like to see somebody that's active and able to meet with the students and you know, actually know them with a name their face.

**Student** – I think it's very imperative that Jackson State has our own water pump. I see a lot of other schools, especially PWIs, have their own water pump, and I feel like we must have one as well. You all have seen us go through major water issues throughout the past decade. My father



is a Spring 93 graduate of Jackson State University, and these same issues have been going on since he's graduated here.

Please make sure when assigning a President, he understands the issues and concerns of our students but also that you all are working to make sure that the funds are allocated to make sure we have our own water pump.

**Student** – Ensure the president can articulate their vision to the student leaders. Ensure they can connect to the student body, not just the student leaders. I don't want to feel like I'm checked off of your to-do list.

**Student** – Many people have been talking about how the students and president interact with each other, but I think the bigger part is how the president reacts to the faculty and staff as well. I think it's very important to have an open-door policy. I think it is very important that the faculty know that if they do have concerns that you are someone who's not going to belittle their concerns or their feelings.

Next president should focus on increasing enrollment. I think that will not only keep faculty retention, but I also think student retention, which is my next point. I need a president who really wants people to not only come to Jackson State University. The next president of Jackson State University, my home, my institution, should be proud of making that number double, triple, and quadruple.

**Student** – Does not want to feel like the president is rehearsing what they're saying. We're all students. We're all humans. Talk to me as if you were talking to your family members. Don't read off of a paper when you're trying to address a concern. Because if a question comes up and you don't know how to answer it, that's concerning for me. So just making sure that they are transparent with us in all ways.

A president who understands communication and critical response time, especially for students. I would like more town hall meetings to address campus issues, not just when things are happening.

**Student** – Would like extensive research conducted on presidents due to the close interaction with students. I say that because we have first-year generation students like myself come to college, and we really don't know anything about financial aid, how the business office works, about majors and deans. With the next president, I feel like you all should look into somebody who's actually, you know, about students and how to handle students' concerns.

**Student** – A concern is the phone system. If we have to be here on campus to get an education, the employee should also be here. A lot of them work from home. They don't answer the phone. The only way you can get in touch with them is the email. They don't respond to emails because how will you respond to everybody if you get over-flooded with emails? So that is a major concern.

**Student** – Components in the next president would include: a strong track record of collaboration, devoted to fostering each department, faculty and administrator and meet the needs of students, president with a sense of perseverance when situations and times get tough,

dedication of the overarching enhancement of JSU students and scholars, cultural competence and a broad understanding of inclusion and sensitivity, teamwork mindset, engaging and passionate about JSU students

**Jackson State University**  
**President Search Listening Session No. 3 Alumni and Community**  
**Wednesday, April 19, from 1-1:45 a.m.**  
**JSU Student Center Ballroom B**  
**Jackson, Mississippi**

**Session No. 3 Alumni and Community:**

**Alumni/Community** – We want the best for Jackson State University. We want you all to be thorough. We want to make sure that whoever comes here wants to be here. I say that because we have some people when they come here, don't understand that we are Jackson State and that we do know something. And the condescending attitude of people when they come into the university that I'm not going to listen to this group. I won't listen to this group.

They need to understand that we are all family and we all have something to contribute. And the way we do that is we do it together, but it has to start at the top when. We want to make sure that whoever comes into this situation that they embrace the JSU community and understand that we all have something valuable to contribute.

**Alumni/Community** – When you look at me, you're looking at the history of Jackson, Mississippi. I worked for a radio station that was one block from here, WOKJ. WJMI. WJMI has a lot of history entangling Jackson State University. JMI was one of the first commercial radio stations that hired students from the Jackson State Mass Communication program. With those two marriages, Jackson State became one of the biggest universities in the state and beyond because JMI was well known nationwide, and most of the young announcers came from the Jackson State Mass Communication program.

In other words, everybody was homegrown. So, whomever you elect, please consider some homegrown talent. People that's been here. So please consider that.

**Alumni/Community** – My vision for a successful candidate will be someone who has a vision for the future and a plan for the future that is shared openly and transparently with all constituents. And that also includes a plan for financial stability, sustainability, and growth for this university. We are a family here and need someone here who understands the culture and has a vision for the future.

**Alumni/Community** – Jackson State is a wonderful university. We have graduated people from all over the world. Please allow us to sit before you guys before you choose a president. The last three have really made us shamed, and I don't want to be ashamed anymore.

Why don't you allow us to select our own committee and then select our own president? Because we are smart enough to do that. We are very educated people, and I think that we can do that.

**Alumni/Community** – Came to JSU in 1960. During most of that time, I have been one of the most severe critics of the college board. It's not because I discount the importance of the college board. It's because I try to consistently tell the truth as I see it in the college board's actions. I say it also because I want those criticisms to stick out there so that you, as new college board members, would not make the same mistakes.

I've talked with a lot of folks before getting here. They feel that this board needs to give Jackson State its best attention. They want to feel that you really care about Jackson State and its best interest and that this is not just a show. They would like to have more input. We need consistent participation in the actual selections of the president.

We, as alumni, have been around for a long time now. We want to leave this particular surge having restored or regained trust in the board to actually care about Jackson State University. One of the things that we consistently say is that you have not really done real good background checks before you bring somebody forward.

One of the things that we would like to have is an individual who has the vision, the backbone, and the personality of a John Peoples. The last time we had a consistent and good president for Jackson State University was those days.

We need a person who is going to be a strong advocate for Jackson State University, upholding his tradition, embracing its culture and community, and then developing it into the university that it can become. That has yet to happen because Jackson State University is in the capital city. It should easily be the largest university in the state.

It should easily have the kind of programs that turn out professionals in every walk of life. A few years ago, we were told Jackson State doesn't need a law school. Cause you got Mississippi College of Law in Jackson. So, what.

They refuse to have Jackson State over the medical center. Even though Jackson State is in in Jackson and the medical center is in Jackson, but the people who they consistently decided needs to run it was up in Oxford. Jackson State has always been treated as an unwanted stepchild.

It's time now for us to move out into the light of what we should have always been. Again, I have been one of the most consistent and longest critics of the college board. It's not a job to relish. I'm hoping with all that criticism you will look and see what has been ailing folks and how to move forward away from that. So that Jackson State becomes what it always should have been.

**Alumni/Community** – I just want to ensure that this time the president is not selected on a who-you-know basis and a what-you-know basis. We are tired of whom we know, and we're looking for somebody based on their expertise, what they know about this university. What they know about this city and what they want to do here on campus for Jackson State University.

**Alumni/Community** – I'm thankful, number one, that we have one of our own at the head of this search process. So, I'm looking forward to what Dr. Cunningham is going to do in terms of this process for us to get our next president.

The qualities and the qualifications we feel are important are someone that is accountable, accessible, transparent, someone who innovative because we have set a precedence of what we are and we are one of the major institutions of higher learning, in the city, in the state of Mississippi and in the country.

We want to make sure that somebody has the ability to catapult us to the next level. They need to have experience at the higher-ed level, not just in a department, not just working at a university, but knowing the intricate details of how to run a university because it is not just education. It is also a business. They have to understand that business side and be able to build those relationships. They need to know the institution, its history, relevance, viability and sustainability in our dynamic society.

Know the culture and the climate of this university, not only with the staff and the faculty, but also understanding the students, understanding how they learn and what it is they need to learn so that we can make sure that the process is such that for the alumni association they are giving back because of course we are sustained by the dollars and cents that come into the university, so we have to have those students wanting to go to Jackson State University.

The next leader needs to also be student-focused. They need to build relationships throughout the various areas of the university and across the country. Relationships are a big thing because we can't get corporate sponsors. We can't get corporate donors. We can't move to an R1 research institution if we don't have those relationships and an understanding of what it takes. Lastly, we need a slate of formidable candidates placed in front of us so that we can make an informed decision as to who will be the next leader of this university.

**Alumni/Community** – As a professor in higher education, we need someone with a shared vision. We need one with morals and high standards. We need a leader who can communicate with the faculty, the students, the state legislatures, the state government, the federal government, and all who are taxpayers in Mississippi.

We must have someone who knows the history, the culture of Jackson State, the historic mission of Jackson State, and the culture of Mississippi.

We want someone committed to this institution and with the experience to know the history of the community, the history of the state, and the history of Mississippi.

**Alumni/Community** – There is a lack of communication between the Institute of High Learning and our neighborhood. I grew up watching elderly people raise money to send their children to this university. The education that we are getting from our children is not centered around the community as much as it should be.

The gatekeepers of this university will not allow the community to come in and give help or voice their opinion of what's going on in our neighborhood. You look around our campus, you see all these distressed houses. All these boarded-up houses should not be within 10 miles of our university.

We are looking for our institution to be the hub of our neighborhood. The next president of our university needs to be more attuned to the needs and wants of the community.

**Alumni/Community** – You should do a better job in vetting the potential candidate for president of Jackson State. We love Jackson State. We want Jackson State to move forward. I also strongly feel that you need to get input from the alumni, faculty, staff, and from the community and selecting the next president of Jackson State University.

**Alumni/Community** – First of all, I'm going to applaud you for having a search and I hope it's the full search. I hope that you will get various stakeholder groups to serve on the search committee. I haven't heard about the committee other than your leadership, Dr. Cunningham. I hope that you will allow them to give you some input in putting those qualifications together. Then, I hope you will do a national search. I know Dr. Anthony is in the position now, but hopefully, she could apply as well and let the best candidate win.

**Alumni/Community** – I can say this motivated me based on what some of the previous presenters spoke about. Dr. Bishop has me excited to make sure it happens. I want to ask if you all participate with the state legislators to come and tell us in our district the good things about the laws that have been passed. When the students, staff and faculty hear the great things of not just people working for us, what it really means that's going to make us really have shared government.

**Alumni/Community** – I want to see a leader who can lead. We need someone who is open. We need somebody that cares about this institution. I would also like to clarify the man or the woman does not make Jackson State. Jackson State is Jackson State. It has a history in this community. It has done things for Black folk that nobody has thought about doing or has done. I'd like to see someone with a good vision for the university. You know, how are we going to recruit (students)? How are we going to retain (students)? How are we going to bring in money? I just want it to be clear that you all will do the right thing and not go outside the process to bring in somebody else.

Make this a university you want your children to come to and your grandchildren.

**Alumni/Community** – I want a president who is a servant and a president who has faith. You need a president who loves students, faculty, staff, and the community and who's not afraid to speak to the needs of JSU.

**Alumni/Community** – I'm looking for a president who first of all loves the people and they have to be able to communicate. Communication is one of the greatest keys that you can have. And you know, you have to listen to the folks. They have to have the students at heart and they need to have character. You need to have character when you walk into the room. Because I promise you, you don't have to say a word. Your life speaks when you walk into the room. You don't have to say anything. I'm here because I love Jackson State. I just say for you to do the right thing for the good of JSU.

**Alumni/Community** – All of us in our rooms, and our families have been impacted by Jackson State in some kind of manner. All of our lives, trajectories, educational pursuits, and professional living has had imprint from Jackson State University. I thank all my fellow alums for showing up today because we need to see you also talking to our students. How can the university faculty

and staff better engage alumni so we can collaborate in our communities and in our neighborhoods?

We have a JPS school right behind us. We have Jim Hill, Blackburn. Where is the collaboration with community members partnerships to give our students exposure? How about extending our hand in collaboration with businesses and organizations outside the city of Jackson throughout this country?

We have so many alumni doing great things all across the world. We should tap into their potential and let them pour back into our students. We need to make sure we have a leader who can look at these collaborations, have these communications with these organizations with each other, and tell our alums not only thank you for your money but thank you for your time, your talents, and the treasure that you give back to your dear college home. We can't just call these members of our community when we want their money.

We have to call them and say, what do you want to do? How do you want to use your talent and give back to our school? And as an alum myself, you know, I'm always ready to help my students, and I try to guide them in the right path to meet other alums.

So, we need a president who is going be willing to listen to the alums and understand that when they come to you with passion, don't penalize them for coming to you as an alum and give them compassion. Make sure our president understands currency. Make sure they understand branch dollars and cents and how you run a business. Professionalism, how we can increase enrollment, how they can talk to businessmen, women, legislatures, community, and people across the country to bring monies back to this institution.

**Alumni/Community** – Wants to see a president who has a vision for technology and innovation, who is creative and is open to listening to students.

**Alumni/Community** – I've been receiving calls the past several weeks from folks around the country wondering what's happening at Jackson State. Uh, they're concerned about the process. You have a process. You follow that process.

As a legislator, we have to ensure that we invest money wisely. When we see companies have several CEOs over the past several years, every two or three years, we're going to be very reluctant to invest money in those companies.

As legislators, we see what is happening in Jackson State. We see how we have had inconsistent leadership at the top and that legislators use that as an excuse not to invest in Jackson State.

We need you to select a strong leader who can communicate with Jackson and with Jackson State. First of all, communicate with legislators and business people. We need money to run this operation from the legislation, the private sector, and the home association. But to do that, we need to select a strong leader with the confidence and skills to take this university to the next level.