

University of Southern Mississippi
President Search Listening Session #2, 1-2:30 p.m.
Monday, October 3, 2022
Joe Paul Theater, Thad Cochran Center
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Minutes

Mr. Tommy Duff, co-chair of the search committee for President of The University of Southern Mississippi (USM), again gave opening remarks that included introduction of fellow committee members and purpose of the listening sessions, which were held on the USM Hattiesburg and Long Beach campuses (two sessions at each site, Monday, Oct. 3 and Tuesday, Oct. 4). Mr. Duff's remarks included the following:

*Welcomed those in attendance.

*Introduced panel members.

*Discussed the formation of the 15-member Campus Advisory Constituency and cited the names of its members, and its role in assisting with the development of a profile of a desirable candidate for president of the university.

*Stated again that the board takes its obligations seriously in searching for a good president for the university, and its desire to have input from all university stakeholders in the selection of USM's next president.

*Cited the board's engagement with the company Academic Search and its representative, Dr. Jay Lemons, for its assistance in helping identify the next USM president via a nationwide search, and noted Academic Search's prior relationship with USM President Emeritus Dr. Aubrey K Lucas.

*Restated that for those unable to attend or who preferred not to speak at the session, they can provide input into the presidential search process online at www.mississippi.edu.

*As in the first session, stated information about how to verbally provide input at the listening sessions; noted microphones at both corners of stage to make comments; also noted that while there was no set time limit for comments, asked that those making comments be mindful and respectful of others waiting to make comments within the overall time limit of the session (each listening session was 90 minutes in length).

Comments from listening session attendees (identified by category of affiliation) include the following:

*Alumnus - I love this place; I want Dr. Joe Paul (as president); anybody that doesn't like Joe Paul, "something is wrong with them."

*Faculty - Would like to see a president who supports the concepts of academic freedom and shared governance, a leader with experience as a faculty member desirable.

*Faculty, Alumnus - I went to school here and have been a faculty member since 1987; I live and breathe USM. We are at a crisis moment (in leadership); I very much like Joe Paul, he has a lot of the qualities I'd like to see in the next president. Student enrollment is a concern, and we need someone good at fundraising. Low morale among faculty is an issue as well. We need a president who can hit the ground running, not take two years or more to get up to speed on the job.

*Staff member - We need someone supportive of military veterans who choose to be students at USM.

*Student - Would like to see someone ready to cultivate the community; the (student) involvement piece is important. We have solid academics here at USM.

*Alumnus - Next president needs to be passionate about USM, serve as our champion, attend campus events, be passionate and decisive; visit Mississippi schools to recruit students, be excited about connecting with alumni and friends of the university. Either hire Joe Paul or find someone like him.

*Student - We need someone as president who understands our community.

*Student - We need a president who values diversity, makes everyone feel at home here, and works hard on student retention.

*Alumnus - We need a president who will support and lift up our Greek Life system on campus, and go out and tell people why they need to come to USM; when I came here, admissions and recruitment staff rolled out the red carpet for me.

*Student - We need a president who values minority students, supports extracurricular activities, maintains positive relationships with alumni who can also recruit students—let them know why USM is a great choice for them.

*Student - We need a president who knows USM; supports Greek Life; who is vocal in support of the university (advocate).

*Student - Need a president with a vision, who will listen to the frustrations of its students and who has an awareness of all of the academic programs at the university; Math and philosophy double major, and “we have cool things going on in our programs.” Want a president who will make education what it should be, fight (advocate) for me as a student, back me up.

*Alumnus - Need a president who is best suited (culturally) for our university and our community and state, who understands our university culture but also understands that a university is a complex entity with many different components. Would want board members to make the choice using a secret ballot. Prayers are with the board. Thank you for your service.

*Student - It's important that we get someone who wants to be involved with the students, attend events, connect with clubs and other groups. Be attentive to academics above all else. We need someone who wants to be at USM.

*Staff member, student - Expressed concern about lack of staff representation on campus search constituency. Staff care about the university and hope the next president values our vision for the university.

*Alumnus - Need a president who understands the importance of private giving (support) to the university; need someone with experience raising money and a record of personal (financial) support of the institution where they worked. We need a “winsome” president, engaged, passionate about the university, someone you can’t say ‘no’ to.

*Student - Want a president who will be present, and not consider USM a steppingstone to another job. Someone who cares about students, alumni, is good at recruiting new students.

*Alumna - Spent 37 years in education, and I love the university. Heard about the meeting (listening session) on TV and took the time to drive here to comment. We don’t need a president from Kalamazoo – we need someone who bleeds USM. We need someone who cares, has guts, has common sense, and is not worried about political correctness.

*Student - We need someone who will lead with equity, value everyone regardless of who they are or where they come from.

*Staff - Would have loved to see someone on staff chosen for the advisory committee.

*Faculty - We need someone who values diversity and guides us with a strategic vision to help us all bleed USM.

*Alumnus - Impressed by the number of people here (attending listening session). My children attend Jackson Academy, and other presidents visit these schools (from Ole Miss and Miss. State). We need a president who will visit these schools too, who builds team relationships, who can sell the Southern Miss lifestyle, promote our top academic programs; we need someone who is a good manager and can put together a good (administrative) team. We need a president with genuine devotion to the university. When Dr. Lucas enters a room ‘Southern is there.’ We’ve got that in Joe Paul now. I mean, we’re in the Joe Paul Theater (site of listening session).

*Alumnus - We’re stagnant, we haven’t been strong in years. We need passion all around, a president who is devoted to the university; we need to improve student recruitment, not quantity but quality. This choice represents a pivotal moment in our history, and we need a president who believes in this place, someone who is visible and present who makes relationships outside the university community, someone like Dr. Joe Paul.

*Student - We need someone who is concerned about student diversity, including those with disabilities; someone who takes safety on campus seriously, including issues concerning sexual assault.

*Student - I hope the next president is interested in the Greek Life community here, an important pillar of student life at USM. I would not be the man I am today if not for my fraternity.

*Faculty - We do a lot with a little in University Libraries at USM, and we’re proud of that. We need someone who will come in and pour themselves into the job. I believe our best and brightest days are ahead.

*Faculty - I’d like to see the next president give faculty more input into the decision-making process at the university, and support diversity.

*Student - We need a president for everyone like Joe Paul; someone who will take us to the next level; someone who cares about (regular) students as much as the athletes.

*Faculty - We need someone who is supportive of faculty research and has a heart for economic development. We have some great research taking place at USM.