

Lincoln University Board of Curators

February 22, 2024

OPEN SESSION

1. Call to Order:

The Lincoln University Board of Curators Open Session was officially called to order by Board President Victor B. Pasley at 9:30 a.m., on Thursday, February 22, 2024, in the Board Room, 201 Young Hall, Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri.

1. A. Roll Call: Curators present were: Vernon V. Bracy, Stacia Bradley Brown, Everidge Cade, Richard G. Callahan, Victor B. Pasley, Richard R. Popp, Terry Rackers, and Tina Shannon. Nia Walker, Student Representative to the Board of Curators, was also present. Rose Ann Ortmeyer recorded the minutes.

2. Approval of the Agenda:

Curator Shannon moved for approval of the Open Session Agenda as presented. Curator Callahan seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Presentation from the Atlanta Chapter of the Lincoln University Alumni Association:

On behalf of LaShawnda Jones, President of the Atlanta Alumni Chapter, Patricia Neal Stinson, read the attached letter. The Board stated that they would respond to the letter from the Atlanta Alumni Chapter.

4. Action Item:

Academic and Student Affairs Committee - Curator Stacia Brown

4. A. Minor in Entrepreneurship:

Dr. Stevie Lawrence, Acting President, reviewed the recommendation to offer a Minor in Entrepreneurship, effective Fall Semester 2024. Curator Brown moved for approval of the Minor in Entrepreneurship. Curator Shannon seconded the motion. Motion carried.

5. Motion for Closed Session:

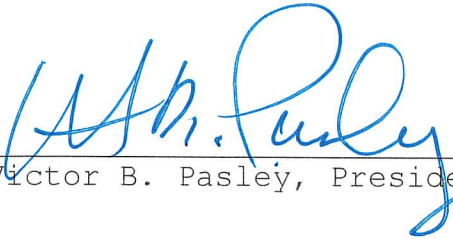
Curator President Pasley asked that the Board be given the authority to commence a closed meeting, possible closed vote, and possible closed record as follows: (1) "Legal actions, causes of action or litigation involving a public governmental body;" (3) "Hiring, firing, disciplining or promoting of particular employees;" (13) "Individually identifiable personnel records..." and

(14) "Records which are protected from disclosure by law;" and other matters for which a closed meeting is authorized pursuant to Section 610.021 RSMo.

Curator Callahan so moved. Curator Shannon seconded the motion. Motion carried as follows:

Curator Bracy	Yes	Curator Brown	Yes
Curator Cade	Yes	Curator Callahan	Yes
Curator Pasley	Yes	Curator Popp	Yes
Curator Rackers	Yes	Curator Shannon	Yes

The Open Session of the Lincoln University Board of Curators adjourned at 9:50 a.m.



Victor B. Pasley, President



Tina R. Shannon, Secretary

To: Lincoln University Board of Curators

From: LaShawnda Jones, President of the Atlanta Alumni Association

Date: February 22, 2024

Subject: Addressing Concerns Regarding Prioritization of Community Needs over Students, Staff, and Alumni Well-being

Dear Board of Curators,

I am writing to address a growing concern among the alumni, students, and staff regarding the apparent prioritization of community needs over the well-being of those directly affiliated with and committed to supporting Lincoln University. I address these concerns as the President of the Atlanta Alumni Association; in which I uphold my duty to communicate the sentiments of our members and share disheartening feedback we have received.

I want to emphasize the gravity of the situation. The Atlanta chapter recently solicited feedback on the state of the university, and the responses we received paint a picture of distress and neglect among the student body, staff, and alumni. It has come to our attention that there appears to be a trend of prioritizing the wishes of the community over the well-being of our students, staff, and alumni. It has become increasingly evident that the concerns of these stakeholders (whom the institution exists to support) are not being adequately addressed. This poses a significant threat to the reputation and integrity of our institution. While we understand the importance of community engagement and support, it should not come at the expense of the well-being of those directly involved with the university.

Considering the above, we are deeply concerned about the health and well-being of both staff and students. As evidenced by the tragic loss of Dr. Bonnie Candia-Bailey, and alumni and staff member who reached out for help from your office, the urgency of this situation cannot simply be overlooked again. The fact that such a significant stakeholder felt so desperate to take their own life after seeking assistance from this very board is a clear indication that more needs to be done to support the mental health and wellness of our community.

In light of these events, we urge the board to take immediate action to address the following issues:

1. **Prioritization of Stakeholder Well-being:** Reassess the decision-making process to ensure that the needs and well-being of students, staff, and alumni are given the utmost consideration in all board decisions.
2. **Support for Mental Health:** Implement comprehensive mental health support services for both staff and students, including counseling, crisis intervention, and suicide prevention programs. Additionally, provide training for faculty and staff to recognize signs of distress and know how to appropriately respond.
3. **Transparent Communication:** Improve communication channels between the board, administration, staff, students, and alumni to foster transparency and accountability. Ensure that concerns and feedback are addressed in a timely and respectful manner.

4. **Work Environment:** Evaluate the work environment to identify any factors contributing to stress, burnout, or dissatisfaction among staff and students. Take proactive measures to create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.
5. **Community Engagement:** While community engagement is important, it should not come at the expense of the well-being of those directly involved with the university. Strike a balance between serving the needs of the community and prioritizing the welfare of students, staff, and alumni.
6. **Stakeholder Tasks Force:** Establish a task force comprised of representatives from the Alumni Association, faculty, staff, and students to ensure ongoing accountability and progress in addressing these issues.
7. **Key Leadership Changes:** Assess all levels of leadership and consider immediate and permanent changes.

I urge the board to take these concerns seriously and prioritize the well-being of our university community. Failure to do so not only jeopardize the health and safety of those involved but also undermines the integrity and reputation of our institution.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing your response and working together to create a healthier and more supportive environment for all members of the Lincoln University community.

Sincerely,
LaShawnda Jones
President, Atlanta Alumni Association



LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

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Board of Curators

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Victor B. Pasley, President

Everidge Cade, Vice President

Tina Shannon, Secretary

Richard R. Popp, Treasurer February 28, 2024

Vernon V. Bracy

Stacia R. Bradley Brown

Richard G. Callahan

Terry Rackers

Student Representative

Nia C. Walker

Dear Atlanta Alumni Association and President LaShawnda Jones,

Thank you for the letter you shared with us last week. The Board of Curators sincerely appreciates your willingness to share your thoughts, concerns and ideas as we all work toward our shared goal of strengthening Lincoln University.

As we continue to mourn the tragic death of Dr. Antoinette “Bonnie” Candia-Bailey, we are grateful for the continued dialogue with Lincoln alumni in Atlanta and across the country who have stepped up to support Dr. Candia-Bailey’s loved ones, as well as our students, faculty, staff and fellow alumni. Lincoln’s relationship with our distinguished alumni is key to the success of our University and all those who are part of the Blue Tiger community.

As you know, the Board of Curators has committed to an impartial review of the facts surrounding this tragedy, which is why we have engaged with a reputable, independent third-party expert from outside the University to thoroughly review concerns raised regarding compliance with the University’s established policies and procedures. The Board has given this third party full access to all university personnel, records, emails, documents, and other relevant information to ensure that its review is thorough and complete, and able to guide the Board to make the best decisions for our students, faculty and staff and the entire University community.

While the ongoing nature of that independent review – which we hope will be complete in the coming weeks – and the legal limitations on what the University can discuss publicly regarding personal matters prevent us from publicly commenting on some of the issues raised, we share many of the goals outlined in your letter:

Regarding your request for an assessment of processes and evaluation of work settings to ensure the well-being of our students and employees, we fully agree with these needs and such a review is already underway as described above. The Board of Curators is eager to review the findings of this independent review and is prepared to address any gaps identified to ensure a safe educational and workplace environment.

You rightly cite the importance of supporting the mental and behavioral health of our community, and the Board of Curators is also already taking several steps to ensure that the mental health of Lincoln University employees and students is a top priority. The University has been collaborating with mental health professionals from the community to provide additional access to licensed counselors for students, faculty, and staff to meet the most immediate necessity.

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Atlanta Alumni Association and President LaShawnda Jones

February 28, 2024

Moving forward, the Becoming a Healthier LU initiative, an extension of a pre-existing Wellness Committee, seeks to support the all-encompassing health needs of the Lincoln University community by providing activities and resources to promote healthy minds, bodies, and spirits.

Engagement with Lincoln University's broader community – locally, throughout Missouri, and across the nation – is an essential element to achieving our shared goals of Lincoln's success. The Board of Curators and University leadership strongly believe that the essential work of meeting the needs of our students and employees, and of building bridges between Lincoln University and key outside stakeholders, are not mutually exclusive goals. Rather, this work has proven to be mutually reinforcing and beneficial to all parties involved – especially our students and employees. The challenges that Lincoln University and other HBCUs face, ranging from crucial resources to recruitment, are challenges that Lincoln can more effectively meet by partnering with all those who have a stake in our University's proud legacy and ongoing work.

The Board of Curators is committed to upholding the values and standards that define Lincoln University and will work diligently to ensure that they are reflected in every aspect of university life. Again, thank you for your commitment to helping us achieve those goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. B. Pasley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Victor B. Pasley, President
Lincoln University Board of Curators