



Board of Supervisors

March 22, 2021

Ms. Rani Borkar
Chair, Oregon State University Board of Trustees
638 Kerr Administration Building
Corvallis, OR 97331

Dear Ms. Borkar,

As volunteers and citizens entrusted with the supervision of great public universities like Oregon State and LSU, we share similar mantles of responsibility. My fellow Supervisors and I know what a difficult spot you find yourselves in, and we regret that the upheaval in our university has spilled across the country to yours. As our interim president often reiterates, transparency is required for rebuilding trust, and so I thought it best to reach out and offer some clarification, which I am submitting to you now.

As you are aware, LSU employed the external law firm of Husch Blackwell to conduct an investigation into allegations related to Title IX compliance. During your Board meeting last week, an individual raised the question of why Dr. Alexander was only offered 13 written questions by Husch Blackwell, after which he espoused his frustration at not being interviewed. In actuality, Dr. Alexander was twice invited to be interviewed and instead communicated through Oregon State's general counsel that he would only accept questions in writing. Husch Blackwell consented when it was the only way to get answers from Dr. Alexander, but stated their preference for a live interview so that there could be follow up questions. Had Dr. Alexander accepted the invitation for a detailed interview, naturally the report would have included many of the details he indicated that he wished he would have been able to provide, and perhaps he wouldn't be in the position he currently faces. In the pursuit of the truth, Husch Blackwell diligently collected information amounting to 2,500 documents totaling 75,000 pages and more than 60 interviews with LSU employees plus 27 community outreach interview sessions with 10 participants per session, but they only had one and a half pages of responses from Dr. Alexander.

There are some additional points that could have used more context and clarification. For example, LSU campuses already had Title IX coordinators on each campus and prior to Dr. Alexander's arrival. Also, the Greek organizations' activities were suspended in response to an unfortunate death, and not in response to Title IX concerns. Had Dr. Alexander consented to be interviewed, Husch Blackwell could have sorted through the inconsistencies and provided an opportunity to correction. That time has passed and it seems fruitless to quibble with the previous president about what happened during this tenure.

What seems different about the current situation is the national inter-institutional accountability in progress. Perhaps in the past, an administrator or coach could leave a university and feel comfortable in the knowledge that any mistakes at a prior university would remain there in secret. The fact that we can not ensure accountability for people who have left the university, and many have, has caused more local forces to demand the entirety of the justice fall onto just a few people. This form of scape-goating is not justice. There has to be hierarchy of discipline that appropriately applies to perpetrators, administrators, and employees, based on the scale of their transgression and the scope of their responsibilities. Your Board of Trustees must be of a similar mind-set, since you collectively determined that probation, an uncommon admonishment of a sitting president, was an appropriate sanction. Consistent with the hierarchical model of employee sanctions, the University of Kansas took firmer action in relieving their head coach for claims that he was the perpetrator of sexual harassment. Regardless, we are all participating in a reckoning that demonstrates administrators can not leave their universities as a means to avoid responsibility.

One lesson learned from our experience is that unattended issues spanning years and administrations can unduly burden future leaders who must ultimately fix the problems. As an illustration, we are observing the current interim president, who is simultaneously wrestling with pandemic-related challenges and a Title IX problem that has built over years. In saying that, I must take a moment to acknowledge the interim president's leadership. Our interim President Tom Galligan has taken on all responsibility and associated criticism related to this tragic situation, despite the fact that he was not involved in any of the processes that led us to this point. President Galligan has made sure to apologize to the survivors personally and individually every chance he gets, though he is the first to remind us all that actions speak louder than words. President Galligan is faced with daunting budgetary scenarios, but has committed to us and to the Louisiana Legislature that he will not go to the state government to ask for money to fix our Title IX problems, but rather he will find the solution within our current budget. And President Galligan has made no bones about his responsibility to manage the change necessary to protect LSU students from ever experiencing these indignities again. It is unfair that Tom must labor under such duress, but we are grateful to him and feel confident the university is heading in the right direction.

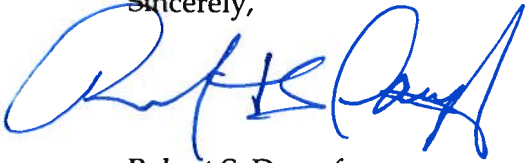
I feel confident that I can speak not only on behalf of my university, but also for my state, in saying that I am beyond offended by Dr. Alexander's arrogant and condescending comments about Louisiana's culture, our state, and our university. When sharing his opinion that Louisiana has a different moral standard than Oregon, he omits the fact that he enthusiastically counted himself as one of us for almost seven years. In general, I think it's a fair assessment to say that most Louisianans are, at their core, very similar to most Oregonians. They work hard, raise families, and look to their land-grant universities to educate their children while extending

research to improve the state's well-being. They look to us for the type of leadership necessary to make our campuses safe and effective educational environments. From Dr. Alexander's remarks, his contempt for these hard-working people was evident enough to make me question his commitment to those we serve.

I wish this letter was not necessary, and it would not be if Dr. Alexander had spoken with Husch Blackwell and shared his perspectives. But, I felt it was necessary to clarify the record, as well as respond to some of his observations. I wish you and the Oregon State University community the best of luck in the future.

Geaux Tigers and Geaux Beavs,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert S. Dampf". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Robert S. Dampf
Chair, LSU Board of Supervisors