



OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Public Meeting Notice**

October 11, 2021

TO: Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees  
FROM: Sabrina Prud'homme, University Board Secretary  
RE: Notice of Special Meetings of the Board of Trustees

The Southern Oregon University (SOU) Board of Trustees will hold special meetings on the dates and at the locations set forth below.

The board will interview candidates for the position of University President. Pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2)(a), the interviews will be held in executive session to consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent. No final action will be taken in executive session. Following each interview, the board will have dinner with each candidate.

The meetings will occur as follows:

October 14, 2021

Webinar Link: <https://sou.zoom.us/j/85131354805>

5:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Meese Room of the Hannon Library on the campus of SOU

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ashland Springs Hotel, 212 E Main St, Ashland, OR 97520

October 18, 2021

Webinar Link: <https://sou.zoom.us/j/81241137434>

5:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Meese Room of the Hannon Library on the campus of SOU

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ashland Hills Hotel, 2525 Ashland St, Ashland, OR 97520

October 21, 2021

Webinar Link: <https://sou.zoom.us/j/89905797755>

5:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Meese Room of the Hannon Library on the campus of SOU

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ashland Springs Hotel, 212 E Main St, Ashland, OR 97520

October 25, 2021

Webinar Link: <https://sou.zoom.us/j/89502857872>

5:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Meese Room of the Hannon Library on the campus of SOU

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ashland Hills Hotel, 2525 Ashland St, Ashland, OR 97520

October 27, 2021

Webinar Link: <https://sou.zoom.us/j/81142902359>

5:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Meese Room of the Hannon Library on the campus of SOU

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ashland Springs Hotel, 212 E Main St, Ashland, OR 97520

The agenda and materials for each meeting will be available at [governance.sou.edu](https://governance.sou.edu) at least 24 hours in advance of each meeting.

Prior to these meetings, on each date, an open-forum presentation will be held at SOU from 3:15 – 4:15 p.m. in the SOU Science Building, Room 151. A quorum of the board or one of its committees may be present at this forum.

The Hannon Library is located at 1290 Ashland Street, Ashland, OR on the campus of Southern Oregon University. If special accommodations are required please contact Pamela Tomac at (541) 552-8055 at least 24 hours in advance.



## Board of Trustees Special Meeting

October 14, 2021

5:00 – 6:00 p.m. (or until business concludes)

Meese Room, Hannon Library, SOU

<https://sou.zoom.us/j/85131354805>

6:30 – 8:30 p.m. 212 E. Main Street, Ashland, OR

### AGENDA

Persons wishing to participate during the public comment period may sign up at the meeting.

Please note: times are approximate and items may be taken out of order.

- |           |          |   |   |
|-----------|----------|---|---|
|           | <b>1</b> | <b>Call to Order and Preliminary Business</b>   | Chair Santos                                |
|           | 1.1      | Welcome and opening remarks   |   |
|           | 1.2      | Roll call   | Sabrina Prud'homme,<br>SOU, Board Secretary |
| 5:00 p.m. | <b>2</b> | <b>Candidate Interview for the Position of<br/>University President<br/>[Executive Session Pursuant to ORS 192.660<br/>(2)(a)]*</b> | Board of Trustees                           |
| 6:05 p.m. |          | Temporarily Adjourn   |   |
| 6:30 p.m. | <b>3</b> | <b>Dinner and Discussion with Candidate</b>   | Board of Trustees                           |
|           | <b>4</b> | <b>Adjourn</b>  | Chair Santos                                |

\* No final action will be taken in executive session.

**Chris Gilmer, Ph.D. (Pronouns: he, him, his)**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## **CAREER OVERVIEW AND GOALS**

With 30 years of upwardly mobile leadership experience in higher education and private sector administration, grant writing and federal programs administration, community mobilization and coalition building, pre-K through adult educational consulting, training and technical assistance provision, undergraduate and graduate teaching face-to-face and online, academic writing and publications management, public relations and journalism, faculty development, curriculum development, project evaluation, staff supervision and comprehensive human resources management, fundraising and fiscal management, I have proven myself valuable to all of my employers and am now searching, not randomly for a job, but deliberately for a leadership path that will challenge me to use my passions for education, community-building, workforce development, and equity to effect positive social change through the medium of education.

I currently serve as President and tenured Professor Humanities at West Virginia University at Parkersburg. I have served as Executive Director/Chief Operating Officer of Alcorn State University's Vicksburg Campus, Vice President for Academic and Sponsored Programs at a nonprofit agency, and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Adams State University. I was Director of Online Education for Alcorn's three-campus system and Professor of English. Alcorn is the oldest public land-grant Historically Black University (HBCU) in the United States. Adams is the oldest federally-designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in Colorado. Earlier in my career, I served as a faculty member at Jackson State University, an HBCU designated as Mississippi's urban university, and at Tougaloo College, a private liberal arts HBCU, where I chaired the Department of English and Modern Languages. At Tougaloo, I also served as founding director of the Center for Faculty Development and co-chaired undergraduate research.

Having supervised staffs of 400 people and multi-million-dollar budgets, I was principal investigator/project director of the first Southeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT) and the first chair and CEO of the National CAPT Network. I provided national leadership toward project start-up, implementation, and evaluation of this network of training and technical assistance centers funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to serve all U.S. states and jurisdictions, including building and nurturing a nationwide remotely-managed team in five satellite locations.

## **SKILLS OVERVIEW**

Twenty-five years of experience in higher education as a senior executive, professor, trainer, technical assistance provider, grant writer, evaluator, and editor; 20 years consulting experience providing training and technical assistance through the U.S. Department of Education's regional comprehensive center and educational labs networks and other venues on topics ranging from leadership to grant writing and curriculum development to cultural diversity, team building, best practices in teaching and retaining first-generation students, developing culturally relevant pedagogy, differentiated instruction, developmental education, and online education

Twenty-five years of experience as an administrator in higher education and private sector; broad understanding of all major management functions of local and remote staffs including staff hiring, supervision, evaluation, and discipline; budget planning and management; human resources functions; fundraising; and marketing/public relations

Published editor, writer, and master communicator in both written and verbal forms; confident and highly skilled trainer and public speaker

Partner leader, leading by example and earning respect from employees, supervisors, clients, and funders for fairness, vision, inclusiveness, and integrity

Proven consensus builder and master group facilitator capable of engaging and molding disparate individuals and groups into a well-served, well-satisfied constituency

Successful proposal developer, grant writer, and fundraiser leading and serving on teams that have secured more than \$75 million in funding for clients nationwide

Skilled strategic planner and priority setter, sharing success with every member of my team and accepting failure as my bottom-line responsibility, turning any failure into a "teachable moment" and ultimately repurposing it into success in an alternate form

Consistently receive student evaluations among the highest in the departments that I have served and excellent evaluations from all supervisors

## **EDUCATION**

University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, Ph.D. in English, 1994, emphasis in writing, major figure study in Tennessee Williams, 4.0 GPA

Mississippi College, Clinton, MS, M.A. in English, 1989, emphasis in writing, 3.95 GPA

University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, B.S. in English/journalism, 1987, 3.7 GPA

East Central Community College, Decatur, MS, A.A. in Liberal Arts, 1985, 3.95 GPA

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **West Virginia University at Parkersburg, Parkersburg, WV, July 1, 2018-Present; President and tenured Professor of Humanities**

West Virginia University at Parkersburg is a free-standing, independently accredited hybrid institution, the only college in West Virginia that is fully a community college and a bachelor's degree-granting university, maintaining strong and traditional ties with West Virginia University, the state's flagship, but not a regional campus of the flagship. WVUP enrolls almost 3,000 students in academic credit-bearing classes working toward an associate or bachelor's degree and additional students in workforce development programs working toward a non-degree certification or credential. WVUP is accredited in good standing with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and holds a number of departmental and discipline-specific accreditations.

The university is governed by a local Board of Governors appointed by the Governor of West Virginia in consultation with the university's President who reports to the Board of Governors and also to the Chancellor of the West Virginia Community and Technical College System and the Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Council, currently a combined role. The college offers a wide range of credentials and degrees supported by a faculty and staff of approximately 400. As president, I supervise five vice presidents and all university functions as well as the independently-governed, but university-staffed WVUP Foundation. We operate at three primary locations, our largest campus in Parkersburg, WV and a satellite campus in Ripley, WV with a downtown center in Parkersburg, and 11 community-based instructional centers.

Major accomplishments under my leadership include, but are not limited to:

- After seven years of year-to-year enrollment decline before my tenure began, we posted an increase of 16 percent new students fall 2020 and an overall enrollment increase of 10 percent for summer 2020; among West Virginia's 19 publicly supported colleges and universities, WVUP posted the largest overall headcount enrollment gain of 10 percent for the 2019-2020 academic year; 18 percent unduplicated headcount enrollment increase from fall 2018 to fall 2019 after my complete restructure of the university's recruitment and admissions leadership and processes;
- Enrollment in early college (high school dual credit) programs doubled in a one-year period and shows promise for more growth;
- Workforce development training hours doubled from 46,000 annual training hours to 96,000 annual training hours delivered to an additional 2,000 non-credit students;
- WVUP courted and received the largest foundation donation in the 60-year history of the university, \$1.8 million from the Arnold Foundation to implement the City University of New York's intensive research-based retention program; one of only two colleges selected nationally in 2019;
- WVUP was selected in 2021 from a large national pool of applicants as one of nine colleges nationwide to participate in the Metallica Scholars Program to elevate the status of workforce and technical education, in partnership with the American Association of Community Colleges;
- The university doubled the amount of competitive grant funding received in a one-year period with promise of significant continued increases, 57 new grants in two years;

- Significant enhancements to the physical plant of both campuses have been successfully completed, including redesign and transformation of the library into a modern learning commons;
- Reinvigoration and nurturing of long-ignored community and college/high school relationships resulting in immediate enrollment increases and much better reputation;
- Nurturing of relationships between WVUP and local nonprofit arts organizations to promote staging theatrical productions, hanging art installations, and hosting concerts on campus for the first time in many years;
- Reframing social justice efforts into an overarching equity program called Opening Pathways to Equity Now, the OPEN Project, after significant consultation with all stakeholders;
- Creation of an experiential learning program piloted with students in the strategic communications major, under the mentorship of their faculty and the professional marketing staff, who have taken over the marketing function of the university with such success that consensus is our marketing has never been better; pilot program set to expand into business, education and other majors through formation of a student recruitment team to supplement, if not to drive, the work of professional recruiters;
- Enhanced focus on shared governance through doubling the membership of the President's Cabinet to better represent all stakeholders; revision of the process to change or add policies and procedures to ensure broader stakeholder feedback;
- Development of a comprehensive short-term and long-term strategic plan for student recruitment based on the life cycle of the student, which served as the foundation for a new university-wide strategic plan completed fall 2020;
- Implementation of feasibility study which has put WVUP's dormant Riverhawk Farm back into service for farm-to-table with local restaurants and to grow potatoes for a locally-based national potato chip company; funded by \$300,000 in pledges and grants to date;
- Creation of the WVU Parkersburg Proud Initiative, a presidential fundraising initiative announced two years ago in collaboration with the WVUP Foundation, the first goal-setting, deliberate fundraising campaign in the university's 60-year history; goal set to raise \$3 million in three years; in less than two years we doubled the goal, presently developing a more ambitious campaign;
- Veterans Resource Center ranked seventh in the nation in 2021; bachelor's degree in early childhood education ranked first in the nation in 2020; bachelor's degree in business ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in the nation in 2021; 12 national education marketing awards won in 2020-21, more than any college in West Virginia; inaugural Mark Ivester Innovation Award from the Community Colleges of Appalachia in 2021; 26 active Learn and Earn workforce development student internship/externship experiential learning partnerships with area business and industry, more than any college in the nation.

**Innovative Behavioral Services, Inc., (IBS) Ridgeland, MS, January 2007-Present; Vice President for Academic and Sponsored Programs, and Founder, National Institutes for Historically-Underserved Students (volunteer)**

IBS is a statewide nonprofit providing mental health counseling and educational enhancement. It provides services to historically-underserved students and families without regard to their ability to pay, and my work focuses primarily on fundraising. I have also worked to ensure the

continuous academic integrity in design and implementation of educational programs, and more recently I founded the National Institutes.

As a partnership initially led by IBS, Adams State University, and Alcorn State University, and now led by WVU Parkersburg, I founded, convened, and facilitated the first think tank meeting of the National Institutes for Historically-Underserved Students which brought together by invitation on the Adams State University campus 32 higher education, K-12 education, philanthropic, civil rights, and healthcare leaders from across the nation with our students to sign a *Declaration on the Rights of Historically-Underserved Students*. Three additional think tanks have been held at WVUP (virtually in 2020), and the college and its foundation have assumed the fiscal and programmatic management of the Institutes which now has more than 75 national leaders as active participants, along with many student ambassadors. Our most recent event in Parkersburg included leaders from more than 25 states and the District of Columbia.

There are four inter-related institutes operating under one umbrella:

- The Institute for Social Justice in Higher Education
- The Institute for Curricular Reform in Higher Education
- The Institute for Research and Best Practices in Higher Education
- The Institute for Pre-K through Adult Education Partnerships in Higher Education

The Institute for Social Justice in Higher Education will focus on civil rights issues advocating for historically-underserved and disenfranchised student populations.

The Institute for Curricular Reform in Higher Education will develop curricular materials based on research and best practices that can be shared with colleges and universities at no cost or cost-recovery because texts by publishers have become prohibitively expensive for our most vulnerable students. This Institute will also focus on development of culturally-relevant pedagogies.

The Institute for Research and Best Practices in Higher Education will utilize research-based models to test the theories which emerge from the other Institutes and to validate the efficacy of our work. It will be the dissemination arm to share cross-institute resources with the broader education community.

The Institute for Pre-K through Adult Education Partnerships in Higher Education will build primary/secondary/higher education partnerships and a continuum of best practices. The Institute will focus on familial education and develop resources with that focus.

**Chris Gilmer and Associates Consulting, Parkersburg, WV and Vicksburg, MS, 2000-Present, President**

I coordinate a group of affiliated, independent college and university faculty members from various disciplines to serve the training and grant writing needs of clients nationwide. Part of our work funds the pro bono services of a nonprofit organization, Innovative Behavioral Services, Inc., a regional nonprofit social services agency providing counseling services and educational support to historically-underserved populations without regard for their ability to pay. I serve as a volunteer officer of the nonprofit.



Clients have included RMC Research Corporation, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, University of Alaska Southeast, Florida State University, Alcorn State University, U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Education, Puerto Rico Department of Education, Mississippi University for Women, Johnson Controls International, Educational Testing Service (ETS), and the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services.

Our work focuses on curriculum development and redesign, specialized writing and editing services, and faculty development training. Additionally, we have secured in excess of \$75 million in competitive federal and non-federal grant funds for clients nationwide. We specialize in researching grant opportunities, matching them with clients, writing and submitting applications, and grants management/evaluation. I have worked as a Faculty Programs Consultant for Cengage Learning, one of the nation's largest educational publishers, providing peer-to-peer keynote addresses and training workshops on developmental education to faculty members and administrators at national and regional conferences and campus-based faculty training events. Cengage maintained a cadre of only 10 Faculty Programs Consultants chosen from a large national pool of faculty candidates.

For 20 years, I have worked with such global educational leaders as the U.S. Department of Education, Educational Testing Service (ETS), and RMC Research as a consultant providing training and technical assistance nationwide through the Comprehensive Centers and Regional Educational Labs on such topics as developmental education, online and adult education, cultural diversity, differentiated instruction, team building, infusing culturally relevant pedagogy, student success, and grant writing. One current consulting project is to sustain a professional learning community of educators in the high-poverty Mississippi Delta, now in its seventh year, and to provide them with training and technical assistance on improving low-performing schools.

**Alcorn State University, Vicksburg, MS, August 2013-June 2018 (except for July 2016 through February 2017); Executive Director/Chief Operating Officer, Alcorn State University, Vicksburg Center; Director of Online Education for the ASU System; Professor of English; Executive Director, Southwest Mississippi Center for Culture and Learning; Consultant for Online Education and Vicksburg Expansion**

ASU is the oldest public land grant HBCU in America and has been promoting student success and closing the achievement gap for historically-underserved students since 1871. ASU serves almost 4,000 students at three primary locations including its historical residential campus in Lorman and extension centers in Natchez and Vicksburg. I served as Executive Director in charge of the Vicksburg Center overseeing budgets, facilities, personnel, course offerings, continuing education, and community relations. I also served as Director of Online Education for ASU across all locations promoting and developing new online course offerings and degree programs, online education protocols and procedures, academic computing infrastructure related to online education, and faculty development.

University service included membership on the Provost's Advisory Council as a direct report to the Provost, Council of Deans, and Graduate Council. I chaired the Academic Technology Users Group which monitored academic technology use and online education and made recommendations to the Provost and President regarding these university functions. I was hired as a consultant to develop online education and to support expansion into Vicksburg and development of the Vicksburg Center. I transitioned from consultant into administrative roles

June 2015, at which time I transitioned from an administrative role to an adjunct faculty role at Walden University.

In Vicksburg, I served on the steering committee which led to the city's selection as a Ford Next Generation Learning City, the first in Mississippi and 25<sup>th</sup> nationwide. In conjunction with the Vicksburg Warren School District, we won the Governor's Award for Exemplary Educational Partnerships for our STEM program with the Thurgood Marshall Foundation, one of only two such programs nationwide.

**Adams State University, Alamosa, Colorado, July 2016-February 2017, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer; Professor of English, tenured**

Adams State University is the oldest federally-designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in Colorado and a highly diverse university. It educates students through face-to-face, online and hybrid bachelor's through doctoral programs including a unique program for incarcerated students and a Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs-accredited (CACREP) master's program in counseling.

Reporting directly to the President, I was one of three vice presidents comprising the senior management team and having signature and other decision-making authority in the president's absence. Under her leadership, we administered a \$60 million annual budget, and I had direct responsibility for the budget of the academic sector. I sat on the Executive Council, President's Cabinet, and Athletic Council while convening and presiding over the Academic Council (council of departmental chairs) and Graduate Council, directly supervising the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. Additionally, since Adams does not have an academic structure including deans, I directly supervised 13 departmental chairs, the first-year experience program, directors of the library and academic technology, the major in interdisciplinary studies, research and sponsored programs, and distance and continuing education programs.

While fully-accredited, Adams was on probation from the HLC when I arrived, primarily for violations in its distance education programs, and I oversaw complex reaccreditation efforts resulting in removal of the university from probation and restoration to normal accreditation status. At the state level, I sat on the Chief Academic Officers Council with representatives from all other public universities and community colleges in Colorado. I networked extensively with the Adams State Board of Trustees on matters related to academic affairs and with the Office of Title V Programs to oversee academic components of the suite of grants received based on the university's HSI designation.

Major accomplishments included, but were not limited to:

- Overhaul of developmental programs to include two corequisite education pilots in math and one pilot in English embedded into the local high schools;
- Founding of FUTURO Education, Families United To Unleash Rural Opportunities, an umbrella for the university's community-based programs serving the 14 independent school districts in the San Luis Valley with emphasis on dual enrollment for high school students;

- Supported overhaul of general education based on a unique model using equity and inclusion as the foundation;
- Evaluation and rebuilding of the Office of Extended Studies (distance education) which oversees distance education and was the focus of concern resulting in HLC probation;
- Oversaw faculty retention, promotion, and tenure;
- Successful site visit from CACREP resulting in full accreditation for doctoral program in counseling; also accredited at the master's level;
- Receipt of National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant to promote minority women in STEM fields; served as Principal Investigator;
- Development of training sequence implemented for Academic Council and Extended Studies management and staff on best practices in online education and evaluation of online course quality;
- National search for Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs/Graduate Programs, Research, and Sponsored Programs; oversaw searches for other senior positions;
- Taught Ethnic and Minority Literature in the Department of English during my first semester on campus because the university lost its only other scholar in this area and the course was going to be canceled;
- Formed and nurtured strong relationships with the university's students, management team, trustees, faculty, staff, alumni, and community supporters;
- Actively supported the university's programs for its most vulnerable students including Community for Inclusive Excellence, Leadership, and Opportunity (CIELO), Upward Bound, College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), Cultural Awareness and Student Achievement Center (CASA), Boettcher Teacher Preparation, and others;
- Formed strategic partnerships with other minority-serving institutions, research universities, community colleges, federal technical assistance providers, nonprofits, and private companies nationwide;
- Developed and deployed an equity-based academic strategic planning model to replace the dated 2009 academic master plan;
- Oversaw university's reaccreditation efforts to comprehensively and strategically prepare for HLC's successful November 2017 site visit;

**Walden University, Minneapolis, MN, August 2009-June 2016, Core Professor and Chair/Academic Coordinator, Department of Undergraduate Writing, College of Undergraduate Studies (CUGS); Contributing Faculty, CUGS; Chair, Writing Task Force; Faculty Development Director for CUGS**

A member of the Laureate Educational Network of 70-plus universities with more than one million students worldwide, Walden enrolled at the time of my service 60,000 students from almost 150 countries. It is among the largest, most highly accredited fully online universities in the world. I served five years as departmental chair/academic coordinator and then as a contributing faculty member in the College of Undergraduate Studies, providing its general education curriculum. I oversaw the remotely distributed undergraduate writing faculty and taught courses in all areas of writing, women's literature, modern popular culture, and interdisciplinary studies. I also served as Chair of the Walden University Writing Task Force, an elected member of the College's Curriculum Committee that approves all major course changes and all new courses, a member of the first-year experience committee, and as a senior colleague

for new faculty members. I recommended curriculum revisions and new course development in the area of writing, chaired the task force that developed the writing skills assessment test, and was a member of the Faculty Advisory Panel for the Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE).

A recipient of the 2014 Faculty Excellence Award, one of only ten such awards given each year and selected from a global faculty of 3,000, I served on Walden's university-wide accreditation steering committee chairing the subcommittee on mission. I also chaired the subcommittee on student issues for the general education academic program review that supported a 10-year reaffirmation of accreditation from the HLC. I directed faculty development for CUGS, served on the committee developing Walden's new undergraduate honors program, and served on the CFE task force to measure the social change impact of Walden's graduates. Elected as a faculty representative to my college's senior management team, diversity in faculty recruitment and hiring grew through my efforts as departmental chair and in other leadership roles. Co-founded online support communities/affinity groups for Black and LGBTQ+ students, and allies.

**Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS, August 2010-May 2013, Visiting Faculty Member and Curriculum Developer, Department of English**

Mississippi State is a large land-grant university committed to broad access to higher education and high quality academic programs. I was hired for a three-year fixed term appointment ending May 2013 to develop and pilot teach a fully online Certificate in Professional Writing at the undergraduate and graduate levels including course development. As part of the certificate, I developed and piloted a course in grant writing that was among the most popular new electives.

**Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, January 2007-May 2010, Associate Professor of English and Curriculum Enhancement Team Chair, Department of English; Grant Writer, Office of Institutional Advancement, Division of Development**

JSU is a comprehensive, urban Historically Black University (HBCU). I facilitated teams that secured grants from several foundations with responsibility for working with deans and department chairs to develop and administer all non-federal grant submissions for the university. Additionally, I oversaw compliance and reporting issues for funded grants. I developed and taught beginning through advanced undergraduate courses, advised students, and served on a variety of committees including the Provost's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) team and the Community College Articulation Agreement Committee. As part of the QEP team, I chaired a cross-disciplinary task force of faculty and graduate students in revising the university's freshman composition curriculum with rigorous placement testing and measurement standards. Service learning, learning communities, culturally relevant texts, and instructional technologies were added.

**Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), Calverton, MD (worked remotely), January 2004-December 2006, Deputy Director for Special Programs, Southeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT)**

Responsibilities included providing training and technical assistance to clients in 12 states and jurisdictions on various health and educational topics, strategic planning and resources allocation, primary responsibility for all supplemental projects such as U.S. Department of

Education grantees, data collection and reporting. Additionally, I served as a member of the four-member CAPT management team, and I oversaw all diversity and communications functions.

**Tougaloo College, Jackson, MS, August 1999-December 2006, Associate Professor of English, tenured; Chair, Department of English and Modern Languages; and Founding Director, Center for Faculty Development**

Tougaloo College is a private liberal arts Historically Black College (HBCU) with high academic standards that celebrates its important historical role in the Civil Rights Movement. While at Tougaloo, I chaired the Department of English and Modern Languages, developed and taught courses from developmental writing and composition through honors senior courses in British, American, and world literature. I directed the tutoring programs of the Writing Center and Writing across the Curriculum initiatives, co-directed undergraduate research programs, and served on the college's successful reaccreditation team. While at Tougaloo, I mentored more HBCU Mellon Fellows than any other faculty member at any HBCU nationwide and helped to redesign the first-year experience. I also taught in a bridge program for high school students through the college's TRIO program and prepared students for the Tougaloo College/Brown University student exchange program.

Selected by and reporting to the provost to serve as the Center for Faculty Development's founding director, I led efforts in developing, implementing, and revising the college's faculty performance assessment system; assisting faculty members in developing portfolios for tenure and promotion; recruiting diverse faculty members; developing individualized corrective plans for faculty members not meeting approved standards; conducting needs assessment regarding faculty training needs and providing training; assisting faculty members in the preparation and submission of grants; securing funds for and fostering faculty/student undergraduate research; mentoring junior faculty and developing a formal senior/junior faculty mentorship program; gathering faculty performance data and generating reports drawn from the data for accreditation and other purposes; serving as a liaison between the faculty and senior administrators; creating opportunities to maintain high faculty morale; and performing a wide array of related tasks.

While at Tougaloo, I served as a consultant for Belhaven University, a private liberal arts college, as it developed its highly successful adult education program, developing and piloting most of the modules in composition and communication and teaching as an adjunct in the working adult program for five years.

**Developing Resources for Education in America, Inc. (DREAM), Jackson, MS, 1992-2001, Acting President, Associate Executive Director, Executive Editor, and Senior Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs; Founding Director/Principal Investigator of the Southeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies and Founding Chair/CEO of the National CAPT Network**

DREAM was a publisher of early childhood through adult educational materials and a provider of training and technical assistance. Originally hired to provide leadership to the publishing division serving 26 states and Puerto Rico, I was quickly and additionally promoted to lead the transition of this small, locally-based non-profit agency into a regionally and nationally respected educational publishing house and training provider. I served as managing editor of a series of pre-K-2 children's books on cultural diversity (and author of one volume) with gross sales in

excess of \$1 million. This series, promoting life skills, critical thinking, and cultural diversity, was distributed through a grant to every kindergarten and first-grade classroom in Mississippi and translated and culturally adapted for extensive use in Puerto Rico's kindergarten program.

I oversaw DREAM's publications and media relations and its first grant writing campaign, securing \$20 million for the company, more than doubling the staff, and increasing the annual budget three-fold to over \$10 million. Duties included overseeing all aspects of national conferences for audiences as large as 500. As a member of the executive committee, I networked extensively with the Board of Directors, oversaw budgetary and personnel matters including hiring and termination issues, diversity in employment issues, and grant administration, data collection and analysis, project evaluation, and grant reporting. While at DREAM, I presented keynote addresses or workshops at more than a dozen national and international conferences and served two terms as Chair of the Mississippi Executive Prevention Council. I served as Acting President while the founding President took a one-year sabbatical.

For two years, I served as the Founding Director/Principal Investigator of the Southeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies (Southeast CAPT), a 12-state and jurisdiction technical assistance center competitively funded to DREAM by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under a grant that I wrote. The CAPT provided training and technical assistance as part of the National CAPT Network serving all 50 states and U.S. jurisdictions. I was elected by my peer directors and approved by the funding agent to serve as the inaugural Chair/CEO of the National CAPT Network, overseeing approximately \$25 million in federal funds with five regional offices and 200 employees nationwide.

### **Prior to 1992**

I served as Director of Public Affairs at Mississippi University for Women and as managing editor for two award-winning weekly newspapers. During this period of time, I also served as an adjunct instructor at Mississippi College, a private liberal arts college, and at East Central Community College.

### **SELECTED AFFILIATIONS (Present and Past) AND PUBLICATIONS**

National Commissioner on College Readiness, American Association of Community Colleges

Innovative Behavioral Services, Inc. (volunteer vice president)

Board of Directors, Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council

Board of Directors, Artsbridge

Board of Directors, Mid-Ohio Valley Chamber of Commerce

Board of Directors, West Virginia Center for Civic Life

Founder and Convener, Arts Collaborative of the Mid-Ohio Valley

Rotary International, Rotary Club of Parkersburg Board of Directors, current President; prior member, Rotary Club of Vicksburg

Board of Directors, Community Colleges of Appalachia

President's National Roundtable, Kettering Foundation

Mid-Ohio Valley Chamber of Commerce's 2019 Business Leader of the Year

Founding Co-Convener, Research Alliance on Improving Post-Secondary Success at HBCUs, Regional Educational Lab Southeast at Florida State University

Founding Co-Convener, Research Alliance on Improving Schools in Mississippi, Regional Educational Lab Southeast at Florida State University

Board of Directors, Founding Vice Chair, Discovery Zone Children's Museum of Parkersburg

Board of Directors, Mountain of Faith Homeless Ministries

Campaign Cabinet, United Way of West Central Mississippi, committee co-chair

Advisory Board, University Press of Mississippi

Vicksburg/Warren County Chamber of Commerce

Steering Committee, Ford Next Generation Learning Vicksburg

Advisory Board, Southwest Mississippi Center for Culture and Learning

Vicksburg Association of Marketing Professionals

Presented more than 100 workshops and keynotes for colleges, private sector, and conferences nationwide spanning two decades; presentations include keynote addresses for statewide conferences of the South Carolina Association for Developmental Education and the Florida Association for Developmental Education and at national conferences on developmental education, adult education, cultural diversity, infusing culturally diverse pedagogy into the curriculum, team building, grant writing, integrated reading and writing, first-year experience, and college success for first-generation and other historically-underserved students

Three invited presentations at the White House Conference on HBCUs

"Making Colleges Student Ready: It's About Time," conference panel presentation for The Society for College and University Planning, October 2021 conference at the University of Illinois-Chicago, lead presenter

Writer and editor of published curricula and training materials, creative nonfiction, children's literature, scholarly peer-reviewed articles, grants, magazine and newspaper articles, and training module on grant writing published by Educational Testing Service (ETS)

Creative nonfiction anthologized three times in peer-reviewed collections by University Press of Mississippi alongside Nobel- and Pulitzer Prize-winning authors and international leaders such as Oprah Winfrey

“You Are Worthy of Your Dreams,” editorial column published in *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, spring 2020

“A Letter to George Floyd,” editorial column published in *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, summer 2020

Peer-reviewed academic publications: *Studies in American Drama, 1945-Present*; *Journal of Developmental Education*; *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, and *Encyclopedia of Online Education*

Children’s Big Book nine-volume series managing editor (writer of one volume) distributed nationwide with sales in excess of \$1 million, translated and culturally adapted for use in Puerto Rico’s kindergarten program

Published interviews with renowned actors and writers Ruby Dee, Margaret Avery, James Baldwin, and Susan Sontag

Scholarship in Process:

“Imagining the Future: Historically Black Colleges and Universities—A Matter of Survival,” book chapter for a peer-reviewed book forthcoming from Information Age Publishing, co-author

“The Efficacy of Assessment Measures Used for Admission and Certification and Differential Impact on People of Color,” peer-reviewed article forthcoming from the National Education Association, co-author

“Attention, Attention Must Be Finally Paid”: A Case for Reinventing Liberal Arts Education, article forthcoming for Kettering Foundation’s *Higher Education Exchange*, author



## **Statement of Leadership Philosophy**

**Chris Gilmer, Ph.D.**

A leader knows when to talk and when to listen, and generally spends more time listening. A leader knows what she knows and is confident enough to admit what she does not know. She surrounds herself with people who complement her strengths. A leader takes responsibility for his own actions and for any failure that occurs on his watch, while he is eager to share credit for every success with the members of his team. A leader makes decisions by achieving broad consensus whenever possible, knows when a decision must be made, and is not afraid to make the hard ones alone when they must. They weigh the needs of the many and the needs of the few, making choices fairly even when they cannot always be popular. A leader is respected for transparency and integrity even by the person who occasionally does not agree with one of his decisions. She would always wish to be well liked, but realizes it is more important to be trusted.

Within the higher education sector—while students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, donors, and community members are all vitally important—a leader has one primary consideration as the basis for every decision: what is best for the students we serve? Serving students is not just a job. It is an honor. It is why we are here, and a higher education leader is a passionate and tireless advocate for students.

A leader balances consistency with innovation and leverages all available resources, internal and external, to achieve or to exceed the desired outcomes. She realizes that the university must be for and of the community it serves, and she is never too busy to spread the message to one person in line at the post office or one thousand people listening to a keynote address. They feel successful only when the community beyond the university's walls feels ownership and pride and when the community within its walls feels heard, validated, and inspired. A leader does not create a culture of individual personality which could falter when she leaves, but endeavors to create a culture of community with shared vision and common goals which will endure long after she is gone.

My leadership philosophy is simple: I ask no one to work harder than I work or to do anything I would not do myself. I create a deliberately non-hierarchical structure in which all people feel empowered and respected, in which any person feels free to respectfully disagree with me and is willing to accept my respectful disagreement. Such acceptance is the very beginning of building consensus. I evaluate each person on his, her, or their merits based on my own experiences with that person, and I begin new professional relationships with high expectations. I do not say anything about someone that I would not say directly to that person. I expect to be treated by those I lead and by those who lead me no better and no worse than this. For many years, I considered myself a servant leader, trying always to embody the best meaning that the word “servant” connotes, a spirit of service. Since the word also connotes a meaning of hierarchy and a structure in which one person is more than another, however, I have coined the term “partner leadership,” a structure in which each of us can serve equally and with dignity, but in which no one is perceived as less-than. I am a partner leader. I can force people to do almost nothing, but inspire them to do almost anything that is worthy. If ever this is no longer the case, the organization needs a new leader.

## **Vision Statement for Inclusive Excellence in Higher Education**

**Chris Gilmer, Ph.D.**

With notable exceptions, colleges and universities have always been among the most progressive institutions in American culture, usually ahead and often far ahead of the states and communities in which they are set. We are called to lead and should never be satisfied to follow. Inclusive excellence is one of the critical leadership opportunities of this moment in history for American higher education. We are the laboratories wherein students of every sex, race, age, socioeconomic status, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and every other defining characteristic known to humankind come together. If higher education is called on to educate the mind for professional achievement and community service, are we not also called on to educate the spirit to effect positive social change in a world culture that becomes more global every day? We are the laboratories wherein top academic performers sit in classrooms alongside underprepared students struggling to read the textbooks, and we owe just as much to one as to the other. We are the laboratories in which fifth-generation college students matriculate with first-generation students who have no existing culture of higher education in their families. Transgendered people learn alongside grandmothers, and all hold equally the promise for future generations of their families and the world family. If higher education does not model the behaviors that need to be mainstreamed into society, what institutions will fill that role? The question is not whether we can afford to do it; the question is whether we can afford not to do it.

Tolerance is not enough. Acceptance is not enough. They are necessary, but insufficient. What we must do, what we must be, is more difficult than that—and more promising. We must learn to celebrate that which makes us different as fully and as easily as we celebrate that which makes us the same. What makes us the same, our shared humanity, will take us only so far. The differences in innate abilities, ways of thinking, learned skills, methods of communication, natural orientations, core beliefs, and other individual traits will take us the rest of the way. Watch a group of toddlers playing together in a sandbox

for a glimpse of what we might become. They do not define by race. They do not define by gender. They do not define by social class. Prejudice is taught and learned, fed by one generation to the next. The good news: if it is taught and learned, it can be untaught and unlearned if we are willing to do the hard work and to do it honestly. No longer a wide-eyed child, it is predictable for adults to sometimes fear that which is different, even to promote our own survival at the expense of others. But do we not wish to do more than survive? Are we not called to become something more than predictable? Ultimately, should there not be one united humankind made up of diverse voices?

Infants are not afraid of much, so perhaps we must become as they are—optimistic, open, unjudging, innocent—to live into our full potential. In short, we must be reborn. The gestation has begun. We are growing every day. The birth will not be an easy one. Higher education must be the midwife of this global human rebirth, and if we do our job well, imagine the world in which all of our grandchildren may live together in peace.

## **Statement of Educational Philosophy**

**Chris Gilmer, Ph.D.**

The best teachers I know are occasionally, but rarely, “sages on stages.” More often, they are coaches who unlock, affirm, and expand the wisdom students already possess and facilitators who create safe spaces in which students can learn not only from them, but from each other and the world around them. Good teachers sometimes provide answers, but are much more interested in asking important questions. They are comfortable in the absence of answers when none exist, secure in their command of their subjects, but equally secure in their own fallibility. They never pass up a teachable moment, and they are more interested in helping students learn how to learn than in precisely what they learn. Good teachers take their responsibility very seriously and themselves seriously enough, but never too seriously. Over time, they become masters of whatever approach works best for them, and they see themselves as much or more as facilitators and partners as they see themselves as leaders. The best teachers provide examples, starting with the most important example of their own lives, and they become role models who inspire students to grow into their best selves while not being afraid of or embarrassed by their own humanity and a few false starts along the way.

Based on my humble beginning in the cotton fields of rural Mississippi, I have adopted the personal creed, “To whom much is given, of him or her is much required.” With the help and sacrifice of more people than I can name, I am living proof that a person can rise above the stereotypes and low expectations society sets for him, and I work daily toward the goal of opening educational doors for this generation and the ones to follow. As a first-generation college student, I have devoted my career to date to enfranchising the disenfranchised, to educating those that some deem uneducable, and to serving as a voice for those who need an advocate and are, at least temporarily, unprepared to speak for themselves. Having spent my academic career with underserved students, I have been privileged to serve thousands of first-generation college students, under-prepared learners, honors students, traditional and adult learners,

students who came to college from around the corner and from the other side of the world. A good teacher embraces all kinds of learners. There is no need for any college without the students it serves, and I have celebrated equally with the dyslexic basketball player to whom I taught vocabulary words while shooting free throws and the Rhodes Scholar finalist whom I helped gain admission to law school.

My life is a case study in the transformative power of education, not just for individuals, but for families and entire communities. Education is the great equalizer. It must not be simply a privilege of those to whom access comes easily. It must not be tailored only to serve the needs of those prepared to excel. It must be a right of every person willing to work hard for it. It is less the job of the student to meet higher education fully prepared than it is the job of higher education to meet each student wherever she, he, or they might be along the continuum and to serve as a bridge to opportunities for a lifetime of professional contributions and service. Only when this vision is realized will the promise of equality and social justice for all made so long ago by this nation be kept.

A teacher is a lifelong learner who leads students with one part inspiration, one part personal example, and one part benevolent authority. The student is not always right, but neither is the teacher. The student is, however, always the student and, as such, our only reason for choosing this vocation. In 2021, a classroom can be in a traditional building with tables and chairs, a field of clover in motion under a March breeze, a strip mall, a beach with wireless Internet connection, a home nursery while an infant sleeps, or a workplace cafeteria. It can be in Mexico City or Prague; Parkersburg, West Virginia or Ashland, Oregon. Students do not care what we know until they know that we care. Students can be forced almost nowhere, which is as it should be, but they can be inspired almost anywhere. Teaching is, therefore, a sacred trust, an awesome responsibility, an honor, and perhaps for the very best teachers, even a calling. Over the years, many students have asked me if I will remember them should we meet again at some far distant time. My answer: Maybe not if I only taught you something, but absolutely if you taught me something. What a radical notion—teachers not afraid to learn with and from those they teach.