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TOP STORY

Loftin resigns as MU chancellor, effective at the end of the year

RUTH SERVEN, EMMA VANDELINDER Nov 9, 2015



TAZ LOMBARDO

Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin watches from behind as University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe speaks to students on Nov. 3 at the University Hall parking lot. On Monday, Loftin announced his resignation as chancellor at the end of the year.

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COLUMBIA — MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said Monday afternoon that he will leave his job at the end of the year and move to a role coordinating research at MU.

The announcement came just 6 1/2 hours after UM System President Tim Wolfe resigned his position.

Twenty months into his time as the leader of the university's flagship campus in Columbia, Loftin faced criticism for how he handled racism on campus, severed relations with Planned Parenthood, the loss of benefits for graduate students and the sudden resignation of the dean of the School of Medicine.

Last week the English Department made a vote of no confidence in Loftin's leadership. On Monday, nine deans signed a letter to the UM Board of Curators and to Wolfe saying Loftin had created a "toxic environment through threat, fear

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R. Bowen Loftin moves out and on to a new chapter

and intimidation." The faculty of the Department of Romance Languages and Literature also took a vote of no-confidence in Loftin.

Loftin will become director for research facility development and will lead MU's efforts to construct and renovate facilities to meet the university's research needs.

UM System News said in a release during a curators' press conference that Hank Foley, MU senior vice chancellor for research and graduate studies, would become interim chancellor for the MU campus.

An interim system president will be announced as soon as possible, the release said.

Curator Donald Cupps said he was disheartened by events leading to Wolfe's resignation and to Loftin's removal as chancellor.

"As a board, we have taken an oath to maintain the standard of excellence and source of pride that the University of Missouri is for all Missourians. We are committed to keeping the institution and our state moving forward," Cupps said. "It saddens me that some who have attended our university have ever felt fear, being unwelcome or have experienced racism."

At the news conference, Cupps said "some of our students, and some of our employees, we may have failed, and for that we apologize. And we have resolved that we will attempt to do better, but it will take a lot of work."

The curators outlined several steps the UM System and MU campus will take to address complaints about the racial climate on its campuses over the next three months. They said in the news release they will:

- Appoint for the first time a chief diversity, inclusion and equity officer for the four-campus system.
- Conduct a full review of all UM System policies related to staff and student conduct.
- Provide additional support for students, faculty and staff who have experienced discrimination and for the hiring and retention of diverse faculty and staff.
- Create a diversity, inclusion and equity task force to develop both a short- and long-term strategies for diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure that each campus has a chief diversity, inclusion and equity officer reporting to its chancellor.
- Launch a leadership training and development education program that will include the curators, the president and other administrators, followed by faculty and staff.

Specifically at MU, the curators called for:

- A search for consultants to conduct a comprehensive assessment of diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Mandatory diversity, inclusion and equity training for all faculty, staff and future students.
- Continue a comprehensive review of student mental health services to ensure students get appropriate help.

Charles Presberg, chair of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, explained why 28 of its 30 faculty members voted no confidence in Loftin, saying they were "probably more interested in the resignation of the chancellor, than of the president. ... The general consensus is he is the one that is even more responsible for a lot of the chaos and disorder that has occurred on campus."

Presberg said the department's complaints don't come solely from the recent racism issues on campus. Faculty is upset about Loftin's lack of communication and failure to explain his decisions, Presberg said.

Foley's credentials and comments

Foley was appointed to position of MU senior vice chancellor of research and graduate studies in March 2014. He was formerly the executive vice president for academic affairs, research and economic development with the UM System. He is also a professor of chemical engineering at MU.

Foley oversees compliance operations, internal grants and programs, technology management, industry relations as well as the MU Research Reactor, the Christopher S. Bond Life Sciences Center and other campus centers, according to the UM System website.

Foley was in and out of the Old Alumni Center throughout Monday as the curators met behind closed doors for six hours in the Fireplace Room. He also attended the curators' news conference.

He said he was happy that Concerned Student 1950 leader Jonathan Butler had ended his hunger strike, that he was pleased the curators entrusted him to become interim chancellor and that he believes Monday's events will lead to significant change.

"You've heard some things today that were outlined and were substantive and that make sense, that we can start to move forward on very quickly, that are concrete, and not just talk, and to get beyond the listening stage to actually implementing change."

Foley said he is looking forward to working solely on the MU campus.

"It's a difficult time and a turbulent time, there's no doubt about that," he said. "I don't want to minimize or in any way dismiss the challenges we have ahead of us, but I love the campus, I love the school, the students are wonderful."

Foley said he believes in "institutional autonomy, academic freedom and in shared governance. I think it is important to reach out to leaders" such as "the provost, the deans and vice chancellors, the Faculty Council and both the undergraduate and graduate student leaders."

Faculty reaction

Ben Trachtenberg, associate professor of law and chair of the MU Faculty Council, said he had a good working relationship with Loftin.

"If he decided that it made sense for him to transition to a different job, then he made the right decision," Trachtenberg said, adding that it will be important to get buy-in from faculty, students and other groups when selecting successors to Loftin and Wolfe.

Nicole Monnier, director of undergraduate studies for the German and Russian Studies, said faculty understood that Loftin's "days were numbered."

"None of us expected to lose a system president and a chancellor in one day," she said.

Monnier said she talked to students Monday who were confused or angry. She said she found solace from Jim Spain, vice provost for undergraduate studies, who reminded her that MU has been standing since 1839.

"So many things have happened so quickly," Monnier said.

"From the graduate insurance, to Planned Parenthood to the recent protests on campus: Too many people were upset about too many things for" Loftin "to be effective in his role."

Monnier said it will be important for new leaders to articulate a clear mission and to involve faculty, students and staff in defining it.

"I had a student say to me today that he was ashamed of Mizzou," Monnier said. "I don't want our students to be ashamed of us as an institution. I hope we have someone who can bring back a sense of pride in who we are."

Sarah Wynn contributed to this article.

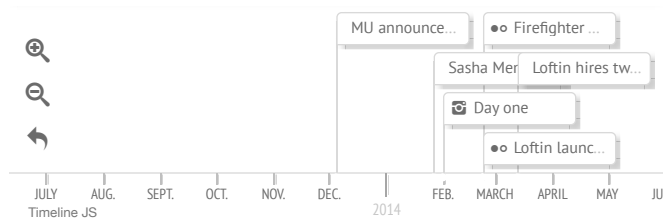
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A LOOK AT R. BOWEN LOFTIN'S TENURE AT MU



Beatriz Costa-Lima/Missourian
Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin introduces donor representative Sam Hamacher, to the crowd outside the Trulaske College of Business.



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