

Another Secret Presidential Search Another Recipe for Disaster

JSU has a new President. On Wednesday, May 31, 2017, the IHL once again crammed someone down the throats of faculty, students and alumni after yet another secret presidential search. Stated in IHL-eze, JSU was told the “preferred” candidate was William Bynum, currently President of MVSU was to be their president. He came to campus to smile and be vague while talking about an unspecified “vision” for the future. As reported by the [Clarion Ledger](#), “Bynum attempted to win over students and alumni, saying he is a God-fearing, God-loving man, who believes in faith, family and the future of higher education.”

Unimpressed by Bynum’s claims, one of the [alumni](#) stated to Bynum, “I’ve spoken with students and alumni at the Valley and I have received a low approval rate (of your presidency).” Nor did the vocal frustration with the selection end there: “When you were selected, it was almost without hesitation that you accepted the position with only being at Mississippi Valley for four years. How can we trust that you will stick with JSU?” Bynum’s vaguely responded, “I can assure you the Valley family is okay with my being here.” Of course his response can equally be read as “the Valley family is glad to be rid of me.”

According to [MississippiToday](#), “the JSU alumni association president put Bynum on notice. ‘You will be held accountable, if you are not true to all you’ve said, we will question all that you’ve done to get to this point. We are watching you and we are watching IHL.’”

In short, the cash strapped Mississippi Higher Education system, including JSU with a reported \$8 million dollar operating deficit, begins a new university presidency with anger, resentment and questions about the qualifications of the new hire. Bynum seems airily unconcerned about the discontent with which he is about to begin his new job: “Let’s cut to the chase. I may not be your choice and you have every right to an opinion of who you want. But the board made the choice and I’ve made the decision to accept.”

According to the [Clarion Ledger](#), “The College Board has said about 50 people applied for the JSU presidential job. The board process is secret and no other names of finalists were made public.”

With each new secretly hired president, Mississippi taxpayers, faculty, students and alumni get yet another taste of how inadequate the IHL’s “secret searches” program for hiring new presidents for Mississippi’s public universities can be. With all of the turmoil and turnover, maybe the next search will be wide open, and maybe those in charge of it will select an academic. One can always hope, but given the IHL’s history, we do not realistically expect any change.