

## Questions

After his [retirement in 2015](#), the IHL has summoned Joe Paul to serve as Southern Miss' eleventh president. A [Southern Miss alumnus](#), Dr. Paul has served various administrative functions for more than 40 years. He replaces Dr. Rodney Bennett who was touted as "... the first [African-American](#) president of a historically and predominantly white higher education institution in Mississippi."

A few questions seem obvious.

Why did the IHL appoint someone who, based on age, is a caretaker president? In fact, Dr. Paul appears to be a clear break from the previous two progressive hires of Dr. Rodney Bennett and Dr. Martha Saunders.

We know what happened to Dr. Saunders. Read a few of the reports here at [usmnews.net](#). You might begin with her spendthrift behavior exemplified by the purchase and use (some might say misuse) of an airplane. But where did Dr. Bennett go? At the time of his resignation, Dr. Bennett advised the Southern Miss community of his [intent](#) to "explore new professional opportunities." Dr. Bennett is a [young](#) black (age 56) academic with an ostensibly bright future. In fact, the only employment shown for Dr. Bennett is sitting on the [board](#) of The First Bancshares, Inc. (Mississippi). However, we have been unable to determine whether he is currently on the board of directors. Regardless, that is not a full-time job. There have been no posts to his [Twitter](#) account since December 16, 2021. We can't help but ask why a new college or university has not announced his employment? If he has been employed, aren't he and USM proud to announce it?