

The IHL Really Needs Advice

A local online chat-site announced Dr. Rodney Bennett as the IHL “preferred candidate” for president at USM several hours before the IHL made its announcement. Until the IHL confirmed it, “preferred candidate” Dr. Bennett was merely a rumor.

That same online chat-site recently reported that the IHL’s “unanimous” decision to name Bennett was nothing more than public relations blather: “Also, do not be fooled, the ‘official’ vote was unanimous 12-0 for Dr. Bennett, but that is for PR purposes only. The real vote was 7-5 with the 3 USM board members voting against Dr. Bennett. I say this because this is the line you will be given when you call, that it was a unanimous vote.”

The report about discrepancy between the publicly announced vote and the vote taken behind closed doors is not yet confirmed. However, given the IHL’s public relations tendency to mislead Mississippi taxpayers and students, its probability is likely.

If the IHL can’t select a “preferred candidate” without an honest unanimous vote—especially if all USM IHL members voted against Bennett—the IHL needs to look harder, think harder, work harder to find a truly “preferred candidate.” The IHL might begin by being honest and open. It needs to stop the pretense of inclusion and open the search process to public scrutiny from start to finish. Let’s have an honest vetting of all applicants. We haven’t even seen a curriculum vita for Dr. Bennett. What is his research record? What fund raising has he accomplished? We don’t know.

Clearly, the IHL members need the advice of Mississippi taxpayers and students. Its failures in presidential hirings throughout the state are too many to ignore. If IHL members can’t deal with open, honest debate, they should resign. Let others with courage and honesty do the job of which the IHL seems incapable.