

Performance Review of
DR. M. CHRISTOPHER BROWN II
PRESIDENT
KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Charlie Nelms, *Senior Consultant*

ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNING BOARDS OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

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INTRODUCTION

On August 26, 2020, the Kentucky State University (KSU) Board of Regents entered into an agreement with the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), Washington, DC, for a comprehensive assessment of M. Christopher Brown II, Ph.D., eighteenth president of Kentucky State University. Charlie Nelms, AGB Senior Consultant, and a three-time chancellor at universities in Indiana, Michigan, and North Carolina, served as consultant and facilitator of the review.

FOCUS OF REVIEW

The review of Dr. Brown's leadership and performance focused on five critical areas:

1. Communications with Regents and key university constituents
2. Hiring, empowering, and retaining an effective senior leadership team
3. Success in securing buy-in from faculty and other key constituents in pursuit of the University's mission and the president's vision
4. Success in meeting performance metrics established by the Board of Regents
5. Areas in which the president has excelled and opportunities for improvement

THE PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION

The preliminary discussion of the review of President Brown commenced with conversations between Regent Chair, Dr. Elaine Farris; AGB Director of Consulting, Ms. Elizabeth Alvarado; and AGB Senior Consultant, Dr. Charlie Nelms, wherein the scope of work was established along with delineation of the review process and timeline.

On September 15, 2020, Ms. Alvarado, and Dr. Nelms met with the President's Evaluation and Compensation Committee to review the evaluation process and to respond to questions from committee members. Senior Vice President Clara Ross Stamps, Brand Identity and University Relations, was designated as staff liaison for the review.

As noted in the AGB Scope of Work, the evaluation of President Brown entailed a review of numerous documents, including the President's Self-Assessment. Individual interviews were held with members of the Board of Regents, President Brown, Kentucky State University vice presidents, deans, faculty and staff senate leaders, Student Government Association leaders, community representatives, alumni, and foundation leaders. In addition, focus groups were held exclusively for students, faculty, staff, and Kentucky State University alumni.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Prior to commencing each interview or focus group, the AGB Consultant explained that the Kentucky State University Board of Regents had retained AGB services to undertake a comprehensive review of Dr. Brown's performance as President. Participants were assured that their comments would be accorded the highest level of confidentiality and that no comments, remarks, or observations would be attributed to any individual.

CORE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How successful has President Brown been in articulating a clear, concise, and compelling vision for Kentucky State University which aligns with the university's mission?
2. Has President Brown been successful in hiring and empowering a team of senior administrators to lead their respective divisions and departments?
3. Student success is a central feature of President Brown's vision for Kentucky State University. How successful has he been in articulating clear expectations for students and other members of the university community and in holding them accountable?
4. How successful has President Brown been in securing buy-in and support from Regents, legislative officials, members of the university community and various constituent groups?
5. What are the areas in which you feel President Brown has excelled and what do you see as opportunities for improvement?
6. How successful has President Brown been in meeting the performance metrics set by the board?

In assessing President Brown's leadership effectiveness, the Consultant used feedback gleaned from interviews and focus groups, along with the contents of President Brown's self-assessment and supporting documents.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

President Brown is a visionary and passionate leader who has articulated a clear, concise, and compelling vision for Kentucky State University. Student success is the centerpiece of his vision and serves as the focus of his priorities, decision-making and leadership. Dr. Brown is perceived as charismatic, energetic, inclusive, transparent, engaging, accessible and futuristic.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Achieved specialized accreditation in several academic areas
- Increased enrollment each semester
- Increased student retention rates
- Increased four-year graduation rate
- Improved academic profile of entering students
- Exhibited a commitment to faculty diversity through establishment of the TOPS program
- Streamlined academic structure and appointed permanent deans
- Stabilized university leadership
- Strengthened the KSU brand, locally, statewide, and nationally
- Secured bonding authority for a residence hall
- Increased private fundraising
- Established positive working relationship with members of the Kentucky State Legislature
- Established effective working relationships with faculty, alumni, and students
- Improved town-gown relationships by strategically involving city officials, residents, alumni, and members of the university community

RECOMMENDATIONS

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION EFFICIENCY

- Conduct a comprehensive review of university budget development and monitoring processes to ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with best practices in higher education
- Work with the Finance and Administration Committee to develop a financial dashboard for the Board that will be updated quarterly
- Improve accounts payable cycle time to ensure the university captures payment discounts and maintains good vendor relationships
- Strengthen university private fundraising capacity and consider launching a capital campaign

ACADEMIC AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Permanently fill the Provost position and empower the appointee to ensure that all academic programs meet the highest levels of excellence and responsiveness
- Reduce the number of administrative units in University receivership
- Ensure infrastructure and administrative leadership are in place to facilitate enrollment stability amid the projected demographic cliff facing higher education

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

While there is always room for improvement, based on my analysis of information collected from interviews and focus groups with various university constituents, along with a review of President Brown's self-assessment, it is my unequivocal view that Dr. Brown is providing effective leadership as the eighteenth president of Kentucky State University. He exudes an unparalleled level of energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to student success. Support for President Brown's leadership is ubiquitous.

