



Faculty Senate  
University Assembly

#1 University Boulevard  
507 Tower  
St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499  
Telephone: 314-516-6769  
E-mail: senate@umsl.edu

July 23, 2020

Dear Board of Curators of the University of Missouri:

We are writing to you about the proposal to merge the positions of President of the University of Missouri System and the Chancellor of the University of Missouri - Columbia. As members of the Steering (Executive) Committee of the UMSL Faculty Senate and UMSL's representatives of the Intercampus Faculty Cabinet, we thank you for seeking input from various constituencies as you decide on this issue.

We see the historic challenges that face higher education today. We recognize the importance of being innovative in our thinking and in our approaches in order to meet these challenges successfully. We know we cannot continue to do everything in the way we have done them before.

However, many of us are greatly concerned that merging the roles of the President of the University of Missouri System and the Chancellor of the University of Missouri - Columbia may have unintended consequences that would negatively impact the ability of UMSL to achieve its missions and to best serve our students and communities. Our colleagues at UMKC and Missouri S&T have also voiced similar reservations.

Our reservations about the potential merger stem from concerns about the organizational structure itself. This means that although it is key to hire and to retain skilled and capable people in this role, these concerns cannot be completely ameliorated by the skills and expertise of any single administrator who would fulfill these positions. We recognize the Board of Curators has the authority to implement this position merger and reorganization plan. If you chose to go forward, we wanted to urge you, as the Curators and caretakers of our system, to implement this change in a way that minimizes the risk of negative consequences and strengthens the likelihood that this change benefits the system as a whole.

Our concerns and questions include the following:

1. ***Managing conflicts of interest between the two roles:*** There will inevitably be situations in which the collective interests of the system and those of the University of Missouri - Columbia are not completely aligned. Since someone in the combined position would be most involved and most familiar with University of Missouri - Columbia's needs and issues, it would be challenging for even the most conscientious and dedicated individual to maintain an objective perspective. We ask that you develop and implement rules, guidelines, and structures to help the person in this position maintain impartial oversight and leadership that is fair to all four universities in the system.
2. ***Nature of any potential cost savings:*** One of the primary justifications for the change has been that it reduces excess costs and allows the system to be more efficient. However, the potential cost savings have not been clearly communicated, nor have

any estimates of other costs that might be associated with this position merger and reorganization. We ask that you provide a data-supported estimate of what those cost savings reasonably might be, particularly the annual cost-saving resulting from the consolidation.

3. ***Implications for the relative distribution of resources and autonomy across the four universities.*** Many of our faculty are concerned that this merger would move the system to a flagship and satellite model that would further centralize the focus of higher education in the state on University of Missouri - Columbia. We ask that you indicate what safeguards will be put in place to ensure that the missions and goals of the other universities are supported and that these universities' roles are not limited to supporting the primary campus, but guarantee that other parts of the state are served and other aspects of the system's mission remain in place.

If you decide to go forward with the position merger, we urge you to consider implementing the following suggestions in order to address these questions and concerns.

1. ***Establish a body, such as a Council of Chancellors, through which major policy issues are addressed and discussed.*** This body should have representation from the leadership of all four universities and the means of providing input directly to the Board of Curators. This would be a means of ensuring that the needs and context of all four universities are considered in policy-making, and help Chancellors to identify areas of excellence at their own universities where they can help the system to adapt and excel.
2. ***Develop and implement a clear and transparent evaluation plan.*** Please articulate the means through which you will determine how well both the people who serve in this combined position and the new structure itself are meeting the goals of the merger to reduce costs, to use resources more efficiently, and to increase productive collaboration across the system. This evaluation plan should include clear measures that are tied to the teaching, research, and community engagement missions of the system as a whole that are developed with input from relevant stakeholders. The process and results of these evaluations and the steps taken to address any problems should be transparent.
3. ***Establish additional means through which the Board of Curators can stay up-to-date and informed about the goals, mission, and accomplishments of all four system universities.*** We recognize that each Curator will come to their role with different areas of expertise and varying degrees of familiarity with the universities in the system. In order to help make informed and thoughtful decisions about the future of the system, we urge you to visit our universities more regularly (virtually or in person) and to talk with our faculty, students, alumni, and community members more directly. We believe the faculty at all four universities would welcome the opportunity to help with this by sharing what makes them proud of their institutions and working together to address the challenges we face.

Our faculty are committed to UMSL's missions to positively transform the lives of our students by providing high-quality education, to carry out high-quality research and creative arts, and to anchor and strengthen our community. As St. Louis' urban public research institution, UMSL has a key role in training the workforce in a region that is the primary economic engine of the state. We serve a high proportion of first-generation and Pell grant eligible students, helping to empower these students not only to better their own lives, but also to strengthen the communities in which they live and work. Some of the recent indicators of UMSL's success in achieving these missions include the following:

- This month, the St. Louis Community Foundation named UMSL as one of the top five institutions in the state that have strategies, practices and policies that support the enrollment and successful graduation of Black and Pell-eligible students in the [“Degrees with Less Debt”](#) report.
- For six consecutive years, *Military Times* has named UMSL to its “Best for Vets: Colleges” list. The rankings represent institutions that provide welcoming, supportive environments for military-connected students.
- Thirteen programs at UMSL have received top 50 national rankings in the high research classification by Academic Analytics, a company that ranks doctoral programs based on faculty scholarly productivity.
- UMSL’s Missouri Institute of Mental Health in partnership with the National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse (NCADA) is implementing and evaluating a 5-year, \$5 million grant to reduce opioid overdose events in the Eastern Region of the state.
- UMSL saw a 21% increase in fundraising in fiscal year 2020 over the previous fiscal year.
- According to a September 2019 US News and World Report, UMSL ranks second in the state in its social mobility index.

All four universities in University of Missouri System are committed to high-quality education and scholarship. However, each university’s goals and missions are distinct. We believe that the University of Missouri System is strengthened by this diversity in missions across its institutions and that we collectively best serve our state and region when all four universities in the system are able to pursue their distinct and specific missions.

As you move forward, therefore, we urge you to work towards building a transparent organizational structure for our system that not only encourages collaboration across our universities, but also allows each the support, space, voice, and autonomy to best fulfill their own key and unique roles in the development of our state.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Alice Hall  
UMSL Faculty Senate Chair and Intercampus Faculty Cabinet Member

Bindu Arya  
UMSL Faculty Senate Steering Committee

Erika Gibb  
UMSL Faculty Senate Steering Committee

Jon McGinnis  
UMSL Faculty Senate Steering Committee and Intercampus Faculty Cabinet Member

Joseph Pickard  
UMSL Faculty Senate Steering Committee

Pamela Stuerke  
Intercampus Faculty Cabinet Member