

**428 N. McKean Street  
Butler, PA 16001**

October 9, 2017

Dr. Karen M Whitney  
Interim Chancellor  
Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education  
Dixon University Center  
2986 North Second Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110

Honorable William McCarrier  
Chairman, Council of Trustees  
Slippery Rock University  
300 Old Main  
1 Morrow Way  
Slippery Rock, PA 16057

Dear Chancellor Whitney and Council of Trustees Chairman McCarrier:

On behalf of the Presidential Search Committee, I wanted to provide you with important information related to the letter you received from Mr. Robert S. Taylor.

Following the sequence of events that occurred on Friday, October 7, 2017, immediately leading up to and including the meeting of Slippery Rock University's Council of Trustees, I believe it is imperative to correct the record.

Specifically, Mr. Taylor—a member of both the Council of Trustees and the Presidential Search Committee—made several erroneous claims in a letter he addressed to you and that he distributed to council members, the Governor, the Attorney General, and the Ethics Commission.

Those erroneous claims directly affected the outcome of the Council's failed vote to recommend to the chancellor and State System Board of Governors two candidates for consideration as Slippery Rock University's next president. In his letter, Mr. Taylor contended that two members of the Presidential Search Committee—Ms. Molly Mercer and Mr. Scott Albert—"may have had a very real conflict-of-interest throughout the search process of which they never addressed openly to the Search Committee or Council of Trustees." That claim is wholly inaccurate.

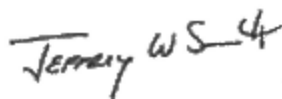
In fact, on several occasions in the process both Ms. Mercer and Mr. Albert discussed with the

committee their professional relationships with one of the presidential candidates. The search committee was well aware of the circumstances. In addition, the search committee sought a determination from the Office of the Chancellor whether the relationships constituted a potential conflict. In accordance with board policy, the Office of the Chancellor determined that there was no inherent conflict involving the two committee members.

To be clear, Ms. Mercer and Mr. Albert acted ethically and took every action necessary to ensure the integrity of the search process. Any member of the search committee who attended all of the committee's meetings and interviews of all candidates would have been well aware of this.

In his role as a member of the search committee, Mr. Taylor never raised any questions of the matter with me, or at any time prior to releasing a letter with erroneous contents at the last minute. Had he done so, he would have understood the facts of the matter and would have avoided inappropriately affecting the search process.

I hope you find this information useful.

Handwritten signature of Jeff Smith in black ink.

Jeff Smith, Chair  
Slippery Rock University  
Presidential Search Committee

cc: Honorable Tom Wolf – Office of the Governor  
Honorable Josh Shapiro – Office of the Attorney General  
Robert Caruso – Executive Director, Pennsylvania Ethics Commission  
Cynthia Shapira – Chair, Board of Governors  
Slippery Rock Search Committee  
Slippery Rock Council of Trustees