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Black Faculty, Staff, and Administrators Association

April 28, 2020

President Samuel Stanley, Jr.  
426 Auditorium Road, Room 450  
Campus

Dear President Stanley:

The reaction to the announcement in your letter of April 27, 2020 about selecting Dr. Teresa Woodruff as Provost in the words of many in our community is “a travesty,” “unbelievable,” “outrageous,” “unconscionable,” “shocking,” and “appalling.” To those of us seeking a just, inclusive, and equitable campus, this appointment is a misjudgment of what Michigan State University (MSU) needs now, given the abysmal state of race relations both on campus and in the nation. We need a person who has stellar credentials, is a healer, and has the lived experience of diversity in a broad sense, not simply a traditional scholar. The needed characteristics were evident in the other two candidates, but not in the one you selected

While we applaud Dr. Woodruff’s academic credentials as a scholar, and as we indicated in our feedback to the committee, if she were applying for or being hired as a distinguished professor or an endowed chair, we would be welcoming her enthusiastically to MSU. However, her limited administrative and narrow range of diversity experiences pale in comparison to the other candidates. Furthermore, *The Daily Northwestern’s* March 3, 2020 reporting of “an anonymous coalition representing marginalized and underrepresented students of The Graduate School” demanding her removal as Dean of the Graduate School strongly suggests that she is NOT the right person for MSU. This feedback to the search committee was voiced loudly and clearly during the interview process.

We also found it curious that on the verge of the Provost announcement, just last week, you announced that you would reopen the search for a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). Was this an attempt to appease and silence, given the pending announcement of the Provost which results in the bypassing of not one, but two outstanding and highly qualified scholars who are persons of color? The CDO is an important position, but MSU missed the opportunity to place a person of greater depth and with broader diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) experience in the critical office of the Provost. MSU missed an opportunity to demonstrate that diversity, equity and inclusion are foundational to MSU and not just lip service.

***Relentlessly Moving Forward!!***

In your letter of April 27, 2020 announcing your decision for the Provost position, you lauded "...the diverse, inclusive and distinguished search committee" that you appointed. This sounds like a pretense of advocacy for diversity and inclusion. Hence, we are left wondering if you heeded the search committee's advice in reaching your final decision or were you just using them. You owe the MSU community a greater explanation of your selection than your letter provides given the stellar records of the other two candidates and their vast, outstanding administrative and exceptional DEI experiences. Our evolving trust in you as a strong advocate for diversity has been shattered.

When Dr. Woodruff arrives, we will work with her, but we want to be extremely clear that this decision to name her provost, considering the other candidates, her lack of proven administrative experience, and her seeming inability to work for and with students of color, is profoundly disappointing.

Sincerely,



Eunice F. Foster, PhD  
President  
Black, Faculty, Staff and Administrators Association

Cc: MSU Board of Trustees  
MSU Interim Provost  
MSU Black Alumni Association  
Lansing NAACP  
The State News