



November 03, 2025

Dear Senators,

With the Board of Supervisors poised to select LSU's next President at their meeting tomorrow, November 4, I wanted to reflect on the process by which we reached this point and the importance of this decision.

To start, I want to extend my deepest appreciation to my fellow search committee members Olivia Phelps and Kenneth Schafer. This has been a trying process and the work they did to represent the faculty and staff of this university is to be commended. Their commitment to LSU was on display every day, and I was also heartened by the dedication a few other members of the committee exhibited to this institution and its mission of conducting research and educating the population of Louisiana.

Despite elements which were unusual for a search of this type, such as its accelerated pace, I was pleased that I was able to identify three outstanding candidates for the position from the pool presented to the committee. As I stated in the Search Committee meeting on October 29th, my final three candidates, in no particular order, were Dr. Matt Lee, current interim President of LSU; Dr. James Dalton, Executive Vice President & Provost at The University of Alabama; and Robert Robbins, Distinguished Visiting Fellow at The Hoover Institute at Stanford University and former President of the University of Arizona.

In my estimation, these three individuals met each of the criteria established by the committee for the position, keeping in mind that includes both the Presidency of the LSU System as well as serving as Chief Executive of the A&M flagship campus in Baton Rouge. It is in that latter role that this individual is expected to, according to the responsibilities listed on page five of the [LSU President position profile](#), "advance the generation, preservation, dissemination, and application of knowledge and cultivation of all academic areas of study on the campus."

Given these responsibilities, I and a number of other members of the committee prioritized academic achievements and experience running a Carnegie R1 multi-campus system, as detailed in the search criteria developed by the committee, in our evaluations of the candidates. Each of these candidates, in my opinion, met or exceeded these standards.

I was therefore extremely disappointed when Interim President Lee did not advance into the final three. Not only did I think it was a mistake because as an accomplished scholar and gifted administrator he was deserving based on his merits, but Dr. Lee has been a dedicated member of the LSU community for decades and has never failed to step up when called upon to serve this institution. I have heard from many individuals on- and off-campus who share my disappointment at his omission as a finalist, and on behalf of myself and the many faculty and others with whom I have spoken I wish to publicly express the admiration we have for him as well as our appreciation

for all he has done and, I sincerely hope, will continue to do for Louisiana State University.

Now that the final three candidates have been selected by the Search Committee our work is complete and the decision of who will serve as the next President of LSU rests with the Board of Supervisors. As they go through their deliberations I would encourage them to keep in mind the various audiences who will be closely watching and the message they will send with their selection.

There are many groups with an interest in this outcome, including students, alumni, faculty, donors, members of our agricultural and industrial communities, and the citizens of Louisiana to name a few. I have been asked by members of these various groups over the last few weeks how the search is going and reminded of the importance of making the right choice, including choosing someone who will continue to grow the research mission of the only R1 land-, sea-, and space-grant university in Louisiana which sets us apart from the other public institutions of higher education in our state.

It is vitally important to pick someone with the experience necessary to convey to audiences on-campus, within the state, throughout the country and across the world that we will continue the positive momentum we have developed under the Scholarship First agenda of the last few years and maintain our push to become a top 50 public university. Practically this means choosing someone with the necessary academic background and credentials to lead the research enterprise at LSU A&M as the Chief Executive. While it is not impossible for someone without a strong academic background to be successful, it is highly improbable; the scale of the task is immense and the time for on-the-job training is minimal.

Having observed the process thus far, I have to say that I am more anxious about the future of LSU than I have been at any other point in my time in Baton Rouge. There are many factors at play in this decision, including discussions about how to structure the LSU system and its administration. While these questions are worthy of deliberation, it is undeniable that in its current form this individual will be tasked with overseeing the research enterprise of this university from their first day in office and they will be judged by the observers to this process on their perceived ability to fill that role.

These last few weeks have been trying for this institution and those who care about it on many fronts. I believe that faculty have become demoralized by rumors and innuendoes surrounding this search, uncertainty over what it will mean for LSU, and an environment which is perceived to have become increasingly difficult for higher education. As Faculty Senate President I have spoken with faculty members about their anxieties over the tenure and promotion process and what a new President, who under this structure will ultimately be charged with making those decisions, will mean for their lives and careers. As a search committee member I also sat down with members of our agricultural community to understand what LSU can do for them, and they stressed the importance of maintaining our research mission because it is critically important to their operations. One shared how our Cooperative Extension Service has created a test plot on their farm to study methods to control a pest that we didn't even know existed in Louisiana ten months ago. Efforts such as these are only possible if you have a pool of experts, such as entomologists, biochemists and agricultural economists, already in residence and ready to be called upon when necessary. The research we do at LSU makes meaningful impacts to our state every day and we must protect it.

Choosing an experienced individual as President and Chief Executive of the flagship campus will help to bring stability and set us on a path for future success. At its heart every university is an enterprise built on the human capital of its faculty, staff, and students, and I fear that we risk losing the confidence of these groups, plus donors and other key stakeholders, if we do not send a clear and unequivocal signal that academic excellence in both research and teaching is our top priority. If that confidence is lost, it will take tremendous hard work and time to regain it, if it can be done at all, and we will be hampered in our ability to retain the faculty we need to maintain our success and attract the talent necessary to grow in the future. Ultimately we need a President who signals to all audiences at home and abroad that experience matters, merit is rewarded, and LSU is committed to continuing to serve our state in the way that only we can as the premier public research institution in Louisiana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. C. Tirone', with a stylized, cursive script.

Daniel C. Tirone
President, LSU Faculty Senate