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University of Missouri chancellor, president resign amid race backlash

By - Fox News

Published November 9, 2015 6:15pm EST | Updated May 3, 2016 9:32pm EDT



The chancellor of the University of Missouri's flagship campus in Columbia became the latest school official Monday to announce that he will be stepping down at the end of the year.

Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin's announcement came hours after the university system's president, Tim Wolfe, said he was resigning, effective immediately, in the face of growing protests – including the threat of a faculty and student walkout – over his handling of a spate of racially charged incidents.

Wolfe's fate appeared to have been sealed when the University's football team drew national attention to the campus protests by announcing during the weekend that they would not participate in team activities until Wolfe was removed. Head coach Gary Pinkel and athletic director Mack Rhoades expressed solidarity with the players and showed support for Jonathan Butler, a Missouri student staging a hunger strike.



In the end, Wolfe said he hoped his resignation could lead to healing.

"It is my belief that we stopped listening to each other," Wolfe said during his statement. "We didn't respond or react. We got frustrated with each other and we forced individuals like Jonathan Butler to take immediate action, unusual steps to affect change. This is not – I repeat, not – the way change should come about. Change comes from listening, learning, caring and conversation and we have to respect each other enough to stop yelling at each other and quit intimidating each other."

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"Unfortunately this has not happened," Wolfe said.

The University of Missouri System said late Monday it plans to enact several initiatives in the next 90 days to address racial turmoil that led to the resignations of Wolfe and Loftin.

The university system said in a news release that it will appoint its first chief officer for diversity, inclusion and equity. It also plans a review of all university policies related to staff and student conduct and to provide more support to those who experience discrimination. It also pledges to work toward a more diverse faculty and staff.

Task forces addressing inclusion will be required on all four of its campuses.

Butler said Monday he would end the hunger strike he began on Nov. 2. Pinkel and Rhoades said the football team would resume its regular activities.



The protests began after the student government president, who is black, said in September that people in a passing pickup truck shouted racial slurs at him. In early October, members of a black student organization said slurs were hurled at them by an apparently drunken white student. Recently, a swastika drawn in human feces was found in a dormitory bathroom.

More recently, two trucks flying Confederate flags drove past a site where 150 students had gathered to protest on Sunday, a move some saw as an attempt at intimidation. One of the participants, Abigail Hollis, a black undergraduate, said the campus is "unhealthy and unsafe for us."

"The way white students are treated is in stark contrast to the way black students and other marginalized students are treated, and it's time to stop that," Hollis said. "It's 2015."

Wolfe, who has been president since 2012, said he took full responsibility "for the reaction that has occurred."

"I ask everybody from students, faculty, staff, my friends to use my resignation to heal and to start talking again," he said. "To make the changes necessary. And let's focus on changing what we can change today and in the future, not on what we can't change about what happened in the past."

Gov. Jay Nixon said Wolfe's resignation was a necessary step toward "healing and reconciliation" at the school.

Wolfe's announcement was a stark departure from his tone Sunday, when he said that a "change is needed" but did not indicate that he would step down.



The Concerned Student 1950 group, which draws its name from the year the university accepted its first black student, had demanded, among other things, that Wolfe "acknowledge his white male privilege," that he be removed immediately, and that the school adopt a mandatory racial-awareness program and hire more black faculty and staff.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported that Wolfe was confronted outside a fundraising event in Kansas City Friday night by protesters who asked him to define systemic oppression. According to video of the encounter posted on Twitter, Wolfe responded that the students may not like his answer before saying, "Systematic oppression is because you don't believe that you have the equal opportunity for success —"

That statement provoked anger from the protesters, one of whom asked "Did you just blame us for systematic oppression, Tim Wolfe?" as the president walked away.

Reuben Faloughi, a doctoral student at MU and member of Concerned Student 1950, said the "MU for Mike Brown" protests last year helped build momentum for Concerned Student 1950.

"This is only a start, we still don't have shared governance," Faloughi said. "We could get Tim Wolfe 2.0 if we don't get shared governance. So we need to make sure that MU state quarters have a voice in these appointments."

Fox News Correspondent Matt Finn, Fox News Campus Associate Zack Newman, and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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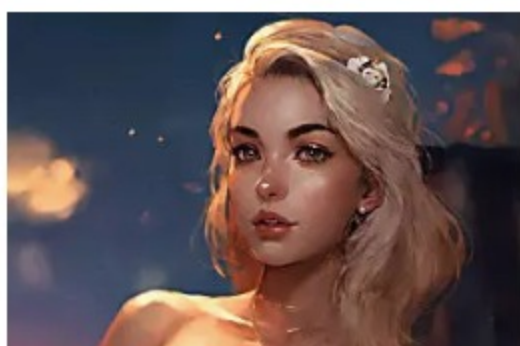
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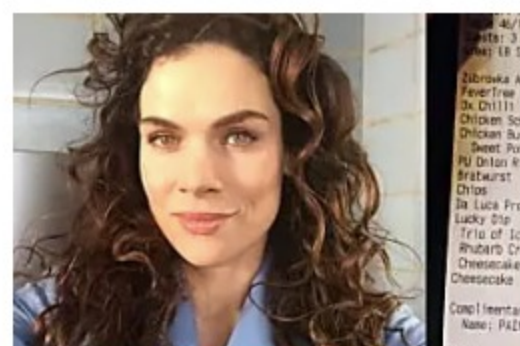
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