

## STATEMENT

First and foremost, I want my students and colleagues to know how sorry I am that I hurt people or left them doubting of my commitment to instill in them the very best each person can be at this university. I apologize again to them, to the University, and the campus community in general. I grieve that the school would suffer any negative perceptions due to my acts. This is a wonderful school, and I am proud of the College and its fine achievements.

In October 2014 I made a last-minute, ill-thought-out decision to rent a costume for a faculty, staff, and student Halloween contest held in the Mitchell College of Business. Regardless of how mindlessly I chose that costume, I sincerely apologize to everyone for doing so. I ask forgiveness for this error in judgment. I regret my decision and I understand the hurtful nature of these symbols. That choice in no way reflects my beliefs, but I certainly understand how the University and all of you could have thought so. My plan henceforth is to convince you otherwise.

I have learned from this error. My actions occurred almost eight years ago, at a time when many Americans, including myself, were not as attuned or sensitive to the symbols of the Confederacy or to their underlying meanings. My choice of costume was in no way intended to be hurtful. Although there were no negative comments made to me at the time, that only reflects the broader ignorance of, or at least acquiescence to, the ubiquitous symbols of slavery. I now know all actions and activities must be driven by a higher standard—that every word and deed must be guided by focusing on others.

Before, during, and after the controversy engendered by my choice of costume, I remain impressed with my College and the University of South Alabama as an institution. Perhaps my greatest regret is that the community I have tried so hard to build and expand would be wounded by my acts. The students, faculty, and staff do not deserve to be painted negatively by my insensitive choice. I want every student to know you should feel welcome at this University and, in particular, the Mitchell College of Business. It is a program with strong academic and collegial qualities, and it pains me that any act of mine would dissuade them from joining it. Nor do I want any student or faculty member, current or potential, thinking that USA is anything, but a community of inclusion, fairness, and quality based on merit, not race or color. Working at the University of South Alabama, guiding students through their academic careers, and having a positive impact on them as they prepare for their next steps in life has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life.

As I begin the return to the faculty, I am participating in a moderated University forum. The forum is being attended by students and other participants chosen by the group that was organized to protest my conduct and the University. In the forum, I am making my statement of apology. Following my comments, each member of the group will have the opportunity to address me about the impact of my actions on them, their peers and the institution. After that, I will work with Interim Dean Alvin Williams on a transition activity before my return to duties upon the conclusion of my administrative leave.

For a period of no less than three (3) years, I will integrate meaningful discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics within the context of my courses. The Dean of

the MCOB and applicable department chair will assist me in identifying diversity, equity and inclusion related content for me to include within my courses, and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will also be available as a resource. Prior to implementation of the new content, my department chair and I will communicate with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion about the planned activities. I will further work with the MCOB and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for a period of no less than three (3) years on diversity, equity, and inclusion projects that will be beneficial to the University community and the Mitchell College of Business.

I thank you for your time.