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STATEMENT OF HART BLANTON, PH.D. AS TO NON-HIRING OF KATHLEEN McELROY, PH.D.

July 21, 2023

Dr. Hart Blanton heads the Texas A&M University Department of Communication and Journalism. He makes the following statement in his personal capacity. He does not foresee offering further public comment on the situation and our firm has no comment to add to his. – David Schleicher (as his attorney).

I am concerned that the public has been misled regarding some of the circumstances regarding the failed attempt to hire Dr. Kathleen McElroy as professor and director of the A&M journalism program. I also speak out to object to race having been a consideration in her treatment. These tragic events were inconsistent with the many professional, welcoming, and honest A&M faculty and administrators I know. The taxpayers, students, and regents have a right to know what happened at this publicly-funded school:

- I initiated the recruitment of Dr. McElroy last year, in recognition of her excellence as a journalist, researcher, and educator. As an added bonus she is an A&M graduate. She applied to a job posted for a Professor and Director of Journalism, and we followed standard administrative procedures while conducting the search. The failed effort to hire Dr. McElroy is a great loss to A&M and surely caused her great unnecessary suffering.
- Then-President M. Katherine Banks misled the Faculty Senate at its July 19th meeting when she represented that the decisionmaking that led to the crisis was at the department level. To the contrary, President Banks injected herself into the process atypically and early on.
- The unusual level of scrutiny being given to the hiring of Dr. McElroy was acknowledged by one administrator to have been based, at least in part, on race. Regardless of the source of any such pressure, I understand it to be illegal for any employer—much less a public university—to subject a job candidate to stricter scrutiny due to her race or color.
- I was shocked to learn an earlier draft of a job offer letter for Dr. McElroy was altered and sent to her without my advance knowledge. The altered draft retained my electronic signature, but reduced the appointment from an earlier-discussed multiyear term to one.
- On Thursday, July 21, 2023, I shared related materials with university legal staff. I was pleased to see that the President then resigned Friday, July 22. Texas A&M cannot have its leaders misleading the faculty, public, or policymakers about how we conduct business.

I request a full and independent investigation of these incidents be conducted, lest they be repeated.