

Valley Courier

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Gilmer resigns ASU position

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BY: STAFF REPORT

ALAMOSA - After seven months employment at Adams State University, Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Chris Gilmer resigned on February 4.



Dr. Gilmer stated that although he had valued ASU President Dr. Beverlee McClure as a friend and colleague, their friendship had "unfortunately dissolved and has begun to affect the university in a negative way."

Gilmer served as Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chief Academic Officer, and tenured Professor of English at Adams State from July 1, 2016, to February 4 of this year.

"While Dr. Gilmer's tenure at Adams State University was short, it was productive," said Arnold Salazar, chairman of the Adams State University Board of Trustees. "Dr. Gilmer voluntarily and at his own initiation resigned his position."

Salazar noted that Gilmer diagnosed problems with the university's distance learning program and implemented reforms to resolve accreditation issues. He also founded the National Center for Historically-Underserved Students, bringing together more than 30 experts of national scale.

"Dr. Gilmer is committed to meeting the needs of underserved students, and I am confident he will continue to make meaningful contributions in this important area," Salazar added.

Gilmer also stressed his commitment to the university and the city he made his home last summer.

In his February 4th statement to Adams State, he said he cares "deeply about the future of our local community, Adams State University, and the San Luis Valley."

He added, "I deeply regret any challenges recent events have created, but I am also very hopeful and fully committed that together we can move forward toward more noble goals."

Gilmer pointed to several accomplishments the university has made in recent months such as policies and actions to address the Higher Learning Commission's concerns, primarily regarding the university's handling of online courses. He also pointed to the founding of the National Center for Historically-Underserved Students, which brought together a think tank to focus on barriers to recruiting, retaining and graduating students who have historically been underserved, namely "ethnic minorities, socioeconomically-challenged and first-generation students, military veterans, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students and the academically underprepared, among others."

Gilmer referred to web site criticisms of McClure that he said omitted facts and placed her in a false light, accusing her of "(1) discrimination against protected groups and at-risk populations, (2) creating hostile work environments , (3) retaliating against those she did not like, and (4) harboring homophobic tendencies."

Gilmer added, "Concerns President McClure and I might have had about each other resulted from misunderstanding and miscommunication . Based on fuller understanding and better communication between us, I do not make these accusations against her."

He said the focus for ASU should be on its accomplishments and goals as it moves forward.

"If we are going to overcome our challenges, what we need is positive, sincere, and truly open communication ."

He concluded, "Let us appeal to the better selves which live within all of us. This is an interactive style which President McClure and I pledge to model together since we both care more about the institution than any personal gain. I ask you all to roll up your sleeves and join us in fixing our problems, celebrating our victories, and elevating this institution by elevating our discourse and supporting our president and Board of Trustees. Let us all remember that we are here fundamentally to serve our students, and nothing should ever get in the way of that mission."

Gilmer earned a PhD. from the University of Southern Mississippi; a master's degree from Mississippi College; and a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern Mississippi. Before coming to ASU he served as Executive Director of the Alcorn State University campus in Mississippi, Director of Online Education for the three-campus system, and Professor of English there. He was also the chief operating officer of the Vicksburg Campus."