Cleveland Community College Presidential Search Update Comment and Reply shared by Robert A. Williams

A comment was received in a previous article that stated:

“The two candidates have been invited back for a final interview. This is the reason for the back to back meetings. The same agenda will be used during both. In my opinion, they already know who they want. I sent you a message recently about the skeletons in Dr. Hurst’s closet… have you not looked into that? Hopefully your judgement has not been clouded since you named him as your pick in a previous article.”

The message about the “skeletons in Dr. Hurst’s Closet” is provided below. It is an article in the Jackson County Floridan online newspaper regarding Dr. Hurst’s resignation from Chipola College in Marianna, Florida for personal reasons. Read this article for yourself. I find no skeletons in any of Dr. Hurst’s closets based on this article. I also called the Publisher of the Jackson County Floridan and asked if there was any more to this story. Anything like a skeleton in the closet that has come out since October 16, 2016? The answer was “No.”

So, I believe I did my due diligence regarding Dr. Hurst when I originally made my decision to recommend Dr. Hurst for the President of Cleveland Community College. This recommendation was made due to Dr. Hurst’s successes after resigning from Chipola College in his role in Workforce Development for the whole state of Alabama. In case the CCC BoT hasn’t been paying attention, Alabama has been recently very successful in attracting major automobile manufacturing jobs with the

accompanying spin off jobs. Beating the sox off of the whole State of North Carolina in Economic Development.

Also, whatever caused Dr. Hurst to leave Chipola College, it was not salary. From this very same article Dr. Hurst was very well respected at Chipola College as his work performance reviews and salary advances indicate. We hope the CCC BoT's will not be stingy with their salary offer to Dr. Hurst. This guy can go anywhere he wants.

As for the second candidate, Dr. Reese from Mitchell Community College, she has her positives too. When I attended her public interview I sensed a administrative "toughness" that may very well be necessary to finish the house-cleaning at CCC. Or, should I say that I feel she will "clean-house" where cleaning house is needed. It is just like I said in another article, when you find weeds in your garden, you pull them up by the roots and shake off the dirt.

It is a shame the CCC BoTs and their interim President have not already pulled up the weeds by the roots at CCC so CCC will have a running start with a new President. Perhaps CCC should hire both Dr. Reese and Dr. Hurst. Dr. Reese to clean up the personnel issues and Dr. Hurst to make Cleveland Community College and Cleveland County the place to live with good paying jobs for everybody that wants to work.

The Article:
Hurst resigns presidency of Chipola College
From staff reports Oct 18, 2016 (0) Jackson County Floridan

> *Dr. Jason Hurst has resigned as president of Chipola College, two years and six months after he was named to replace Dr. Gene Prough in the position.*
>
> *The resignation was accepted Tuesday by the Chipola College Board of Trustees in 6:30 p.m. meeting.*
>
> *He goes on immediate administrative leave and Dr. Sarah*

Clemmons was named to fill in as the schools' chief officer until his final official day on Dec. 1. She was also tapped to become the interim President in December and to fill that post through at least June 30 of next year.

Hurst submitted a letter to the board announcing his resignation, and board attorney Jeff Goodman read a portion of it in the meeting.

"It is with a heavy heart and much sadness that a decision has been made to resign as President of Chipola College effective Dec. 1, 2016. In addition, I am requesting to be placed on administrative leave effective immediately. This is an incredibly difficult decision for me but I believe it is one that is in the best interests of the college but most importantly, my wife, children, and family's best interests. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you, our five county region, and our more than 3,000 students. I am excited about what is next for me and my future. I am also hopeful that Chipola College will continue to thrive and build upon the many great initiatives currently ongoing."

The balance of his letter was a summary of the milestones by the college during his tenure.

Hurst said after the meeting that he'd been considering this decision for roughly the last week and that he is currently weighing his options as to future employment. He said the family expects to continue living in the area at least for a while.

He did not share any specific reasons about why he chose to resign, but reiterated that he felt it was the best decision for his family. His time at Chipola, he said, was a productive and positive period in which he felt the college had accomplished many good things. He also said he felt the college will be in good hands going forward.

Hurst became Chipola's 10th president on April 1 of 2014. In

December of 2013, the district board of trustees selected him to replace Dr. Gene Prough, who retired on March 31.

Hurst first came to Chipola in November 2011 as vice-president of Baccalaureate and Workforce Development and was promoted to executive vice president in 2013.

Prior to Chipola, Hurst served as vice president for Workforce Education and Academic Support at Pensacola State College from July 2010 to November 2011. He served Central Alabama Community College as the director of Workforce Development and director of the Talladega Center. Prior to that, he served as the assistant dean of Workforce Development at Gadsden State Community College.

In addition to his doctorate from Mississippi State University, Hurst also earned a Master of Education degree from Auburn University and a Bachelor of Education degree from Athens State University. He and his wife, Alisa, have three children—Hayden, Halle and Hunter.

A year into his tenure as president of Chipola College, Hurst had his first evaluation as head of the school; the result meant a raise and other incentives for the administrator.

During his first review, which was conducted around his anniversary date, Chipola reported that the district board of trustees gave Hurst high marks. On March 17 of 2015, the board approved a three-percent raise, bringing the president's base salary from $165,000 to $170,000.

He had in April of this year renewed his contract for the coming academic year, with an amended base salary. He was to make $185,000 for the period of April, 2016 to the end of March, 2017. He would have drawn a base of $200,000 for the period of April 2017 to the end of March 2018. In April of 2018, his base would have increased to $215,000 for the ensuing year.

He would also have been compensated at a rate of just over $790 a day for each of the 30 annual vacation days he elected to work instead of taking the time off, and could have accrued up to 60 over time for such compensation.

Joining Chipola at the end of 2011 as vice-president of Baccalaureate and Workforce Development, Hurst was promoted to executive vice president in 2013 and, following the retirement of Dr. Gene Prough, took office as president of the state college in April of last year.

Hurst would have gotten a $35,000 bonus, if he had worked through March 31, 2018. That incentive plan was also part of the agreement approved by the trustees, during the board's most recent meeting. His three-year contract, which the board first approved in April 2014, was renewable or extendable at the end of the terms; and re-opened for extension or pay increases, upon evaluation.

Along with the president's base pay, tens of thousands of dollars in additional benefits contributed to Hurst's total annual compensation. The college contributed five percent of the salary to a Deferred Compensation Plan, made monthly contributions to the Florida Retirement System, provided an automobile and cell phone, covered family health insurance with dental and vision coverage, and allowed Hurst and his family to live in a house owned by Chipola.