

A Perception of Instability

Written by By Kenneth E. Fisherman
Thursday, 13 December 2012 20:08

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In the last several years there has been a rumbling just under the surface of higher education in Maryland. Most of the rumors have been centered on the boards of trustees and the presidents of three important institutions— Coppin State University, Morgan State University and Baltimore City Community College.

Recently, much of the whispering has become public. In the cases of Coppin and BCCC, the handwriting had been on the wall for some time. Faculty and student groups had expressed a lack of confidence in Presidents Reginald S. Avery and Carolane Williams and tensions have been evident on the campus. Both schools have suffered from funding and enrollment issues and the frostiness between these two leaders and their governing boards has been obvious for months.

Avery announced his exit earlier this fall and Williams' fate was sealed when BCCC's board terminated her this week. President Avery determined he was in a losing battle but Williams is clear, she is not happy about losing her job. She, rightly so, worries that after making some gains at the school, albeit not quickly enough for some BCCC faculty and leaders, the board has given the impression that she was incompetent. This firing may not end well.

However, the announcement that Morgan's Dr. David J. Wilson's contract would not be renewed caught many off guard. Despite recent advances for research and national partnerships under his tenure, the school suffered a public relations nightmare with recent shootings on campus and numerous episodes of nationally reported violence.

Dr. Wilson was also considered somewhat aloof and not as personal and engaging as previous presidents.

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Perhaps it is now time for Maryland's legislature to exercise some level of oversight in reviewing what appears to be a perception of instability in the administration of these schools.

Although no one wants "Big Brother" government to second-guess the independent power of these boards to operate with a level of autonomy, the reputation of these colleges and the faith of thousands of students, parents and faculty is being impacted.