

Medical School Dean Is Chosen to Lead Penn as Interim President

Dr. Larry Jameson was selected after M. Elizabeth Magill resigned amid an uproar over her statements about campus antisemitism.

By Campbell Robertson and Michael Corkery

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Dr. J. Larry Jameson, dean of the medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, was named the institution's interim president on Tuesday, three days after his predecessor resigned amid an uproar over how elite colleges have handled antisemitism on campus.

Dr. Jameson replaces M. Elizabeth Magill, who resigned on Saturday after an intense campaign by donors and alumni who said she did not do enough to protect Penn's Jewish students.

Demands for Ms. Magill's ouster began bubbling up in September after she allowed a Palestinian writers conference to meet on Penn's campus, an event that included speakers who had been accused of antisemitism. But the criticism came to a boil last week after Ms. Magill's cautious and at times legalistic answers to questions about campus antisemitism at a Dec. 5 congressional hearing.

On Saturday, less than two years after she was named president, Ms. Magill announced her resignation. Scott L. Bok, the chairman of Penn's board of trustees and one of Ms. Magill's supporters, announced that he was stepping down as well.

The board's executive committee met briefly on Tuesday to approve Dr. Jameson as the university's interim president, with Julie Beren Platt, presiding as the interim chair. Ms. Platt, who is also the chair of the board of the Jewish Federations of North America, was chosen for the post on Saturday.

Dr. Jameson, 69, the longest serving dean among Penn's 12 schools, is taking the helm of a university reeling from the turmoil of the past few weeks. On the same day that Dr. Jameson was named interim president, a donor who had demanded Ms. Magill's ouster sent a letter to the trustees calling for broad changes to the school's governance and culture.

The donor, Marc Rowan, who gave \$50 million to Wharton, the business school, wrote in the letter that "clear choices" needed to be made by the trustees about "the direction of the University."

“While antisemitism has received the most attention, I believe this is just a symptom of a larger problem ... culture,” wrote Mr. Rowan, the chief executive of Apollo Global Management.

Mr. Rowan had waged a weekslong campaign to pressure Ms. Magill to step aside. In his letter on Tuesday, Mr. Rowan said Penn trustees failed to help Ms. Magill succeed.

“I want to be very clear and repeat what I have said publicly,” he wrote. “I do not believe Liz Magill is antisemitic. Liz is a principled, thoughtful, and accomplished academic who wanted the best for UPenn.”

With his letter to trustees, Mr. Rowan included a list of 18 questions on issues that range from the ideal size of the governing board to whether students should be able to discern the political leanings of their professors.

“While recognizing the complete academic freedom of the faculty and the freedom afforded administrators as individuals,” he wrote, “what is the University’s policy on faculty and administrators promoting a particular viewpoint in their official capacity?”

Mr. Rowan’s letter is likely to fan growing concerns about big donors using their contributions to exert influence on how universities deal with contentious political issues. In recent years, some Ivy League schools have faced criticism from some older, relatively conservative donors for embracing policies prioritizing diversity.

Mr. Bok, the former chair of the Penn board, offered his perspective on the uproar in an opinion piece published on Tuesday in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

In the piece, Mr. Bok, who is an investment banker, said that donors play an important role in funding research and scholarships. “But donors should not be able to decide campus policies or determine what is taught, and for sure there should not be a hidden quota system that ensures privileged children a coveted place at elite schools,” Mr. Bok wrote.

“For nearly all of the 19 years I served on Penn’s board, I felt like there was a very broad, largely unspoken consensus on the roles of the various university constituencies: the board, donors, alumni, faculty, and administration,” Mr. Bok wrote. “Once I concluded that this longtime consensus had evaporated, I determined that I should step off the board and leave it to others to find a new path forward.”

That task will now lay in part with Dr. Jameson, a figure with more than a decade of experience in Penn leadership. In addition to being dean of the medical school, he has also been executive vice president of the University of Pennsylvania Health System, which operates hospitals and specialty centers around the region. The school and health system, which make up Penn Medicine, employ thousands of people and account for the largest

share of the University of Pennsylvania's operating budget. Before coming to Penn, Dr. Jameson, a molecular endocrinologist, was dean of the medical school at Northwestern University.

At Penn, Dr. Jameson helped steer Penn Medicine through the difficult years of Covid's emergence. Last year, he expanded a summer program for aspiring medical students from underrepresented backgrounds to include undergraduates from a number of historically black colleges and universities. "We are dedicated to attracting and training a diverse group of talented future physicians," Dr. Jameson said in an announcement of the program's expansion.

According to The Daily Pennsylvanian, the student newspaper at Penn, Dr. Jameson and the chief executive of the university's health system sent a letter to the medical school community last week saying that calls for genocide "violate our behavioral standards and remind us that we must forcefully condemn, prevent, and respond to hate in all forms." **Campbell Robertson** reports on Delaware, the District Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia, for The Times. More about Campbell Robertson

Michael Corkery covers national issues such as drug addiction, mental illness and violence and the people and places most affected by it. More about Michael Corkery