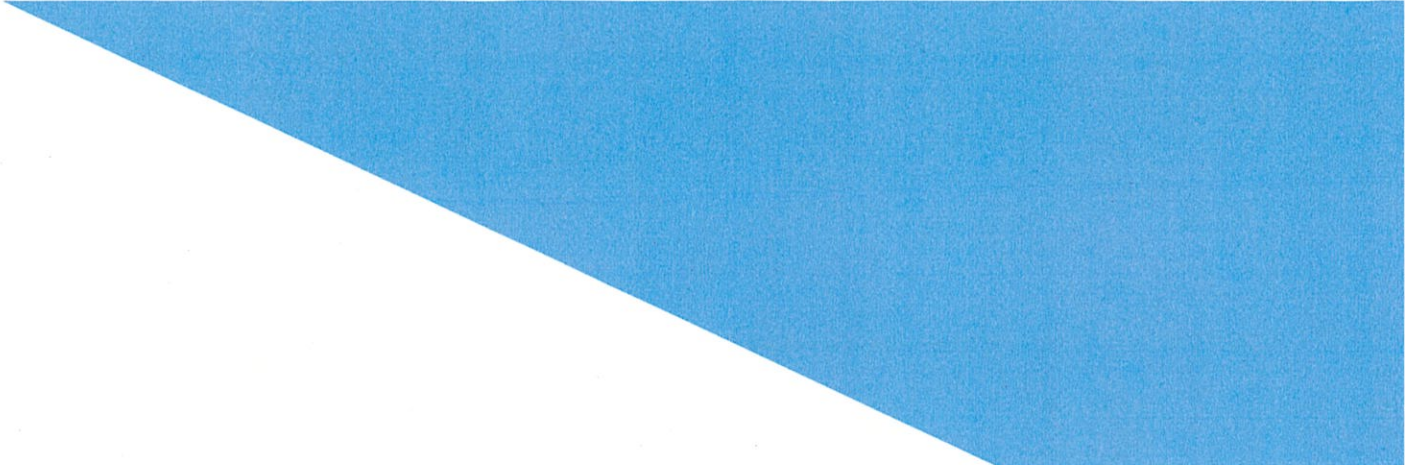
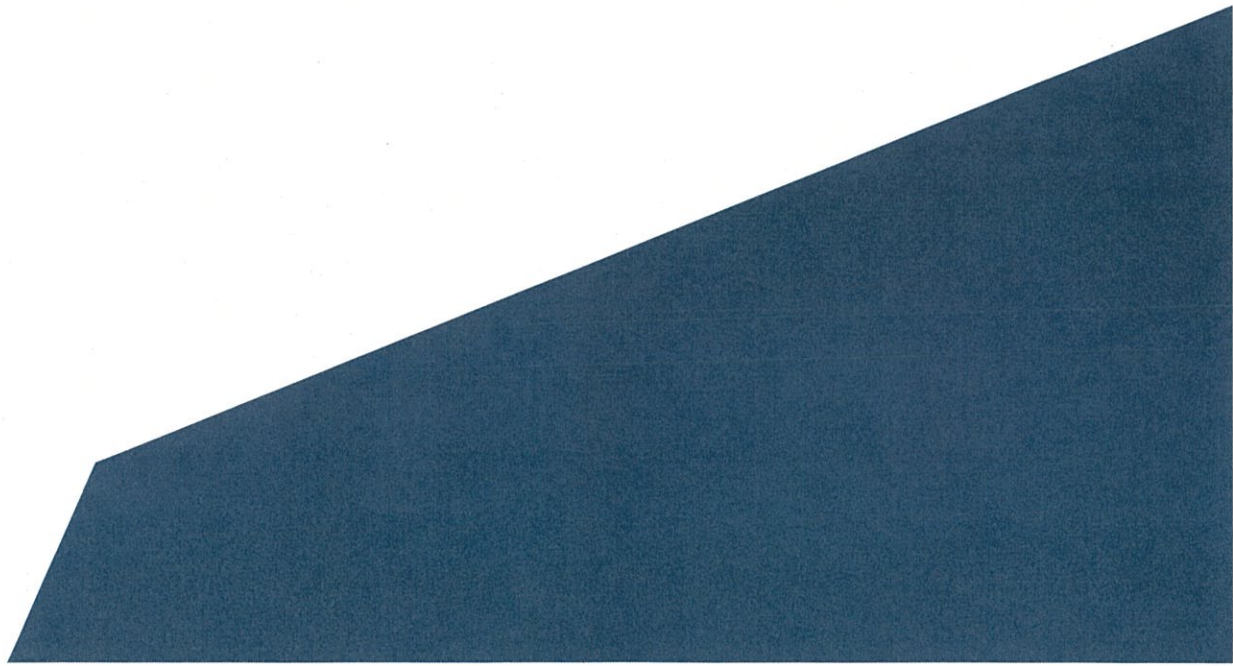




HBCUs ARE NOT ALL THE SAME:

My Experience at
Texas Southern University,
an HBCU in Houston, Texas

Stanley B. Lemons





I am a 60-year-old African American man who long wanted the experience of attending a Historically Black College or University, or HBCU. In the fall of 2021, my family and I moved to Houston so I could enroll in a Doctor of Education program at Texas Southern University, one of the largest HBCUs in Texas. What began as a hopeful and meaningful opportunity eventually became painful and disillusioning.

This is not an indictment of Texas Southern's history or significance. Rather, my experience shows how leadership issues and the protections afforded public universities can leave students feeling unheard, disenfranchised, and unprotected. I hope my story encourages reflection about how institutions treat the students they serve.

At Texas Southern, I progressed steadily through the doctoral program, took three or four classes each semester, and completed my coursework with a 3.88 GPA. I also passed my comprehensive exams on the first try. My dissertation focused on HBCU undergraduate students' perceptions of writing skills, a topic I believed could help students at HBCUs and beyond. The study involved a sample size of 189 first- and second-year students from Morehouse College, Paul Quinn College, Southwestern Christian College, and Texas Southern University.

As I neared completion, the process began to unravel. My doctoral adviser, Dr. Holim Song, suggested presenting my research in a way that, in my view, would compromise its integrity and conflict with university protocol as well as prior research approvals from my full dissertation committee. I raised my concerns with Dr. Song and my dissertation committee, including Dr. Jafus Cavil, the interim dean of the College of Education. Weeks before my expected defense and December 2024 graduation, Dr. Song resigned as chair of my committee. I was stunned. (See Exhibit A)



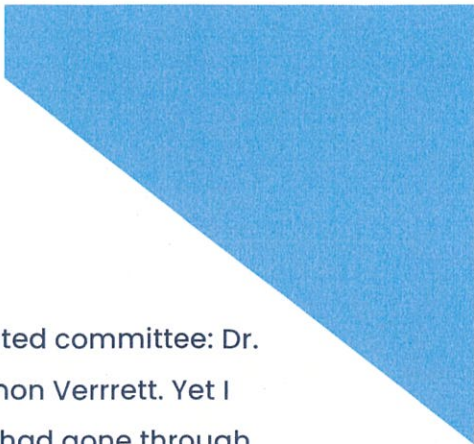
Dr. Jacqueline Smith later became my adviser and dissertation chair, and Dr. Toya Conston joined as statistician. After two rounds of edits, Dr. Conston gave verbal and written approval of my dissertation (See Exhibit B). Because of Dr. Song's resignation, Dr. Smith and I agreed that I would reenroll for the spring 2025 semester and defend my dissertation in February, with graduation in May (See Exhibit C). That decision came with additional tuition costs.

Then, on January 27, 2025, I received an email from Dr. Smith and Dr. Conston asking me to remove sections of the dissertation they had approved about a month earlier. I reached out to Texas Southern leadership for guidance, including President James W. Crawford III and Provost Carl Goodman, but less than five days later, both Dr. Smith and Dr. Conston resigned from my committee. Once again, my graduation was in jeopardy.

I tried to keep moving forward. In February 2025, I scheduled what I hoped would be my dissertation defense in the TSU library. My wife and two library staff members attended, but no one from my committee came. (Watch the 7-minute presentation video clip, <https://youtu.be/FRS1x4lyWtU?si=iILJXi0hhYtzKye1>) I later wrote multiple letters to university officials seeking help. In one, I shared that I was the first person in my family to earn a college degree and that my mother, now 86, had once been invited by Amherst College to serve as honorary grand marshal at my graduation there (See Exhibit D). I had hoped she would also see me receive a doctorate. Texas Southern never responded.

As May approached, I sought a court injunction to compel university leaders to meet with me and resolve the dissertation and graduation issues. But I withdrew the request after I could not find affordable legal representation.

I was not allowed to defend my dissertation or graduate that spring.



During the summer of 2025, TSU finally provided a fully constituted committee: Dr. Ronnie Davis, Dr. Viveca Grant, Dr. Reginald Todd, and Dr. Shannon Verrett. Yet I later learned through court testimony that the new committee had gone through the entire fall semester without reviewing my dissertation. Dr. Reginald Todd, the new chair, testified that getting the full committee to provide feedback “slipped my [Dr. Reginald Todd’s] mind” and that he, Dr. Reginald Todd, had “dropped the ball” (See Exhibit E).

I returned to court in February 2026 to seek an injunction requiring TSU to create a path for me to defend my dissertation and graduate on May 8, 2026. Because TSU is a public university protected in many ways by sovereign immunity, the Texas Attorney General’s Office represented the university in court.

As a pro se litigant, I had to navigate the process on my own. I did not fully understand how much protection sovereign immunity can give public universities or how difficult it can be for students to get answers. I paid tuition to Texas Southern and followed the process, yet getting responses from the university remained difficult. I reached out to Texas Southern University President James W. Crawford III multiple times, but even to this day he has remained unresponsive to my letters and meeting requests for more than a year and a half as I have tried to complete my degree (See Exhibit F). I could not help asking why a place I once considered safe would devote taxpayer-funded legal resources to fighting a Black man seeking to complete his degree at an HBCU.

During this past spring 2026 semester, Texas Southern unenrolled me from the university without my permission or due process, an act I consider a violation or denial of educational access under federal civil rights laws. On April 28, 2026, the university, on its own initiative, issued a \$413.56 partial refund of my tuition, representing only a fraction of what I paid Texas Southern during



my years at the school (See Exhibit G). The latest communication from three of the four dissertation committee members regarding the status of my dissertation was conflicting and unreasonable, as the trial court later noted, and it blocked my ability to complete my degree.

Today, I carry more than \$125,000 in student loan debt from my doctoral studies at Texas Southern—regrettably, with no degree to show for my time and money. I once proudly called Texas Southern University “my HBCU.” (See Exhibit H) Now I feel deep disappointment about what happened.

I want the doctorate degree from Texas Southern University that I earned and paid for, and I want to be made whole for the financial and non-financial harm caused by the university’s actions and those of its officials.

May 22, 2026

Stanley B. Lemons

Stanlemons2@thesecrettowing.com

404.869.1290



Exhibits

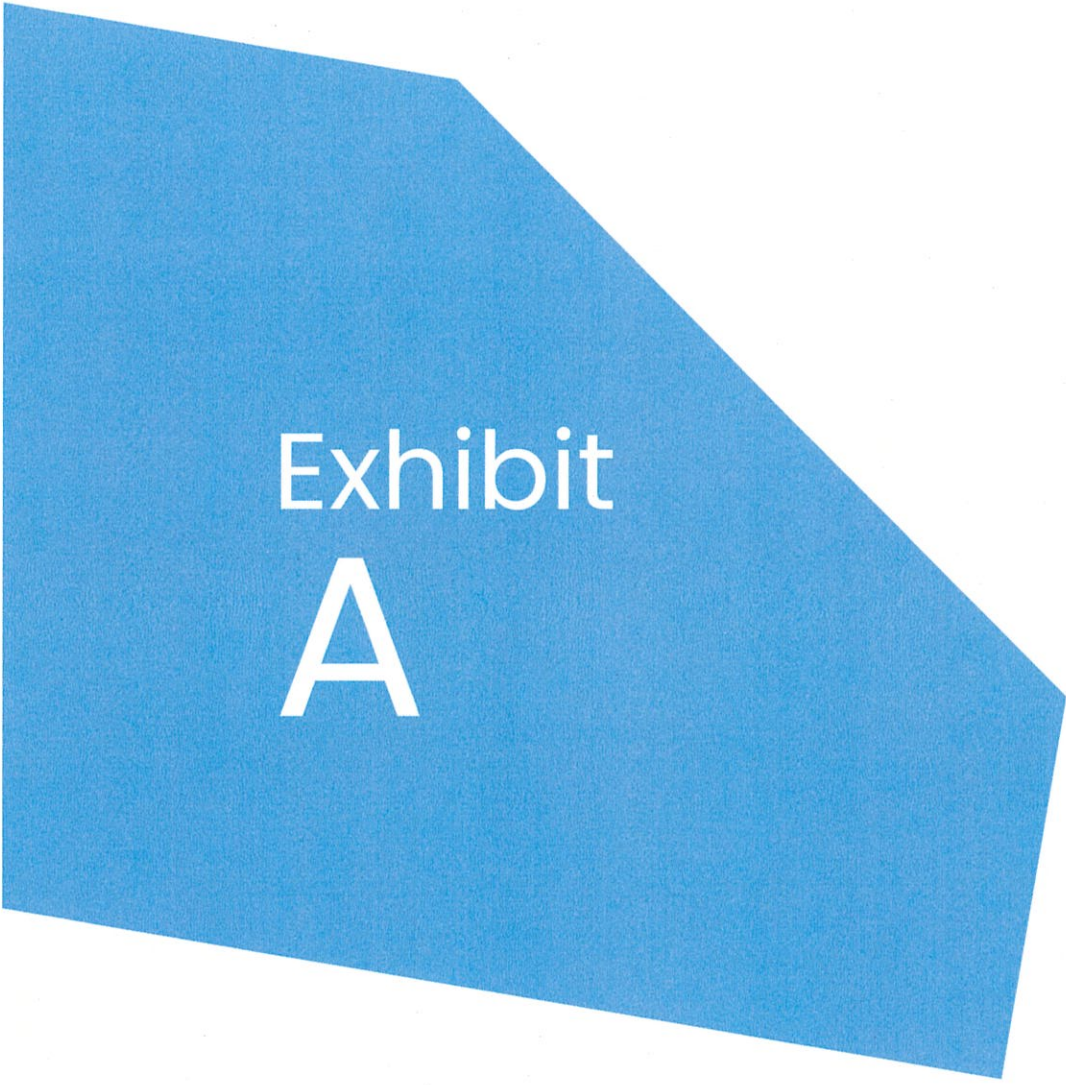
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Exhibit A

Re: Time sensitive request

From Smith, Jacqueline <Jacqueline.Smith@tsu.edu>
Date Wed 11/13/2024 7:39 AM
To Cavil, Jafus <Jafus.Cavil@tsu.edu>; Lemons, Stanley <s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu>; Todd, Reginald <Reginald.Todd@TSU.EDU>
Cc stanlemons2 thesecrettowriting.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com>; Song, Holim <Holim.Song@tsu.edu>

Dr. Cavil,

This is an unfortunate situation for Stan, BUT my question is, who is serving as the statistician?? Dr. Song was Chair and Statistician!! I think this needs to be clarified...

Thank you,

Dr. Smith

Jacqueline D. Smith, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
College of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Texas Southern University
3100 Cleburne Street Office 205
Houston, TX 77004
713-313-7504
Jacqueline.Smith@tsu.edu

From: Cavil, Jafus <Jafus.Cavil@tsu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 12:19 PM
To: Lemons, Stanley <s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu>; Todd, Reginald <Reginald.Todd@TSU.EDU>; Smith, Jacqueline <Jacqueline.Smith@tsu.edu>
Cc: stanlemons2 thesecrettowriting.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com>; Song, Holim <Holim.Song@tsu.edu>
Subject: Re: Time sensitive request

Can you provide me with a telephone number to call regarding providing you with information regarding your consideration in replacing a dissertation chair and what this may mean regarding the completion of the dissertation process? With that said, it is extremely important



June 17, 2024

Good day, Stanley Lemons!

This is to inform you that your protocol #1956, "*Perceptions of Writing Skills from Undergraduate Students at HBCUs*", is exempt from Texas Southern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) full committee review. Based on the information provided in the research summary and other information submitted, your research procedures meet the exemption category set forth by the federal regulation 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2):

Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording)

The Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) number assigned to Texas Southern University is FWA00003570.

If you have questions, you may contact the Research Compliance Administrator for the Office of Research at 713-313-4301.

PLEASE NOTE: (1) All subjects must receive a copy of the informed consent document, if applicable. If you are using a consent document that requires participants' signatures, signed copies can be retained for a minimum of 3 years of 5 years for external supported projects. Signed consents from student projects will be retained by the faculty advisor. Faculty is responsible for retaining signed consents for their own projects, however, if the faculty leaves the university, access must be made available to TSU CPHS in the event of an agency audit. (2) Documents submitted to the Office of Research indicate that information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subject; and the identities of the subjects will not be obtained or published; and any disclosures of the human subjects' responses outside the research will not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. The exempt status is based on this information. If any part of this understanding is incorrect, the PI is obligated to submit the protocol for review by the CPHS before beginning the respective research project. (3) Research investigators will promptly report to the CPHS any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects and others.

This protocol will expire June 17, 2027

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Grace Loudd", is written in dark ink.

Grace Loudd, PhD, Chair
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION - ONLY

GUIDE FOR WRITING THESIS/DISSERTATION PROPOSALS

Please Type in Form

DATE May 15, 2024

TO: Dean, the Graduate School

FROM: Quelene D. Smith
Department Head (Signature)

In behalf of Stanley Lemons

Stanley Lemons

I,

Name of Student

E-mail: s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu

T-Number T-00737779

I herewith submit the following dissertation/thesis proposal. The proposal contains three (3) main chapters, namely, Chapter 1- Introduction, Chapter 2 - History and / or Literary Review or Related Literature, and Chapter 3 Design of the Study.

I understand that work on the dissertation/ thesis should not be initiated until after this proposal has been approved by the individuals listed below. Students who plan to graduate in May or August must have dissertation/ thesis proposals approved by the Graduate School no later than November 30th; students who anticipate completing the degree in December must submit the proposal to the Graduate School by May 31st.

Dissertation/Thesis Title: Perceptions of writing skills from undergraduate students at HBCUs

APPROVAL RECOMMENDED:

Quelene D. Smith
Chairman of Thesis/Dissertation Committee

Quelene D. Smith
Member of Committee

Quelene D. Smith
Member of Committee

Quelene D. Smith
Member of Committee

Quelene D. Smith
Graduate School Representative

Quelene D. Smith
Head of Major Department

Quelene D. Smith
Director, Doctoral Center

Quelene D. Smith
Dean, College/School

Quelene D. Smith
Dean, Graduate School

Stanley B. Lemons
Student's Signature

Stanley B. Lemons
Student's Name (Type)

Stanley B. Lemons
Student's Mailing Address

Stanley B. Lemons
City/State/ Zip Code

Stanley B. Lemons
Student Current Phone Number

5/15/2024
Date

5/15/2024
Date

5/15/2024
Date

5/15/2024
Date

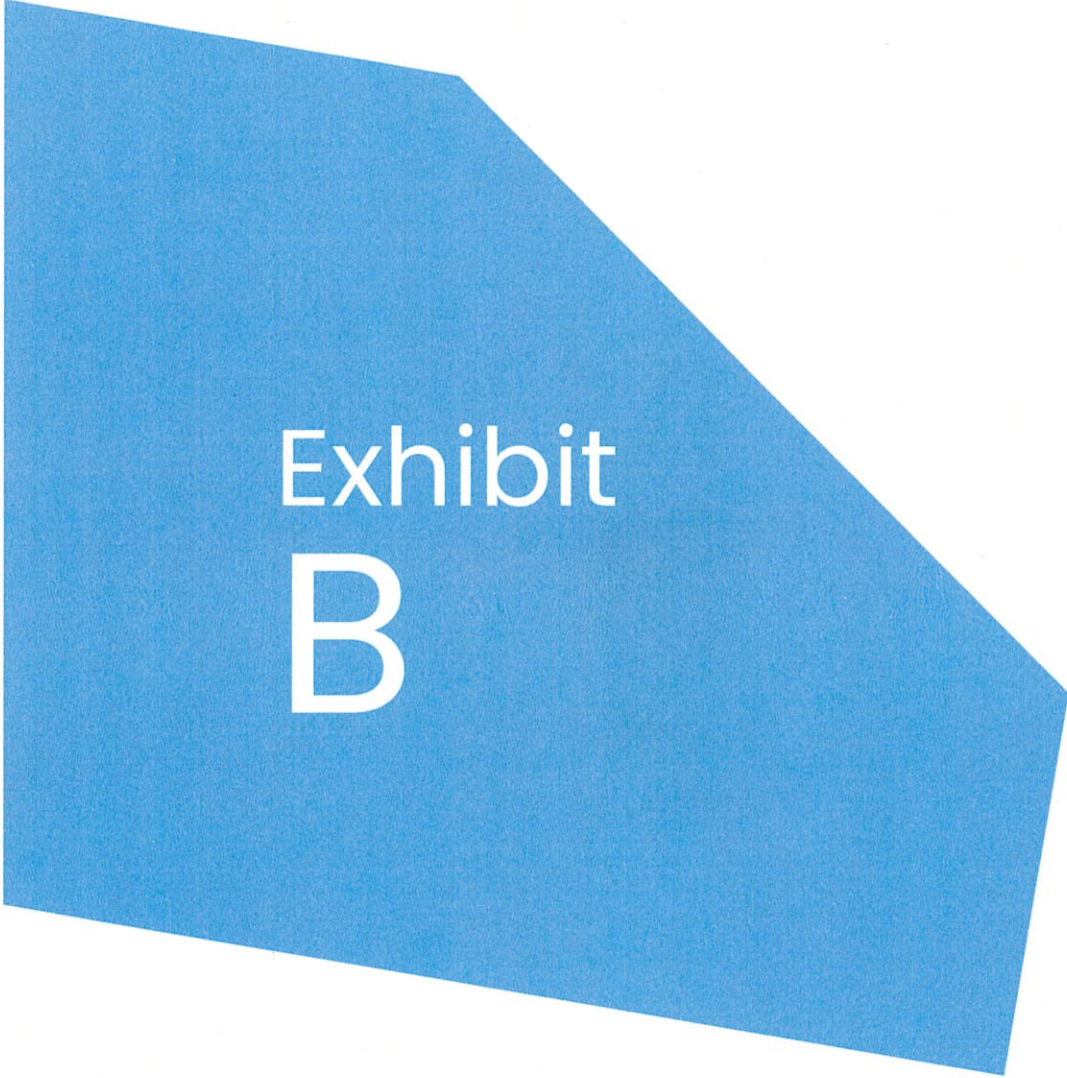
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Exhibit B

From: Conston, Toya <Toya.Conston@TSU.EDU>
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2024 1:57 PM
To: stanlemons2 thesecrettowriting.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com>
Cc: Smith, Jacqueline <Jacqueline.Smith@tsu.edu>; Lemons, Stanley
 <s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu>
Subject: Re: Draft Dissertation

Hi All

I hope all is well and Happy Wednesday. I have reviewed the dissertation and have the following comments/edits:

- 1) Chapter 4: Make sure ALL tables are formatted using APA Stylistics
- 2) Chapter 3 & 4: Need to explicitly state the qualitative methodology utilized in the study to analyze the open-ended responses (i.e. Coding)

Other than these changes, I am good with moving forward. I hope this helps.

Dr. Conston

Toya Conston, Ph.D.
 Clinical Assistant Professor
 Program Director, Human Development and Family Sciences (HDFS)
 Psychological, Health and Learning Sciences (PHLS)
 College of Education
 University of Houston
 trobert6@central.uh.edu

Adjunct Professor
 Educational Administration and Foundations (EDFD)
 Texas Southern University
 toya.conston@tsu.edu

From: stanlemons2 thesecrettowriting.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 1, 2024 1:35 PM
To: Conston, Toya <Toya.Conston@TSU.EDU>
Cc: Smith, Jacqueline <Jacqueline.Smith@tsu.edu>; Lemons, Stanley
 <s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu>
Subject: Draft Dissertation

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] DO NOT CLICK links or attachments unless you recognize the sender

Step 14a

Submission of Dissertation for Signature of Director, Doctoral Center and Interim Associate Dean, Academic Affairs

Specific Modifications Declaration

I, (Name of Candidate: Stanley B. Lemons), am submitting the attached Dissertation titled:
Perceptions of Writing Skills From Undergraduate
Students at HBCUs

for the signature of the Director of the Doctoral Center and Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. I have signed this communication indicating that I previously reviewed this submission and advised the candidate to make specific modifications in the document. On 12.20.24 (Insert Date) the candidate presented the modified document. I reviewed the modified document and I am satisfied that the indicated modifications have been made.

Statistician

Toya Conston

Print Name

Toya Conston

Signature

The Statistician identified above represents that he or she had previously reviewed this submitted document and advised the candidate to make specific modifications. The Statistician further represents that upon presentation of the modified document by the candidate; the Statistician reviewed the modified document and is satisfied that the indicated modifications were made. Given these representations, I approve the document for signature by the Dean.

Dr. Joyce K. Jones
Director, Doctoral Center

Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil
Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

*The Statistician may be: Dr. Ronnie Davis
Dr. Emiel Owens
The Research Professor on your committee

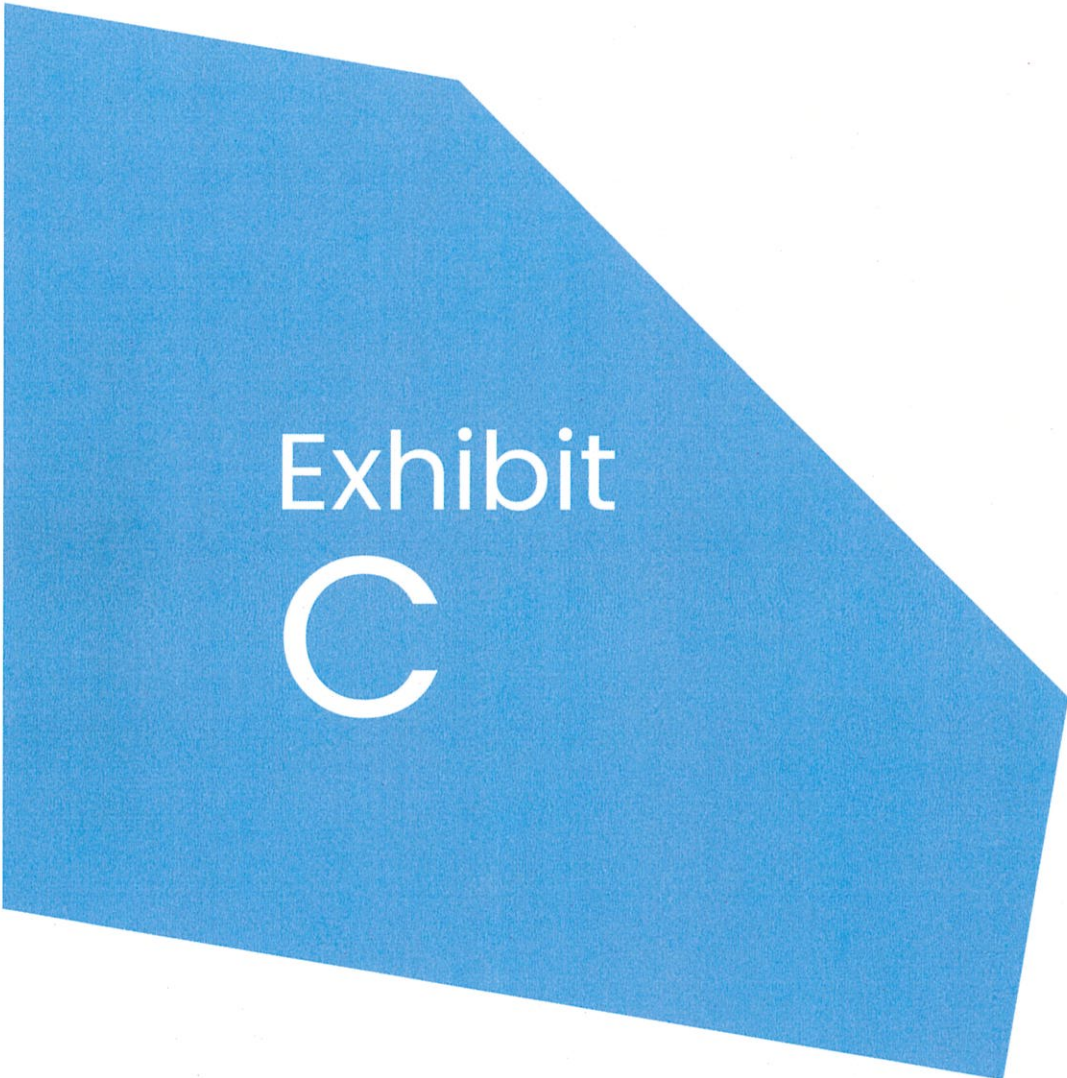
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Exhibit C



Outlook

Re: Draft Dissertation

✓ **From** Smith, Jacqueline <Jacqueline.Smith@tsu.edu>

Date Wed 12/4/2024 3:45 PM

To Conston, Toya <Toya.Conston@TSU.EDU>; stanlemons2 thesecrettowriting.com
<stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com>

Cc Lemons, Stanley <s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu>

Dear Dr. Conston,

Hope you had a great Thanksgiving week. Stan has decided to wait until February to defend his final chapter, which works for the committee. However, part of the plan is for him to meet with you, to get clarification and guidance on making the necessary corrections. I've already recommended an editor, and I was waiting for your feedback before I offered more. The tables were on that list!

Mr. Lemons knows that Chapters 3 and 4 MUST be explicitly written for understanding, and he must be able to explain the results.

Hopefully, he can schedule a time to meet with you before the semester ends.

Thank you for your prompt response and agreeing to work with Stan.

Dr. Smith

Jacqueline D. Smith, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
College of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Texas Southern University
3100 Cleburne Street Office 205
Houston, TX 77004
713-313-7504
Jacqueline.Smith@tsu.edu

From: Conston, Toya <Toya.Conston@TSU.EDU>

Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2024 1:57 PM

To: stanlemons2 thesecrettowriting.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com>

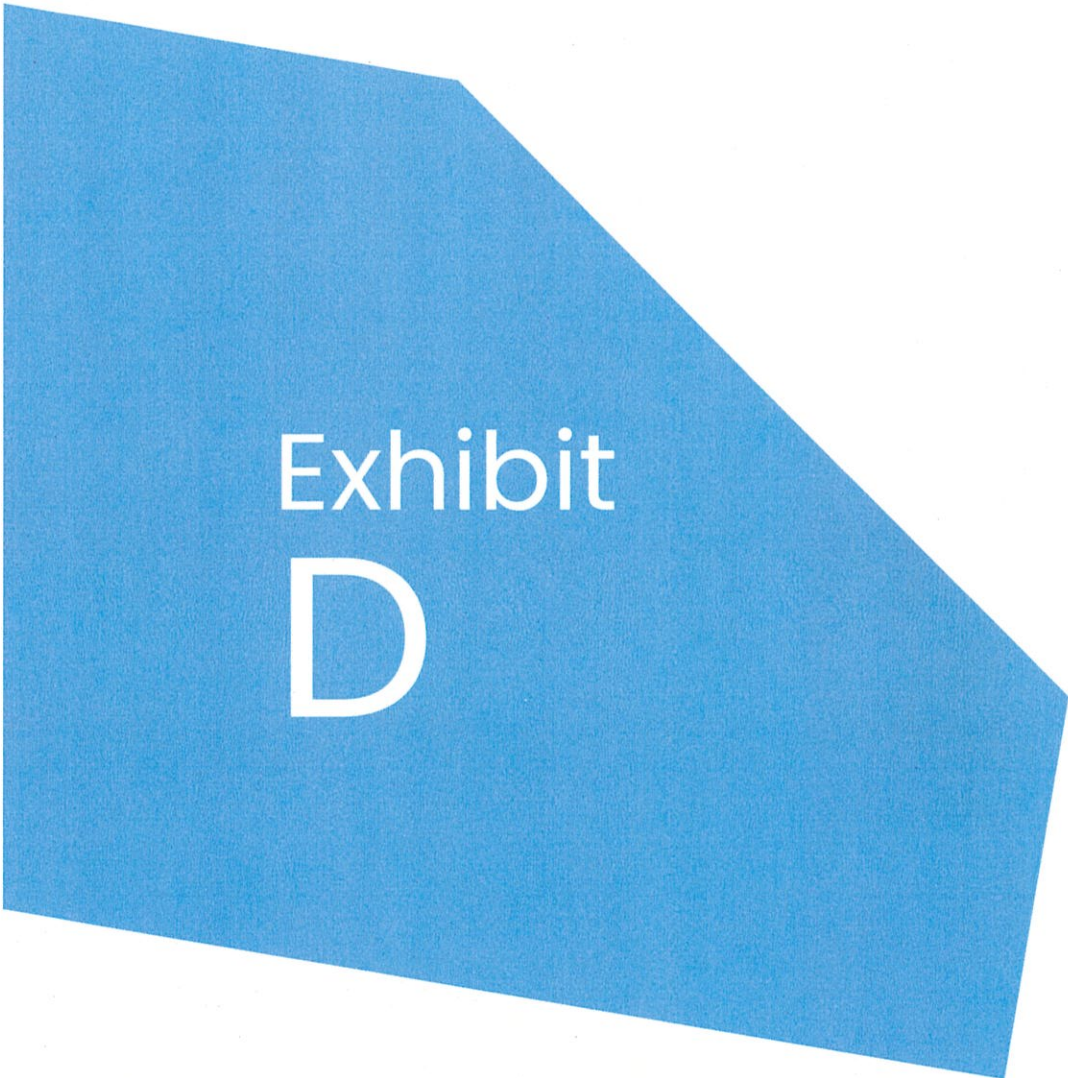
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Exhibit D

April 14, 2025

Re: Temporary Injunction Hearing to Stop the TSU Commencement II Ceremony at 2:00 p.m. on May 9, 2025

Good afternoon, Mr. Nahn.

I am writing to follow-up on my email communication of Friday, April 11, 2025, in which I notified you of my court filing of April 10, 2025 (Case #2025-25087) and the scheduled temporary injunction hearing of April 24, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. in the Harris County District Court Building (55th District Court) with the Honorable Latosha Lewis Payne presiding. See attachment. I would like to immediately resolve this matter, so that I can shift my attention toward celebrating my graduation from Texas Southern University (TSU) and likewise inviting my family and friends to come to Houston, TX to join me in my graduation celebration.

To recap:

1. I enrolled in the TSU Doctor of Education program (Ed.D.) in January of 2019. My dissertation research was approved by 1) the TSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), by 2) my dissertation committee (May 15, 2024), and by 3) my dissertation committee statistician on December 20, 2024.
2. I did the work, as evidenced by my cumulative 3.88 GPA and my having passed all sections of the TSU Comprehensive Exams on my first attempt.
3. I earned my TSU Ed.D. degree, and I paid tuition for my TSU Ed.D. degree. Therefore, I want my TSU Ed.D. degree.

I provided my dissertation committee of record (Dr. Jacqueline Smith, Dr. Reginald Todd, Dr. Toya Conston, and Dr. Shannon Verrett) with a copy of my dissertation on February 28, 2025. Additionally, I have forwarded on multiple occasions and am resending now a link to a video recording of my February 28, 2025, dissertation defense presentation:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/2228016723587941122>.

Please advise:

What does Texas Southern University want/need from me so that I will be allowed to graduate on May 9, 2025, with my Ed.D.?

Please email your response

to: stanlemons2@thesecrettowing.com AND s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu before 10:30 a.m. CDT, Tuesday, April 15, 2025. If, however, the appropriate TSU personnel have already approved my dissertation and dissertation defense, please forward the approvals to the aforementioned email addresses, along with instructions on how to upload my dissertation to ProQuest.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Best,

/Stan/

Attachments (2):

- Petition and Court Order
- Elder information



Cc:

- TSU personnel and local stakeholders
- Lisa McBride, Thompson & Horton, LLP and TSU outside counsel

P.S.

TSU employees have heard me mention my family a few times, and, in fact, I mentioned my mom in the attached petition to Judge Payne. For that reason, I'd like to share the stories of three elders in my family. Perhaps, you'll better understand my motivation for pursuing my doctorate degree.

My mom

My mom's name is Rue Dean Lemons. She's 85 years old. As a single-parent, my mom supported my brother, Wendell, and me when we were adolescents. We lived in the 75216 zip code of Dallas. My mom still lives there. By the time I matriculated through high school and later Amherst College, the Amherst Board of Trustees and the College President, Peter Pouncey, invited my mom to serve as the Honorary Grand Marshal for Amherst's 167th Commencement. My mom, adorned with a cap and gown, led the entire Amherst College graduating class into the Commencement ceremony. She opened the Commencement with a few words and then she sat on stage with the Trustees, including the late Thomas Wyman (former Chairman & CEO of CBS), Edward "Ed" Ney (former CEO of Young & Rubicam Advertising Agency and former U.S. Ambassador to Canada), George "Spike" Beitzel (former senior executive at IBM), and Theodore "Ted" Cross (Attorney and Founder of the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*). All of these "power" people, plus several other academic elites were all there on stage at my 1988 Amherst College graduation. But guess who commanded the stage? My mom. Today, I can only imagine how my mom will feel when she watches her son (me) take yet another step beyond being the first in my family to graduate from college ... to now earning a doctorate degree.

My dad

My dad Walter Lemons, died on March 25, 2018. He was 79 years old. My dad was big on education. He stressed the importance of doing well in school, staying away from drugs, and keeping God first in my life. (I've tried my best to do these things.) My dad retired from the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). He was the lead Janitor. Days before he died, I told him that I had decided to go back to school—in my mid-fifties—to earn a doctorate degree. He nodded with approval.

My mother-in-law

Sadly, my mother-in-law, Gladys Stone, passed away on March 8, 2025 – just over a month ago. I was hoping that Gladys would somehow be able to come to Houston to watch my anticipated dissertation defense this past November 2024. Back in December 2024, Jenine and I could sense that the end of life might be near for Gladys, so Jenine planned to travel to North Carolina to be with her mom after my early February 2025 dissertation defense. Jenine was committed to remaining in Houston to support me for my dissertation defense. As Jenine and I headed on Highway 288 toward the TSU campus on the morning of February 28, 2025, I recall her saying, "I hope the TSU people rise to the occasion. If they don't show up, I'm going to be really upset." Jenine left for North Carolina on Sunday, March 2, 2025. I followed soon thereafter. If Gladys were physically here, I think she would be proud of my TSU graduation.



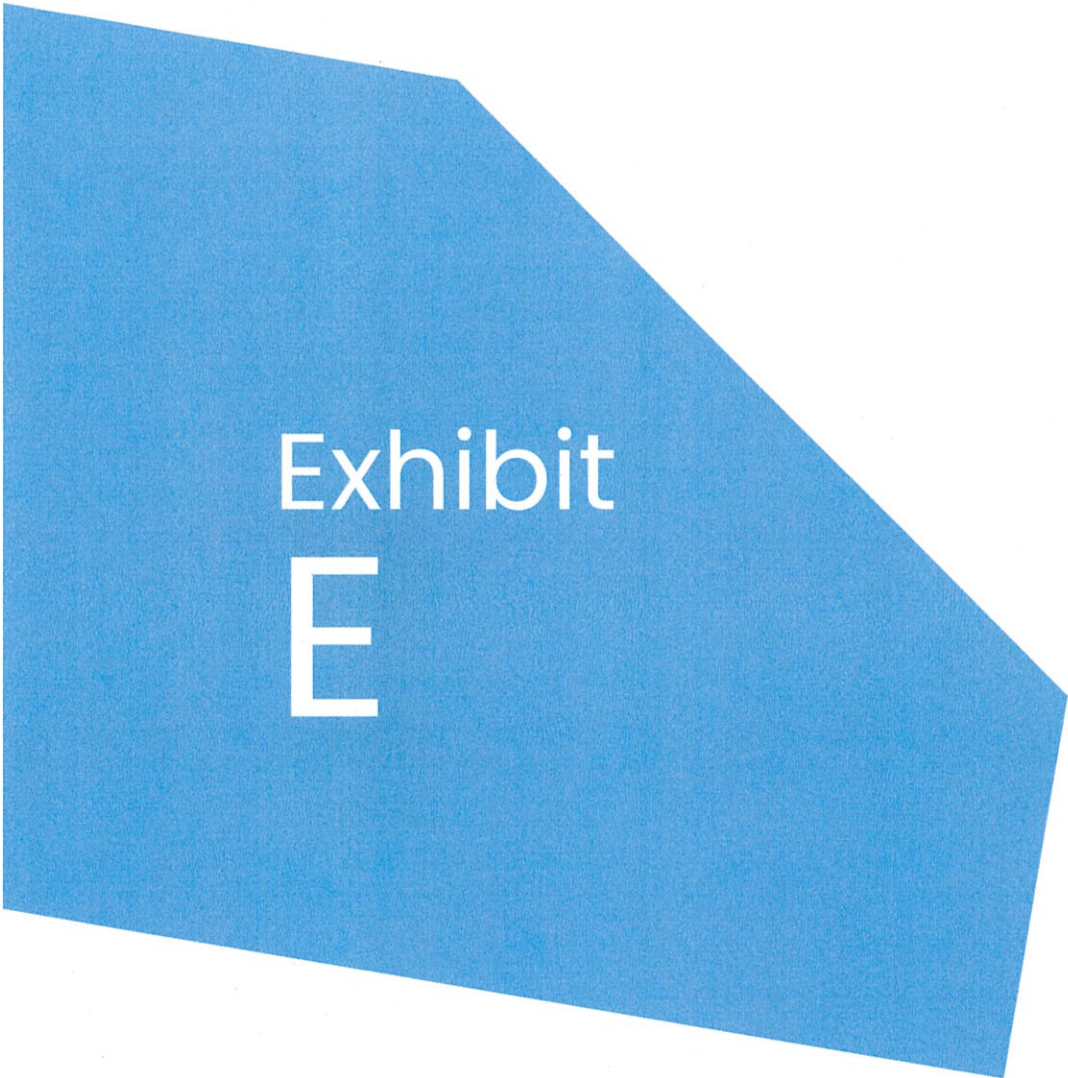
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Exhibit E

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REPORTER'S RECORD

VOLUME 2 OF 2 VOLUMES

TRIAL COURT CAUSE NO. 2025-25087

APPELLATE NO. 14-26-00402-CV

STANLEY B. LEMONS	)	IN THE DISTRICT COURT
VS.	)	OF HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY	)	55th JUDICIAL DISTRICT

TEMPORARY INJUNCTION

CONTINUED TESTIMONY OF REGINALD TODD

On the 16th day of March, 2026, the following
proceedings came on to be heard in the above-entitled
and numbered cause before the Honorable Latosha Lewis
Payne, Judge presiding, held in Houston, Harris County,
Texas;

Proceedings reported by machine shorthand.

Tamika T. Bartee, B.C.R., RPR, CSR #12593
Official Court Reporter
Harris County, Texas

1 A. That time hasn't came yet, September 6, 2026.

2 Q. I am sorry, 2025.

3 A. If you say so. I mean, I am not sure that
4 that's the exact date. But I do know you gave me a
5 dissertation in the fall semester.

6 Q. And I will -- it was September 6th, the
7 beginning of the fall semester?

8 A. I didn't say it wasn't.

9 Q. Okay. And during the fall semester, you, along
10 with the other three committee members, did not provide
11 any written or verbal feedback on my dissertation,
12 correct?

13 A. Yeah, I believe that is correct. No -- well,
14 Dr. Verrett provided feedback. Now, I didn't provide
15 that feedback to you, but Dr. Verrett did provide
16 feedback.

17 Q. Okay. So to confirm, the committee, under your
18 leadership, or your caring, did not provide me any
19 feedback, correct?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. During the fail semester?

22 A. During the fall semester, correct.

23 Q. Okay. But it is your testimony that
24 Dr. Shannon Verrett gave you some feedback but you
25 didn't give that to me, correct?

1 A. Correct. I asked all committee members to give
2 feedback. Dr. Verrett gave feedback. I was waiting on
3 the others to give feedback. I didn't receive it, and
4 it slipped my mind.

5 Q. Okay. Actually, according to your testimony,
6 you stated -- and you can say that I dropped the ball
7 because I did not follow back up with them. So it's --
8 is it true then that you -- that you not only did not
9 give me any feedback during the entire fall 2025, you or
10 the committee, 2025-semester, but that you did not --
11 you just did not --

12 A. You just quoted that I said I dropped the ball.

13 Q. Is that correct what I said?

14 A. That's what I testified to. I dropped the
15 ball. You need me to state it again.

16 Q. Thank you. You did.

17 A. I did, Stan. I dropped the ball. I'm sorry.
18 I apologize.

19 MR. LEMONS: Your Honor, I am just asking
20 the witness a question and proceeding.

21 THE COURT: There is no question.

22 MR. LEMONS: I will proceed.

23 BY MR. LEMONS:

24 Q. Dr. Todd, isn't it true that at one -- at some
25 point during the semester, you made a determination that

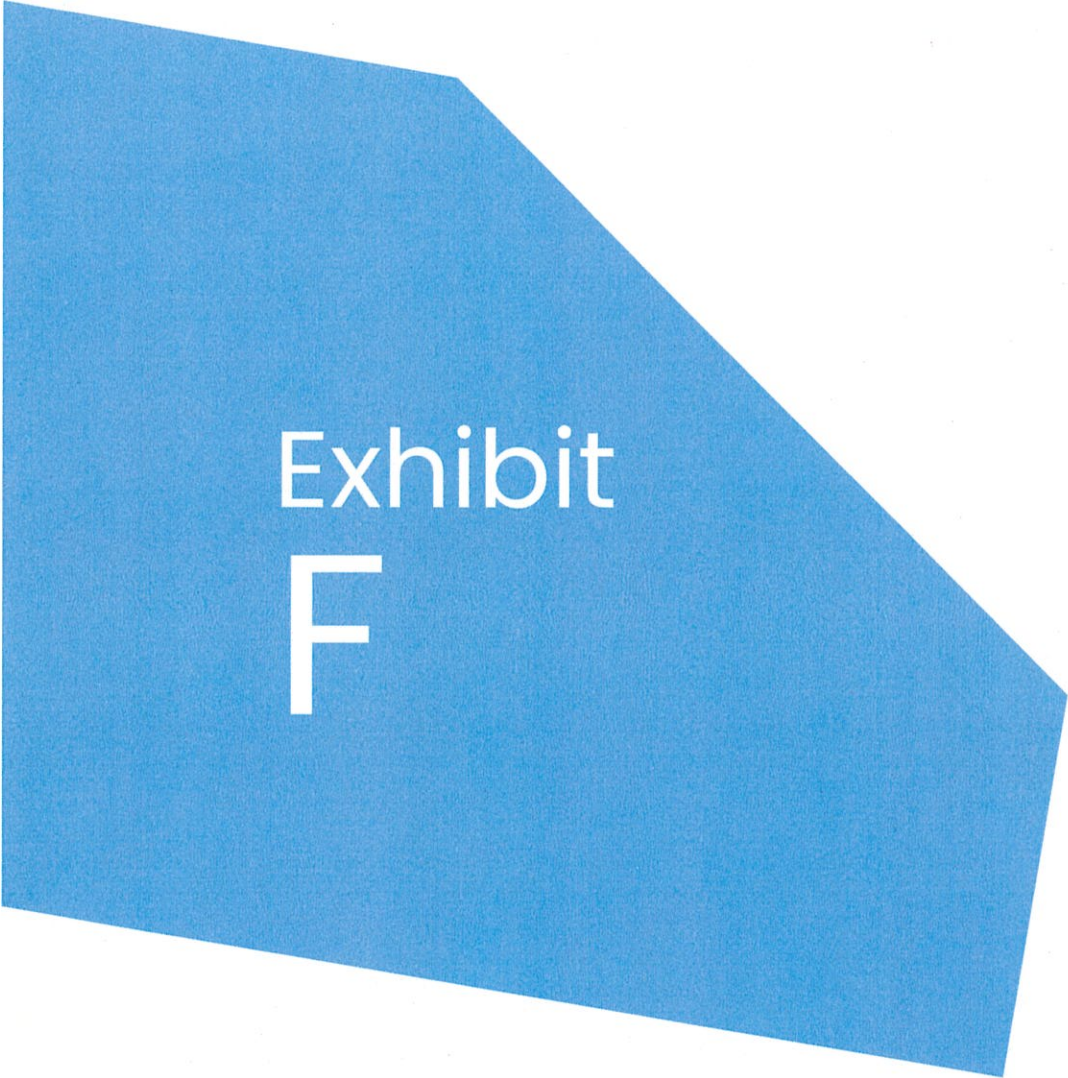
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Exhibit F



Outlook

Crawford letter

From stanlemons2 thesecrettowriting.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com>

Date Thu 12/26/2024 11:47 AM

To stanlemons2 thesecrettowriting.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com>

President Crawford,

I hope you are doing well and enjoying the holiday break after your first semester at Texas Southern University (TSU). I appreciate the energy and, by my estimation, the student-centered approach that you have been bringing and continue to infuse into the TSU culture. I especially enjoy watching your periodic video updates in which you encourage, console, and motivate students.

Before you arrived at TSU, you might recall that I sent you a note via LinkedIn to welcome you to the university and to hint at my then anticipated graduation from TSU with a doctoral degree in December of 2024. While the timing of my graduation did not work out this past fall semester, I'm ready to make it happen in the spring of 2025, May 9, 2025, to be precise.

All that said...I'd like to invite you to attend my College of Education doctoral dissertation defense in the spring – the dissertation defense being the culminating step in my doctoral journey. The tentative date for my dissertation defense is February 5, 2025, at 1:00 p.m., presumably in the College of Education building; my dissertation chair and full dissertation committee will need to weigh in to finalize my dissertation defense timing and logistics. I will keep you posted.

I wish you and your family a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Best regards,

Stan

Stanley B. Lemons

The Secret to Writing, LLC, President & CEO

February 1, 2025

President J.W. Crawford, III
Dr. Carl B. Goodman
Texas Southern University
3100 Cleburne Street
Houston, Texas 77004
Delivered via Email and FedEx

Re: Stanley Lemons, Doctoral Dissertation Defense and Spring 2025 TSU Graduation

Dear President Crawford and Dr. Goodman:

As I shared with you in past communications, I am looking forward to graduating from Texas Southern University (TSU) this spring 2025 semester with my doctorate degree in curriculum & instruction. At the same time, I, unfortunately, have encountered—once again—an unanticipated situation at TSU that jeopardizes my ability to successfully defend my doctoral dissertation and ultimately to graduate. For this reason, I am writing to ask for your help in providing a path forward to my completing the TSU doctoral program this spring.

In a nutshell, I gained approval from the TSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and my Doctoral Dissertation Committee to conduct research at HBCUs, inclusive of TSU and other HBCUs. I was successful in collecting research data, but ironically my research methodology, despite its defacto IRB authorization and multiple approvals from my doctoral committee, is now, effectively, being described as invalid by my doctoral committee. Equally important, the overall **lack of** accurate, consistent, honest, and fair guidance I have received throughout the TSU dissertation process has been and continues to be both disappointing and upsetting.

I have attached for your review a chronology of events (including exhibits), which serves as a fact pattern. I am also copying Dr. Raijanel Crockern on this note, along with members of the College of Education and The Graduate School (“party’s” to this matter). Given Dr. Crockern’s project management role on the TSU engagement with Huron Consulting Group, I certainly hope that she and the TSU strategic planning team will be able to glean insights from my experience at TSU to advance the institution’s strategic planning process and mission.

But still, I want to reiterate the urgency of my request that you convene a meeting with the appropriate individuals to resolve this matter so that I can successfully defend my doctoral dissertation and graduate in the spring of 2025. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Respectfully submitted,



/Stan/

Stanley B. Lemons

s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu

cc:

- ✓ Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil
- Dr. Toya Conston
- Dr. Jaqueline Smith
- ✓ Dr. Holim Song
- Dr. Reginald Todd
- Dr. Mahesh Vanjani
- Dr. Shannon Verrett

February 14, 2025

From: Stanley B. Lemons

To: Vice Admiral James W. Crawford, III
President
Texas Southern University
3100 Cleburne Street
Houston, Texas 77004

CERTIFIED MAIL

Re: Doctoral Dissertation Defense Spring 2025 Graduation

Dear President Crawford,

Please find attached a copy of my *Request to Schedule Dissertation Defense*. I am sending this document to you and copying Dr. Mahesh Vanjani in alignment with Texas Southern University's requirement that the document be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks preceding a doctoral dissertation defense.

As per my February 1, 2025, and February 6, 2025, communications to my doctoral committee, I choose February 28, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. CDT to defend my doctoral dissertation in the TSU College of Education. This date will enable me to follow TSU's written graduation guidelines.

As I shared in my February 1, 2025, letter to you and Dr. Carl Goodman, my experience with the TSU doctoral dissertation process has been disappointing at best. But a bigger concern that I have about what's happening here is as follows: there appears to be a coordinated effort between the leaders and staff of the TSU College of Education and Graduate School to block my ability to successfully defend my doctoral dissertation and to graduate this spring 2025, as highlighted in my letter to you on February 1, 2025, and my letter of February 6, 2025, in which you were copied. You might even consider the attached, and seemingly synchronized, letters of February 5, 2025, from Dr. Jacqueline Smith and Dr. Toya Conston.

I realize that the contents of this letter could be taken by you, a university President, as a small and perhaps inconsequential matter. But for me, my objective of getting my doctoral degree that I earned is important. I wanted to get my doctorate degree from TSU, an HBCU, for good reason. And now, I am not being treated fairly. I know you are new to the university and there is a lot to do. But I ask for your help and your leadership.

Best regards,



/Stan/

Stanley B. Lemons

Attachments

Cc:

Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil

Dr. Toya Conston

Dr. Carl Goodman

Dr. Jaqueline Smith

Dr. Reginald Todd

Dr. Mahesh Vanjani

Dr. Shannon Verrett



January 21, 2026

James W. Crawford III
President
Texas Southern University
3100 Cleburne Street
Houston, TX 77004

Re: Texas Southern University (TSU)/Negligence and Fraudulent Misrepresentation

President Crawford,

I sent a letter to you dated February 1, 2025, regarding the Texas Southern University (TSU) College of Education and specifically the TSU doctoral dissertation process (see Exhibit 1). Since that time, I have experienced an accelerated, systematic, and orchestrated scheme to block my ability to defend my doctoral dissertation and graduate from TSU, notwithstanding my 3.88 cumulative GPA and the fact that I passed the TSU Comprehensive Exams on my first attempt.

For your reference, I provide an example of the unethical and fraudulent behavior that I have encountered at TSU:

- TSU instructors Drs. Reginald L. Todd, Ronnie Davis, Shannon Verrett, and Viveca Grant (hereinafter referred to as “my dissertation committee”) directed me, during a June 30, 2025, Zoom meeting, to disregard TSU Institutional Review Board dissertation approvals and to effectively rewrite my dissertation, thereby losing a substantive part of my work from 1.5 years and prolonging my ability to graduate. And further, the dissertation committee, in collusion with the Interim Dean of the College of Education, Dr. Jafus Kenyatta Cavil, requested that I revise four of the five chapters of my dissertation based on the committee’s limited, vague, and poor guidance, as reflected in their bullet-point of directives. The dissertation committee also refused to meet with me to provide clarification of their requests. Nonetheless, I revised my dissertation as best I could and submitted a revised copy to Dr. Reginald L. Todd (Dissertation Committee Chair) on September 6, 2025. See Exhibit 2.

- Despite my having rewritten four of the five chapters of my dissertation during the summer of 2025 and having re-enrolled in TSU for the fall 2025 semester, my dissertation committee failed to meet with me and failed to provide any feedback on my dissertation for the entirety of that semester; instead, I received only misleading and repeated false assurances from Dr. Reginal L. Todd that I would receive feedback on my dissertation, effectively negating any possibility of graduating from TSU in December of 2025—approximately one year after my originally anticipated graduation from TSU in December 2024. See Exhibit 3.
- In an email dated January 11, 2026, and forwarded to over 20 TSU employees (inclusive of Mr. Charlie Nahn [TSU General Counsel], Dr. Mahesh Vanjani [Interim Dean of the TSU Graduate School], and Dr. Derrick Manns [Executive Director, Curriculum & Graduation Initiatives]), Dr. Carl L. Goodman, TSU Provost, made false and fraudulent statements in an attempt to create the impression that the TSU staff had been working with me during the fall 2025 semester. See Exhibit 4.
- On January 5, 2026, and January 16, 2026, Dr. Reginal L. Todd forwarded to me similarly misleading and fraudulent emails in an effort to further the false narrative set forth by Dr. Carl Goodman regarding my dissertation completion and to create a paper trail falsely suggesting that TSU had been working with me during the fall semester to advance my dissertation and graduation from TSU. Additionally, Dr. Todd attached to his January 6, 2026, email disparate, conflicting, and incomplete PDF notes from three of the four dissertation committee members, seemingly intended to retroactively invalidate the very work that the full dissertation committee had directed me to complete during the June 30, 2025, Zoom committee meeting. Dr. Shannon Verret even backdated his PDF note to October 29, 2025, so as to reinforce TSU's fraudulent behavior. See Exhibit 5.

President Crawford, the actions that you, knowingly, have allowed to happen at TSU and are actively participating in, as evidenced by your inclusion on email communications, is both unacceptable and disgraceful to the rich legacy of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

In an April 7, 2025, email from the former Chair of the TSU Board of Regents, Brandon Simmons, Mr. Simmons stated that you would be reaching out to me regarding this matter (see Exhibit 6). Yet, as you know, I never heard from you. And moreover, you declined my meeting requests, despite, presumably, Regent Simmons conferencing with you to communicate with me.

In a January 4, 2026, email addressed to Dr. Carl Goodman, in which I copied the current TSU Board Chair, James Benham, and the complete roster of TSU Regents, I communicated that the fraudulent actions at TSU continue to persist, delaying my graduation from TSU and causing further financial and emotional harm to me and, by extension, my family (see Exhibit 7). To date, I have not received a reply or any assistance from TSU Regent James M. Benham and the TSU Board, which, in my estimation, reflects the TSU Board of Regents' continued dereliction of university oversight and negligence in attempting to resolve this matter.

With the above points in mind, I request the following:

- That my TSU dissertation committee, acting as a fully constituted four-person committee, comply with TSU's rules by providing me with any necessary written feedback on each page of my condensed 122-page draft dissertation submitted via email to Dr. Reginald L. Todd on May 21, 2025, and that such feedback be sufficiently specific and reasonable to enable me to successfully complete the TSU dissertation process.
- That I be allowed to defend my dissertation, online or in-person, before February 11, 2026, due, in part, to the fact that the TSU dissertation committee has had my dissertation since the summer of 2025 (Dr. Reginald L. Todd and Dr. Shannon Verrett have had my dissertation since January of 2025) and the fact that my dissertation title, proposal, and research proposal was approved (see Exhibit 8), along with the statistics in my dissertation in December of 2024 (see Exhibit 9).
- That TSU will act in good faith to submit my dissertation to the appropriate publishing outlet, e.g., ProQuest, thereby providing a path for me to graduate from TSU on or before the conclusion of the spring 2026 semester.

Despite my disheartened feeling about TSU, I want the Texas Southern University doctorate degree that I earned and paid for.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Stanley B. Lemons/

Stanley B. Lemons
404.869.1290

Attachments

- Motion for Temporary Injunction, January 23, 2026, Harris County District Court #55 (Case #2025-25087)
- Exhibits 1-9

Cc:

Via certified mail to TSU President, James W. Crawford, III

Via certified mail to The Honorable James M. Benham and the TSU Board of Regents

Dr. Grace Loudd, Chairperson, TSU Institutional Review Board

Southern Association of Colleges and School Commission on Colleges

The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas

The Honorable Dustin Burrows, Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives

The Honorable Donna Campbell, Vice-Chair Texas Senate Committee on Education

The Honorable John Cornyn

The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor of Texas

The Honorable Dr. Wynn Rosser, Commissioner of Higher Education

The Honorable Terry M. Wilson, House Committee on Higher Education

Houston Media Outlets

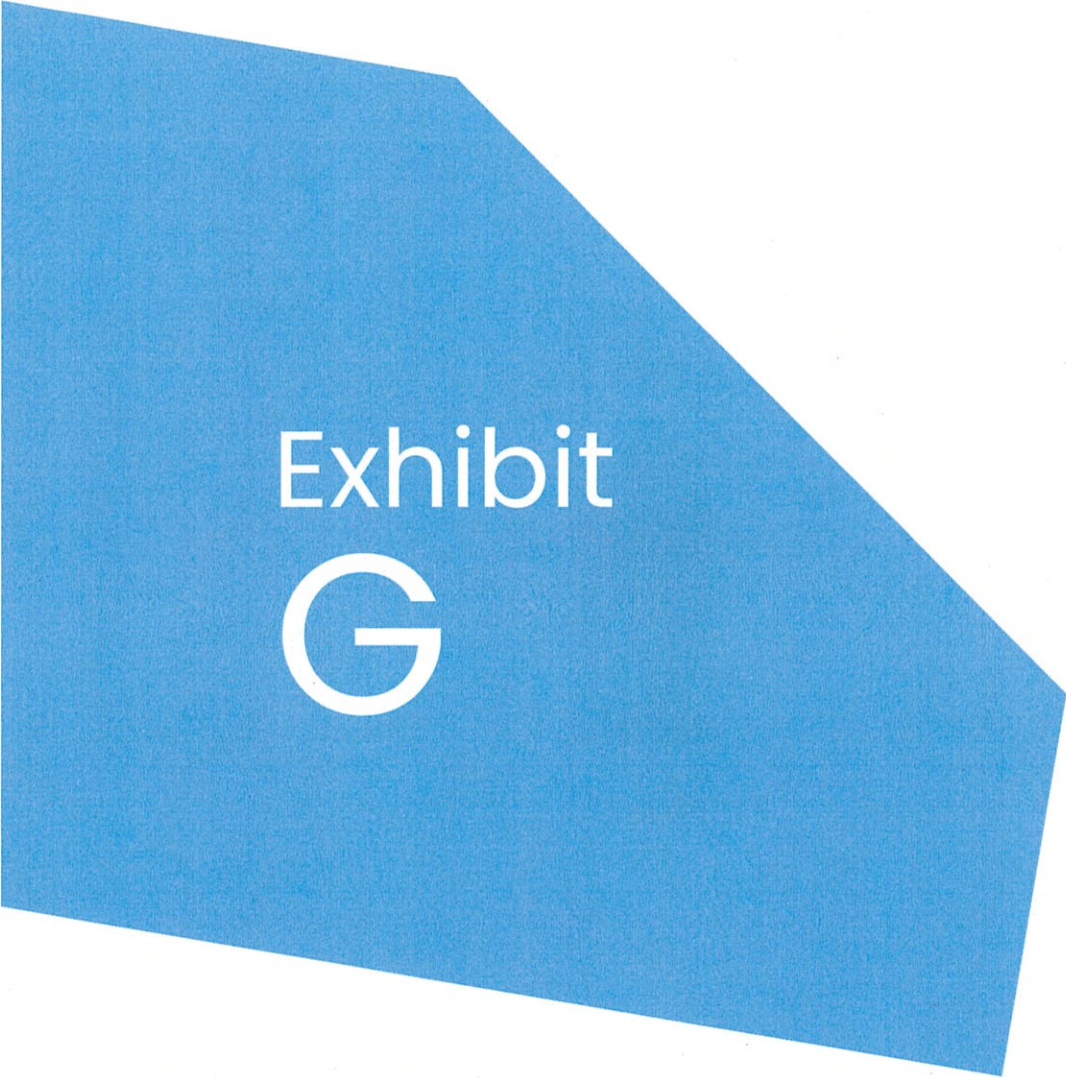
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Exhibit G



Outlook

Re: EDCI 999 for Spring 2026 Semester

From registrar <registrar@TSU.EDU>**Date** Mon 2/9/2026 8:51 AM**To** Lemons, Stanley <s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu>

You will need to reach out to the College of Education for assistance.

Thanks,

Office of Student Records**Texas Southern University****Bell Building****3100 Cleburne Street, Houston, TX 77004****O: 713-313-7071****TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY**

Division of Academic Affairs

From: Lemons, Stanley <s.lemons7779@student.tsu.edu>**Sent:** Monday, February 9, 2026 8:40 AM**To:** registrar <registrar@TSU.EDU>**Subject:** EDCI 999 for Spring 2026 Semester

Dear Registrar,

Just want to follow up on my conversation this morning with a representative from the TSU registrar's office that the Dean of the College of Education authroized on January 14, 2026, the drop/cancellation of my EDCI 999 (Disseration Class) for the spring 2026 semester.

Please confirm.

Best,

Stan

404.869.1290

T- 00737779



Outlook

RE: Scheduled February 10, 2026 Payment

From TSU Student Accounting <SAMail@tsu.edu>**Date** Wed 2/11/2026 12:22 PM**To** stanlemons2 thesecrettowing.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowing.com>

You were dropped by the Registrar's Office, they can be contacted at registrar@tsu.edu.

From: stanlemons2 thesecrettowing.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowing.com>**Sent:** Wednesday, February 11, 2026 12:17 PM**To:** TSU Student Accounting <SAMail@tsu.edu>**Subject:** Re: Scheduled February 10, 2026 Payment

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] DO NOT CLICK links or attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I did not authorize the dropping of my class. Please reinstate me in my EDCI 999 class.

Stanley B. Lemons

President & CEO

The
Secret to Writing.com
Because Words Matter

404.869.1290

<http://www.thesecrettowing.com>**BUY MY BOOK ON WRITING:** [Learn more here.](#)

From: TSU Student Accounting <SAMail@tsu.edu>**Sent:** Wednesday, February 11, 2026 12:07 PM**To:** stanlemons2 thesecrettowing.com <stanlemons2@thesecrettowing.com>**Subject:** RE: Scheduled February 10, 2026 Payment

Stanley B. Lemons
P.O. Box 6726
Houston, Texas, 77265
404.869.1290

February 14, 2026

Dr. Nickolaus Cioci
Registrar
Texas Southern University
3100 Cleburne Street
Houston, TX 77004

CERTIFIED MAIL

Dear Dr. Cioci,

I enrolled into Texas Southern University (TSU) for the spring 2026 semester to complete my doctorate degree in Curriculum & Instruction, which I started five years ago in 2001. I also enrolled in a payment plan to satisfy the spring 2026 tuition and paid my first installment of \$388.56.

TSU unenrolled me from school. I did not authorize the unenrollment, nor was there any due process associated with the unenrollment. On February 10, 2026, I attempted to pay the second installment of my payment plan, but the TSU online payment system would not allow me to make payment.

TSU's actions are unlawful and violate university enrollment policies. TSU is a public university, and I have the right to complete – without harassment, intimidation, and threats -- the doctorate degree to which I have already invested over \$125,000.

I therefore request that TSU immediately re-instate my enrollment in EDCI 999, as well as ensure that the enclosed postal money order (#38205899616) of \$388.56, along with my prior payments, are properly applied to my student account within 7 calendar days. Moreover, I do not see my \$75 graduation application fee for the spring 2026 semester applied to my account; I request your assistance with that matter as well.

Sincerely,

/s/*Stanley B. Lemons*/
Stanley B. Lemons

Cc:
The Honorable Dustin Burrows

The Honorable Donna Campbell, M.D.
The Honorable Terry M. Wilson
Melissa B. Hostick
The Texas Rangers in Company A
Texas State Auditor's Office
TSU Office of Student Accounting, Attn. Jeffrey Thomas

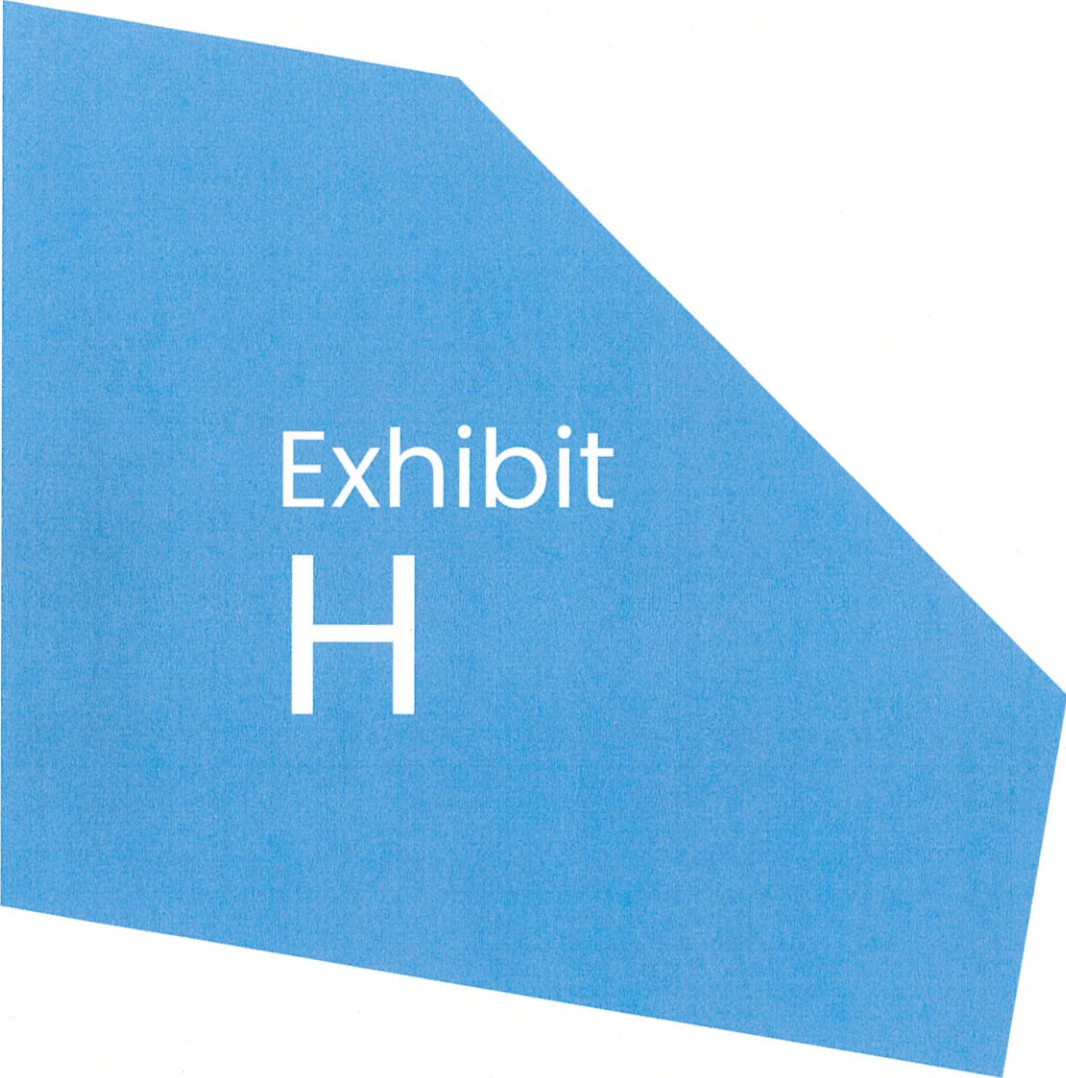
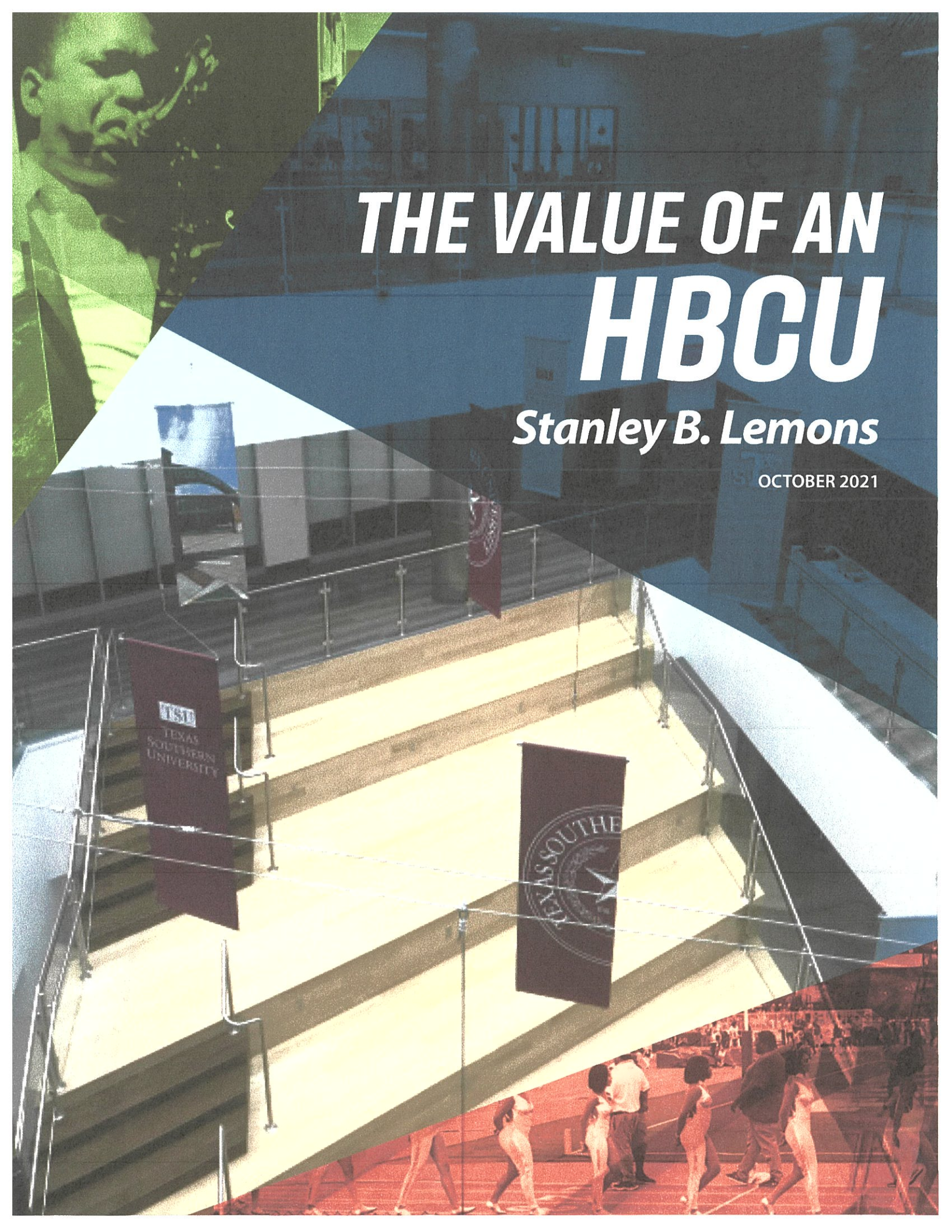
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Exhibit H



THE VALUE OF AN HBCU

Stanley B. Lemons

OCTOBER 2021

I ATTENDED THE TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY (TSU) HOMECOMING THIS PAST WEEKEND, AND WHAT A HOMECOMING IT WAS.

Homecoming weekend for me started with a visit to TSU's Library Learning Center. The place is fabulous. Actually, it's breath-taking. The library could almost double as a museum, if not a work of architectural genius. I was transformed. I couldn't wait to explore the premises.

After a brief chat with the library's receptionist, I made my way to the fifth floor. I got off the elevator and turned to my left. I was immediately hit with images of Black artists, writers, and musicians. I stopped. I literally could not believe what I was seeing. These images of Black intelligentsia were carefully placed on the rows of book stacks. There was Maya Angelou, John Coltrane, Dorothy Vaughan, George



Washington Carver, and many others. Who did this? It was a masterful way of capturing my eyes and mind.

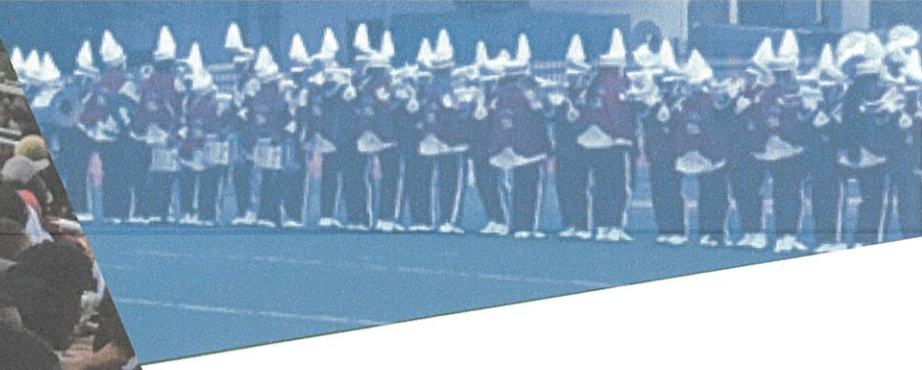
I took a seat in a cubby area near a floor-to-ceiling window. I wanted to take in the view. Suddenly, I could feel the emotions within me start to bubble up. Tears began to form in my eyes. I had finally come home. It was a connection to a school that I had longed for – a place where I felt a sense of natural belonging.

I started to think about my time as an undergraduate student at Amherst, a small private liberal arts college in Massachusetts. My mind then shifted to my

time as a MBA student at UCLA. As I reflected on my experiences at Amherst and UCLA, I wished that I had had the feeling that I was now experiencing while sitting in TSU's library. Seeing people who share my brown skin color and individuals who were and are role models on the stacks of TSU's library made all the difference. I was inspired.

Around 12:30 p.m., I decided to follow-through on my plan to leave the library and to head over to a homecoming reception at TSU's College of Education Building. I was one of the first guests to arrive. After a few minutes, other guests entered the room and a few people sat down at a table





where I was sitting. One of the individuals who sat at my table was Dr. Lacey Reynolds, an Education professor and administrator at TSU.

Dr. Reynolds and I chatted. During our exchange, he, almost predictably, asked me where I had attended undergraduate school. I said, "Amherst College." And then I added, "UCLA business school." Dr. Reynolds seemed to quickly put two and two together and made the correct assessment that attending an HBCU might be a new and different experience for me. He was right. He was right in a good way, but he didn't stop there. Dr. Reynolds was determined to welcome me to TSU. He introduced me to folks at the reception and wanted others to know me. It felt great. For me, here again, was my homecoming.

The next day, Saturday, October 2, 2021, was the homecoming football game. It was a rainy day and one that I thought might

be a bit messy. It didn't matter. I was excited to attend what would be my first HBCU football game at "My HBCU." Sure enough, the hype of the day and the game came true. There were the rows and rows of fans, African American fans. And there was the exhilaration of seeing the football team being cheered on by the sounds of the "Ocean of Soul Marching Band."

I speak with passion about my new school and my HBCU homecoming experience. I could be nostalgic and commence the wishful thinking of what it would have been like to attend TSU or, for that matter, any HBCU as a graduating high school senior. But really, I try not to go there. I don't want to try and replay the past or seek to change something that I obviously cannot. I appreciate my rock-solid academic training and the experiences I had at Amherst and UCLA. I made some amazing lifelong friends, and undoubtedly, I grew as a person.

My wish today is for U.S. colleges in general to continue the work of creating a more diverse and multicultural environment on their campuses. To "see yourself" at a school makes a world of difference.

Attending the TSU homecoming this past weekend was an emotional experience, and an experience that challenges me to want even more for "My HBCU," other HBCUs, and ultimately our country.

Stanley B. Lemons
Founder and President,
TheSecretToWriting.com
Education Doctoral Student
at Texas Southern University (TSU)



Share your feedback about Stan's words on the blog page of TheSecretToWriting.com. Consider the following questions:

How did the experience of attending an HBCU benefit you?

What advice do you have for middle school and high school students who are considering an HBCU as a college option?

What specific advice or story can you share to help students plan and prepare for college, at an HBCU or otherwise?