

On the Banks

Transcript Excerpt — “The New Guy”

Tyler Silvestri: With news from Michigan State University, I'm Tyler Silvestri, and this is On the Banks. Okay, before I say anything else, I should acknowledge and apologize for the months that have elapsed since the last podcast episode. That's on me. I have read your angry emails. I hear you. I am actually very appreciative of them. I've been working really hard on the site, trying to make sure it's functional and that there's good content for you, not just from me, but from a lot of our new contributors, who I think have been doing an outstanding job. Sarah Maynard had a great piece on how MSU has improved since the Nassar scandal, as well as the ways we can still improve. Emma Grace had a great review of the new HBO documentary "At the Heart of Gold," which centers on the Nassar scandal and especially the gymnastics of it, but also MSU aspects. And Leah Wright had a really great and really popular piece called "On Loving and Hating MSU," which dealt with that duality of loving something and being really ashamed of it. And that's a feeling I think a lot of us feel. So that's what I've been up to since the show has been on a hiatus, but it's not going to happen again. Probably. And I'm really, really excited about this episode that we have today. So let's jump in.

We have a new president, or, more specifically, we have a president designate. His name is Samuel Stanley Jr. He has been the president of Stony Brook University for the past 10 years, and he is a pretty good choice, probably. The trouble is, as a lot of you know, the search that led to selecting Stanley was closed. The search involved public listening sessions with members of the Presidential Search Committee, but we never actually heard who any finalists were. And indeed, we don't know who any finalists were still, other than Stanley himself. So some people, regardless of how they feel about Stanley, have issues with the way he was selected.

And frankly, I'd count myself among them. Within hours of Stanley being announced, reporters started digging a little deeper, looking into who he was, and found some scandals that, while quaint compared to what we're used to at MSU, are the sort of thing that the community, I think, should have had the opportunity to talk about. We should have had the opportunity to debate before he was hired as the president. I'm going to play selections from the Board Trustees meeting, and I apologize for their audio in advance. It's a little aggressive. But I'm going to play selections from it. I've edited it down to capture the essence of it.

We heard from members of the Search Committee, from some of the trustees, and from President-Designate Stanley himself, and I'm going to interrupt now and then to weigh in with what I thought or with a fact check or some additional context. So after that, I'm going to play an interview I had with Rebecca Liebson, who was the news editor at The Statesman, which is the campus newspaper at Stony Brook University where Stanley is coming from. She covered him for four years and has a lot of concerns about his transparency and his treatment of student journalists, which obviously is a red flag for me. So with that, let's take a listen to the May 28 Board of Trustees meeting.

Acting President Satish Udpa: I'd like to call this meeting to order. Trustee Byrum has a few comments to offer.

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: Thank you, and good morning. I'd first like to say thank you to Acting President Satish Udpa for his willingness to step up and lead MSU during these past four months. I know you took this position out of your immense love for MSU. The board will officially thank Acting President Udpa at our June meeting.

Today's meeting has one item: personnel action. It's been a lengthy process to arrive at the place we are today, and a big thank-you goes out to our outstanding Search Committee and membership. They have been true partners with the board. So in this search for president, our stated goal was that we wanted to identify the best person possible to lead Michigan State University. The CV of our finalists includes a solid academic background, including a BA in Biological Sciences from the University of Chicago, an MD from Harvard University, a post-doctorate fellowship in infectious diseases at Washington University, St. Louis.

And this individual has proven experience in higher education. I remember distinctly in those early input sessions where we were meeting with a student group, and they said explicitly, "Don't get us anybody that needs on-the-job training." Additionally, the faculty wanted to make sure that we had someone that had been through the ranks and had held various positions, including professor and on up the ranks. And so, our finalist has proven experience. They have been a professor, former at-large member of the faculty senate, distinguished researcher, and one of the nation's highest recipients of the National Institute of Health, NIH, funding, vice chancellor for research, and a sitting president at an AAU institution for a decade. At this time, I want to recognize Trustee Melanie Foster, co-chair of the Search Committee.

Trustee Melanie Foster: Thank you, Chair Byrum. Today represents a pivotal moment in MSU's 164-year history. As we begin, what I am confident will be an engaged and exciting future under the leadership of Dr. Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D. As co-chair of the Presidential Search Committee, it is my honor to move that the Board of Trustees of Michigan State University hereby appoints Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D. As the 21st president of Michigan State University, effective August 1st, 2019. Be it further resolved that the chairperson of the Board of Trustees is hereby authorized to execute such documents and agreements as may be necessary or appropriate in connection with the implementation of this action.

Trustee Dan Kelly: Second.

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: Before we call for a roll call vote, I want to invite to the microphone right over here several members of the Search Committee to provide comments. From the beginning, the board made it clear that the search process would include representation from a diverse group of stakeholders from our community: students, faculty, staff, deans, and alumni. I would like to invite to come forward and share comments Mary Finn, who's the director and professor in the School of Criminal Justice and is the representative of the Faculty Senate; Wanda Lipscomb, senior associate director for diversity and inclusion, College of Human Medicine and associate professor of psychiatry; Katherine "Cookie" Rifiotis, immediate past president of ASMSU, a 2019 graduate of James Madison College and the undergraduate student representative on the committee; and Greg Spray, a 2019 doctoral graduate from the College of Communication Arts and Sciences, representing the Council of Graduate Students.

Mary Finn: Good morning. I was asked to reflect on the qualities and characteristics of the candidate relative to the concerns that the faculty had. In looking at the credentials as well as having the opportunity to be part of the interview with Dr. Stanley, there are really three key areas that I wanted to comment on. First, as has been spoken to already, he has stellar academic credentials, he understands academia and its values, has spent his entire career in academia as a faculty member, and then assumed the very impressive leadership roles both in areas of research and, most recently, the presidency of Stony Brook University. Faculty also identified their desire for the next president to be a person of integrity and to be transparent and collaborative in decision-making. Dr. Stanley has acted in ways that

confirm this is how he leads. He has respect for and values the important role of academic governance, having served on the faculty senate for several years while at Washington University.

Tyler Silvestri: Okay, so I just want to jump in here really quickly. Shared governance is something that's super important to me. I was the vice chair of the University Committee on Academic Governance this year, and I was a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Bylaws Reform, where we proposed major changes to the way academic governance works at MSU, so that faculty and staff and students could play a bigger role so that we could increase the shared governance.

So when I first heard that Stanley was this guy who was really supportive of partnership in governance, partnership in administration, I was really excited. And then I looked a little deeper. So you'll hear more about it from Rebecca Liebson, who I interview later in the show, but there's this survey from the 2016-2017 University Senate at Stony Brook University, where Stanley's coming from, and one of the questions-- I'm quoting here: "To what extent does the university president, Samuel Stanley, involve faculty and staff through the governance structure in decisions that affect policy?"

638 people responded to this. 182 responded positively. That's 28.5%, which is low. So my first thought was, okay, well is this just faculty being grumpy? That happens. You know, I don't think so. So when I look at other questions-- And I should say, this whole survey is going to be available on the episode page on the site, onthebanksmsu.com. You can look at all of it yourself, as well as pretty much all the other documents I talk about. But when you look at the questions, a lot of them, they're lower scores, sure, somewhere 30s, 40s, but some go as high as 60s. "How Would you rate the university president on his representation of Stony Brook's needs to Albany and the outside community?" They had 58.8% of respondents saying, "Yeah. No, he does a good job. Positive." Really, this 28.5 is an outlier. The same group is mad at other administrators. They get similar scores. But for Stanley specifically, it seems like faculty participation in academic governance is a sticking point. I mean, this is his lowest score.

Mary Finn: Third, Dr. Stanley has been effective in advancing issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Under his leadership, opportunities for first generation and underrepresented minority students to access quality education, expanded immensely while he was at Stony Brook. Further, Stony Brook has embraced the HeForShe Movement for gender equity. This is an effort to engage men and boys in removing the social and cultural barriers that prevent women and girls from achieving their full potential. He expressed particular sensitivity to the need for our campus community to heal and to address the betrayal of trust experienced by survivors of sexual assault. Dr. Stanley possesses the experience, the character, and the ability to lead the transformation of MSU.

Wanda Lipscomb: Good morning. I've been invited to share some responses based on the information we've received in our many listening sessions that we held. He's demonstrated many of the skills that we deemed important in a president, leadership development skills, fiscal management skills, faculty and student relations, and collegiate athletics. He is a very successful fundraiser, a community collaborator, and a business innovator. He understands the importance of working with government and economic leaders, and expanding the reach of the university beyond the state to the globe as a national recognized leader in emerging infectious diseases.

Beyond that though, Dr. Stanley loves higher education. Throughout the listening sessions, we heard that the president should be someone who understands the academy. He is a stellar academic scholar who respects the role of academic governance.

The importance of diversity was also echoed throughout our listening sessions. One could say, you can predict a future based on looking at one's past. And for Dr. Stanley, we were able to find evidence of

great change at Stony Brook doing his tenure: development and implementation of an institutional diversity strategic plan; the appointment of the first diversity officer for the university; establishment of an institutional diversity advisory committee; expansion of support for the Equal Opportunity Program; support for the academic success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds; strengthen efforts for women in STEM; the partnership with the HeForShe impact; expansion of support for faculty and graduate student diversity; and recognition of the importance of broadly defined inclusion.

The listening sessions underscored the need for a leader who will address campus climate and safety, who could hear the voices of survivors. Dr. Stanley has demonstrated recognition of the importance for healing, building trust, and creating a responsive climate. He has been described as one who has the courage to lead, the commitment to listen to better understand, the compassion to address the needs of the vulnerable, and the integrity to honor the values of the institution. This is fully in keeping with the qualities that we outline in the presidential prospectus.

Katherine Rifiotis: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here. I was asked to speak a little bit about the process and how Dr. Stanley's accomplishments are going to benefit the Michigan State students. I, alongside other 18 committee members, held over 22 campus wide input sessions, which took place last fall. The community input that came from those sessions served as our touchstone. From them, we composed the university prospectus packet that was handed to each candidate, the qualifications and criteria for our next president, as well as a list of challenges and opportunities at MSU, as envisioned by our community.

In an attempt to fully represent the student body, I also held over 10 student listening sessions across the colleges in partnership with the ASMSU representatives and deans. These sessions furthered my ability to convey the student voice. Throughout these past months, the members of the Search Committee truly empowered me to speak up and represent Michigan State students to the fullest.

Since last August, we invested countless hours in this search, and at every point in our conversations and every time a new discussion item arose, committee members deferred to Greg and I, ensuring that student needs were prioritized for the search of our new leader. During our process, I was also pleased with the trustees in the Search Committee. They opted to listening before sharing their perspective, taking a backseat and allowing the committee's thorough deliberation to unfold without influencing it.

But Dr. Stanley now. Dr. Stanley's accomplishment with student success truly impressed me. He worked comprehensively to effectively eradicate the retention and graduation gap across students of different backgrounds. He has a proven record of prioritizing student input and fostering good relationships with student leaders to address pressing needs around the campus community. But most importantly, he truly grasps what it means to foster accountability and work to earn the trust of a community, understanding that integrity and other institutional values must emanate from the top. When he asked to outline his vision for MSU, Dr. Stanley first pointed that he was going to focus on healing that the community needs to undergo. He aims at doing that through listening and by being a present and accessible president. I am confident that Dr. Stanley is the leader we need to heal and to build a better MSU. I look forward for our community to embrace him. Thank you all, and go green.

Greg Spray: Hello, and thank you for attending today's board meeting. I feel that the Search Committee worked collaboratively to advocate for faculty, staff, and students who call MSU their home. Furthermore, the committee used the information gathered during these input sessions to guide our decision-making process. This group of individuals ensured that the voices of students at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional level were heard, along with the voices of survivors. During

each meeting, the co-chairs and other members of the Board of Trustees would step back and allow the Search Committee to engage in dialogue.

During these discussions, members of the committee repeatedly focused on what we heard from the students during the input sessions, and we would frequently pause each meeting to reflect on the information sessions to be sure that the voices of all students were being heard from. We brought up the many students who believe that MSU has the ability to change rape culture head on. There was a male law student who stated that he wanted a president who would live on campus.

Tyler Silvestri: I just want to jump in here quickly to say that the male law student Dr. Spray refers to here is yours truly. I took part in one of the presidential Search Committee input sessions, and I talked about how it's really important to me that the new president live in the Cowles House for two reasons. One, I think it's critical that they're an active campus player. They're on campus, they're visible, they're present. And two, it's actually required by the Board of Trustees Policy Manual that as "a condition of employment," the president live in the Cowles House. This wasn't always enforced. Lou Anna Simon didn't. John Engler only spent a few nights there. I know Satish Udpa told me in no uncertain terms he had no desire to live there.

A spokesperson for MSU told me that Stanley is planning to live in the Cowles House. There's some renovations that need to be done, because it hasn't been used as a residence in some time, and I guess those are supposed to be done in the spring, so it could still be a while, but it is nice that this is something that Stanley has affirmatively committed to. You can read more about the Cowles House and why I think it's important that the president live there on the site. There's an article; the headline is "My Experience at a Presidential Search Committee Input Session."

Greg Spray: There was another graduate student who felt that the next president needed to strive to make education accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity and/or race. And then there were also many students who called for a president who would appoint people who looked and came from the same background as them. Finally, the committee consistently reflected on what makes Michigan State University unique. That is family, passion, diversity and ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and above all else, the land-grant mission.

Dr. Stanley, I believe, will treat all members of the university community, East Lansing, and the state of Michigan with dignity and respect. I believe that he will help us develop deeper roots for Michigan State University and really further our research profile, as you can see from his extensive CV. Finally, I would like to say that I hope that I represented the Council of Graduate Students and all graduate and professional students to the greatest of my ability and have inspired a renewed confidence in MSU. The next decade for Michigan State University is critical. However, I believe that Dr. Stanley will be able to ensure the safety of students, engage in collaborative decision-making processes, prioritize the needs of students all while maintaining our current research profile, and enhancing the status as the pioneer land-grant college. Thank you.

Acting President Satish Udpa: There's a motion on the floor. And will the secretary please call the roll?

Secretary Nakia Barr: Trustee Byrum?

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: Yes.

Secretary Nakia Barr: Trustee Ferguson.

Trustee Joel Ferguson: Yes.

Secretary Nakia Barr: Trustee Foster?

Trustee Melanie Foster: Yes.

Secretary Nakia Barr: Trustee Kelly?

Trustee Dan Kelly: Yes.

Secretary Nakia Barr: Trustee Mosallam?

Trustee Brian Mosallam: Yes.

Secretary Nakia Barr: Trustee Schlichting?

Trustee Nancy Schlichting: Yes.

Secretary Nakia Barr: Trustee Scott?

Trustee Brianna Scott: Yes.

Secretary Nakia Barr: Trustee Tebay?

Trustee Kelly Tebay: Yes.

Secretary Nakia Barr: The motion carried.

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: Congratulations.

President-Designate Samuel L. Stanley Jr.: I want to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to the Michigan State University Board of Trustees and the Presidential Search Committee for giving me the opportunity to serve this great university. MSU is an extraordinary institution, the pioneer land-grant university, one that helped define that noble mission, and one that accomplishes the difficult feat of providing students affordable access to excellence. And that's an excellence that shines across the whole university in the caliber of your faculty, staff, students, your innovative teaching and learning, your groundbreaking research and scholarship, your world-renowned athletic programs, and your vital extension mission.

And MSU is a university with a scope and scale that few others possess, a scope and scale that creates impact, that allows you to do good, not just for individuals and their families, but also for communities, for the state, for the nation, and for the world. You are engaged in initiatives that I've worked on in my career and I care deeply about, about improving student success, growing sponsored research to generate discoveries that will change lives, as well as other initiatives that are new to me but have already captured my imagination, like the drive to integrate the arts into your land-grant mission and your new initiatives that are transforming agriculture for local freeholder farmers and farmers across the globe.

I'm also impressed by your growing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, a core value for any successful institution. I want to build on that. So the development of a campus-wide plan for diversity, inclusion and equity will be a high priority for me, and I look forward to engaging the board, shared governance, and the entire campus in this endeavor. These are just a few of my initial impressions and there's so much, much more I need to learn about MSU, but I'm so excited about the trajectory you're on, and I look forward to be a part of that journey.

At the same time, I also see a Spartan community that has had a turbulent and difficult time, a community in need of healing. Like Dr. Udpa and the board, I want to meet with the survivors and their families, listen to their voices and their thoughts, and learn from them. And I want to work with them and all of the campus community to ensure that changes that need to be made are implemented. What happened at MSU will not be forgotten. Instead, it will drive us every day to work together to build a campus culture of transparency, awareness, sensitivity, respect, and prevention, a safe campus for all. This is going to be key to all of our initiatives.

Before closing, I wanted to especially thank the students of the Associated Students of MSU for their letter to the incoming president. It was full of wisdom, but I particularly took to heart their reminder that, "While you will be leading the Spartan community, you will not be independent of it. We hope you'll become an integral community member." That will become one of my goals, and I will further it by living on campus and by making every effort to be visible to my fellow Spartans.

Again, my sincere thanks to the board and the Presidential Search Committee for their confidence. And I look forward to working hand-in-hand with you, with MSU's distinguished faculty and staff, with the amazing undergraduate and graduate students, with the citizens and elected officials of the great state of Michigan, and with more than 550,000 proud MSU alumni who bleed green and white, as together we write the next great chapter in Michigan State University's storied history. Go green.

Crowd: Go white! [Applause]

Acting President Satish Udpa: A motion to adjourn the meeting would be an order.

Trustee Dan Kelly: So moved.

Trustee Brianna Scott: Second.

Acting President Satish Udpa: Although those in favor, say, "Aye."

Various Trustees: Aye.

Acting President Satish Udpa: Any nays? Motion carries. Meeting adjourned.

Tyler Silvestri: Okay, so after the meeting ended, there's a 15-minute break, and then they had a press conference with the Presidential Search Committee, some of the trustees, and Stanley himself. It was mostly media there. There were a couple members of the public. And, actually, former Governor Jim Blanchard was there. His firm is leading MSU's defense at the federal level, although that's pretty dormant, according to him. There's not really a lot going on on that front. But in any case, he was there. Anyway, here are some selections from the press conference.

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: It was May 2018 when the board announced the presidential search and designated Trustee Foster and myself as co-chairs. The Search Committee was formed in August, and a national search firm was hired in September. Our stated goal was to find the best possible person to lead Michigan State University as our next president. And I stand here today saying, "Goal accomplished." Dr. Stanley has received the unanimous support of the Board of Trustees and additionally has the full support of the Search Committee.

This is the first open search Michigan State University has conducted for president in over 20 years, and I credit the success to the hard work of our Search Committee, in partnership with the Board of Trustees, along with everyone's commitment to always put the interest of the university first and foremost.

Tyler Silvestri: Okay, so no, this isn't quite right. It's not necessarily inaccurate, I guess, as much as it's misleading and just weird. She says, "This is the first open search Michigan State University has conducted for president in over 20 years." So first, I would object to the characterization of it as an open search. We don't know who any candidates were other than Stanley. We didn't even learn Stanley's name until the morning he was appointed. I mean, yes, there were public input sessions, which I went to, I think were valuable, but I don't think they're enough to say that the search was open. I would object just to that characterization. It wasn't an open search, let alone the first open search.

But even if I acknowledged it was open, okay, I guess it's the first in 20 years. The problem is, it's the first search, period, in 20 years, because when President McPherson left, Lou Anna Simon was selected as president without a search. I'm reading here from a 2004 State News article. Simon says, "Like a lot of people, I was envisioning a national search to fill this position." The article goes on to say, "Trustee David Porteous said the board decided to end the presidential search because the ideal candidate was already in front of them." And I should note here, David Porteous was one of the members of the Search Committee this time around. But I think this statement is just a weird one overall.

It's also worth noting, just as a historical curiosity, the last search MSU did was a disaster. So in 1992, President John DiBiaggio leaves to go be president of Tufts University. They have a search committee with the trustees and nine other people, and pretty early on, the State News gets their hands on a list, a leaked list of all the potential candidates. I mean, it's more than a hundred. It's a ton. And after that, the search committee cuts a bunch of people, really buckles down. It becomes super private, and ultimately it led to McPherson, but it was a wild ride getting there.

So it's not that we have a history of open searches. I'm not saying that. But for Byrum to say here, "This is the first open search in more than 20 years, is wrong I think, on several levels. It's not an open search. It's the first search in 20 years, period. I mean, this is just a weird statement from her, but I digress.

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: I would now like to introduce the co-chair of the presidential search and my colleague, Trustee Melanie Foster.

Trustee Melanie Foster: Thank you, Chair Byrum. It's an honor to be here this afternoon. I guess it's still morning. As you know, we conducted 22 input sessions on campus, and there was a member of the Search Committee at every single one of those input sessions, and there's a few that were at every single one of those input sessions. So they did yeoman's work. I will tell you that we also took input online, and we all received notebooks about that thick with the feedback, which we read. So we were very serious in this process.

And our committee was representative of the broader Michigan State University campus community. It was diverse, with 10 women and eight men and five persons of color that represented students, faculty, staff, deans and alumni. The Search Committee has joined us here today. And again, I'd like to say a

special thank you to all of you. We've become such great friends during this process. It's really the family of MSU.

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: And so, on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Search Committee, it is my distinct honor to introduce to you the 21st president-designee of Michigan State University, Dr. Samuel L. Stanley Jr.

President-Designate Samuel L. Stanley Jr.: Thank you so much, Trustee Byrum. And again, I cannot express how much I appreciate the confidence the Board of Trustees has placed in me, and how much I appreciate the work of the Presidential Search Committee. I wanted to say one thing about them, and that is, and you've heard it today, I think they so ably represented this community, the Spartan community. The questions during the process were thorough, comprehensive, and incredibly informed, and they really did reach back to their constituencies to reflect the concerns that they had about the selection of a president. And they also, at the same time, were externally advocates for Michigan State University as well.

One of the things I found most desirable about coming here was meeting faculty students and staff and seeing how much they love this institution and how much they care about it and how much they want it to succeed, and so that really was important to me. I want to come to a place where we can work together, where we can make a difference, and I'm very excited about the possibilities of doing so.

I know there are challenges ahead. I'm very aware of those, but I'm very confident that we're going to face it together. I'm going to be on campus soon. It's only a couple of months. Please be patient. It's only a couple months. I'm going to be there. And I look forward to really meeting everyone I can to listening and learning [sic]. As I said before, I want to become, as a student suggest, an integral part of the campus community. I want to work for change as part of you and working with you. And that includes all of the constituents in this room, and our alumni, our amazing 550,000+ alumni, who really, as I said before, are so devoted to this institution. I've had a chance to talk to some of them already. Some of them, of course, many of them are on the Board of Trustees. But again, that passion they have from Michigan State University really shines through, and it's a privilege to be a part of that.

I'm not going to say too much more. Again, I'm really excited about this opportunity. I look forward to answering your questions that you may have. But know this: I'm committed to being a great listener. I'm committed to learning from you. I take this role very humbly. You said amazing things about me, and I really appreciate it, but I have a lot to live up to, but I will do my best to be the president that Michigan State needs to move forward. And I wish for all of your help, and please help me succeed in doing that. Thank you.

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: At this point, we will open it up for questions.

Lynsey Mukomel: My name's Lynsey Mukomel. I'm with Wood TV at Grand Rapids. How closely did you watch the Nassar scandal unfold, and what was your main takeaway as someone who now will be leading the university?

President-Designate Samuel L. Stanley Jr.: I certainly followed it, not probably to the depth and degree, obviously, from those who are living and experiencing, but I certainly followed it. And what I saw was a terrible tragedy taking place. Really what to me, and particularly as a physician, was a gross and incomprehensible betrayal of trust that took place and the consequences of that kind of betrayal of trust. Again, as a physician, we really rely on people to believe in us. And as an academic leader, we rely on people to believe in us. And when that trust is violated, the damage is terrible, as we've seen.

So I look forward, again, to learning more about it, since I was at a distance. I need to be immersed more in it. I look forward to meeting with the survivors and their families to understand, how do they believe we're doing? How is the university progressing? I know there's been a number of important steps taken by the university to help improve its policies and procedures to help to work towards changing culture, because that's really what's necessary, is changing culture. It's not just about fixing our procedures. That's incredibly important. We want to create a culture, rather, we want to create an infrastructure where people can report, where they're comfortable reporting, where they believe that things will be acted on after they report.

We also have to have a culture that's preventing this kind of thing from happening. And what are we doing to do that on campus? So I need to learn. Again, these first few months are going to be important for me to learn about it, but that's really what I've seen.

At the same time, Michigan State continues to do great work. You've graduated another amazing class. Your research continues to grow. So what's reassuring to me is, we are able to do work, but this fundamentally needs to be fixed, and I'm committed to working to do that. But it's definitely, the one thing I want to say, it's not just me. I don't have the ability to change the culture at Michigan State University by myself. It really requires all this working together, which is again, why I'm so inspired by the Search Committee and the work they did together, all the constituents coming together for a common goal. We need to harness that kind of energy as Spartans when we work together moving forward. Thank you.

Kim Kozlowski: Dr. Stanley, hello. My name is Kim Kozlowski. I'm a reporter at the Detroit News. The culture change that you referenced earlier, I know you said it was important, but the Spartan community and beyond said that is going to be one of your most top priorities coming in, although there are going to be a lot of other priorities. Could you talk a little bit about what kind of steps you think need to happen to do something like culture change? It's sort of a vague thing to do. What are your thoughts on concrete things you might do to change a culture here at Michigan State University?

President-Designate Samuel L. Stanley Jr.: It's going to be hard for me to obviously be completely specific because, again, I really need to understand the landscape better before I talk about specific measures, but let me talk a little bit about the approach.

First, I think it believes, it does begin with my leadership. The leadership has to be someone that is accountable, has to be someone that's responsible. So that's very important that people feel as though the administration's held accountable for actions and is responsible for its actions. And then something we've talked about before, again, will be earning trust of the community, and that comes by aligning my words with my actions, that when I say the university is going to move in a direction, we move in that direction. When I say we will implement programs in a particular area, we implement those programs. And [when] we say we're making a commitment to a safe campus, we document the things we're doing to put together that safe campus.

And I really believe that the campus culture changes in terms of both the things I've talked about in safety, but also in diversity, inclusion and equity, as well. I think those things are tied together in terms of when one thinks about respect and when one thinks about respecting other people in the community and supporting them in their efforts. So I think that's very important.

I think there are always pockets of the university where there's higher possibilities for risk. And those are areas, for example, where there may be a very tight-knit group of individuals who may not want to work centrally to try and improve culture, may not report, believe they can solve things. And one of the things I've worked very hard on at Stony Brook University is making sure that everyone on campus,

through educational process, understands their responsibility in working to prevent sexual violence and relationship violence and sexual abuse on campus. That's incredibly important to make sure people understand, faculty, staff, and students understand what their responsibilities are. We need to develop what I would call upstander programs, not bystander programs, but upstander programs where students, faculty and staff feel that they can get engaged and help students who they seem having difficulty.

All these things are part, I think, of changing the culture, but, again, it has to come from the top in terms of what I emphasize, what's important to me, where we're putting our resources, and, again, how we're getting people engaged to help. I don't have all the answers to this problem, and I'm going to have to learn a lot from the community to get some of the information that all of us need to move it forward. But I think it is a fundamental part of what we're going to be doing here. And again, listening and learning is a critical part of it.

Carol Thompson: Carol Thompson, Lansing State Journal. The Michigan Attorney General has an open investigation into the university related to Larry Nassar and has said that the university is blocking that investigation, taking some steps to prevent what they can see. Have you been briefed on that, and will you take any steps to change course?

President-Designate Samuel L. Stanley Jr.: I've not been briefed on that, and, again, I might ask Dianne or others to talk about that, so perhaps--

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: Yeah. And the board has been very clear that we are not waiving privilege. So that is not something that-- That has been the board position. Dr. Stanley is coming in, and this is a new chapter in the history of Michigan State University.

Tyler Silvestri (at the press conference): Tyler Silvestri from On the Banks. On campus, it's been a controversial subject, the closed nature of the search inasmuch as multiple finalists weren't identified. And the rationale for it has been that the closed search was necessary to attract high-quality candidates. If it had been more open, if multiple finalists had been identified, would you personally have applied?

President-Designate Samuel L. Stanley Jr.: I think it is hard for me to deal with a hypothetical, obviously. I mean, this was a search I was part of and what I have engaged with, and clearly, I was willing to engage in this particular search, and that's important. And I think for a sitting president, it's important to have that opportunity.

Tyler Silvestri: So I was really disappointed by Stanley's answer here. I don't think it's that hard to engage with a hypothetical. I think that's a thing that lots of people do a lot of the time. And particularly this one. I mean, at some point in the process, did he think, "Boy, it's a good thing that the search is closed"? I mean, did he see that as a benefit? I don't know. And we don't know, because he won't tell us. But this is the problem. We were told it has to be a closed search so that we can attract high-quality candidates. Closed search happens. The question now is, was it worth it?

And I think this would've been a fundamental opportunity, either way, he answered, to instill some public confidence. Maybe he says, "Yes, I would've applied anyway. I love MSU. I think that this is an important opportunity and this is an important time for the university's history, and I want to do my part, and if that got me in trouble with my current university or whatever, it was worth it. I wanted to apply, even if it were open." And I guess that undermines the board a little bit, but whatever. If they say he's the best candidate, he's the best candidate. Here he is. On the other hand, maybe he says, "No, I

wouldn't have applied," and the board is vindicated. Then at least we have some confidence that, okay, the person they say is the best agrees that without this process, he wouldn't be here. And that's at least an answer that gives us some confidence in the search. "Was it worth it?" is the question we have to ask. And right now, we don't have an answer.

So after Stanley said that, Trustee Byrum jumped in. Here's what she had to say.

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: And I would just add that even though this was a confidential search, it was very open and inclusive in the process. And you heard that through the words of the Search Committee members today, and I think the outcome speaks volumes, because we had a successful search, and we, indeed, did hire the best person to lead Michigan State University.

Tyler Silvestri: But how does the public know that? We're supposed to take the Board of Trustees and the Search Committee on their word that they did a good job. I think, fundamentally, what we've learned at Michigan State in the last couple years is that when someone says they did a good job, you check. And we can't do that. We're supposed to take Trustee Byrum and Co. At their word when they say, "This is the best candidate," with no opportunity to judge that for ourselves.

So just as a point of comparison, we recently had a search for the associate vice president for civil rights and Title IX education and compliance, and a search committee narrowed it down to two people, and those finalists gave public presentations before a decision was made. The public got to look into them. Public reporting, including some from On the Banks, dug into these candidates and found out what they're like, what they've done in their jobs. And frankly, there were problems with both finalists. And what ultimately happened is the search failed. They're reopening the search, trying to find more people. That's how it should work. I think that was a very good move on Acting President Udpa's part.

If there's not public confidence in your picks, don't pick them. And the trouble is here we don't have any measure of public confidence, because it was done in the dark.

This idea that these input sessions made it opening and inclusive-- I'm just not sold on it, because if you look through the feedback, which, on the site, you can find all the notes from the input sessions, and if you look over them, what do they say? "I want someone transparent." "I want someone with integrity." "I want someone smart who will do the right thing." Good God, I hope the Search Committee was after that anyway! I mean, getting vague values from the public and saying, "Well, this person has them," without giving any point of reference, any point of comparison, and any opportunity for public debate, for public inspection-- It's not open. It's not inclusive. You just can't say that.

I'd also add that 50,000 students were represented by two. 40,000 undergrads had one representative on the committee, who for the record, I think is a very good person. She's a friend. We've talked about how committed she was to making sure that students felt represented and that their opinions were heard. And that's great, and I have no doubt that she did that to the best of her ability, but fundamentally, one person represented 40,000. And then 10,000 graduate and professional students were represented by one graduate student. There were two students on this committee. To my mind, that's just not representative, no matter how good a job those two students did, and I think they did a good job.

Also, as I think about it, this doesn't seem like even a great strategy for the university from a PR standpoint, because they're very excited about their new presidential pick, understandably. He's announced, and within hours, journalists are digging into him, figuring out what he's done, learning about the blights on his record. I mean, on the one hand, it totally takes away from the excitement of the announcement.

But at the same time, as we debate these issues, his relationship with academic governance or his role in budget cuts or whatever they are, maybe they're things that as a community we can say, "That's fine. These are not disqualifying." But the point is that we should have had that conversation before he was hired. We should have had the opportunity to debate the candidates. I mean, it's not often that I agree with Reclaim MSU, but I think they have a point here. He really does come into office with a cloud of suspicion. He doesn't have the benefit of the doubt, and that's too bad, because he seems like a nice guy. He seems like a smart guy, and maybe he'll do a great job. But we should have had an opportunity to debate the problems that he, like everyone, has before he was appointed.

WXYZ Reporter: WXYZ in Detroit. How soon will you be sitting down with victims of Larry Nassar and actually being able to interact with them as you bring stability to the university?

President-Designate Samuel L. Stanley Jr.: Well, first of all, I really admire the courage of the survivors and those who came forward and how difficult. I can't imagine, honestly, how difficult that must be. I want to do that as soon as we reasonably can. It's going to be one of my top priorities when I get to campus. I want to do it as the president of Michigan State University. I think that's important. But I'm really looking forward to hearing their stories, their thoughts, and understanding how I can help and how the university can help and what are the steps we may need to take, things that may not have been implemented yet that might make a difference. So that's going to be a very high priority for me coming forward.

University Spokesperson Emily Gerkin Guerrant: Last question here. Daniel?

Daniel Howes: Daniel Howes, columnist for the Detroit News. How many finalists were there for the job? How many of those finalists, like Dr. Stanley, had no connection to Michigan State University?

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: We've said in terms of the search process that we're not going to be giving names and specifics, but the pool of candidates that we looked at all were external.

Unidentified Reporter: Doesn't the process--? It seems-- Nothing about Dr. Stanley, but the culture of secrecy has caused the crisis of Michigan State, and I think the criticism from a lot of people is about the process. Wouldn't it have been good to be transparent about what's happening in moving forward?

Board of Trustees Chairperson Dianne Byrum: This will be the final question, but I will answer the question. As we set out from the very beginning, we were very transparent about the process we were going to follow. The Board of Trustees very early on decided that first, we were going to hire Dr. Terry Sullivan as an outside advisor to make sure we were looking at best practices. Then we were also going to impanel a search committee that was representative and diverse of the campus community, and they would be full partners. We did that. And through that process, the 22+ input sessions, we took the input from the community; we included that in the presidential prospectus, which we published; we established a presidential website, which we kept full of timely information; and then the interview process by which we evaluated all candidates came directly from the input sessions. That's why you can stand here today with a unanimous board vote and the unanimous support of the Presidential Search Committee. That's monumental for this university. At this point in time, I think it is significant, and it bodes well for a very successful presidency. Thank you for your time.

Tyler Silvestri: Again, this argument that we were transparent about the fact that we were going to have a non-transparent process does not make it an open and inclusive search. I mean, look, if the position is, a closed search is the best one. This will get us the best results," fine. Own it. Don't pretend that it was open and transparent. It wasn't. I don't buy it that these input sessions made it an open search somehow, even if I think that they were valuable inasmuch as if it turns out Stanley is not what the community clearly wanted in those, we'll have better grounds to be mad. In that sense, I think it's valuable. But the idea that it made them open?, No, it doesn't hold up. It's just not accurate.

But second, if you think that is true, that it's the best, provide some measure of accountability. How do we check that? And the answer right now is, I don't know. We'll see what the public reporting bears out. Maybe we'll learn more about the finalists, and maybe we won't. But the position that now it's just done, we did it, it was transparent, it was open, now we're done, no more questions, it's not right. And it strikes me as fundamentally missing the point of the lesson that we should have learned, and I'm glad that some reporter called that out.