

Why is this happening?

Texas Southern University's systematic attempt to block a qualified doctoral student from obtaining his degree

April 5, 2025

Stanley B. Lemons

404.869.1290

stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com

Why this document? And who is it for?

If you care about student success and the mission of Texas Southern University (TSU), please take 15 minutes to read this document.

If you value fairness and due process, please take 15 minutes to read this document.

Then please contact:

- Vice Admiral James W. Crawford III, TSU President
- Dr. Carl G. Goodman, TSU Provost

Encourage them to immediately resolve the issues raised in this document and to lead TSU with transparency, fairness, and integrity.

Your voice can make a difference.

Contact: ■ Dr. Carl G. Goodman
TSU Provost
carl.goodman@tsu.edu or 713-313-1133

■ Vice Admiral James W. Crawford, III
TSU President
via Ms. Kia Harper, TSU Interim Chief of Staff
kia.harper@tsu.edu

Executive Summary

- On January 19, 2021, Stanley B. Lemons commenced his doctoral studies in the College of Education at Texas Southern University (TSU) to obtain an Ed.D. degree in Curriculum & Instruction. A graduate of Amherst College and the UCLA Anderson School of Management, Mr. Lemons long hoped to experience an HBCU and to enjoy the camaraderie, support, and academic scholarship that he anticipated would come from attending an HBCU. While at TSU, Mr. Lemons completed his academic coursework (GPA 3.88) in December of 2023 and successfully passed all sections of TSU's Comprehensive Exams on his first attempt. Mr. Lemons published an article titled, *The Value of an HBCU*, in which he shared his joy, excitement, and pride at having re-located to Houston to attend TSU. Exhibit A.
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- Mr. Lemons commenced his doctoral dissertation research in January 2024, embarking on a dissertation titled, *Perceptions of Writing Skills From Undergraduate Students at HBCUs*. Mr. Lemons sought to understand the problems that HBCU undergraduate students experience with writing and the interventions that would help students improve their writing skills. Mr. Lemons' research revealed new, and perhaps, far-reaching insights on ways to improve the retention and graduation rates of undergraduate students at HBCUs.
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- Mr. Lemons' work to complete his doctoral studies at TSU has been met with a systematic attempt to block his dissertation research and spring 2025 graduation from TSU. This situation involving Mr. Lemons' studies at TSU has persisted for over five months and has resulted in mental and emotional trauma for Mr. Lemons. To date, TSU has refused to show an earnest desire to resolve this matter, and instead has relied on the "old playbook" of delay tactics, deception, inaction, and non-communication.
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- Mr. Lemons seeks to graduate from TSU on May 9, 2025, and to invite his family to travel to Houston in order to witness this important milestone in life. Will you help? Please urge the leaders of TSU to IMMEDIATELY ACT TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE REGARDING MR. LEMONS' DOCTORATE DEGREE THAT HE SPENT OVER FOUR YEARS WORKING TO EARN.



Overview of Events

Mr. Lemons Received TSU Research Approvals

- TSU Dissertation Proposal Approval (Chapters 1-3 of 5): May 15, 2024. Committee Members: Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil, Dr. Jacqueline Smith, Dr. Holim Song (Chair and Methodologist 1), and Dr. Reginald Todd
- TSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) Dissertation Approval: Official letter received June 17, 2024

Exhibit B

TSU Dissertation Chair and Methodologist 1 Approves Mr. Lemons' Research Methodology, Statistical Approach, and Use of Qualitative Data

"Stan,

You are collecting quantitative data, not qualitative data except open-ended questions. Data for open-ended questions can be considered as qualitative. You can simply describe their response when you discuss your research questions."

Dr. Holim Song

August 8, 2024

TSU Dissertation Chair 1/ Methodologist Tries to Pressure Mr. Lemons to Wrongly Manipulate Research Data

- On November 4, 2024, Dr. Holim Song requested that Mr. Lemons deviate from the IRB and full dissertation committee approved methodology and statistical approach
- Mr. Lemons respectfully declined to follow a methodology that was not approved by the IRB and the full-committee
- On November 5, 2024, at 11:57 a.m., Mr. Lemons emailed the full dissertation committee for assistance regarding Dr. Holim Song's request and his other comments to Mr. Lemons
- On November 5, 2025, at 12:24 p.m., Dr. Holim Song resigned as Mr. Lemons' committee chair, and on November 13, 2024, Dr. Holim Song emailed disparaging comments about Mr. Lemons to the other committee members

Dissertation Chair 2 Questions the Actions of Fellow TSU Professor

- On November 3, 2024, Dr. Jacqueline Smith, dissertation committee member, describes the situation involving Dr. Holim Song's resignation by stating, *"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..."*
- Dr. Jacqueline Smith agrees to become Mr. Lemons' new Dissertation Chair (2)

Methodologist 2 Provides Additional Approval for Mr. Lemons' Research Methodology and Statistical Approach

- Dr. Toya Conston is recruited by Dr. Jacqueline Smith to replace Dr. Holim Song on the committee and to review Mr. Lemons' methodology and statistics (chapters 3-4 of the dissertation)
- Dr. Toya Conston reviewed Mr. Lemons' methodology and statistics on two occasions, and provided two sets of minor edits. Dr. Toya Conston further stated, *"Other than these changes, I am good with moving forward."*
- On December 20, 2024, Dr. Toya Conston provided a written approval of Mr. Lemons' methodology and statistics

Exhibit C

TSU's Actions Cause Mr. Lemons the Expense of Re-Enrollment

- Given the situation with Dr. Holim Song's resignation from the dissertation committee, the time loss associated with the induction of a new committee chair (Dr. Jacqueline Smith), and the time involved with Dr. Toya Conston's review of the dissertation methodology and statistics, Mr. Lemons is put in a situation that would require him to re-enroll into TSU (incurring an additional semester of tuition) for the spring 2025 semester to defend his dissertation and to graduate
- On November 12, 2024, Mr. Lemons wrote to the dissertation committee:

"It is unconscionable to expect that I should be required to re-enroll into TSU for another semester in order to defend my dissertation. I have worked on my dissertation for almost a year, and the work I have done is consistent with my dissertation proposal (approved and signed by you) and the TSU Institutional Review Board."

TSU Committee Members Seek to Reverse Research Approvals

- On January 27, 2025, Mr. Lemons received an email explaining, in part, that the methodology and statistics in his dissertation would need to be removed (post facto), despite the fact that the methodology and statistical approach had been approved by 1) the TSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), 2) the original dissertation committee, 3) Chair/methodologist 1 (Dr. Holim Song), and 4) Dr. Toya Conston as per her written approval of December 20, 2024 – approximately one month prior to the January 27, 2025, joint letter from Dr. Conston and Dr. Smith
- In summary, Mr. Lemons gained multiple approvals over a period of one year, researched students at four HBCUs in the southwest and southeast regions of the U.S., and then, effectively, was directed to discard his work

Mr. Lemons Asks for Help from the TSU Provost and TSU President. TSU Personnel Retaliate by Writing Letters of Committee Resignation

- February 1, 2025, Mr. Lemons contacted Dr. Carl Goodman (TSU Provost) and Vice Admiral James W. Crawford III (TSU President) about the situation with Mr. Lemons' doctoral dissertation committee
- February 4, 2025, Dr. Jacqueline Smith wrote a letter stating that she resigns from Mr. Lemons' dissertation committee, citing in her letter a reversal of the previously approved dissertation methodology/statistics and rebuking Mr. Lemons' attempt to get help from the TSU leadership
- February 5, 2025, Dr. Toya Conston wrote a letter similar to Dr. Jacqueline Smith's February 4, 2025, letter of the day before, stating that she (Dr. Conston) resigns from Mr. Lemons' dissertation committee, citing in her letter a reversal of the approved dissertation methodology/statistics and rebuking Mr. Lemons' attempt to get help from the TSU leadership
- Exhibit D

TSU Dissertation Committee Members Fail to Provide Feedback on Mr. Lemons Dissertation and Refuse to Participate in Mr. Lemons' Dissertation Defense

- February 28, 2025, Mr. Lemons conducts a dissertation defense presentation in the TSU library
- No committee members from Mr. Lemons' dissertation committee attend his dissertation defense presentation of February 28, 2025

As of April 5, 2025, Mr. Lemons' dissertation committee:

- Has not provided feedback on his February 28, 2025, updated dissertation,
- Nor has **any** faculty or staff member of TSU watched the video recording of Mr. Lemons' dissertation defense presentation (as measured by Go To, Inc. viewership logs)

Conclusion

- There has been a failure in the TSU doctoral dissertation process.
- Additionally, there has been a failure of leadership on the part of the individuals listed below to genuinely address and, in good-faith, seek to resolve this situation with Mr. Lemons' doctoral dissertation and spring 2025 graduation:
- Dr. Reginal Todd, Chair
TSU Department of Curriculum & Instruction
- Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil
TSU College of Education Interim Dean
- Dr. Mahesh Vanjani
TSU Interim Dean of The Graduate School
- Dr. Carl G. Goodman
TSU Provost
- Vice Admiral James W. Crawford, III
TSU President

Would you be willing to help by urging TSU to act in a fair and ethical manner?

If so, please reach out to:

- Vice Admiral James W. Crawford, III, TSU President
via Ms. Kia Harper, TSU Interim Chief of Staff
kia.harper@tsu.edu
- Dr. Carl G. Goodman, TSU Provost
carl.goodman@tsu.edu or 713-313-1133

**Thank you for taking the time
to hear my story.**

**Want to learn more about my
doctoral dissertation research?**

View my website here:

<https://thesecrettowriting.com/doctoral-dissertation>





Exhibit A



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?



Exhibit B

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION - ONLY

GUIDE FOR WRITING THESIS/DISSERTATION PROPOSALS

Please Type in Form

DATE May 15, 2024

TO: Dean, the Graduate School
FROM: Paqueline D. Smith
Department Head (Signature)

In behalf of Stanley Lemons

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

I, Stanley Lemons
Name of Student

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:

Song Han

Chairman of Thesis/Dissertation Committee

Paqueline D. Smith

Member of Committee

[Signature]

Member of Committee

[Signature]

Member of Committee

[Signature]

Member of Committee

Paqueline D. Smith

Graduate School Representative

[Signature]

Head of Major Department

[Signature]

Director, Doctoral Center

[Signature]

Dean, College/School

[Signature]

Dean, Graduate School

[Signature]

Student's Signature
Stanley B. Lemons

Student's Name (Type)

[Signature]

Student's Mailing Address

[Signature]

City/State/ Zip Code

[Signature]

Student Current Phone Number

Date 5/15/2024

Date 5/15/2024

Date

[Signature]

Date

STEP 6

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF FACULTY FOR
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Date 11/20/2024

TO: Dean of the Graduate School

FROM:

[Signature]
Department Head (signature)

Curriculum & Instruction
Department

The following persons are recommended for appointment to the Examining Committee for

Stanley B. Lemon S who is a candidate for the Ed. D. in the
Student's Name Degree

Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Email Address S.lemons7779@student.tsu.ru Phone Number [Barcode]

TSU T# 00737779

Title of Dissertation Perceptions of Writing Skills from
Undergraduate Students at HBCUs

List of persons recommended:

Graduate Faculty Name (Please Type or Print)	Department
<u>Dr. Jacqueline D. Smith</u> Dissertation Advisor	<u>Curriculum & Instruction</u>
<u>Dr. Reginald L. Todd</u> Committee Member	<u>Curriculum & Instruction</u>
<u>Dr. Shannon Verrett</u> Committee Member	<u>Curriculum & Instruction</u>
<u>Dr. Toya Conston</u> Graduate School Representative	<u>Educational Administration & Leadership</u>

Action of Graduate Office

() Approved

[Signature] 2/1/25
Dean, The Graduate School



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, reading "Grace Loudd".

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



Exhibit C

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



Exhibit D



Mr. Stanley Lemons
Doctoral Candidate
Texas Southern University
February 5, 2025

REFERENCE: STANLEY LEMONS'S DISSERTATION @
S.LEMONS7779@STUDENT.TSU.EDU

Dear Mr. Lemons

Please let this correspondence serve as notice of my withdrawal from your Dissertation Committee as the designated methodologist.

To date, I have provided timely feedback to guide you in refining your dissertation to meet the highest standards of scholarship. However, as opposed to collaboratively continuing to work with the committee, you have decided to involve university leadership which suggests a divergence in our perspectives on the doctoral academic process. Moreover, the most recent set of revisions is in alignment with not only the standards of conducting quantitative research, but also with feedback that the previous methodologist provided before they stepped away from the committee due to a similar impasse.

While I am no longer formally part of the committee, I wish you continued academic success in your pursuit of the degree.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Toya Conston'.

Toya Conston, Ph.D.

Clinical Associate Professor
Human Development and Family Sciences
Psychological, Health & Learning Sciences
College of Education
University of Houston
Trobert6@central.uh.edu

Adjunct Professor
College of Education
Texas Southern University
Toya.conston@tsu.edu



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

3100 CLEBURNE STREET • HOUSTON, TEXAS 77004

713-313-7011

DEPARTMENT OF
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Mr. Stanley Lemons
Doctoral Candidate
Texas Southern University
February 5, 2025

REFERENCE: STANLEY LEMONS DISSERTATION @ S.LEMONS7779@STUDENT.TSU.EDU

Dear Mr. Lemons,

I am writing to formally step down as the Chair of your dissertation and member of your committee. This decision was not made lightly, but I believe it is in the best interest of both you and your academic progress.

While I respect your dedication to your research, our academic process is designed to maintain the highest standards of scholarship. As your Chair, I have provided feedback to guide you in refining your dissertation to meet these standards. I understand that the recent revisions and subsequent delays have been frustrating for you, and I regret that this situation has caused distress.

However, your decision to escalate the matter by involving university leadership, rather than continuing to work collaboratively within the committee framework, suggests a divergence in our perspectives on the academic process. Given this difference, I feel that stepping aside will allow you the opportunity to work with a new Chair who may better align with your approach.

I will inform the department of my decision and will ensure a smooth transition to your new chair. Please know that my intention is to support your success, even if I am no longer formally part of the committee.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline D. Smith

Jacqueline D. Smith, Ed.D.
Professor/Dissertation Chair
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Texas Southern University
Jacqueline.smith@tsu.edu
713.313.7179