

An Open Letter from John McGlothlin, Candidate for IU Board of Trustees

May 9, 2024

In my career as a financial planner I am required to act as a fiduciary, which means I must place my clients' interests before my own. My job, in short, centers around listening to someone when they explain what they value, need, and want.

Trustees are fiduciaries as well: their job is to act in the best interests of others. And just as I must act only after listening to my clients, I believe university trustees must base their decisions upon input from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and those vested in the university's success. Determining how best to support Indiana University and its academic mission begins here.

Recently, numerous constituencies have articulated their concerns regarding the IU administration's response to protests on the Bloomington campus. Trustees must attend to these important voices, which include:

- The American Association of University Professors at IU-Bloomington, which [described](#) the events of April 25 as “an egregious violation of Indiana University values.” It called upon the Board of Trustees to enact “changes necessary to ensure that such a breach of the University's principles never be repeated.”
- The ACLU of Indiana, which [declared](#) the administration's removal of protestors from Dunn Meadow as out of line with free speech policies, and the campus bans handed to some protestors as issued “without due process and . . . disproportionately severe.”
- The Student Voice Coalition—composed of the IU Student Government, the Indiana Memorial Union Board, the Graduate and Professional Student Government, the IU Funding Board, and the Residence Hall Association—which [condemned](#) the administration's actions on April 25.
- The NAACP of Monroe County, which [denounced](#) the arrest of protestors.

Moreover, these statements must be read in light of responses to earlier administrative actions:

- More than 15,000 individuals signed a [petition](#) declaring the abrupt cancellation of Samia Halaby's exhibition at the Eskenazi Museum of Art in January as contrary to IU's mission statement.
- More than 400 IU faculty from across multiple campuses [decried](#) the suspension of Dr. Abdulkader Sinno in January by IUB Vice Provost Carrie Docherty as a violation of Bloomington campus policies regarding shared governance and as an attempt to curtail free speech.
- In April, 93% of IUB voting faculty [supported](#) a vote of no confidence regarding IU President Pamela Whitten, IUB Provost Rahul Shrivastav, and Vice Provost Docherty.
- In early May, more than 1,000 IUB faculty signed a [petition](#) demanding the resignation or termination of President Whitten and Provost Shrivastav in response to their handling of campus protests in April.

Notably, the chair of IU's Board of Trustees, W. Quinn Buckner, responded to the IUB faculty vote in April by [stating](#) that Whitten “has my full support and that of every member of the Board of Trustees.”

Buckner's declaration indicates a yawning disconnect between current trustees and broad swathes of IU's stakeholders. As fiduciaries, trustees must take repeated, serious grievances regarding the administration

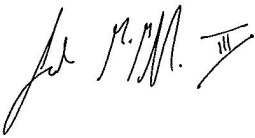
and university policies to heart, and must consider appropriate responses. Failing to do so is failing in one's fiduciary duty, as is hastily deferring to authorities at the university or statehouse.

I hold no illusions regarding the sway afforded a single trustee. But as I assert in my [candidate statement](#), board members who are committed to acting in an organization's best interests must be comfortable with confrontation. It would be my honor to challenge our trustees to truly hear and meaningfully respond to those voices from across the university system that have expressed such deep concerns with IU's status quo. Specifically, I believe the board must evaluate current freedom of speech policies, the state of shared governance on campus, and—most broadly—the current administration's capacity to act in accordance with the principles that make Indiana University a respected institution of higher learning.

If you'd like me to act as your fiduciary, please mark your calendar to [vote online](#) beginning June 1. You may also request a paper ballot by contacting the trustee election coordinator at truselec@indiana.edu or 812-855-6610.

In the meantime, I invite you to contact me directly via my [candidate website](#).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John McGlothlin III". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a prominent "J" and "M".

John McGlothlin III