

Ohio Senate Advice and Consent Trustee Appointment Questionnaire

Name: Michael Lee Bennett

Institution Being Appointed to:
Zane State College Board of Trustees

1. Are you a graduate of or do any of your dependents attend the institution to which you are being appointed as trustee?

My son and daughter are graduates of Zane State.

2. What is your position on the First Amendment rights of faculty, staff, and students, and how will you balance this with promoting diversity of thought on campus?

I believe, especially on a college campus, students should be exposed to a wide range of issues and perspectives and be encouraged to express their opinions in a respectful manner. Classroom discussion and debate encourages critical thinking, which is important for the development of their values, evolution of their beliefs and encourages a commitment to lifetime learning and success.

3. In your opinion, what are three current significant issues affecting higher education?

Affordability, aligning programs and degrees with the needs of the businesses in the state and helping students develop the skills and critical thinking for success in life.

4. Do you feel comfortable presenting new or alternative solutions to issues presented to the Board of Trustees ("Board") by the president or other trustees of the institution to which you are being appointed?

Yes. Having served on Boards, it is always a challenge for Board members to get information outside of the information presented by the Administration but it is incumbent on the Trustees to seek alternative views and have the courage to question orthodoxy and one-sided viewpoints while maintaining a collegial working relationship and respect.

5. What are some ideas you plan to propose to reduce the overall cost of higher education?

Maximizing the College Credit Plus Program for the benefit of the students not only from a cost perspective but also as an avenue for individual success in a campus setting enhancing self-esteem and instilling confidence to continue their education and seek challenging post graduate opportunities.

6. What thoughts do you have on faculty tenure, post-tenure review, and annual faculty performance reviews?

Difficult question. While I respect that faculty should have the freedom to develop their curricula and teach as they believe best challenges and prepares students, I also recognize that all faculty and staff should be evaluated and given feedback for areas of improvement. Poor performers, given clear direction on an improvement plan, need to have the opportunity to succeed but the institution has to have the ability to remove long term poor performers.

7. What are your thoughts on ways to increase graduation rates at the institution to which you have been appointed?

I tend to value employment rates in their program of study and degree as opposed to graduation rates. The institution and the student are most successful when the graduates receive employment in the area of the degrees or certificates.

8. Is higher education in Ohio addressing the current and future workforce needs of our state, and how can the institution you have been appointed to better address these workforce challenges?

Mostly, yes. I have seen firsthand how the training and degrees from Zane State have opened the doors of opportunity for my kids and so many other motivated young people in this region.

9. In your view, who are you ultimately responsible to serve as a trustee of the institution you have been appointed to: the president, Board chairperson, or taxpayers of Ohio?

While the mission of the institution and the faculty, administration, Board and staff are to serve the students, I am mindful that the ultimate stakeholders are the taxpayers of Ohio who provide the state share of the budget to operate and meet the needs of the community.