Approved by the Board of Trustees

May 22, 2025

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Board Meeting

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## RESOLUTION FOR ROBERT J. JONES

As you conclude your impactful time as the 10th chancellor of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the Board of Trustees wishes to honor you and express its deepest gratitude for your vision and leadership, which have so strongly enriched the university and the lives of its students, faculty, staff, alumni, and stakeholders around the globe.

In your nearly nine years as chancellor, you have made the university more accessible and affordable, built its reputation as one of America’s leading research universities, protected the health and safety of its constituents, and made it more compassionate to all members of the university’s extended family.

Early in your tenure, you led the celebration of the university’s 150th anniversary, and you began to set the foundation for making the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign the land-grant model for the 21st century.

You brought people from different perspectives together for critical conversations about the use of Native imagery on campus. You listened to and partnered with Native Nations to support their economic development. You established a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Office to facilitate the repatriation of remains and artifacts to tribal communities and lineal descendants, among other efforts to support Native people.

You addressed the problem of tuition sticker shock for low-to-modest-income students by establishing the Illinois Commitment program, which provides free tuition and fees for up to four years for all qualified in-state students, and you coined the phrase “What part of free don’t you understand?”.

You oversaw the most successful fundraising campaign in university history. When the $2.25 billion goal for the “With Illinois” campaign was announced, some said that magnitude was unthinkable, unbelievable, and simply impossible, but you and your team surpassed it and raised approximately $2.7 billion. You helped secure several major gifts from prominent alumni, including Larry Gies, Thomas M. Siebel, and The Grainger Foundation.

You led the university through the COVID-19 global pandemic by prioritizing the health of the campus community and beyond, building an ecosystem that included a homegrown rapid saliva test, a building-entry system, social distancing protocols, and safe and comfortable isolation and quarantine spaces, and then sharing the test and related tools throughout the state, the nation, and the world.

You demonstrated extraordinary integrity, collegiality, and an ability to build consensus across the Urbana-Champaign university, within the University of Illinois System, and across the State of Illinois. With humility and authenticity, you partnered with the Board, president, vice presidents, other chancellors, legal counsel, and many other colleagues to mitigate risks and advance important initiatives. You often set aside your own objectives to bring together stakeholders with potentially divergent interests to do what was best for the institution. You partnered with peer universities, national laboratories, foundations, and corporations on “radical collaborations” to address quantum, biomanufacturing, bioengineering, instrumented tissues, artificial intelligence, and a diverse range of social issues. Thanks to your impactful leadership, the university has been recognized as the state institution that is best positioned to convene private and public partnerships and collaborations to solve problems that are too large and too complex for any single institution to address alone.

You have served in national leadership roles in higher education organizations including the Association of American Universities, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, the Big Ten Academic Alliance, and the Big Ten Council of Presidents and Chancellors, leading the boards of each of these organizations for many years.

You have appreciated that for many people the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics is the “front door” of the university, and you have supported the success of student-athletes on and off the field of play and helped build the national reputation of the university’s Division I programs.

You understood the importance of boldly sharing the university’s story of impact and of doing so with one voice, so you led the creation and implementation of the first-ever university-wide brand platform, including the move to a single logo and even a single pairing of orange and blue colors.

You took the time and effort to connect with students through a series of videos that showcased your approachable nature, your sense of humor, and your willingness to wear a variety of costumes ranging from “Neo” in *The Matrix* to a lifeguard to a 17th-century chancellor to a campus tour guide. And you are perhaps the most photographed chancellor in the history of the university. For thousands of students, taking a selfie with you has become a rite of passage.

But first and always, you are an accomplished scholar, who began life as the son of a Georgia sharecropper, worked full-time through much of your high school, junior college, and baccalaureate career, distinguished yourself throughout your PhD studies, and earned a faculty position at the University of Minnesota, where you conducted research that advanced the world’s understanding of plant physiology. Your scholarly achievements earned you membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and recognition as a fellow in the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Science Society of America.

At this time, the Board of Trustees, President Timothy L. Killeen, faculty members, students, and staff extend our deepest gratitude and warm wishes to you, Lynn, and your family. Our University of Illinois family holds great fondness for your dedicated service and unwavering commitment to the values of our institution. As you embark on another great opportunity to lead in educating the next generation, know that in our hearts we will always consider you a true Illini.

The Board of Trustees directs that this resolution be incorporated in the minutes of today’s meeting to become a part of the official public record and that a suitable copy be given to you as a permanent reminder of the esteem and affection in which you are held.