



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on November 10, 2015

## University of Missouri Students Force President's Removal

Flexing their muscles of influence, at least 30 black football players at the University of Missouri have forced the resignation of the school's president, Tim Wolfe (shown).

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin — who oversees the university's main campus in Columbia, Missouri, — also will step down, the university system's governing body, the Board of Curators, announced Monday evening.



The players had vowed they would boycott all team activities, including practice and games, until Wolfe was removed. They alleged on Twitter Saturday night that the president was negligent in not adequately addressing concerns of African-American students about multiple racist incidents on the campus over the past few months.

The tweet read, "The athletes of color on the University of Missouri football team truly believe 'Injustice Anywhere is a threat to Justice Everywhere.'" The statement was a quotation from Martin Luther King, Jr. The tweet added, "We will no longer participate in football related activities until President Tim Wolfe resigns or is removed due to his negligence toward marginalized students' experience. WE ARE UNITED!!!!"

Graduate student Jonathan Butler went on a hunger strike last week, demanding Wolfe's removal. A group calling itself Concerned Student 1950 (1950 being the year the first black students were admitted to the school) led the protests, until joined by Butler and finally, members of the football team.

What had precipitated these protests, which eventually culminated in Wolfe's demise?

The president of the student government, who is black, said in September that people in a pickup truck yelled racial slurs at him as they passed by. The next month, a white student, apparently intoxicated, made racist remarks about members of a black student organization. Then, in the recent homecoming parade, black protesters blocked president Wolfe's car, before being taken away by police.

A swastika, drawn in feces, was recently found in a dormitory bathroom.

In an attempt to ease tensions, university officials announced that all new students, faculty, and staff would be offered "diversity training."

President Wolfe issued a statement on Sunday that "change is needed," and that the university was drawing up plans to promote tolerance and diversity. Apparently, that was not enough, and Missouri Tigers Coach Gary Pinkel announced that he supported his players' actions. In a tweeted picture of Pinkel and his team with their arms linked, the coach asserted, "The Missouri Family stands as one. We are united. We are behind our players."

Many have pointed out that the 2014 riots in Ferguson, Missouri, following the shooting of a black teenager by a white police officer have contributed to the intense reaction in this case as well as others around the country.



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Last spring, players at the University of Oklahoma skipped spring practice to protest a video which appeared on the Internet, and was condemned as racist. Coach Bob Stoops and Athletic Director Joe Castiglione led the protest, which took place on the school's legendary Owen Field.

The video that sparked this milder protest, which was apparently filmed on a charter bus, featured members of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (ΣΑΕ) fraternity singing that "there will never be a n\*\*\*\*\* in SAE."

In this particular episode, OU's President David Boren, a former Democrat U.S. senator, took swift action, expelling those who were identified in the video. He then cut all ties with the fraternity, and ordered all members out of the ΣΑΕ fraternity house — regardless of whether they had anything to do with the racist video.

While these incidents of racist activity are reprehensible, they also raise serious questions.

For example, in the Oklahoma case, while few took issue with the disciplinary action meted out against the students directly involved in the racist song, which spoke of lynchings of blacks, some raised concern about students who were not even involved being summarily punished, without any due process.

The Missouri case raises other questions. While any decent person would condemn racist slurs directed at anyone, it is not clear exactly what the students wanted the school president to do, unless the perpetrators could be identified. One demand made upon Wolfe was particularly ludicrous — the group Concerned Student 1950 demanded that he "acknowledge his white male privilege." The Missouri Students Association wrote a letter to the board objecting to the "increase in tension and inequality with no systemic support" since the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson.

Considering that even the Obama Justice Department later concluded that Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson shot Brown in self-defense, it is not clear what the University of Missouri was supposed to do in the way of "support." That the student government would make such a statement despite such evidence of Wilson's innocence should cause concern that radical groups across the nation, and not just at the University of Missouri, will continue to use such incidents to inflame racial tensions.

The precedent established in the Missouri case is particularly troubling. If football players can now dictate the dismissal of the university president over racist actions of others, what other policies can be determined by athletes or other student groups? Perhaps they will demand the removal of professors they don't like for their politics, or even for just tough grading.

Missouri's football team has a losing record at this point in the season. So what might a team that is competing for a championship be able to change at a college campus?

*Photo: AP Images*



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