**TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT GLENDA GLOVER**

**RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT REMARKS**

I’ll get right to the point. I have an announcement that I would like to share with you as 1,000 of my closest friends.

After almost 11 years and having reached nearly every objective and goal I set for myself and TSU, as the leader of this great institution, my beloved alma mater, I stand before you to announce my retirement as President of Tennessee State University, at the end of the spring semester 2024. It was a decision that did not come too easily, and it was not made lightly. My voice is needed now on a more national platform.

I believe you and I can see those efforts, legislation, policies, are being made every day to push this country back, to drag us back, to force us back into an era that we all fought so hard to overcome; an era that we have not seen since the days of the landmark decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education.*

My skill set, my leadership abilities, my voice is needed now more than ever on a much larger platform, as we fight to protect access and equity in higher education. As the daughter of a civil rights leader, I know that we must have leaders, who are not just leaders, but influencers, who are well prepared for this good fight, and will gear up for the battle that we now have in higher education – the fight for access and equity. I will continue to address these issues but from a different unrestricted platform.

Serving as President of Tennessee State University has been the honor of a lifetime. Words cannot express the emotions I have as I stand before you this morning. TSU prepared me for every accomplishment I have achieved throughout my career.

This is indeed more than a full circle moment for me. This is where I got my start, where the seeds of excellence were sown for a young teenager from south Memphis who aspired to change the world, and I came to Tennessee State University, graduated in 1974. From 1974 to 2024, the 50-year blessing, the most awesome blessing that God could ever bestow.  And now it’s only appropriate that I announce my retirement from the place that gave me my start.

In my inaugural address in 2013, I spoke of roots and wings. The two legacies that we inherit from this university; one is roots, the other is wings –roots and wings. The greatest gifts a university can impart to a student are roots and wings. roots to lay a foundation, and wings to soar.

TSU gave me roots. And then TSU gave me my wings which allowed me to soar. Roots for preparation and wings to fly as high as possible - The ability to soar, roots and wings.

They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles. I thank Tennessee State University for giving me roots and wings. Wings that allowed me to fly up to the top of the mountain, to land in a spot to lead this great institution. We resided on that mountain.

But I read one day in the book of Deuteronomy, where the Lord said to Moses, you have been on this mountain long enough. And that’s my scripture today. I have been on this mountain long enough. It’s time for me to come down from this mountain and move to a different calling. A different moment. A different level, a new level where I will continue to elevate TSU and all HBCUs.

And to my friends this morning, I am not announcing another position. I don’t know what God has in store for me. but I do know that I have been faithful to my calling. And I have done all that was assigned to my hands to do and achieved all that I set out to do.

As I mentioned earlier, the threats to higher education, to civil rights, to voting rights, the movement in the country to travel backwards and erase the gains that many of our family members and friends gave their lives for, make me know that it’s time to lend my voice to a national conversation, in a different capacity, as we escalate the fight for equal access to higher education.

Yes, this will be my last year serving as your president. But this year will be awesome as we take TSU to another level and will continue our work to advance TSU. And please know that I will be president of TSU until I’m not.

It was my goal to elevate TSU, to advance TSU, to leave TSU in a better place than when I arrived.  There were many great moments, some ranked higher than others. There are a few areas I want to highlight.

First, I am happy that we have expanded TSU’s breath to a national level. We have elevated the brand, the reputation, the legacy; and ensured that TSU is on a nationwide platform by increasing the national visibility of this university. TSU is being discussed in rooms where it has never been discussed before. This recognition helped us to recruit even more students, not only from the state of Tennessee but from around the country.

We brought many extraordinary individuals to our campus to see and experience the greatness of our university, allowing our story to be told at a higher level.

For starters, we hosted the Vice President of the United States of America, Kamala Harris. I am pleased to have developed a relationship with Vice President Kamala Harris. It began when she was a Senator, and it grew to a different level when I worked on the effort for her to be President Joe Biden’s choice as running mate in the 2020 election.

We still meet and talk as often as possible. I am often called upon to provide information for speeches or other activities. I have dined at her home and have had discussions with her at the White House. Many times, it’s discussions about elevating HBCUs and how TSU can have a leading role in that effort. I have also included our student leaders in discussions and visits with her at the White House. And being in the same sorority with her has brought TSU even more recognition and notoriety.

An exciting parallel is the return to our campus of TSU’s daughter, Oprah Winfrey. We reconnected and re-established a relationship. The university had not formally connected with her in about 30 years despite attempts by alumni, TSU faculty and staff as well as other TSU presidents. But with perseverance and diligence, we continued to build that relationship, and as she so fondly stated during that commencement address that Glenda Glover would not take no for an answer, so we were able to bring her back as our commencement speaker. The attention that her returning to TSU thrust TSU into the international spotlight. There is much more potential with that relationship.

Michelle Obama was on campus in 2013.

We have entertained several other influential Americans who have changed the course of our nation. Because of our accomplishments and who we are, we were able to attract such notable individuals, including:

US Congressman Bennie Thompson

Rev. Jesse Jackson

Rev. Al Sharpton

Ms. Lynn Whitfield

Ms. Taraji Henson

Just to name a few

And there were many many others. These nationally known individuals brought their wisdom, notoriety, and prestige to campus. The positive impacts from their visits helped to drive enrollment.

I want to mention also that I had the honor of serving as international president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. The first time a TSU president served as head of a 325,000-member organization. This gave added prominence to TSU across the nation. And it helped us to recruit numerous students. But I am quick to acknowledge that there was doubt about whether it could be done. But the verdict is in. It was enormously successful. And of tremendous benefit to TSU. Particularly the funds that we raised to support HBCUs. the initiative that I spearheaded brought well over a quarter of a million dollars to TSU.

I was honored to have been appointed by President Joe Biden to serve as Vice Chair of his Board of Advisors for HBCUs. This, along with my national involvement in education, and other national awards and recognitions, contributed to my being noted as a national leader among HBCU Presidents and others in higher education. And I thank you for your continuing support in that endeavor.

I will touch on a few more areas.

Students. We expanded the division of student affairs to make sure we were dedicated to student success. We significantly increased the student affairs budget to invest in more technology, and focus on improving student retention, completion, and graduation rates. Employers are telling us that the quality and capabilities of our graduates have increased. The number of employers who are seeking our graduates has more than tripled. We have expanded student internships and permanent placement for students.

As it relates to Housing. Significant progress has been made regarding student housing and campus facilities. And more is coming. I mentioned earlier, the new residence hall with 750 beds. We have a request for another residence hall (or two) with the capacity of 1,000 beds.

Let’s move to faculty. We made significant progress improving faculty and staff salaries since I arrived in 2013. We increased faculty salaries by 28%, and increased staff salaries by over 30%. We are still not where we need to be, but there has been a dramatic needle swing. We initiated base salaries for dept chairs, and for new faculty coming to TSU. We set a minimum salary for starting TSU staff. I have been intentional about competitive salaries. I remain committed to equity in salaries.

I applaud the faculty and staff, which includes administrators, on how we have increased our research productivity, which has more than doubled from $49 million when I arrived, to just over $100 million.

I truly believe in shared governance. I truly believe in shared governance, meeting regularly with faculty senate and faculty senate executive committee and discussing various matters of concern that affect the institution.

And I like to brag about the relationship between the faculty senate and the administration. How we have moved from adversarial to collaborative. I thank the faculty for a shared governance ministry.

In the area of Academics. Let’s start with the fact that every subject area on campus that offers accreditation is accredited, and TSU is in good standing with SACSCOC.

We have established essential new degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The university has moved first from R3 doctoral designation to R2 doctoral research which as we know is the high research category. TSU is one of only 11 HBCU in the R2 category.

We have put plans in place to move TSU from R2 to R1- the highest research category offered in higher education.

Our computing and technology structure and capabilities have significantly increased. We went remote in 2020 at the start of the covid pandemic with very little difficulty and down time.

I would like to boast again that our academic competitor group has changed. We compete now with top tier prestigious universities. Students and faculty no longer choose TSU because it’s close geographically or is the lowest cost; but choose TSU because of what we do, who we are, and where we are going, and the students we produce!

In the area of Finances. I repeat, TSU is in its best financial position ever in the history of this university. Our institutional budget is millions in the black, affording us to reinvest and grow our people, facilities, and programs. We doubled the endowment from $45 million when I arrived at TSU to over $100 million now. We have increased fundraising in substantially every category with a significant increase in companies that contributed $1 million or more.

We formed corporate partnerships that advanced the stature of TSU involving students, faculty, and staff. Companies like HCA, Amazon, Google, Apple, Boeing, Ford, Bank of America, Fedex, Lowes, Regions, Nike, Pinnacle, Western Express. And several others. So, despite what you may hear or what is reported, we are in a sound financial position, and well positioned to continue in this financial position.

And this is a huge one. The state of Tennessee acknowledged a significant and longstanding underpayment to TSU. Their own financial analysis indicated that comparatively speaking, TSU is owed $544 million. We fought to receive that funding. Rep. Love joined us in that fight. We applaud Gov. Lee for taking the first steps to do what’s right in addressing this inequity with a $250M allocation. We thank you for your support as we pursued this endeavor.

Now the final two areas. First, Safety. We instituted initiatives to improve safety on campus. We fenced in the university and included gate accesses. We made a significant investment in police dept, by hiring several more police officers and safety officers on campus. In fact, we doubled the number of police officers. We implemented a culture where everyone wears ID cards. We implemented TSU Tiger Patrol, which is peer-to-peer student surveillance with students helping us out.

In the area of Buildings and Properties. I won’t say much more about the new buildings that were constructed and others were renovated. You saw that on the charts earlier.

And now Alumni. We have tried to give alumni voice, an create a new voice among our younger alums. I have visited chapters and alumni groups, listened to alumni suggestions and concerns, and delivered the keynote address to alumni functions around the country:

In Atlanta, Detroit, Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, Washington DC, Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Birmingham, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Jackson, Louisville, and others over this 11-year period. Alumni remain our heartbeat and represent the essence of who we are.

So, you see, it was my goal to elevate TSU. And I am honored and blessed that we have met that goal.

Again, to my 1,000 closest friends, my announcement to retire next year does not mean that this is the last you will see of me or hear of me. I am merely retiring from the presidency of Tennessee State University. Wherever my door may be, it will always remain open to the students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni and the Nashville community. I will continue to work to advance educational opportunities, to ensure fairness, equity, and justice for African Americans and people of color, for women, and those who are often left behind.

I thank God for giving me the ability to show up every day at TSU and try to make a difference; and for putting so many wonderful people in front of me, to have such great faculty and staff, and students join me on this journey.

I gave my all each and every day. I have listened to the voices that gave me advice on advancing TSU. Sure, at TSU, we had our challenges, setbacks and disappointments. Even days that I felt like quitting. But there was something within. It was my commitment to the talented students we serve, my pledge to the faculty staff, alumni, and community, that brought me back into focus. and we remembered that problems have term limits, and we refused to give our problems tenure!

We had to lead TSU through the COVID pandemic, tornado recovery, the tragic suicide of a student on campus, and other crisis moments. But I depended on you, I depended on my cabinet and TSU leadership. I depended on the alumni and each of you. I depended on God. And we got through it all with that true TSU spirit.

To the Board of Trustees, I thank you for entrusting me with this awesome opportunity,

To the faculty and staff, I thank you for your support. It wasn’t always easy to make those tough decisions. I know it wasn’t easy for you either.

To the students, you were my greatest inspiration. You all know that I have always been student centered. My proudest moments were when you reached milestones and major achievements. This is highlighted even more at commencement when you take flight on the wings of success. Students, you also experienced challenges and triumphs. You probably weathered the most, I thank you for continuing that TSU spirit.

To my family, I thank you for your unconditional support. Your assistance, sacrifices, and your understanding of the responsibility required is deeply appreciated.

In Ecclesiastics it says, to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. And here at TSU, there is a time to arrive and a time to leave. My time is up on this mountain. I’ve done what I was called to do. I have done all that is assigned under my hands to do at TSU. It is time.

Together we have laid a foundation. We established an 11-year legacy. With this foundation, I am prepared to pass on this torch, pass on the baton to the next leader, to the next builder. That’s the mark of a great leader, to lay the foundation, so that the others may build on that strength, and on the excellence of our academic programs, our history, outstanding faculty staff, students, alumni, and community, to take us to even higher heights.

Before I go to my seat, I end with an expression of love – heartfelt love from me to each of you- to those who came before me, and those who will come after me. I can’t express the amount of love I have for you.

I ask each of you to continue your journey, continue to serve. Continue to soar. Continue to think work, serve to advance this university, until God has granted every blessing, approved every request, and answered every prayer, until TSU has become all that God has ordained for us to be.

God bless each of you. God bless Tennessee State University!