

February 3, 2023

Subject: Vote of No Confidence regarding President William B. Caldwell, IV To The Board of Trustees:

We are reaching out to you today to express our great concern and fear regarding the current climate and uncertain future of the institution of Georgia Military College. At this critical juncture, we as members of the Prep School Faculty of Georgia Military College issue a vote of No Confidence in the president of the college, William B. Caldwell, for the following reasons:

1. Failure to follow policy and procedures:

- The GMC employee handbook states in section 2. 1.5 "Discharge" that "Discharge will occur after a careful review of the case with the appropriate administrator [...] and a review of the case by the Vice President of Human Resources for documentation adequacy and compliance with GMC policy." The events surrounding the termination of Principal Steve Greer occurred within two hours of the email from Principal Greer to the faculty stating that he was informed that he would not be returning after the end of the school year but would be finishing out his contract.
 - **Policy 2.1.5 does not apply in this situation as Dr. Greer was not discharged from employment. He was removed from his role as Principal of the Preparatory School and offered a lateral transfer to work with our Junior College while maintaining his same pay and benefits.**
 - **The institution had begun succession planning in the fall of 2022 for several leaders that are eligible for retirement in the next 1-3 years. The intent was to produce an organizational plan that ensured transitions would take place with minimal disruption to the organization. Dr. Greer was part of these discussions.**
 - **In discussion (1/30) with the President, Dr. Greer was informed that he would move into a new role. The President informed Dr. Greer that the announcement of this transition would be included as part of a larger organizational plan, briefed to the Board of Trustees, and then effectively communicated with faculty, staff, parents, and students.**
 - **The following morning, Dr. Greer independently announced his departure in an email sent only to the Prep School faculty and staff. The email inferred Dr. Greer would not remain with the institution after the school year and that he had no future plans. Dr. Greer did not follow specific instructions; this communication, without coordination, created the confusion we were seeking to avoid.**

- **Shortly after Dr. Greer sent the email announcing his departure at the end of the school year, he separately emailed the President affirming his commitment to the lateral transfer to the Junior College. The emails appeared contradictory.**
- **With the intent to clarify Dr. Greer’s messaging, the President met with Dr. Greer (1/31). During the conversation, the President determined he had lost confidence in Dr. Greer to continue as Principal as this was another incident of improper communication and coordination. This was not a “knee-jerk reaction” to one isolated email but rather a culmination of multiple communication and coordination issues.**
- **It was communicated to Dr. Greer that the offer to laterally transfer with the same pay and benefits to the Junior College was still an active offer. Dr. Greer declined the transfer.**

2. Actions that are not in the best interest of the institution:

- The termination of Principal Steve Greer, which has led to negative press for the institution. Terminating him instantly after that email was a knee-jerk reaction that has brought about outrage by parents, students, faculty, staff, and the community at large. This has led to a Change.org petition calling for the retirement of William B. Caldwell, IV, which has garnered over 800 signatures within only 36 hours.
 - **As stated above, Dr. Greer was not terminated but, in fact, resigned from the institution by refusing to accept a lateral transfer with no reduction in pay and benefits. This was not a “knee-jerk reaction” to one isolated email but rather a culmination of multiple communication and coordination issues.**
- The appearance of a misappropriation of funds that has led to a special audit by the Department of Audits and Accounts / House Appropriations Committee of the Georgia State Legislature and could lead to fundamental changes in the structure of GMC Prep School or the termination of the K-3 program. At the end of SY 21-22, Governor Kemp authorized a one-time \$2000 payment for full-time teachers. Teachers in the prep school began asking about this stipend in the spring of 2022, and we were initially told in a faculty meeting in May 2022 that we would not receive this stipend. After Principal Greer requested clarification with the institution, we were eventually informed we would receive a partial sum so that the funds, earmarked for teachers of grades 4-12, could be distributed among all teachers. The reduced pre-tax amount was stated at \$1744, and the actual amount after taxes was \$1126.
 - **GMC is currently undergoing a special examination by the Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA). We understand this is a routine audit for new legislators to better understand how GMC operates.**

- **The Special Examination objectives were codified for us in November to determine:**
 - **What are the various funding streams of GMC?**
 - **What is the Governance structure of GMC as it relates to public resources?**
 - **What options exist for modernizing the state's obligations and oversight of GMC?**

We welcome this audit as an opportunity to solidify language in a document for lawmakers to reference to better understand our unique institution.

- **To state that this audit was caused by a misappropriation of funds is completely false. As a State entity, GMC undergoes a financial audit, and many other annual audits, each fiscal year.**
- **GMC can confirm in a May faculty meeting a question was asked about the \$2,000 stipend and whether or not it applied to the faculty. A representative at the meeting stated, "it probably did not." At the time, the Resource Management office had been working to determine how, what, and who the money applied to and in what form (bonus, stipend, supplement, or base salary adjustment).**
- **This was corrected the next day and communicated to the Prep School. Upon publication of the Proposed AFY2022 Budget, GMC determined there was not enough funding to pay each teacher the \$2,000 salary supplement. During various House and Senate Appropriation meetings, GMC requested additional State funding to fulfill the whole \$2,000 per teacher pledge. However, when approved, the Amended Fiscal Year 2022 budget only allocated enough funds to pay \$1,744 per eligible GMC employee. GMC paid out 100% of the State funding allocated to the Salary Supplement to those eligible employees. No bonus funding from that state allocation was given to GMC Institutional staff, nor to Junior College employees or faculty. In order to provide the largest stipend possible to our full-time staff/faculty, four administrators opted out of the bonus and those funds were reportioned across all eligible positions.**
- **In meetings, William B. Caldwell has repeatedly been heard to speak about events happening at the institution and how it will affect his legacy. The wording is often "How will this affect MY legacy" instead of remaining focused on the goal shared by the faculty of this institution: educating students and elevating their character. The perception is that his focus is firmly on himself rather than on the good of the institution.**
 - **The President routinely asks, "How will this decision or event affect the future leaders of GMC?" The President is a forward thinker who always makes a conscious effort to ensure that the decisions he makes now will benefit the**

institution and make it a better place long after he has retired. It is the legacy of GMC that the President is always concerned with, not the legacy of himself or one individual.

- **Anyone who knows the President at all is aware that his top priority at GMC is the students. He loves to interact with students from Kindergarten to Junior College every chance he gets, and he takes a personal interest in every one of them. When he talks with the students, he does many times challenge them to think critically about the legacy they and their class will leave for GMC.**

3. Expansion of prep school without legislative approval:

- Although we have not been briefed and were only recently informed by our Principal via email on January 25th at 2:24 p.m. about the special audit, it is logical to assume that the unauthorized expansion of grades K-3 is the action that led to the scrutiny by the Department of Audits and Accounts /House Appropriations Committee of the Georgia legislature, thus bringing about the audit that may spell disaster for GMC. This topic is obviously very important to the faculty and staff of GMC Prep, especially in light of the future employment of staff and faculty.
 - **GMC Prep School is fully recognized by the state of Georgia as a K-12 institution and is fully funded as such. The expansion of the Prep School is not associated with the special examination by DOAA. Plans to expand the Prep School were submitted as part of the annual submission of our strategic initiatives to the State and communicated to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB). We did learn during this process that the legislative offices are not always informed of what is submitted to OPB, and this did cause confusion during the legislative session. We addressed those concerns adequately and have since made it standard operating procedure to inform all offices of any initiatives that have an impact on that state budget.**

4. Lack of transparency and trust:

- Meetings to discuss the state of the school are rare, never include our most important stakeholders the parents, and issues that do not present the current administration in the best light (e.g., audit by the state, lack of completion of the Fine Arts building, lack of progress on the Academic Center of Excellence, vastly decreased enrollment in the Junior College) are omitted entirely. When uncomfortable briefings are held (such as the meeting held at 3:15 p.m. on January 31st following the sudden termination of principal Greer), questions are not allowed by LTG Caldwell.
 - **Every senior leader participates in a weekly leadership meeting where all of these items, and more, are discussed. The intent of these meetings is to coordinate and inform with the direct guidance and expectation of the**

President for senior leaders to then ensure that their faculty and staff are informed as well and, in doing so, that each leader aligns their team with the spirit of GMC.

- **We do agree that communication and coordination from the Prep School to the parents has not been as effective as it should have been. It is the expectation of the President that the Principal of the Prep School carries the responsibility for holding and maintaining these communication channels.**
- **It has become apparent to us that information on topics above, such as Junior College enrollments and construction projects, were not well-communicated in the Prep School. Most other areas of the institution feel as if they are updated since their department head keep regular communication disseminated from such departments as College Enrollment Management, Junior College Academic Affairs, Information Technology, and Engineering. We have taken steps to rectify this lack of information, such as having information sessions directly with Prep School faculty and staff.**
- **President Caldwell maintains an open-door policy and regularly meets with all stakeholders at their request. He welcomes questions. However, such as the information-sharing meeting on 1/31, these meetings are at times held without questions, especially when the meeting relates to personnel matters.**
- **At our most recent institutional assembly on Wednesday, January 25th at 3:30 p.m., at the end of the presentations, the President did not open the floor for questions but simply dismissed the faculty and staff and referred all questions to the Director of Communications.**
- **Our desire is for every member of the GMC Family to feel as if they are an important, integral member of the family, and should they have questions or concerns, these are addressed in a satisfactory manner.**
- **At the recent institute-wide Faculty and Staff Meeting, President Caldwell ended the meeting by saying he wanted to answer everyone's questions and that they should email them to the institution's Director of Communications. The reason a Q&A was not held directly after the meeting was that the President wanted to allow everyone to have an early release and not be required to stay for questions that did not apply to them. Additionally, faculty and staff from our satellite locations were watching a live stream of this meeting and were unable to submit questions because it did not offer a chat option. We made the decision to treat all employees equally to ensure that those attending in person were not given a forum not afforded to the rest of the institution. In an effort for fairness and transparency, alternate mechanisms for questions were communicated.**

- To date, the Director of Communications received one question in relation to the Preparatory School that was answered quickly.
- This week the President and members of the Senior Team began a series of after-school meetings with the Prep School Faculty to address any questions and concerns they have involving the organization and operation of the Prep School, Junior College, and Institution as it has become apparent that information communicated to the Prep School was not being adequately addressed by Prep School leadership. These meetings will continue as long as the faculty want them to continue until all questions are answered.
- The position of Assistant Superintendent was suddenly created in the Spring of 2021 without the Board of Trustees' approval (not found in board minutes), and was not announced or posted for other qualified applicants.
 - The position of Assistant Superintendent was created to support the growth of the Preparatory School, as we brought on the faculty and staff for the K-5 program. The position is also responsible for training, onboarding, and inculcating GMC culture for all new hires. Since GMC is so unique in its culture, this was an essential position to ensure the continuity of our great atmosphere. This position handles NewDay USA admissions, interviews and scholarship awards.
 - The creation and personnel selection for the Assistant Superintendent followed the GMC hiring policy 1.14. The Principal was a single incumbent job (one person held the position of Principal); therefore, this person was eligible for promotion into the position without advertisement. Positions created for staff and faculty do not require Board approval, as that authority is delegated to the President.
- In addition, the Prep School Superintendent position was invented without discussion with faculty and staff, and solely for the purpose of receiving state funds to help cover a portion of the President's salary. Since 1879, our institution had never installed a superintendent and the need for such a position is baffling.
 - The President assumed the title of Superintendent as a “dual-hat” in his already existing role as the President of the College. Upon learning more about the school’s funding formula from OPB for the Preparatory School, it was discovered that three existing positions already functioning in the Prep School had never been listed on a roster for the school’s reimbursement allocation. These positions were superintendent, school nurse, and resource officer. After this discovery, all existing positions that already functioned at the school were added to the list for reimbursement. This resulted in increased funding allocations to support the Prep School. This did not result in an increase in

salary for any of the listed positions, merely an increased reimbursement for these existing positions from the State. The effort to investigate the funding formula more thoroughly directly infused financial support to the operations of the Prep School.

- There is overall concern among the faculty regarding the relationship between the institution and NewDay USA. Since Caldwell brought them to GMC, their organization has had increasing influence and control over areas of the institution. For one example, the Prep School Center for Education of the Arts had to undergo a name change to the NewDay USA Center for Leadership, and a building originally intended solely for student use has become at least partially a center focused on the initiatives of NewDay USA.
 - **NewDay USA proudly supports 12 military schools across the United States, including GMC Prep School. Through their association with GMC Prep, they have come to believe that our school is the finest military prep school in the country. Over the past seven years, NewDay USA has provided nearly \$2 million dollars in scholarships for students in our Prep School. They have been equally generous in supporting the Center for Leadership, which will offer a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to bringing in world-class leadership speakers and performing arts for the benefit of our students and community.**
 - **We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of the NewDay USA family for the lives they are changing in our community.**

5. Fear of retaliation:

- When berating administration in a meeting about an error that had occurred with the roster for a sporting event, Caldwell declared, "I'm so powerful it's scary!" after threatening to fire the employees with whom he was speaking. He actually said, "If I want to fire someone, I just turn to Jill Robbins and say 'Make it happen!'" There were six employees present for these statements.
 - **Three Senior Leaders that attended the meeting recall this conversation. An error was made when a coach submitted to GHSA the roster of eligible participants for the State competition. It was devastating for all involved, the student, parent, coach, and other staff and faculty. The President called a meeting to convene those involved who could help prevent this from happening again. It was an emotional meeting in which the President stated he was not going to fire anyone over the incident. For context, he stated he said he wasn't firing anyone and then stated that if he wanted to fire someone, he was capable, and he would ask Jill Robbins to make it happen. The quote listed in this letter is out of context and implies the President was exerting his power when in contrast, he was not asserting his power to fire someone.**

- There is a pervasive air throughout the institution that questions are not welcome, and that pushback could result in retaliation and even termination. For that reason, most faculty are extremely reluctant to sign their actual names to this document, and will instead sign "Anonymous Teacher" in an attempt to protect their employment. Several teachers are so concerned that even that precaution was not enough; however, they have provided their verbal support.
 - **No employee at GMC is ever removed for having an opinion or asking questions. The President has always welcomed opinions and input and factors them into the decisions he makes. GMC adheres to a no-retaliation policy and follows the policies and procedures in regard to discipline and standards of conduct.**

Based on the above concerns, we are requesting a meeting with the entire GMC Board of Trustees in an off-campus location and without the presence of administration to discuss the future of our beloved institution. It is our carefully considered opinion that Georgia Military College Board of Trustees should ask for the immediate resignation of William B. Caldwell, IV. We have no confidence in his leadership.