

## **News Release March 3, 2011**

### **Trustees Vote To Place Burnham on Administrative Leave Without Pay, Hire Dr. William M. Toms as Acting President, Engage Outside Auditor to Investigate President's Office Expenditures, and Implement Additional Travel Restrictions and Controls on President's Expense Account**

The Brookdale Community College Board of Trustees voted this morning to place President Peter Burnham on unpaid administrative leave, and hired as Acting President Dr. William M. Toms, who retired in 2008 from the New Jersey State Police after 25 years of distinguished service.

The Board also voted to retain an independent auditor to conduct a full-scale audit of the President's Office and to adopt additional restrictions on travel and controls on expenses incurred by the College President.

The Board took these actions as a direct result of information discovered during a financial review aimed at further reducing Brookdale's budget. That review revealed significant expenses and reimbursements associated with the President's Office budget that may not be directly connected to Brookdale or are contrary to Brookdale's adopted policies governing travel, mileage, and other reimbursable expenses.

Supplee, Clooney & Company, a professional accounting and auditing firm that specializes in public agencies including schools, was retained to investigate all expenditures made from the President's Office budget including all expenses and reimbursements made by that office. Supplee, Clooney was directed to complete their work and issue a report to the Board by the end of the month and will be paid an amount not to exceed \$12,500. Peter Burnham was placed on administrative leave without pay pending the results of the auditor's findings.

"We are conducting a comprehensive audit of the President's Office and will release to the public the findings as soon as we can. This is a public institution and everyone from our Freeholders to our faculty to our taxpayers deserve answers," said Howard Birdsall, Chairman of Brookdale's Board of Trustees.

"Our highest obligation is to the truth and Dr. Toms is going to lead a very open and transparent process that gets us the answers we need. If something happened that shouldn't have happened, we want to know what it was, how it happened, and how to prevent it from happening again. Dr. Toms has built an outstanding record of achievement during his career and has the perfect skill set to lead Brookdale through the challenges we face," said Birdsall.

Dr. Toms received his Doctorate in Human Resource Development from The George Washington University and earned a Masters in Educational Administration and Supervision from Seton Hall University. He held various positions with the State Police including Deputy Superintendent of Investigations, Commanding Officer of the Intelligence Section at the rank of Major, and Executive Officer of the Office of Professional Standards. He is a certified fraud examiner.

Dr. Toms will begin serving as Acting President effective Monday, March 7, 2011 and will be paid a weekly salary based on an annual total salary of \$150,000. He was directed by the Board to begin an immediate review of all policies, procedures and controls currently in place and to work with the Supplee, Clooney auditors to recommend changes that ensure Brookdale meets the high standards of governance required of a public institution. Dr. Toms will also recommend to the Board steps necessary to make sure that any improved policies, procedures, and practices are implemented correctly and monitored for on-going compliance.

"The Board of Trustees sets the goals, objectives, and policies for Brookdale. The administration's job is to develop and execute programs and procedures that achieve them. We didn't have a reason to doubt that we were following best practices and procedures until now. In hindsight, we could have been more vigilant

in that area and forced ourselves as a Board to more regularly and routinely review our policies and the procedures developed by the administrators in response,” Birdsall continued.

“I want people to know that we understand that it shouldn’t have come to this and these changes reflect our commitment to making certain Brookdale is never again in this situation. During our long history, Brookdale has developed a reputation for excellence and has become the number one degree-granting community college in New Jersey. The steps we’re taking today will enhance Brookdale’s reputation and will serve well the interests of students, faculty, and taxpayers alike,” Birdsall concluded.

The Board also adopted additional fiscal controls to enhance accountability and increase oversight including requiring all overnight travel, including that of the President, to receive the prior approval of the Executive Board and requiring the President to file with Executive Committee for approval a monthly expense report detailing the date, location, business reason, type and amount of the expense incurred.