

Robin Myers returns as ASU system interim president

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The Arkansas State University (ASU) System Board of Trustees named Robin Myers to return as interim president.

Myers, who previously served as ASU system interim president in 2024, was again named to the position on Dec. 12, 2025, following the previous president's resignation. He said he was honored to return.

Jeff Hankins, ASU system vice president for strategic communications and economic development, said the chancellors and system staff were relieved by Myers' second appointment. He said they are confident he was the best individual to step back into the interim president role.

"Dr. Myers is a calm, steady force who's very experienced," Hankins said.

In his role, Myers said he is responsible for enacting board policies and overseeing the operation of the system office as it interacts with each campus under the ASU system.

The ASU system oversees the educational, cultural and economic development of six campuses across Arkansas (Arkansas State University, Henderson State, ASU-Beebe, ASU-Newport, ASU-Mountain Home, ASU Mid-South and ASU Three Rivers) and several other satellite institutions.

Regardless which campus

they belong to, Myers said, students should know the ASU system works on their behalf to support and assist them.

"There is a group of people working on their behalf and I think that's important to understand for students," Myers said. "Unfortunately, because we are remote from the campuses, it is hard to have that interaction with students."

Despite this limited contact, Myers said over 30 years of interactions with students in various educational positions gave him the experience needed to succeed as interim president.

Myers served as chancellor of ASU-Mountain Home for 11 years from 2012 to 2023, where he said he learned how students integrate and work together with campus operations.

"I think those are the things, just having that exposure and experience over the years, that provide me with a good background to understand what our campuses are going through on a day-to-day basis and the kinds of support and conversations that they need from me," Myers said.

As a child, Myers said he worked closely with his dad's business, gaining experiences and opportunities that shaped his current skill set.

The interim president said his greatest strength is his ability to listen to people and understand their perspective. He said he is not quick to judge

or make decisions, but instead exhausts all information on a topic before moving forward.

However, Myers said his methodical nature is sometimes a weakness.

"I try to maybe do too much or get too involved sometimes, just because I want to help and assist," Myers said. "Maybe I should take a step back occasionally."

Jerry Morgan, ASU system

board of trustees chair, said the board named Myers because of his previous experience as interim president and comprehension of system priorities.

Hankins said the board of trustees turning to Myers again is a significant compliment. He said he does not recall any particular challenges from Myers' first appointment as interim president.

"If anything, we came

away disappointed that he couldn't have stayed on as president," Hankins said.

The interim president said it's too soon to tell if his current appointment will be different or similar to his first, although the circumstances are similar.

Myers was first named interim president in 2023, following the resignation of the second system president, Chuck Welch.

In 2024, Myers stepped down after the board completed its search for a permanent system president, naming Brendan Kelly to fill the position. However, Kelly resigned in early December 2025 upon being offered to serve as president of Eastern Michigan University, his alma mater.

Myers said he enjoyed his time working with Kelly through both transitions.

"Just an exceptional person, incredible skills and ability," Myers said. "To be able to go back to his hometown and the school in which he graduated and be the president of that, no one can blame him."

Hankins said the board of trustees held a special meeting to accept Kelly's resignation. Soon after, at the next scheduled meeting, the board named Myers to be interim president.

Myers said the timing of the transition required him to pivot quickly.

"In addition to trying to transition and get an apartment and get moved to Little Rock,

I had to also try to celebrate the holidays with my family," Myers said. "It was a challenge, but it was also exciting and it worked out perfectly."

In a statement published after Kelly's resignation, A-State Chancellor Todd Shields said continuity of purpose is vital during system president transitions.

"As the trustees identify a new system president, our job is to stay the course and stick to the vital mission of educating tomorrow's leaders and bridging our four-year and two-year colleges, industry and workforce needs for the ultimate good of Northeast Arkansas and the entire state," Shields said.

Myers said he wants to be remembered as someone who cared about people, supported students and worked on behalf of everyone to find the best solutions for every issue presented to him.

"In the end, everything we do is focused on providing the best educational experience and opportunities we can for our students," Myers said. "It is both an honor and a privilege to get to work with these folks."

Myers will serve as interim president until the board of trustees completes its search for someone to fill the position in a long-term capacity. The board will meet again Feb. 13 to outline next steps in the search for an ASU system president.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASU SYSTEM

Photo of Robin Myers, the interim president for the Arkansas State University System. Myers was previously the interim president in 2023 and is returning after Brendan Kelly's resignation in December 2025.

PROTEST, CONTINUED

She said the goal of her posts was to show she is a regular student who followed proper procedure in reporting incidents involving racial discrimination. She said she was not seeking conflict or attention.

The RA on duty at the time of the incident did not respond to requests for comment before publication.

After Isabell released the audio recording between her and the Title IX office, Young Dems began organizing a protest.

Students respond with protest

John Thompson, vice president of Young Dems and a sophomore political science major from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, said he helped organize the event to support Isabell.

"We are here because one of our own, a student at this campus, Isabell, was called one of the oldest and most hateful slurs in American history. She didn't just imagine it. She didn't misunderstand it. She didn't mishear it," Thompson said. "She heard it so clearly that it blasted beyond four walls and into all of our cell phones on every social media platform. That's what people think of this university now, but that is not us; that is not the case."

Thompson said Title IX's response to Dickerson was negligent.

"When she went to that office, she was seeking protection, and

she got nothing," Thompson said. "In fact, she got blamed."

According to the Constitution, the First Amendment states the government can't abridge a person's freedom of speech; however, that doesn't mean one is protected from the consequences of their speech.

However, in his speech at the event, Thompson said the Constitution has amendments protecting harmful acts dating back to the 1800s.

"They say, 'Oh, don't get emotional. It's the First Amendment.' I don't care. Don't tell me that, because they told my ancestors, it's the Fifth Amendment to own you. The 14th Amendment, we're going to segregate you, but it's equal," Thompson said. "It's separate, but it's equal. We know the lies. We know the manipulation that you play in your head, trying to justify what happened because you're too scared to stand up to this."

Izzie Stanton, Young Dems president and first-year nursing major from Jonesboro, followed Thompson's speech. She said the protest's turnout is significant.

Attendance grew as the protest continued, with more students and faculty joining the crowd with signs and support.

"It shows that this community cares, that we support one another, and that we believe our campus should be a place where everyone feels respected

and safe. We are not just here to speak. We are here because we're asking for action," Stanton said.

The protest was widely covered by various Arkansas media organizations, including Jonesboro Right Now, K8, Democrat-Gazette and The Jonesboro Sun.

Chauncy Betts, a junior strategic communications major from McGehee, Arkansas, said he's glad the crowd continued to grow.

"I'm glad the faculty and staff members showed their faces like that, and showed that they do support our actions and what the protest is all about," Betts said. "I'm proud of John. He's a mentee of mine. He's a wonderful student leader, and I'm proud of him for what he did today."

The Young Dems president read a list of demands aimed at the A-State administration.

The demands include the university publicly acknowledging the alleged racist remarks, starting an independent investigation into the situation and changing the student handbook to reflect clear expectations that protect students.

"We understand these requests may be complex," Stanton said. "But we are asking that they be met with seriousness and respect. We're asking to be heard. We're asking for meaningful action that reflects the value this community claims to stand for," Stanton said.

A segment of the protest allowed students and faculty to approach the microphone to share their thoughts and opinions on the situation.

Asia Simmons, a senior social work major from Jacksonville, Arkansas, said they were gathered on the lawn not to embarrass, humiliate or degrade A-State or the administration, but to express their feelings toward how the institution handled the incident.

"It took three days for recognition, three days for your student body to lose trust, hope that the school that they chose to support their dreams of breaking generational curses, tossing societal barriers and loosening the grip of self doubt would not take three minutes to inform the student body, to apologize and to truly show that this behavior has no place at Arkansas State," Simmons said. Amouria Maufas, a sophomore data analytics major from West Memphis, Arkansas, said she urged everyone who felt the weight of the hateful events to speak out.

"There is power in presence. Keep going to class, keep turning in your work. Do not leave this campus without the degree you worked for. And never stop advocating for yourselves, keep speaking your truths," Maufas said.

Tiffany Chaney, Dickerson's roommate, also spoke at the protest. Chaney, a sophomore

wildlife conservation major from Vilonia, Arkansas, said Dickerson is one of the kindest people she's ever met and did not deserve what happened to her.

"She showed me the video and the phone call before it was ever published, and I'm the one who told her to go to Title IX," Chaney said. "We had a pipe burst and we had to move out, and she was rightfully frustrated, and she got discriminated against because of that."

Faculty also spoke at the protest.

Lucy Barnhouse, assistant professor of history, said she was proud to have members of the crowd in her classroom.

"As a history professor, I love hearing all of you talk about the importance of history and the richness of history and your power to act and change history," Barnhouse said.

Shamal Carter, who is running for District 36 in the Arkansas House of Representatives, gave the closing remarks.

"Standing up against racism does not require hate in return. It requires courage, discipline and a commitment to justice. It requires choosing peace when provoked and choosing integrity when tested. Change doesn't happen overnight," Carter said. "I'm standing here before you as an alumni, as a leader in this community, to tell you that we've come a long way, yet we have a long way to go. As students, as Greek

organizations, as school clubs, understand the importance of you being here today."

Administration responds with emails

While Shields and other members of the administration didn't show up for the protest, both A-State and the ASU System Office sent out a second statement that day.

"The Arkansas State University System takes allegations of racism and discrimination seriously across all its campuses," the ASU System Office statement read. "The responsibility for conducting Title IX and institutional integrity investigations rests with the ASU System Office, not with individual campus leadership."

The Arkansas State University statement said hate speech and discrimination are not aligned with the values of campus and have no place at A-State.

"When students do not feel safe, supported, or feel that they do not belong, they cannot be expected to learn, trust or thrive," the statement read. "The university remains committed to fostering a campus community where every individual is respected, supported, heard, and we continue to work intentionally to uphold these standards."

Jerry Don Burton | Editor-in-Chief, contributed to this report