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By Theresa Defino

◆ While expressing their “great disappointment,” the University of Michigan (U-M) Board of Regents on Jan. 16 announced the immediate removal of Mark Schlissel as president and the appointment of Mary Sue Coleman as interim president. Schlissel “may have been involved in an inappropriate relationship with a University employee,” the board said in a statement posted on its website. “After an investigation, we learned that Dr. Schlissel, over a period of years, used his University email account to communicate with that subordinate in a manner inconsistent with the dignity and reputation of the University.” The regents’ actions were swift: U-M officials said they received an anonymous tip about the relationship on Dec. 8.

In their Jan. 15 termination letter to Schlissel, board members called his behavior “particularly egregious considering [his] ... involvement in addressing incidents of harassment” by U-M employees and his “declared commitment to work to ‘free’ the University community of sexual harassment.” The board posted 188 pages of detailed text messages, emails and other correspondence between Schlissel and the unidentified subordinate, which date from September 2019 to December 2021. They show the two planning to meet and coordinating travel, as well their takeout orders for Indian food and pizza. Coleman, who retired as U-M president in 2014 after serving 12 years, said in a post to the U-M community that she “accepted the interim appointment because of my love and respect for this institution.” Coleman also offered her “deep appreciation to all of you during a difficult time for U-M. I know some will feel a sense of loss. What we can do now is to renew our commitment to learning together, as well as to doing research and public service as a collectivity.” A search for a new president is underway. (1/20/22)

◆ Dr. Robert Califf’s bid to be commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the second time has advanced to the floor of the Senate, but a vote has not yet been scheduled. On Jan. 13, Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., announced that the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, which she chairs, had voted 13 to eight to forward the nomination to the full Senate. The subject of a HELP Committee hearing on Dec. 14, Califf was nominated by President Biden in November. Califf previously served as commissioner for 10 months in 2016, the final full year of the Obama administration.

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