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Tuskegee University names first female president in 136-year history

The Tuskegee University Board of Trustees has voted unanimously to name Dr. Lily D. McNair as its next president. McNair will be just the eighth president in the university's 136-year history and is the first woman to hold the position.

The new president, who is currently the provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Wagner College in New York City, will start on July 1. Her former boss, Wagner College President Richard Guarasci congratulated her on the new job, "as well as for the intelligence, professionalism and grace that she has maintained throughout her seven years as provost."

"I am honored and humbled to be selected to serve as the eighth president of Tuskegee University," she said. "The historic contributions of the university's students, faculty and alumni are well known and valued throughout the nation. I very much look forward to building on the legacy of my predecessors so that Tuskegee University will ascend to even greater heights in the years to come."

"When we launched our presidential search last October, our goal was to identify someone who could champion both Tuskegee's historic legacy and her place in the future of higher education," said John E. Page, chair of Tuskegee's Board of Trustees. "Our Board of Trustees is confident that Dr. McNair brings to Tuskegee the precise skill set required to ensure we continue thriving as one of the nation's leading HBCUs."

Since 2011, the New Jersey native had been the second-ranking executive of Wagner College, a private college of about 2,200 students on Staten Island. She holds an undergraduate degree in psychology from Princeton University, and master's and doctoral degrees in psychology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

A clinical psychologist by training, Dr. McNair's higher education career includes other academic, research and executive appointments at Spelman College, University of Georgia, the State University of New York at New Paltz, and Vassar College.

McNair beat out Dr. Jack Thomas for the position.

The naming of McNair brings to an end a presidential search that lasted six months and evaluated more than 150 possible candidates.