



University of Missouri System

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Steve Owens biography

Steve Owens (born 1955) is general counsel for the University of Missouri System. He served as interim president of the system from January 9, 2011, until February 15, 2012.

Owens was born in Kansas City, Mo., and attended Glendale High School in Springfield, Mo., where he was student body president. He was the third generation of his family to attend the University of Missouri. While at MU, he was a member of the varsity tennis team and tapped into honor societies QEBH and Omicron Delta Kappa.

After graduating from MU in 1977 with a BS in Public Administration, Owens attended Wake Forest University School of Law. He received his JD in 1980 and then clerked for the Honorable William Robert Collinson, United States Judge for the Western District of Missouri.

In 1981, Owens joined the Kansas City law firm Stinson, Mag and Fizzell (now Stinson Morrison Hecker). While at the law firm, he was named partner; served on the firm's board of directors and its executive committee; and chaired the firm's litigation department and its complex litigation and class action division. He has been selected for "The Best Lawyers in America" and "The Kansas and Missouri Super Lawyers" peer listings and he has Martindale Hubble's highest ratings (AV) for competence and ethics.

As part of his private practice, Owens and his law partner Robert Lattinville launched a sports law group that grew to include Norm Stewart, Rick Majerus, Cheryl Burnett, Jackie Stiles and others as clients. Owens and Lattinville were designated "Preferred Counsel" by the Women Basketball Coaches Association.

In January 2008, Owens became general counsel for the UM System. When University President Gary Forsee unexpectedly announced his resignation, he became interim president of the university in January 2011. During this period, he worked closely with other university general officers including chancellors on the four campuses to continue pursuing strategic priorities and initiatives of the university emphasizing the preservation and promotion of quality and excellence in institutional core mission.

During his time as interim president, the university faced an 8% reduction in state support and a projected \$42 million revenue shortfall, but balanced its \$2.7 billion budget and provided faculty and staff with their first pay raise in three years. Also during his tenure, the university's 50-year-old pension plan was reformed; student enrollment and academic credentials of incoming students grew; the university's ethics hotline was expanded; a rule reiterating academic freedom for faculty and protection of student classroom discussion was promulgated; and a search was launched that led to the hiring of Dr. Cheryl Schrader as the first female chancellor of Missouri University of Science and Technology.

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Among the events that occurred under his watch as president was the decision in 2011 for the university system's flagship school, the University of Missouri–Columbia, to move from the Big 12 Conference (which has had a relationship from its predecessor in 1907) to the Southeastern Conference.