



USC Steals Wharton Dean To Head Marshall School Without A Full Search

BY: JOHN A. BYRNE ON JUNE 11, 2019



Wharton Dean Geoffrey Garrett

In a highly unusual move, the dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School has agreed to accept the deanship at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business.

Geoffrey Garrett, who has been dean of Wharton for just under five years, will stay at Wharton for one more year before assuming the job in

July of 2020. His appointment is likely to fuel even more controversy at the school because it occurred without a thorough search for a new leader of the Marshall School. Gareth James, a Marshall professor for more than two decades, will serve as interim dean beginning July 1 and lasting until Garrett's arrival the following year.

Garrett will succeed the highly popular Jim Ellis, who departs the job at the end of this month, forced out by interim USC President Wanda Austin and Provost Michael Quick for undisclosed reasons. The Los Angeles Times, citing unnamed sources, attributed the decision to cut short Ellis' third consecutive five-year term as dean to mishandled gender and racial bias com-



USC Marshall Dean James G. Ellis

plaints at the school, a claim that Ellis has vigorously denied.

GARRETT WAS HIRED WITHOUT A FULL SEARCH

The decision to oust the dean has led to widespread controversy, campus protests and bad publicity at a university already embroiled in a series of negative news, from its prominence in the most recent college admissions scandal to earlier reports that a long-time gynecologist at

the campus health center had mistreated students for decades. And now the administration's choice in bringing on Garrett will give Ellis' supporters more ammunition to attack the university.

Garrett, sources say, is being hired without a full search for a successor, and Garrett was the only person interviewed by the search committee and a handful of deans from other USC schools. No job posting was ever made or advertised,

nor was a job description finalized. In a brief interview with the Los Angeles Times, Garrett said he had learned about the Marshall school as part of a re-accreditation team this spring and the trip "piqued my interest and curiosity." The Times described him as being "more circumspect" when asked about the search and interview process for the job.

"This was not a search," maintains a source close to the school who spoke on condition of anonymity. "This was a coronation. They hired him in a vacuum. This is all about declaring a victory lap by Austin and Quick as they are going out the door. Does that mean that he is the best fit for the Marshall School? Absolutely not. You can't know that because he didn't have to compete with other candidates for the job."

A spokesperson for USC disagrees that a thorough search wasn't done. He says the university engaged the search firm of SpencerStuart and the university held "listening sessions for the Marshall community" and "provided a way for the community to contact the search firm and provost directly." Asked if the search committee interviewed more than a single candidate for the job, the spokesman said only "the details of the search are confidential."



USC Interim President Wanda Austin and Provost Michael Quick engineered the ouster of Dean Ellis (Photo courtesy of USC)

PRAISED FOR EXPANDING WHARTON'S GLOBAL PRESENCE IN DATA ANALYTICS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS'

Meantime, Austin and Quick are also surrendering their positions at USC as interim president and provost on exactly the same day that Ellis packs up his office and leaves for the last time on June 30th. Austin is being succeeded by Carol L. Folt, the recently departed chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Little more than two weeks before he leaves as provost,

Quick made the announcement in a memo to faculty, staff, and students at Marshall this morning. Quick described Garrett as “a strong leader who has been guiding Wharton since 2014 as it has expanded its global presence in data analytics, entrepreneurship, behavioral economics and other areas, and he is a highly-cited academic.”

In his memo, Quick thanked the Marshall Faculty Advisory Search Committee for its work during the search process and “for providing Dr. Garrett with a comprehensive understanding of the Marshall School during his interview.”

DISAPPOINTMENT ON TWO COASTS

Ellis' advocates were clearly disappointed in the outcome. “I can well appreciate why Geoff Garrett would want a one-year cooling-off period before coming to Marshall,” says Lloyd Greif, a Marshall alum and donor and a strong supporter of Ellis (see [The MBA Alum Leading The Fight To Save A Business School Dean](#)). “Temperatures are running pretty hot at the school right now. I'm sorry, but the end doesn't justify the means. Whether Geoff Garrett's the best person for the job is not the point. Jim Ellis

did nothing wrong and should still be dean for the next three years. He doesn't deserve the disrespect and mistreatment accorded him by the university."

Meantime, there also was disappointment at Wharton over the announcement. Superstar Wharton Professor Adam Grant called the dean's move "the best news for the state of California in quite some time— and a huge loss for us at Wharton."

In a LinkedIn post, Grant noted that the school's faculty was "pleasantly surprised by your ability to inspire and motivate and your collaborative approach to creating vision and strategy. Over the past 5 years, we've marveled at the way you believe in and elevate the capabilities of everyone around you, the aplomb and cheer with which you challenge conventions and remove obstacles, and the contagious curiosity that you bring to every conversation. You've set an impossibly high standard for academic leadership. I feel lucky to have worked with you and learned from you."

FOURTH B-SCHOOL DEANSHIP IN LESS THAN NINE YEARS

In an announcement put out at 8:35 a.m. PST, University of Pennsylvania President Amy Gutmann and Provost

Wendell Pritchett notified the Wharton community of the surprise news. They said that Garrett had done an "absolutely superb job in leading Wharton for the past five years...In preparation for Geoff's departure from Penn, we will very shortly initiate the process of forming an Ad Hoc Consultative Committee of faculty, students, and alumni to advise us on the selection of the next Dean of the Wharton School. Penn Medicine EVP/Dean J. Larry Jameson has agreed to chair the committee and our expectation is that we will announce a new Dean prior to Geoff's departure. Since Geoff will remain at Wharton through the end of the coming academic year, we will have ample time to celebrate his extraordinary leadership. In the meantime, we hope you will join me in extending warm wishes to Geoff on this new adventure in his life as well as thanks for his many contributions to Wharton's success."

In going to USC's Marshall School, Garrett will be taking on his fourth deanship of a business school in what would be less than nine years (see Wharton's New Job-Hopping Dean). Before Wharton, he had been dean for a year and one-half at the University of New South Wales' Australian School of Business and for a single

year at the University of Sydney's business school. Garrett will be leaving his Wharton deanship one year short of his seven-year term.

At USC, he will assume the reins of a business school that is ranked well below Wharton with far fewer resources (see Wharton's Geoff Garrett: USC Not A Step Down). Wharton's full-time MBA enrollment is nearly four times the size of the Marshall School, roughly 1,700 students versus 450, though the Marshall School boasts a substantially larger undergraduate population, slightly more than 4,000 students to Wharton's 2,500. Currently, Poets&Quants ranks Wharton's full-time MBA in a tie with Harvard Business School. USC's Marshall School, though on an upward trajectory under departing Dean James Ellis, places 22nd in the U.S. and its full-time MBA program fails to make the Top 25 in either Forbes or The Financial Times rankings.

The Australian-born Garrett, however, has had strong ties to California. His wife is from Northern California and Garrett thinks of himself as an "honorary Californian." He lived in the Los Angeles area for eight years. From 2001 to 2005, he was a political science professor at UCLA and

dean of the university's International Institute. He then moved over to USC as a professor of international relations and president of the Pacific Council on International Policy until 2009. Garrett also taught in the political science department at Stanford University from 1988 to 1997. Even though he has been gone from the area for quite some time, he still owns a home in West L.A.

LEAVING WHARTON WITH MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Garrett will bring with him several substantial accomplishments from Wharton. By the time he packs his bags for California, he will have nearly concluded the largest fundraising effort at Wharton in history, raising almost \$1 billion in a capital campaign. Begun a year before his arrival in July of 2014, the campaign's official conclusion is in 2021. As of today, the campaign has racked up pledges of \$787.2 million, including the largest single gift—\$50 million—ever given to Wharton.

Those funds will have a lasting impact on the school. Among other things, construction is now under way on a new building on the south side of Steinberg Hall—Dietrich Hall that will provide learning and teaching spaces, house the Wharton Statis-

tics Department, and become a campus hub for analytics. At the corner of 40th and Sansom streets, a new building will be devoted to Penn student entrepreneurs. Wharton's Vance Hall will undergo a major renovation, returning the building to the academic core of the school, and the re-named Lauder Institute building also will be refurbished.

No less crucial, Garrett also has been highly successful in the MBA rankings game. The year before his arrival, Wharton's full-time MBA program was ranked fourth in the U.S., behind Harvard, Stanford and Chicago Booth. In fact, Chicago had ranked ahead of Wharton for the fourth time in a row on Poets&Quants' annual composite list. Wharton also was the only Top 10 school that saw a decline in applications for the Class of 2015. After claiming first place for the first time in Poets&Quants' annual MBA ranking in 2017, Wharton last year found itself in a dead tie for top honors with Harvard Business School.

LITTLE RANKINGS UPSIDE FOR GARRETT AT USC MARSHALL

At USC, however, Garrett will face an unusual challenge. He is going to a school in turmoil, racked by bureaucratic and political upheaval. He will succeed a highly popular

dean whose third consecutive five-year term was cut short by three years because of his termination. Dean Ellis is being forced out of his deanship by an interim president and a provost who have since both lost their jobs. His dismissal, backed by Board of Trustees Chair Rick Caruso, is largely viewed as unfair and a form of politically correct discrimination against an older, white male in his early 70s.

The vast majority of the school's faculty and staff, along with its students and most supportive alumni, are united in anger over the departing dean. Austin, Quick and Caruso have been heavily criticized for their lack of transparency and failure to consult with faculty. Students have marched on campus in protest. The faculty is enraged. Many donors are cancelling or rethinking tens of millions of dollars of pledges to the school. Nearly 4,200 people have signed a petition in support of Ellis, and hundreds more have sent letters, emails and phone calls to the university's board of trustees opposing the university's decision.

RESENTMENT OVER THE UNIVERSITY'S TREATMENT OF DEAN ELLIS IS DEEP

Austin has never publicly disclosed the reason for the ter-

mination, only that the decision was made “after careful deliberation,” according to an email sent to alumni. “Because this is a personnel matter, we are limited in what we can share about this decision,” she added. Caruso, in an interview with the Los Angeles Times, said that Ellis’ firing “is part of where the university is today in terms of acknowledging a proper culture that needs to be embraced and practiced on campus.” Ellis has told faculty and staff that he has done nothing inappropriate.

Resentment over Ellis’ treatment is deep and it will be a major challenge for Garrett to win back support for the school. It will also be much harder for Garrett to further improve on Marshall’s already high rankings under Ellis. Last year, the biggest single gain in the top 25 programs belonged to Marshall, which advanced four places to rank 22th, its highest placing ever. Only two years earlier, Marshall’s full-time MBA program ranked 36th.

In his memo, Quick thanked Ellis “for his strong dedication to USC Marshall. Under his leadership, the School made great academic strides and gained international recognition. We look forward to Dr. Garrett further fueling your passion, and for the Marshall community to take advantage

of – and create – extraordinary opportunities in the ever-changing business climate of the 21st century. Under his leadership, along with Dr. James and, with your support, the USC Marshall School of Business will continue to be an engine for innovation and a model of global economic leadership.”

PENN PRESIDENT & PROVOST HEAP MORE PRAISE ON GARRETT

Over at Penn, the president and provost were equally upbeat in describing Garrett’s accomplishments as Wharton dean. “Geoff has expanded the Wharton standing faculty to more than 240 members and increased its breadth, depth, diversity, and eminence,” wrote Gutmann and Pritchett in their memo. “This has enabled the school to reinforce its leadership in its traditional areas of strength while also emerging as a global force in data analytics, entrepreneurship, fintech, behavioral economics, and other fields that are defining the future of business. Innovative programs such as the Penn Wharton Budget Model, Behavior Change for Good, the Stevens Center for Innovation in Finance, the Harris Alternative Investments Program and the Analytics Initiative are helping Wharton do pioneering work in novel ways, reach more communi-

ties, and have more global impact than ever before. Wharton’s volunteer leadership and alumni are engaged as never before, and their unprecedented support has fueled the School’s continued ascent. We are committed to sustaining Wharton’s extraordinary momentum of the past five years throughout our Power of Penn campaign and far into the future.

“The student body is more accomplished, diverse, and better supported than at any point in Wharton’s storied history. A revamped undergraduate curriculum has brought a renewed school-wide focus on experiential learning and teaching excellence. Dual-degree programs and cross-school partnerships have expanded in high-priority areas including global business and society, healthcare leadership, management and delivery, integrated product design, business and law, and data science and information technology. Online education has grown exponentially with online preparation classes for incoming MBA first-year students, online specializations for business professionals in fields from leadership and management to business analytics and fintech, and hundreds of thousands of digital learners from around the world have accessed Wharton MOOCs.”