STATEMENT BY W. PATRICK RAGSDALE, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Media Contact: OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240
For Immediate Release: May 24, 1989
Print PDF

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has reached an agreement with Dr. Gerald Gipp, President of Haskell Indian Junior College which resolves the BIA inquiry into allegations against Dr. Gipp.

As deciding official in this matter, I have spent many hours over the past six weeks reviewing all the evidence and Dr. Gipp's written response concerning the charges that were raised against him. Many rumors and insinuations were noted in an earlier investigation and have continued to surround this matter. Only four charges, however, were cited against Dr. Gipp in the January 19, 1989, proposed notice of adverse action. These four charges and the issues raised by those charges have been thoroughly reviewed by me.

Of the four charges presented to me, the issues surrounding the special summer session in 1987 and the employment of Dr. Gipp's daughter caused me the greatest concern because of the potential for the appearance of impropriety or conflict of interest by the chief official of the school. In reaching my decision to finally settle this matter, I considered many factors, including Dr. Gipp's response to the charges against him. In his response, Dr. Gipp acknowledged that he could have done some things differently to avoid any possible appearance of favoritism. I agree. Based on my review of the record, however, there was not sufficient evidence for me to conclude that Dr. Gipp took any actions, or did not take any action, with bad faith or improper motivation.

In his response to the proposed notice, Dr. Gipp requested a reassignment to another position, after his reinstatement to Haskell Indian Junior College. It is Dr. Gipp's judgment that approval of this request will allow a new spirit of cooperation to develop at Haskell. I concur with this judgment.

Accordingly, Dr. Gipp is reinstated as President of Haskell Indian Junior College, effective May 29, 1989. Dr. Gipp will be reassigned, sometime within the next 30 days, to duties in the Washington office.

I concur with Dr. Gipp's concern that the focus at Haskell must be educating students. The BIA is committed to working with the administration, faculty, students and supporters of Haskell to achieve its primary mission. Now that this chapter is concluded, everyone can get on about that business.