

# President's message to the Stanford community

Dear Stanford Community,

As you know, last December a Special Committee of the University's Board of Trustees initiated a review of allegations of misconduct related to my scientific research and papers that I authored or coauthored. I have consistently denied any allegations, including those based on anonymous and unsubstantiated sources, that I engaged in fraud or any other unethical conduct related to my research and papers.

## **The Findings on the Issue of Research Misconduct**

Today, after a comprehensive and months-long review process that included input from an independent Scientific Panel, the Special Committee has issued a report detailing its conclusions.

I am gratified that the Panel concluded I did not engage in any fraud or falsification of scientific data. Specifically, the Panel did not find that I engaged in research misconduct regarding the twelve papers reviewed, nor did it find I had knowledge of or was reckless regarding research misconduct in my lab.

As I have emphatically stated, I have never submitted a scientific paper without firmly believing that the data were correct and accurately presented. Today's report supports that statement.

## **Stepping Down as President**

Although the report clearly refutes the allegations of fraud and misconduct that were made against me, for the good of the University, I have made the decision to step down as President effective August 31.

The Panel's report identified some areas where I should have done better, and I accept the report's conclusions. Specifically, the report discusses steps I took to address issues that arose with some publications. I agree that in some instances I should have been more diligent when seeking corrections, and I regret that I was not. The Panel's review also identified instances of manipulation of research data by others in my lab. Although I was unaware of these issues, I want to be clear that I take responsibility for the work of my lab members.

I expect there may be ongoing discussion about the report and its conclusions, at least in the near term, which could lead to debate about my ability to lead the University into the new academic year.

Stanford is greater than any one of us. It needs a president whose leadership is not hampered by such discussions. I therefore concluded that I should step down before the start of classes. This decision is rooted in my respect for the University and its community and my unwavering commitment to doing what I believe is in the best interests of Stanford.

### **Leadership Transition and Ongoing Role as Stanford Faculty Member**

I communicated my decision to the Board of Trustees, and they accepted my view that a leadership transition in time for the start of the next school year is the best course of action. I am confident the Board will appoint a superb leader as the next President of our beloved institution.

While I will be stepping down as President, I will remain on the Stanford faculty and look forward to continuing to conduct my scientific research on brain development and neurodegeneration under the auspices of one of the world's preeminent educational institutions.

### **Assessment and Actions Regarding Research Papers in Question**

In the 32 years I have headed a research laboratory, I have published 74 papers of which I am a principal author, and over 150 of which I am a non-principal author.

Of the twelve papers that were part of the Special Committee's review, seven are ones of which I am a non-principal author and where the images in question were generated in the principal author's lab. With respect to those papers, the Panel's conclusions support that I did not have knowledge of any errors or manipulation of research data.

The remaining five papers are ones of which I am a principal author. In a separate document available on my website, I provide information on the Panel's conclusions and corrective actions I believe it is necessary for me to take with respect to these five papers, but I want to briefly touch on two points.

First, four of the five papers are ones that I have known for some time have issues. While I took steps in the past to address President's message to the Stanford community

Dear Stanford Community,

As you know, last December a Special Committee of the University's Board of Trustees initiated a review of allegations of misconduct related to my scientific research and papers that I authored or coauthored. I have consistently denied any allegations, including those based on anonymous and unsubstantiated sources, that I engaged in fraud or any other unethical conduct related to my research and papers.

The Findings on the Issue of Research Misconduct

Today, after a comprehensive and months-long review process that included input from an independent Scientific Panel, the Special Committee has issued a report detailing its conclusions.

I am gratified that the Panel concluded I did not engage in any fraud or falsification of scientific data. Specifically, the Panel did not find that I engaged in research misconduct regarding the twelve papers reviewed, nor did it find I had knowledge of or was reckless regarding research misconduct in my lab.

As I have emphatically stated, I have never submitted a scientific paper without firmly believing that the data were correct and accurately presented. Today's report supports that statement.

### Stepping Down as President

Although the report clearly refutes the allegations of fraud and misconduct that were made against me, for the good of the University, I have made the decision to step down as President effective August 31.

The Panel's report identified some areas where I should have done better, and I accept the report's conclusions. Specifically, the report discusses steps I took to address issues that arose with some publications. I agree that in some instances I should have been more diligent when seeking corrections, and I regret that I was not. The Panel's review also identified instances of manipulation of research data by others in my lab. Although I was unaware of these issues, I want to be clear that I take responsibility for the work of my lab members.

I expect there may be ongoing discussion about the report and its conclusions, at least in the near term, which could lead to debate about my ability to lead the University into the new academic year.

Stanford is greater than any one of us. It needs a president whose leadership is not hampered by such discussions. I therefore concluded that I should step down before the start of classes. This decision is rooted in my respect for the University and its community and my unwavering commitment to doing what I believe is in the best interests of Stanford.

### Leadership Transition and Ongoing Role as Stanford Faculty Member

I communicated my decision to the Board of Trustees, and they accepted my view that a leadership transition in time for the start of the next school year is the best course of action. I am confident the Board will appoint a superb leader as the next President of our beloved institution.

While I will be stepping down as President, I will remain on the Stanford faculty and look forward to continuing to conduct my scientific research on brain development and neurodegeneration under the auspices of one of the world's preeminent educational institutions.

#### Assessment and Actions Regarding Research Papers in Question

In the 32 years I have headed a research laboratory, I have published 74 papers of which I am a principal author, and over 150 of which I am a non-principal author.

Of the twelve papers that were part of the Special Committee's review, seven are ones of which I am a non-principal author and where the images in question were generated in the principal author's lab. With respect to those papers, the Panel's conclusions support that I did not have knowledge of any errors or manipulation of research data.

The remaining five papers are ones of which I am a principal author. In a separate document available on my website, I provide information on the Panel's conclusions and corrective actions I believe it is necessary for me to take with respect to these five papers, but I want to briefly touch on two points.

First, four of the five papers are ones that I have known for some time have issues. While I took steps in the past to address these issues, I agree with the Panel that in some cases those steps were insufficient.

Second, with respect to three of those four papers, which are more than two decades old, new information from the Special Committee's review has revealed that the person responsible for the issues engaged in manipulation of research data in that trio of papers. Evidence of manipulation of research data by another individual in one figure in a fifth paper published two decades ago has also recently come to light. The Panel concluded I had no knowledge of the data manipulation before any of these papers were published or, indeed, until recently, and that it would not have been reasonable to expect me to have detected it at the time.

With the knowledge I have now, it is clear that the issues with these five papers require me to retract the trio of papers and correct the other two.

These findings have also caused me to further reassess the processes and controls I have in place. While I continually maintain a critical eye on all the science in my lab, I have also always operated my lab on trust – trust in my students and postdocs, and trust that the data they were presenting to me was real and accurate. Going forward, I will be further tightening controls, including, for example, more systematically matching processed images to original raw data, both in the course of each scientific study and especially when bringing a study to publication. I will vigorously apply this and other best practices to ensure that these kinds of problems do not recur.

Thank You

I have been in this role for nearly seven years, and it has been the greatest honor and most fulfilling experience of my career. I will always cherish my time as Stanford's President, and I am proud of what we accomplished together during my tenure.

I am especially proud of our partnership to develop a Long-Range Vision for Stanford as a Purposeful University, focused on education, knowledge, solutions and sustainability, and on supporting a diverse and inclusive community. From this flowed, among other things, the new Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability; a new undergraduate curriculum focused on citizenship; robust expansion of our financial aid programs; creation of impact accelerators for medicine, education, social problems and sustainability; establishment of institutes to help shape the digital future; and foundational support for our scholars in all fields to remain at the cutting edge of their disciplines. The Vision has inspired our broader community, triggering more philanthropic support in the past few years than was raised in our last major campaign. I look forward to seeing how our community continues to pursue excellence in these areas and others in coming years.

There is so much for which I am grateful, and I have many to thank. I first want to thank the Board of Trustees for giving me the extraordinary opportunity to lead Stanford – and for the diligence and professionalism with which the Scientific Panel, the Special Committee, and the Special Committee's outside legal counsel conducted the review. I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Provost Drell

and the entire Stanford leadership team for their partnership and support these last seven years, which have been marked by so many accomplishments. Most of all, I want to thank the entire Stanford community – for your brilliance, dedication, and the wonderful contributions you each have made to this institution as students, professors, staff members, and more. I am confident that Stanford will continue to be a pioneer and a force for good in the world, and I remain eternally grateful and devoted to the institution that we all love.

I look forward to continuing my relationship with all of you and those who become part of the Stanford community in the future.

Marc Tessier-Lavigne

-----

Office Of The President

Institutional News

•

ss these issues, I agree with the Panel that in some cases those steps were insufficient.

Second, with respect to three of those four papers, which are more than two decades old, new information from the Special Committee’s review has revealed that the person responsible for the issues engaged in manipulation of research data in that trio of papers. Evidence of manipulation of research data by another individual in one figure in a fifth paper published two decades ago has also recently come to light. The Panel concluded I had no knowledge of the data manipulation before any of these papers were published or, indeed, until recently, and that it would not have been reasonable to expect me to have detected it at the time.

With the knowledge I have now, it is clear that the issues with these five papers require me to retract the trio of papers and correct the other two.

These findings have also caused me to further reassess the processes and controls I have in place. While I continually maintain a critical eye on all the science in my lab, I have also always operated my lab on trust – trust in my students and postdocs, and trust that the data they were presenting to me was real and accurate. Going forward, I will be further tightening controls, including, for example, more systematically matching processed images to original raw data, both in the course of each scientific study and especially when bringing a study to publication. I will vigorously apply this and other best practices to ensure that these kinds of problems do not recur.

### **Thank You**

I have been in this role for nearly seven years, and it has been the greatest honor and most fulfilling experience of my career. I will always cherish my time as Stanford's President, and I am proud of what we accomplished together during my tenure.

I am especially proud of our partnership to develop a Long-Range Vision for Stanford as a Purposeful University, focused on education, knowledge, solutions and sustainability, and on supporting a diverse and inclusive community. From this flowed, among other things, the new Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability; a new undergraduate curriculum focused on citizenship; robust expansion of our financial aid programs; creation of impact accelerators for medicine, education, social problems and sustainability; establishment of institutes to help shape the digital future; and foundational support for our scholars in all fields to remain at the cutting edge of their disciplines. The Vision has inspired our broader community, triggering more philanthropic support in the past few years than was raised in our last major campaign. I look forward to seeing how our community continues to pursue excellence in these areas and others in coming years.

There is so much for which I am grateful, and I have many to thank. I first want to thank the Board of Trustees for giving me the extraordinary opportunity to lead Stanford – and for the diligence and professionalism with which the Scientific Panel, the Special Committee, and the Special Committee's outside legal counsel conducted the review. I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Provost Drell

and the entire Stanford leadership team for their partnership and support these last seven years, which have been marked by so many accomplishments. Most of all, I want to thank the entire Stanford community – for your brilliance, dedication, and the wonderful contributions you each have made to this institution as students, professors, staff members, and more. I am confident that Stanford will continue to be a pioneer and a force for good in the world, and I remain eternally grateful and devoted to the institution that we all love.

I look forward to continuing my relationship with all of you and those who become part of the Stanford community in the future.

Marc Tessier-Lavigne

---

Office Of The President

Institutional News

-