

TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

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*Board of Regents
Chairman*

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Statement from James M. Benham, Chairman of the Texas Southern University Board of Regents, on the Passing of Secretary Roderick “Rod” Paige

It is with deep sorrow and a profound sense of loss that Texas Southern University acknowledges the passing of Secretary Roderick “Rod” Paige, an extraordinary educator, public servant, and dedicated member of the TSU family. On behalf of the Board of Regents, our administration, our faculty, our alumni, and our students, I extend heartfelt condolences to his wife, former TSU Regent Stephanie D. Nellons-Paige, and to the entire Paige family. Their loss is immeasurable, and it is felt across this university, throughout the City of Houston, and across the nation.

Secretary Paige’s relationship with Texas Southern University spanned decades and encompassed roles that each contributed in significant ways to the strength and identity of this institution. He began his service at TSU as Head Football Coach, instilling in his players the values of discipline, perseverance, and integrity. He later became Athletic Director, where his leadership helped solidify a foundation for athletic programs at TSU that focus on academic balance, competitive spirit, and the holistic development of student-athletes.

This commitment to excellence extended into the classroom and the broader educational mission of TSU. As a faculty member and later as Dean of the College of Education, Secretary Paige worked tirelessly to elevate the preparation of teachers and administrators who would go on to serve in some of the most challenging school districts in the nation. Under his leadership, the College of Education strengthened its academic rigor, expanded its reach, and deepened its connection to the surrounding community. His creation of the Center for Excellence in Urban Education advanced TSU’s role as a leading institution committed to improving outcomes for students in urban environments.


The university honored these contributions by naming the Roderick R. Paige Education Building after him, ensuring that future generations of educators would learn and grow in a space that embodies his values, his vision, and his unwavering dedication to students. For many, the building serves as a daily reminder of Secretary Paige’s enduring impact on TSU and its mission.

Secretary Paige's influence extended far beyond TSU. His leadership on the Houston Independent School District Board of Education, and later as Superintendent of HISD, ushered in a new era of accountability, innovation, and reform. His focus on student outcomes and teacher effectiveness earned national recognition and set a model that other urban districts sought to emulate.

In 2001, the Honorable Rod Paige was appointed to the United States Secretary of Education, becoming the first Superintendent to serve in this role. He brought to the Cabinet a perspective grounded in years of direct engagement with students, teachers, administrators, and communities. His work brought renewed national attention to the need for measurable progress and expanded opportunity for all children.

Throughout his remarkable career, Secretary Paige was guided by a belief that education is the key to unlocking human potential and strengthening communities. He championed the idea that every child deserves a high-quality education, and he dedicated his life to making that vision a reality. His contributions influenced countless educators, policymakers, and students, and his legacy will endure for generations to come.

Today, Texas Southern University mourns the passing of a coach, an athletic director, a dean, and a national leader whose impact can be felt in classrooms and communities across the country. We also celebrate a life well-lived, defined by public service, courageous leadership, and a steadfast dedication to improving the lives of others.



James M. Benham, Chairman
Texas Southern University Board of Regents