

House Resolution 1069

By: Representatives Epps of the 144th, Randall of the 142nd, Dickey of the 140th, Beverly of the 143rd, and Peake of the 141st

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and commending President William D. Underwood of Mercer University; and
2 for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, President William D. Underwood, the 18th president of Mercer, led Mercer
4 University during a period of dynamic growth and development since his appointment in
5 2006; and

6 WHEREAS, Mercer recently launched its second and third medical school campuses in
7 Savannah and Columbus, initiated a physician assistant master's program and a physical
8 therapy doctorate program, and added doctorate programs in clinical psychology, nursing,
9 counseling, educational leadership, and curriculum and instruction; and

10 WHEREAS, recently, Mercer was reclassified as a research-doctoral university by the
11 Carnegie Foundation, reflecting an increased emphasis on research shown by the amount of
12 annual externally-funded research expenditures that have grown to more than \$32 million;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, the University has intensified its long-standing commitment to service-learning
15 and community engagement under President Underwood's leadership as demonstrated by the
16 College Hill Corridor initiative, which is revitalizing a two-mile area between Mercer's
17 campus in Macon and downtown, has won international awards for community
18 redevelopment, and has leveraged more than \$200 million in public-private investment; and

19 WHEREAS, Mercer has earned the highest federal recognition for community engagement
20 by the Corporation for National and Community Service: the President's Higher Education
21 Community Service Honor Roll in 2009, 2013 (with distinction), and 2014; and

22 WHEREAS, in 2008, Mercer became the first university in Georgia to receive the Carnegie
23 Foundation's designation for "Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships," a
24 classification that the Foundation reaffirmed in 2014; and

25 WHEREAS, in 2015, Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and most prestigious honor society,
26 awarded Mercer a chapter, placing the University in a cohort of the nation's most respected
27 academic institutions; and

28 WHEREAS, under President Underwood's leadership, Mercer resumed competition in
29 intercollegiate football in 2013 after a 72-year hiatus, and in its inaugural season, the
30 University established a new NCAA Division I record for wins by a start-up program by
31 achieving a 10-2 record; and

32 WHEREAS, in recognition of his service to the community, the Greater Macon Chamber of
33 Commerce, in 2013, honored President Underwood with its Citizens of the Year Award; the
34 *Georgia Trend*, in years 2013 through 2016, named him among the 100 Most Influential
35 Georgians; the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, in 2014, presented him with the
36 Leadership Character Award; and *The Macon Telegraph*, in 2016, named him as its Middle
37 Georgian of the Year; and

38 WHEREAS, prior to joining Mercer, President Underwood served as a member of the
39 NCAA Division I Presidential Advisory Group as Baylor University's interim president and
40 held the prestigious Lean Jaworski Chair at the Baylor School of Law; and

41 WHEREAS, in 2008, the Baylor Alumni Association presented President Underwood with
42 its W.R. White Distinguished Service Award; and

43 WHEREAS, an elected member of the American Law Institute and the American Bar
44 Foundation, President Underwood was awarded the Doctor of Law degree, *summa cum*
45 *laude*, by the University of Illinois College of Law in 1985, where he graduated as class
46 salutatorian and was an editor of the *University of Illinois Law Review*; and

47 WHEREAS, following graduation, he was a clerk for the Honorable Sam D. Johnson of the
48 United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, prior to practicing law for several years
49 with a prominent law firm in Dallas; and

50 WHEREAS, as an undergraduate, he attended Michigan State University and Oklahoma
51 Baptist University, where he met his wife, Lesli, with whom he has two children, Jessica and
52 William; and

53 WHEREAS, it is abundantly fitting and proper that the outstanding accomplishments of this
54 remarkable and distinguished Georgian be appropriately recognized.

55 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
56 the members of this body commend President William D. Underwood of Mercer University
57 for his efficient, effective, and dedicated service to the State of Georgia.

58 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
59 and directed to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to
60 President William D. Underwood.