

March 13, 2025

Presidential Search Committee
Florida A & M University
1601 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32307

Dear Committee Members:

As a two-time graduate of a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), I am deeply committed to the mission of HBCUs and their transformative impact on students, families, and communities. Throughout my career, I have been intentional in my service to these institutions, beginning at Florida A&M University (FAMU), where I earned my Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy, and later as a faculty member in the College of Pharmacy. I continued this commitment at Xavier University of Louisiana, where I spent over a decade advancing academic excellence and student success, and now at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), where I serve as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (PVPAA).

I recognize that HBCUs are more than institutions of higher learning—they are engines of opportunity, providing access to education and improving social mobility for first-generation students and those from underserved communities. FAMU has long been a leader in this mission, and I am inspired by its legacy of excellence and impact. It would be both an honor and a privilege to serve as the next president of Florida A&M University, leading with vision, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to student success.

At UMES, I have been afforded the opportunity to play a key role in managing the academic operations, budget, enrollment, strategic planning, and personnel for the University. Upon reviewing the position profile for the presidency at FAMU, my experiences align well with the desired leadership attributes required for the position. In an effort to delineate this alignment, I have organized my letter around three major themes. They are as follows: *Leadership Experience, Student Success, and Faculty Development.*

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Throughout my tenure at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, I have worked closely with the president to prioritize strategic goals that enhance student success, institutional growth, and academic innovation. One key initiative was expanding access for adult learners, a critical demographic in today's evolving higher education landscape. To achieve this, I collaborated with the Vice Presidents for Enrollment Management and Student Experience and Administration & Finance to increase enrollment and improve student services tailored to this population's unique needs.

Recognizing the importance of flexibility, I worked with faculty to develop online programs and implement eight-week course sessions, allowing adult learners to balance education with work and family responsibilities. Additionally, I spearheaded the creation of a one-stop service center, providing 24/7 access to financial aid, student accounts, admissions, and the Registrar's Office for both students and parents. This comprehensive approach removed barriers to access and support, resulting in improved student engagement and retention.

My leadership experience reflects a commitment to strategic collaboration, data-informed decision-making, and innovative solutions to meet the needs of a diverse student body. As president of Florida A&M University, I would bring this same forward-thinking approach to advancing FAMU's mission and ensuring student success at every level.

STUDENT SUCCESS

As a leader in higher education, I have been committed to advancing initiatives that support student success. Realizing some of our students come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, I focused several of my initiatives on preparing students prior to enrolling in the University. During my tenure at Xavier University, I collaborated with faculty and staff to develop a summer program to improve the academic performance of first-year pharmacy students. After the first year of implementation, the number of non-passing grades was reduced from 19% to 8% compared to the previous year. Likewise, at UMES, we made changes to our Summer Bridge program as a means to improve persistence rates among the participants. The fall to spring persistence rates for the participants over the past three years increased from 81% to 90%.

At UMES, I also appointed a taskforce that included faculty, staff, and students (undergraduate and graduate) to examine academic policies that served as potential barriers to student progression and retention. It was successful in obtaining faculty approval to streamline the transfer credit process, provide additional support for at-risk students, and allow students to take nine credit hours of their last 30 credits at another institution if there are extenuating circumstances.

Beyond the classroom, I have always been an advocate of creating opportunities for students to participate in scholarly activities and experiential learning. As the PVPAA, I allocated funding for students to present their research at regional and national meetings and participate in field trips. The funding was available to students across all of the five Schools. The students were very appreciative as the funding provided opportunities for them to engage their peers at other institutions.

As the dean and in my current role, I have been intentional about teaching our students the importance of civic responsibility and preparing them to be global citizens. Across our curricula, we have created co-curricular opportunities so that our students understand the value of giving back to their community. I also collaborated with faculty to secure international agreements that led to faculty and student exchanges and research opportunities. The countries include India, Brazil, and South Africa.

FAMU's commitment to strengthening programs and services to meet student needs is a passion I share, and I believe every decision should be rooted in how to improve the student experience. I would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Student Affairs team and the academic support staff to enhance programs that focus on retention, well-being, on-time graduation, and post-graduation success.

FACULTY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A thriving university depends on the strength of its faculty and staff, which is why I have remained deeply committed to their development throughout my career. As dean, I prioritized investments in faculty and staff, ensuring they had access to the resources needed to grow as educators, researchers, and leaders. When I became provost, I carried this commitment forward by allocating funds to each school,

guaranteeing that every faculty and staff member could participate in at least one professional development activity annually.

Recognizing the importance of cultivating future leaders, I launched the Provost Faculty Fellows Program and the Assistant Department Chair Leadership Program at UMES. The Fellows Program allows faculty to lead an initiative tied to the university's strategic plan, while the Assistant Department Chair Program provides hands-on leadership experience for aspiring chairs. Both programs equip participants with essential skills in team dynamics, giving and receiving constructive feedback, and conflict resolution, preparing them for expanded leadership roles.

Additionally, under my leadership, UMES implemented its first faculty grantsmanship incentive program, which compensates faculty for securing grant funding and offers workshops to strengthen grant-writing skills. These efforts have reinforced a culture of professional growth, innovation, and institutional excellence. As president of Florida A&M University, I would bring this same commitment to faculty and staff development, ensuring that FAMU remains a place where educators and administrators thrive and, in turn, provide an exceptional experience for students.

Florida A&M University has shaped my journey, both personally and professionally, and it would be an honor to serve as its next president. My commitment to student success, faculty and staff development, and institutional excellence aligns with FAMU's mission and long-standing legacy. With a deep understanding of HBCUs, a record of accomplishment of strategic leadership, and a passion for innovation, I am prepared to lead FAMU into its next era of growth and impact. I welcome the opportunity to further discuss how my experience and vision can contribute to FAMU's continued success. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. Allen".

Rondall E. Allen, Pharm.D.