

Dr. Larry Robinson
Faculty Senate Remarks

Greetings and thank you for the opportunity to come before our faculty and staff today, to provide you with the “State of Florida A&M University Address.” and address this officially-recognized governance group for all faculty members at Florida A&M University.

Before we get started, please join me in a moment of silence for our fallen Rattlers. Thank you!

Each of you are all part of a proud tradition of education, instruction and service. My goal as president is to have transparency and to provide all stakeholders with “what is happening at FAMU, Higher Education, particularly HBCUs” and we all know that “Great Things are Happening at FAMU Every Day.”

Students are at the heart of this institution and you are their life blood... indulge me for a minute... in some case literally pumping information into them to prepare them for the rest of their lives. I thank you for that. Because surely HBCUs are the lifeblood of the African-American people and are becoming increasingly important to students and families, from all walks of life.

- Each year, the nation’s HBCUs generate \$14.8 billion in economic impact; that’s equivalent to a ranking in the top 200 on the *Fortune* 500 list of America’s largest corporations.
- And HBCUs generate 134,090 jobs for their local and regional economies.

**source: United Negro College Fund (https://secure.uncf.org/page/-/pdfs/HBCU_FactSht_National_7-17B1.pdf?_ga=2.60954409.481747273.1553020302-2053482258.1551278621)*

The faculty and staff are on the front lines of this work, every day. Your dedication and hard work keep FAMU Rising and has allowed us to make tremendous progress in advancing our agenda and addressing the Strategic Priorities outlined in our Strategic plan (show the Strategic Plan Slide (Slide 1)).

One major accomplishment in 2017 was the FAMU Board of Trustees and the Florida Board of Governors' approval of our 2017-18 Strategic Plan, FAMU Rising. **Next Slide** As we continue to press on with our Strategic Plan, each year our Board establishes institutional goals. These goals are in three parts:

1. **The President's Annual Goals** - which are shown on the screen which includes the overall Performance Based Funding score for 2019, four-year graduation rates, annual giving and the financial health of the university. **Next Slide**
2. **Performance Based Funding Metrics** - As a reminder, this is the year where the Board of Governors eliminated the Bottom Three. Institutions are still required to have a total score of 51 points to receive the institutional investment. Historically, FAMU has always been above the BOG's threshold to be eligible to receive PBF funding. We are excited this year to be eligible to receive funding. However, we are aware of the road ahead and that we must implement targeted and strategic strategies to continue our efforts in improving on each of the metrics to remain eligible to receive funding and we cannot do it without each of you in this room. We will learn of FAMU's share of the PBF funding during the BOG's June meeting. For 2019, we experienced an increase on seven-metrics (metrics 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10); and three metrics (metrics 1, 2, and 8), we experienced a decline in the actual outcomes. **Next Slide**
3. **Strategic Plan/Accountability Plan** - These metrics are shown on the screen. However, there is one metric that I would like to highlight - Institutional Goal Metric 1 which shows the tremendous progress we have made in the six-year graduation rate. The six-year graduation rate for the 2012-18 FTIC cohort is 50%, which is a three-percentage point increase over the 2011-17 cohort and a remarkable 11 percentage points over the 2009 FTIC cohort. We are well on our way to reaching our 2022 goal of 60%.

Next slide - Our Board of Trustees are holding us accountable for the outcome on these institutional goals and metrics. To keep the BOT and all stakeholders informed on our progress, we have created a Dashboard and Scorecard which is found on my website (president.famu.edu, click on Goals). This site provides up-to-date information on the President's Annual Goals, Performance Based Funding Metrics and Strategic Plan/Accountability Plan metrics. The site includes the metrics and definitions for each metric. At any time, you can go to this site to get an update on how the university is performing in each of the areas based on the data we have available at that time.

We are excited about some of our latest accomplishments and strategies implemented that are designed to enhance student recruitment and retention, improve student success outcomes and upgrade and enhance our facilities to support students, faculty and research:

- We signed a \$125 million financing instrument backed by the U.S. Department of Education's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Capital Financing Program in Washington, D.C. This is the largest loan package ever financed by the federal program. The funds allowed us to break ground on a 700-bed residence and dining hall that is expected to be completed by Fall 2020 and to finance renovations of buildings and research laboratories.
- We are in creating a new outdoor gathering space for students thanks to funding from the Student Government Association. In order to modernize the social, experiential learning and accessibility needs of the student body, the University will build is a new performing arts amphitheater – in line with the student experience and customer service priorities of the University's "FAMU Rising" Strategic Plan. The amphitheater will be located off Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard across from the Student Union. .
- Through our IGNITE program we are seeing more and more transfer students matriculating to FAMU from Florida community colleges.
- Over the past two years, we are experiencing a steady increase in our overall headcount with student enrollment reaching 10,021 students in fall 2018.
- And we are working hard to improve on customer service and enhance our accountability and efficiency.

These accomplishments are a testament to our determination to rise, despite any challenge. And all of you are reasons why we are able to do this every single day. Thank you for your service and support of Florida A&M University.

Financial Stability:

Finances form the foundation of what we are able to do here at FAMU. I am very proud that our credit rating with Moody's was upgraded from negative to stable. As you know, Moody's is a leading provider of credit ratings, research, and risk analysis. So, an upgrade by Moody's is very significant.

We got the upgrade for several critical reasons:

- We reversed a downward trend in enrollment and now our numbers are 10,021 for fall 2018.
- We increased our housing occupancy rate.
- We increased our financial reserves which was very important because it allowed us to justify the number of faculty. When your enrollment drops, your faculty numbers should also drop. We chose to stay the course with faculty and fix our cash problem with reserves.
- We achieved stability in our leadership when I was inaugurated as the university's 12th president.

Turning to Academics:

We begin with what is a very noteworthy achievement for FAMU. Our accreditation was reaffirmed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) which, after visiting FAMU in March of last year around this same time, concluded that our institution met their rigorous standards - with no recommendations. This was reaffirmed in December 2018 during its annual conference. That is a tremendous accomplishment of which we should all be extremely proud. Our next accreditation visit will be in 2028.

I want to thank each and every one of you for making this happen because without you – and particularly the SACS Team – this may not have happened. Our achievements in this area are numerous, To name a few:

- Our nursing program saw a remarkable turnaround – going from a pass rate of 60% to today's pass rate of over 80% of our students meeting the standard of the licensing body.
- Our academic leadership saw the hire of several deans in critical academic areas, journalism, pharmacy, science and technology, education (joining us in May) and finalizing negotiations with the FAMU DRS superintendent. Additionally, we launched a national search for the dean of our law school.
- Some of you may know that we secured \$6 million last year from the legislature to advance our initiative around programs across the board. Included in this appropriation were faculty positions in STEM, math, cybersecurity and business.
- And our faculty has garnered major research dollars:

- Dr. R. Renee Reams, and Dr. Kinfe “Ken” Redda from College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, were selected to receive a five-year, \$16 million partnership grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), a division of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). They are establishing a center to address cancer health equity in Black and Latino populations.
- FAMU was awarded a three-year, \$13.7 million from the National Nuclear Security Administration to support two research projects, “Research on the Science and Engineering of Signatures (ROSES) (Dr. Lewis Johnson) and “Consortium for Materials and Energy Studies” (Dr. Charles Weatherford).
- We’ve established new programs such as our Computer Information Systems program, data science program and our partnership with Google. We were selected as a participant in Google’s Tech Exchange Program through our College of Science and Technology whereby five computer science students and one professor are spending a year gaining hands-on training and experience at Google.
- Through our School of Business and Industry, public accounting firm Crowe launched an innovative in-school paid internship. FAMU is the first historically Black university to participate in this unique collaboration and the first university in Florida giving students on campus an opportunity for real-time learning that combines classroom and professional experiences.
- Meanwhile at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory we have three Ph.D. students spending the last 2 years of their Ph.D. program at Livermore being co-mentored by FAMU faculty and Livermore scientists. They are working on some of the best research equipment in the world during this 3-year grant.
- And Dr. Marcia Allen Owens, Associate Professor of Environmental Science and Policy, through the FAMU ADVANCE program is using the concept of cultural humility to ensure the success of women faculty in STEM)and in the social and behavioral sciences. We hope these women will excel and become productive members of the FAMU faculty.

Finally, and certainly not the least of all of this tremendous success, provost and vice president of academic affairs Dr. Maurice Edington launched a new undergraduate research program. The program will increase student involvement in on campus research with FAMU faculty, as well as make them more aware of summer research and internship opportunities.

Athletics

Turning now to the intersection of athletics and academics, Dr. John Eason has been working hard to shore up our athletics program. So far he has hired a new staff and introduced a highly visible and very engaged compliance component into our athletics program.

Dr. Eason has also made major investments in athletics through commitments from alumni and boosters to support salaries and other resources needed to sustain a top-notch athletics program.

Dr. Eason also introduced some new creative financing program for athletics including our Invest in Champions program and stronger relationships with supporters that have allowed us to acquire new turf on our athletics field and other items of significance.

I would also like to add that our instincts in athletics have proven to be quite sound. You know Hampton University left the MEAC conference to seek “higher” ground – shall we say. We stayed with the conference. That’s because we realize a student athlete can still never lose sight of their academics. As professors and staff you know how delicate the balancing act can be between playing a sport and delivering in the classroom.

Of the 12 institutions in the MEAC conference, I am proud to say that six of them, including FAMU have been designated by Carnegie as a high research institution. This is a testament to the high quality education that these schools can deliver – in addition to deliver the athletics.

Branding and National Recognition:

You know, some university presidents gauge their success by constantly looking at the rankings. I don’t but we are doing well in that category too. Just take a look at this video [\(ROLL #1’s VIDEO\)](#)

Our national reputation is growing and has been affected in several positive ways. As a result, there are a lot of student out there who can't wait to get into your classrooms! We have received more than 9,000 student applications for this upcoming academic year.

This time last year, we had 7,000 applications. We know that to facilitate the matriculation of these additional quality students into FAMU, we need additional resources.

And as you have heard, we've made many strides towards providing the resources to grow our student body to our strategic goal of 12,000 students by 2022.

PowerPoint Slide – Slide #6 and 7 - There is also a regenerated interest in employing our students which is a testament to the academic quality and strength of our brand. The number of employers coming to recruit our students is also up, and so is the number of employers listing job and internship opportunities using the Handshake system in our Hire a Rattler career portal.

In addition, we reestablished the Industry Cluster with a kickoff in November 2018, during the week of my inauguration.

Then there's our new deal with Duke energy to build a solar facility in that will benefit students, faculty, utility customers and Floridians. Through this 25-year lease for land at our Brooksville Agricultural and Environmental Research Station, we will also provide training and educational opportunities for students and members of the local community.

There's also our new Medical Marijuana Education and Research Initiative giving FAMU a seat at the table in doing badly needed research and creating policy that will affect the lives of all Floridians, particularly African Americans and other people of color.

Looking at Hemp, we are finalizing our plans to explore the possibilities of hemp production in Florida. We'll conduct research on cultivating industrial hemp in rural areas of the state by working with private partnerships to conduct and pay for the research.

I've talked about a lot of great stuff today and all of our accomplishments. I hope that you now feel informed about where we are in our strategic plan, where we are

going academically, the enhancements to our infrastructure and the progress in our athletics department.

None of this is possible without all of you, and I thank you for your commitment to the success of our students, our community and our FAMUly!