



Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

P. O. BOX 1357, NORMAL, ALABAMA 35762

December 2, 2020

Board of Trustees
Alabama A&M University
4900 Meridian Street
Normal, Alabama 35762

Dear President Pro Tempore Williams and Members of the Board of Trustees:

Upon my arrival in 2009, Alabama A&M University was facing a number of critical issues germane to her survival. These issues were aptly noted in an Institutional Review conducted by the James L. Fisher Group.

Among them were the following:

- Probationary status by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and numerous complaints
- An inability of the University to manage its own finances effectively
- Overstaffing in both the faculty and staff ranks
- Degree programs that were too numerous in count and some of them outdated
- A miserably deficient record in external fund raising and development activities
- Instability in key leadership positions
- A leadership team lacking the background and skills necessary to position the university for the future
- Backlog of deferred maintenance, health and safety issues
- Dated policy manuals and the absence of a well-constructed Strategic Plan
- Organizational structure not very well functionally defined

Now almost twelve years later, the University finds herself well-positioned for continual growth and expansion. The university's finances are strong as evidenced by the university qualifying for a \$96 million-dollar funding package from the U.S. Department of Education's HBCU Capital Access Program, the largest in the program's history. This loan was followed by a second loan in the amount of \$70 million-dollars. The balance sheet of the university has improved significantly with the net assets increasing from \$2.4 million-dollars in FY 2010 to \$35.9 million-dollars in FY 2019. The strong financial standing has enabled the university to expend over \$54 million-dollars addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance with major renovations to Councill Hall, Ralph Lee, Carter Hall, McCalep Hall, Frank Lewis Gymnasium, Carver Complex, Louis Crews Stadium, Thigpen Hall, Stephens Hall, Normal Hills Complex, McCormick, Buchanan, and Morrison in addition to paving, HVAC systems, and emergency systems. The University also constructed a \$40 million-dollar student residence hall, with construction of a \$60 million-dollar university event center underway and a \$6 million-dollar welcome center awaiting construction.

The academic programs of the university, delivered by a world class faculty of scholars and researchers, prepare students for careers in many emerging fields. Under enrolled programs have been culled from the academic inventory and nine new degree programs have been initiated. These programs include Animal Bio-Health Technology, Communication Specialist, Construction Management, Entrepreneurship, General Music, Kinesiology, Plant Biotechnology, Sports Management and Systems Materiel Engineering. Also, concentrations or minors have been approved in Biomedical Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Plant Biotechnology and Cybersecurity. Many of these programs have received national rankings, have maintained their subject matter accreditations, and most recently, after more than two decades of efforts, the program in business have received the coveted the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation. The university is also in good standing with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The offerings of these cutting edge programs, in part, led to enrollment increases of 25.5% since 2012 with record freshmen class enrollments of 1,483 in 2015 and 1,690 in Fall 2019.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the university have been improved through reorganization and restructuring. The total personnel count for the university has been aligned with the size, scope and mission of the institution. Currently, there are approximately 1,000 full- and part-time employees down from 1,300 in 2009. The academic schools were reorganized from five schools into four colleges and the academic departments reduced from 28 to 18. The organizational structure was streamlined by reducing the number of administrative positions and organizing the university into two major divisions; academic affairs under the provost for academic affairs and research and the non-academic division under the senior vice president for finance and administration. These efficiencies enabled the university to invest in human capital. The conversion of the university's health plan to the state PEEHIP plan resulted in median percentage savings ranging 6.4% to 18% depending upon the plan selected. Further, the first phase of the compensation plan implementation resulted in an overall salary increase of 10% for employees. Also, enhancing operational effectiveness were the conversion of the university from the Legacy Computer Administrative System to the Banner Administrative Computer System, investment of \$6 million dollars over five years in expansion of the university's computer bandwidth from 1 GigaByte to three 10 GigaByte redundant connections to improve resiliency, and high bandwidth wireless connectivity to every academic building and residence halls. The technology upgrades have enabled the university to function remotely during this pandemic.

As with other university functions, there have been significant improvements and increases in external funding. The university completed its first ever capital campaign raising over \$27 million dollars surpassing the initial goal \$16.25 million dollars by 66.2%. Private funding and support were spurred on by the establishment of the signature fundraising recognition program, the Normal Legacy Society. This Society recognizing individuals and couples who have contributed \$100,000, foundations and organizations \$500,000 and companies \$1 million, currently has 13 individuals/couples and three companies who have contributed over \$4 million dollars to the university. The endowment of the university, the Trust for Educational Excellence, has increased from \$32.5 million dollars in 2009 to over \$50 million dollars in 2019. Other significant endowment activities include the, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Endowed Scholarship, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Endowed Scholarship and the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Endowed Scholarship. During the period, the alumni giving percentage rate increased from 7.7% in 2016 to 19% in 2020.

The University and I, in particular, have been fortunate to have an engaged, visionary First Lady. Through her efforts and the volunteer group of the Bulldog Pride Committee, a series of initiatives that include campus cleanup and beautification, enhanced customer service, promotion of character development and wearing of AAMU paraphernalia as a display of pride in the University have been implemented. Significant projects initiated through the Bulldog Pride Committee included the development of Legacy Lake, Be the Match Campaign, Dancing with the President and First Lady, and the development of the "Quad" as a focus of student activities. Additionally, the First Lady's Endowed Scholarship Program and the Normalite Walkway Pavers' Scholarship were established.

Providing focus and direction to the growth of the university have been the strategic plan, *Into the Future* and the university's facilities master plan. Responsible for the implementation and execution of these plans has been a capable, competent, and dedicated leadership team assisted by an able and committed staff. The team has exhibited stability during this period with tenure in their respective positions ranging from eleven years to two years. But above all, the university has been fortunate to have an exemplary governance team. You, as members of the Board of Trustees, have fulfilled your policy role in an outstanding manner. You have provided vision, judicious leadership, and decisions, though difficult at times, focused on the future of the university.

As may be gleaned from the university's strong financial standing, stellar academic programs, efficacy in operations and management, and facilities upgrades and construction, the university is now positioned for unparalleled accomplishments in every facets of her operations and mission. Propelling the university to the next level though, cannot be accomplished in the short term - the next two to three years. It will require a longer term commitment. However, the time for the transition in leadership to provide the foundation for these future accomplishments is now. Why now?

First, the university will be celebrating her 150th anniversary in 2025. This will be a major observance that should be accompanied with a major capital campaign. Second, the university's ten year SACSCOC reaffirmation accreditation process is scheduled for 2024. Third, Alabama A&M University, as are all institutions, is undergoing tremendous transformation due to the pandemic. The institution will be required to make significant adaptations in all aspects of her operations once the pandemic ends. Though some may hope for the "normal" as we knew it prior to the pandemic, it will never return. Different operational models and instructional models will have to be implemented to remain competitive while at the same time addressing current issues regarding the need to increase retention and graduation rates. Fourth, a Board of Trustees that has a shared vision and has demonstrated that they are willing to work together for the good of the university currently exists. Lastly, there are no board seats to be filled during the upcoming legislative session thus allowing the Board to focus strategically on its most significant and important function, the selection of a president. For these reasons, after prayerful consideration and with mixed emotions, I have decided to retire from the position of President of Alabama A&M University on December 31, 2021. The December 2021 date will allow the Board adequate time to select the next president, have the person in place, and avoid the need for multiple transitions by appointing an interim president. Further, I will be exercising the provisions of my contract for a sabbatical beginning January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022.

On a personal note, we have two grandchildren with another on the way. First Lady Abbiegail and I would like to become full time grandparents while we are still in reasonably good health. We wish to thank God for all of his blessings and favor upon us and Alabama A&M University during our tenure. I also want to thank the Board of Trustees for the opportunity to serve, your confidence in me and for your support throughout my presidency. Thanks and appreciation are further extended to my cabinet who have demonstrated their unquestionable dedication to making Alabama A&M University better.

Thank you to faculty, staff, alumni, students, and all supporters of the university for your diligent effort in furthering Alabama A&M University. The acrostic for **TEAM** sums it up best, *Together Everyone Achieves More*. Together we, the TEAM, have made Alabama A&M University a better place. Again, thank you. We will continue to work untiringly during the remainder of our time here. God Bless each of you and God Bless Alabama A&M University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Hugine, Jr." in a cursive script.

Andrew Hugine, Jr., Ph.D.
Eleventh President