

Pernell H. Goodwin, Ph.D.

January 17, 2026

Presidential Search Committee
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Lafayette, Louisiana

Letter of Interest – Presidency of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Dear Members of the Presidential Search Committee,

I write to express my strong interest in the presidency of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. UL Lafayette stands at a defining moment—anchored by its Carnegie R1 designation, distinguished by its research productivity and regional impact, and uniquely positioned to advance Louisiana's academic, economic, and cultural future. I submit my candidacy as a seasoned higher education executive prepared to steward a complex research university with strategic clarity, institutional discipline, and an unwavering commitment to public impact.

I currently serve as Vice President and Campus Chief Executive Officer of the Natchez Campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community College, where I hold full executive responsibility for academic operations, enrollment management, student affairs, workforce development, budgeting and fiscal stewardship, facilities and infrastructure, accreditation readiness, safety and compliance, advancement support, and external relations. My career spans public and private institutions, two-year and four-year environments, HBCUs and predominantly white institutions, rural and regional markets, and faith-based and secular contexts. This breadth of leadership experience has equipped me with the systems-level perspective, political acumen, and operational discipline required to lead a comprehensive R1 research university within a statewide system.

Strategic Executive Leadership in Complex Institutions

As a campus CEO, I function daily in a role analogous to a university presidency—setting strategic direction, aligning resources with mission priorities, supervising executive-level leaders, managing multimillion-dollar budgets, and serving as the principal institutional representative to governing bodies, civic leaders, and external partners. I routinely brief

trustees and system leadership on enrollment trends, financial performance, risk management, and strategic initiatives, translating data into actionable decision-making.

I have led institution-wide change initiatives that modernized academic and student support infrastructure, strengthened campus safety and crisis response frameworks, improved compliance and accountability systems, and fostered a culture of performance and shared responsibility. These experiences mirror the leadership demands outlined for the presidency at UL Lafayette, where vision must be paired with execution and ambition grounded in institutional stewardship.

Advancing Student Success, Access, and Institutional Performance

Student success is the moral and strategic center of my leadership philosophy. Across my career, I have led enrollment and retention initiatives producing documented enrollment growth of 42%, 70%, 144%, and 190% at multiple institutions. Most recently, I achieved three consecutive semesters of double-digit enrollment growth (+16%, +12%, +16%) in a competitive rural market—growth sustained through strategic recruitment, advising reform, pathway development, and student engagement.

At a private university, I led student success and first-generation initiatives that improved retention by nearly 50%, reinforcing my belief that academic persistence is cultivated through intentional design, inclusive culture, and integrated support systems. My work aligns directly with UL Lafayette’s emphasis on access, opportunity, and student completion—particularly for first-generation, Pell-eligible, rural, and underrepresented students across undergraduate and graduate pathways.

At scale, I understand that student success at a research university must be integrated with faculty excellence, academic rigor, experiential learning, and workforce relevance. These intersections have guided my leadership decisions and would continue to inform my presidency.

Research Enterprise, Workforce Alignment, and Public Impact

While my current role is within a community college context, my leadership portfolio is deeply connected to applied research, innovation, and workforce alignment—critical pillars of UL Lafayette’s R1 mission. I have led and supported initiatives that bridged academic programming with industry demand, secured major external funding, and advanced regional economic development through education-industry partnerships.

In one year, I supported the acquisition of more than \$2 million in external funding, including a \$1 million workforce-focused artificial intelligence grant and multiple awards tied to literacy, workforce readiness, and regional development. I have worked closely with

business and industry partners, regional employers, and economic development agencies to align credentials, training, and applied learning with labor market needs.

UL Lafayette's leadership in research, innovation, and economic impact—particularly across energy, engineering, health sciences, computing, and coastal and environmental studies—requires a president who understands how research, talent development, and regional prosperity intersect. My leadership experience is grounded in this ecosystem thinking, where academic excellence fuels workforce vitality and public good.

Fiscal Stewardship, Advancement, and Resource Development

The presidency of UL Lafayette demands sophisticated financial leadership. I have overseen multimillion-dollar budgets, implemented strategic resource allocation models, improved operational efficiencies, and guided fiscal decision-making in resource-constrained environments. I am equally attuned to the importance of diversification of revenue through philanthropy, grants, partnerships, and auxiliary growth.

My approach to advancement is integrative: aligning academic priorities, research initiatives, workforce development, and student success outcomes with donor and partner interests. I have cultivated relationships with public agencies, foundations, corporate partners, and community stakeholders to generate sustainable funding streams that advance institutional mission.

Shared Governance, Institutional Culture, and Leadership Integrity

I have led within shared governance frameworks that respect faculty voice, staff expertise, and student representation while maintaining executive accountability. I have worked collaboratively with faculty leaders, senate bodies, staff councils, and student organizations to advance institutional priorities, navigate change, and build trust during periods of transition.

My leadership style is transparent, inclusive, and performance-driven—values that align closely with UL Lafayette's stated commitments to collaboration, integrity, respect, and transparency. I believe culture is not peripheral to strategy; it is the medium through which strategy succeeds or fails.

Regional Fluency and the Miss-Lou Corridor

I bring not only executive experience but also deep regional fluency. Located along the Mississippi-Louisiana border, Natchez sits within the Miss-Lou corridor, a bi-state region defined by shared economies, workforce patterns, culture, and mobility. Through my leadership, our campus has served students from Concordia Parish and surrounding

Louisiana communities for years, forging cross-border educational and workforce pipelines.

I understand the interconnectedness of Louisiana's parishes, its workforce flows, and the cultural identity that defines Acadiana and South Louisiana. This lived experience enhances my ability to lead UL Lafayette as a statewide and regional anchor institution—one that must navigate policy environments, community expectations, and economic ecosystems with nuance and credibility.

Preparation for the R1 Presidency

I hold a Ph.D. in Urban Higher Education and bring a scholarly, data-informed approach to executive leadership. I have taught at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, published peer-reviewed research, and presented nationally on enrollment strategy, student success, and institutional leadership. These experiences strengthen my capacity to engage faculty, support research excellence, and articulate a compelling academic vision grounded in evidence and practice.

Most importantly, I bring readiness—not aspiration—for the presidency. I understand the scale, complexity, and public responsibility of leading a Carnegie R1 research university within a state system. I am prepared to steward UL Lafayette's academic mission, research enterprise, fiscal health, and regional impact with discipline, imagination, and respect for its distinguished history.

Closing

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette stands as one of the state's most powerful engines of discovery, talent development, and public service. I would be honored to partner with the Board of Supervisors, faculty, staff, students, alumni, policymakers, and community leaders to advance UL Lafayette's national prominence, deepen its research impact, and strengthen its service to Louisiana and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration.

Educationally,



Pernell H. Goodwin, Ph.D.

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Curriculum Vitae

Higher Education Executive | Student Success Champion | Workforce Development Leader

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP PROFILE

A dynamic visionary, student-centered higher education executive with a proven record of institution-wide leadership, enrollment transformation, accreditation excellence, workforce and economic development, and community-engaged innovation across community colleges, rural institutions, public universities, and private institutions. Experienced campus CEO with comprehensive oversight of academics, student affairs, workforce training, budget management, fundraising, accreditation, and external relations. Skilled at leading rural, regional, and mission-driven institutions toward growth, sustainability, and strengthened student success outcomes.

- **Enrollment & Student Success:** Strong enrollment strategist with experience guiding recruitment, retention, and student success strategies for traditional, adult, first-generation, and rural students.
- **Accreditation, Workforce & Fundraising:** Experienced in accreditation and institutional effectiveness as a SACSCOC peer evaluator and primary Student Services writer/reader, with a strong record in workforce development and external funding support.
- **Community & Rural Engagement:** Actively engaged in regional chambers, civic organizations, and workforce partnerships, with a deep commitment to community engagement and rural access.

Committed to expanding access, supporting first-generation students, and building strong, sustainable institutions that anchor and uplift their communities.

EDUCATION

- **Ph.D., Urban Higher Education** – Jackson State University, 2023
- **M.S., Higher Education Administration** – Mississippi College, 2016
- **B.A., Graphic Design** – Jackson State University, 2012

CORE PRESIDENTIAL COMPETENCIES

- Student Success, Retention & Completion Strategies | Enrollment Management

- Workforce & Economic Development Partnerships | Accreditation & Compliance (SACSCOC)
- Community Engagement, Stakeholder, & Legislative Relations | Fiscal Responsibility
- Institutional Leadership & Strategic Planning | Crisis Management & Campus Safety
- Board Relations & Shared Governance | Fundraising, Donor Cultivation & Grant Acquisition

SIGNATURE CAREER ACHIEVEMENTS

(Presidential Snapshot)

Campus Leadership & Culture Building

- Serve as campus CEO, overseeing 80+ faculty and staff, 700 on-campus students, and 3,000 district-wide students, along with all daily operations.
- Modernized learning spaces, facilities, safety protocols, and student engagement areas.
- Strengthened campus culture through leadership development and engagement initiatives, increasing student satisfaction and participation by 53%.

Enrollment & Student Success

- Drove **42%, 70%, 144%, and 190%** enrollment increases at multiple institutions.
- Achieved sustained double-digit year-over-year growth at Co-Lin Natchez (**+16%, +12%, +16%**).
- Strengthened persistence and retention outcomes for first-generation, rural, and historically underserved students.

Accreditation & Compliance

- Served on multiple SACSCOC peer evaluation committees as *primary Student Services writer/reader*.
- Led campus-wide preparation for 10-year SACSCOC reaffirmation with strong compliance outcomes.

Financial Leadership

- Multi-million dollar budget oversight. Directly supervised academic divisions, student services, workforce units, and operations.
- Achieved operational efficiencies through restructuring, vendor negotiations, and strategic resource allocation.

Fundraising & Grants

- Secured \$2M+ in grants in one year, including but not limited to:

- \$1M Workforce Development AI Grant
- \$120K Natchez Literacy & Cinema Celebration Grants and additional workforce and literacy funds
- Raised private donor funds supporting scholarships, community events, and campus initiatives.

Workforce & Economic Development

- Built new workforce pipelines with regional employers in high-demand sectors.
- Expanded adult education and CTE enrollment through employer-integrated programming.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Vice President, Natchez Campus

Copiah-Lincoln Community College (*~3,000 students, rural two-year college*)

2024 – Present

Lead executive officer for the Natchez Campus with oversight of academics, student services, workforce training, enrollment management, budgeting, facilities, and community partnerships. Serve as the public face of the campus and primary liaison to regional stakeholders.

Key Achievements:

- Delivered enrollment increases of **16%, 12%, and 16%** in consecutive academic years.
- Regularly engage with trustees and system leadership to provide campus updates, enrollment reports, and strategic recommendations.
- Established new workforce pipelines with regional employers, boosting adult and CTE enrollment.
- Strengthened crisis management, campus safety, Title IX readiness, and conduct processes.
- Directed modernization of learning spaces and capital improvements.
- Advanced accreditation readiness across Student Services and campus operations.
- Deepened partnerships with chambers, city government, law enforcement, and community groups.

Executive Director of Student Engagement / Director of Student Events / Professor

Belhaven University (*~4,400 students, urban private Christian university*)

2022 – 2024

Provided executive leadership for student life, student success programming, conduct, multicultural affairs, retention initiatives, and student organizations. Served as faculty in the First-Year Seminar program.

Key Achievements:

- Developed and implemented first-generation and retention strategies that increased retention by 49%.
- Oversaw crisis management, behavioral intervention, and conduct operations.
- Led major campus-wide programs, leadership development initiatives, and student organizations.
- Redesigned student engagement that doubled participation in two years.
- Strengthened collaboration with academic advising, counseling, and support offices.

Coordinator of Graduate Admissions / Admissions Recruiter

Mississippi Valley State University (*~2,400 students, rural public HBCU*)

2015 – 2017; 2021 – 2022

Led graduate and undergraduate admissions processes, recruitment events, and enrollment growth strategies.

Key Achievements:

- Achieved successive record-breaking enrollment increases of **70%, 144%, and 190%**.
- Modernized recruitment systems, marketing strategies, and student engagement touchpoints.
- Expanded rural and first-generation student pipelines.

Academic Advisor / Instructor / Retention Specialist

Jackson State University (*~7,000 students, urban public HBCU*)

2020 – 2021

Academic advising, student success initiatives, academic coaching, and first-year instruction.

Key Achievements:

- Increased undergraduate recruitment and enrollment by **20%**.
- Strengthened retention programming and student academic pathways.

Director, Upward Bound

Hinds Community College – Utica Campus (*~12,000 students, rural two-year college*)

2017 – 2020

Led TRIO Upward Bound programming, student development, budgeting, and compliance. Assisted recruitment, admissions, communications, and strategic enrollment planning.

Key Achievements:

- Increased college-going outcomes for first-generation and low-income students.
- Built partnerships with schools, families, and community organizations.
- Achieved a **42% enrollment increase** through redesigned recruitment and engagement strategies.
- Expanded partnerships with K–12 districts, youth programs, and workforce agencies.

Aircraft Maintenance Crew Chief

United States Air Force / Air National Guard

2013 – 2018

Performed aircraft maintenance, safety inspections, and operational readiness tasks.

- **Developed mission-driven, disciplined leadership** in high-pressure environments, directly strengthening my ability to guide institutions through complex challenges and strategic transitions.
- **Built a leadership style grounded in accountability, integrity, and precision**, mirroring the expectations of executive decision-making, fiscal responsibility, and institutional oversight required of a college president.
- **Cultivated a collaborative, cross-functional teamwork approach**, working with diverse teams—experience that aligns with shared governance, faculty/staff engagement, and community partnerships in higher education.

ACCREDITATION & COMPLIANCE LEADERSHIP

- Led campus-wide preparation for 10-year SACSCOC reaffirmation.
- SACSCOC Peer Evaluator (Multiple On-Site Reaffirmation Committees)
Primary writer/reader for Student Services.
- Experienced in standards assessment for:
 - Student Support Services
 - Governance & Leadership

- Institutional Effectiveness
- Resource Management

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Peer-Reviewed Publications

- Goodwin, P. H., & Okojie, F. A. (2024). The Impact of Campus Residency on Retention of First-Generation African American College Students at Predominantly White Institutions. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 11(2). 14-32.

National Opinion Publications

- Goodwin, P. (2025). *Investment in HBCUs Is Key to Addressing the Nation's Workforce Challenges*. The EDU Ledger.

Presentations

Presenter, regional and national conferences on enrollment strategy, student success, and community engagement. Leader in first-generation student support, rural access, and workforce alignment.

- *The Role of HBCUs in Shaping the Future of African American Labor* – USDA (2025)
- *Inclusivity at the Core: Engaging Diverse Campus Populations* – NASPA Symposium (2024)
- *RISE: Re-envisioning Enrollment Management & Student Affairs* – NASPA Symposium (2023)

COMMUNITY & REGIONAL LEADERSHIP (*selected*)

- Chamber of Commerce Board Member
- Regional Workforce Development Councils
- Civic and community partnerships across the Miss-Lou (Mississippi-Louisiana border)
- Close collaboration with city leadership, law enforcement, K-12 districts, and economic development agencies

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS (*selected*)

- Student Services Primary Reader/Writer, Peer Evaluator for SACSCOC
- Board Member, Natchez Chamber of Commerce
- Mississippi AI Workforce Readiness Council

- Mississippi Academic Officers Association (AOA)
- Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)

AWARDS & HONORS *(selected)*

- **Educational Institution of the Year**, Copiah-Lincoln Community College, Best of Mississippi Awards & Hall of Fame Inductee (2025)
- **Business of the Month**, Copiah-Lincoln Community College, Natchez Chamber of Commerce (2024)
- **Distinguished Alumni Award**, Mississippi College Higher Education Administration Program (2023)
- **National Defense Service Medal**, United States Air Force (2018)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS AND COURSES

- HED 6506 The Community College | 2024 | Mississippi College, Clinton, MS
- Leadership Seminar 210 | 2023-2024 | Belhaven University, Jackson, MS
- Belhaven Basics/Transfer Success 101/102 | 2022-2024 | Belhaven University, Jackson, MS
- University Success 100 | 2020-2021 | Jackson State University, Jackson, MS