

CHAVONDA JACOBS-YOUNG, PH.D.

January 28, 2026

Mr. Mark Romero, Chair

Board of Supervisors
University of Louisiana System
627 North 4th Street, Suite 2-203
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Mr. Romero and Members of the Presidential Search Committee,

I am pleased to submit my application for consideration as President of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. UL Lafayette's standing as a nationally recognized research university with deep regional roots and a strong commitment to student success, community engagement, and academic excellence aligns closely with my leadership values and professional experience. I am drawn to the university's dual role as both a cultural anchor and an engine for innovation and opportunity for Acadiana and the state of Louisiana.

My career has been shaped by leading complex, mission-driven institutions where excellence, access, and public trust must advance together. Most recently, as Under Secretary and Chief Scientist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, I provided executive leadership for the nation's largest civilian agricultural research enterprise. In that role, I set strategic direction across research, education, and extension; collaborated closely with academic partners; and ensured that discovery translated into real-world impact for communities. I led large, multidisciplinary teams, stewarded significant public resources, and partnered with elected officials, universities, and industry to address challenges including food and nutrition security, climate resilience, and workforce development.

I bring a leadership approach grounded in listening, shared governance, and accountability. I believe strong universities are built by investing in people—faculty, staff, and students—while aligning strategy, resources, and culture around a clear sense of purpose. I have worked closely with governing boards and senior leadership teams to develop and execute strategic plans, strengthen institutional performance, and foster inclusive environments where diverse perspectives are valued, and excellence is expected.

UL Lafayette's aspirations to strengthen student success, expand interdisciplinary research, deepen community and economic engagement, and enhance its national and global profile are priorities I am prepared to lead. I am particularly excited about the opportunity to partner with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community leaders to build on the university's momentum while honoring its history and unique identity.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be honored to serve the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and welcome the opportunity for further conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chavonda Jacobs-Young". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chavonda" written in a larger, more prominent style than the last name "Jacobs-Young".

Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young

Chavonda Jacobs-Young, Ph.D.

Accomplished executive with over 20 years of distinguished experience in global science and science policy leadership. Demonstrated track record of driving impactful results through visionary leadership and strategic decision-making within the Nation's largest federal agricultural science organizations. Recognized for driving financial growth, developing scientific solutions, and mastering competitive granting expertise for research, education, and extension initiatives in the agriculture industry. She is a two-time U.S. Presidential Rank Award recipient and a distinguished fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Under Secretary & Chief Scientist (Senate Confirmed) USDA

06/2022 - 01/2025 WASHINGTON, DC

- Executive leader with authority for an annual budget of over \$4B, 8500 employees, and an \$8B buildings and facilities portfolio.
- Delivered visionary & strategic direction for five science organizations in the Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Economic Research Service, Agricultural Research Service, and the USDA Office of the Chief Scientist).
- Advised the Secretary of Agriculture and Administration on high priority agricultural topics.
- U.S. head of delegation for international engagements such as the G20 Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists and Chair of the OECD Forum on Agriculture.
- USDA executive lead for AIM for Climate co-hosted by the United States and United Arab Emirates which has successfully mobilized \$20B in commitments to advance agricultural innovation to advance climate science globally.
- Led the development and release of the USDA Science and Research Strategy thereby communicating to the agriculture enterprise a roadmap for tackling agriculture's highest priority scientific challenges.
- Established the Agriculture Science Center of Excellence for Nutrition and Diet (ASCEND) for Better Health to successfully translate critical nutrition research into use by Americans to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease and cancer through better nutrition. Including the establishment of a network of nutrition hubs across the country.
- USDA principal to high priority White House initiatives the Cancer Moonshot 2.0, Scientific Integrity, Justice40, Women's Health Initiative, and others.
- Promoted transformative, high risk, potentially high impact research by establishing the AgInnovation Challenge.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ARS Administrator USDA

02/2014 - 06/2022 WASHINGTON, DC

- Senior executive lead for the vision, and strategic direction for the premier agricultural scientific organization's research and technology transfer programs.
- Increased ARS' budget by over 50% (\$1.1B to \$1.6B) and secured an additional \$1.3B for modernized buildings and facilities.
- Successfully secured resources for the construction of new facilities on land-grant university campuses and led the establishment of the \$1.25B National Bio and Agro Defense Facility (NBAF), the nation's first BSL4 facility for agriculture.
- Collaborated with industry to commercialize vaccines for Foot and Mouth Disease, African Swine Fever, Avian Influenza, and other animal diseases.
- Drove the integration of Artificial Intelligence in agricultural research by establishing the AI Center of Excellence and training a cadre of agency experts.
- Established the U.S. Climate Hubs to translate and synthesize science into products and tools for producers.
- Modernized scientific IT infrastructure by establishing SCINet, a high-performing scientific IT network that now serves as the USDA's scientific network and partnered with multiple land-grant universities.
- Enabled an Innovation Ecosystem by creating initiatives such as ARSX, the Breeding Insights Platform, and the Innovation Fund.
- Rebuilt the mission area business service center to improve process effectiveness, efficiency, and customer service to deliver high quality administrative support (HR, procurement, IT, etc.)

Acting Under Secretary, REE (temporary assignment) USDA

01/2021 - 07/2021 WASHINGTON, DC

Acting USDA Chief Scientist (temporary assignment) USDA

09/2017 - 07/2021 WASHINGTON, DC

Acting REE Deputy Under Secretary (temporary assignment) USDA

09/2017 - 01/2019 WASHINGTON, DC

Associate Administrator, Agricultural Research Service USDA

06/2012 - 02/2014 BELTSVILLE, MD

- Provided executive leadership for the planning and prioritization of scientific programs for the over \$1B multidisciplinary National research portfolio.
- Directed 70 staff including four Senior Executive Service members and four Executive Senior Scientific Leaders in the Office of National Programs.
- Executive leader for the Office of International Research Programs which is responsible for facilitating approximately \$20M in federal and international partnerships.
- Co-chaired ARS' Program Leadership Team to provide guidance and direction to agency top senior executives to facilitate cooperation and collaboration to strategically plan and implement ARS' scientific programs globally.
- Co-chaired ARS' Asset Management Board with oversight for managing ARS'

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

\$5.7B portfolio of buildings and facilities.

- Led the development and published ARS' 2012-2017 Strategic Plan.
- Led development and implementation of the 2013 Sequestration Plan requiring millions of dollars in reductions across the agency while minimizing the impact to people and program delivery.
- Represented U.S. in high level agricultural scientific international meetings.

Inaugural Director, Office of the Chief Scientist USDA

12/2009 - 06/2012 WASHINGTON, DC

- Established Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) that now serves USDA department-wide to ensure that research supported by, and scientific advice provided to the Department and stakeholders is held to the highest standards of intellectual rigor and scientific integrity.
- Facilitated establishment of the USDA Science Council, the Education Coordination Committee, and the Scientific Data Council.
- Led the development and implementation of the USDA Scientific Integrity Policy.
- Improved scientific communication by establishing the OCS as the USDA lead office for science and scientific information both within and external to the Department.
- Oversaw the deployment of over 200 roles USDA scientists filled in interagency activities across the Federal government.
- Facilitated the development of budget crosscut documents and white papers for each of the Department's high priority issue areas: climate change, bioenergy, food security, nutrition and obesity, and sustainability.
- Built partnerships between the Department and the broader scientific community through OCS leadership on new initiatives with the National Coalition for Childhood Obesity Research, the Global Research Alliance, U.S. Feed the Future Initiative, and the Global Health Initiative.

Acting Director, National Institute of Food and Agriculture USDA

05/2011 - 05/2012 WASHINGTON, DC

- Led USDA's largest extramural science agency.
- Provided executive leadership, guidance, and direction for the Agency's \$1.2 B in annual appropriated multidisciplinary research, education, and extension programs.
- Led agency congressional engagement through hearing testimony and hill engagement on topics such as budget appropriations and the Farm Bill.
- Led efforts for an external review of the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative by the National Academy of Sciences Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Senior Policy Analyst Executive Office of the President, The White House

05/2008 - 05/2010 WASHINGTON, DC

- Skilled subject-matter expert to the President's science adviser and others within the Executive Office of the President on a high priority agricultural scientific initiatives.
- Built high performance collaborations across the federal government to improve interagency cooperation and solution delivery for high-priority scientific issues.
- Co-Chaired the Interagency Agricultural Biotechnology Working Group.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Facilitated the release of the National Science and Technology Council's Interagency Plant Genome Initiative's 5-year strategic plan.

National Program Leader, Cooperative State Research, Education, & Extension Service USDA

07/2002 - 12/2009 WASHINGTON, DC

- Led Competitive Programs as the Acting Research Director, providing administrative and budgetary oversight for the \$180 million National Research Initiative (NRI), which at the time was the largest competitive grants program within USDA (04/2005 - 12/2005).
- Led agency and departmental efforts in Bioenergy research supported by competitive funding for value-added bio-based products including non-food processing, biotechnology, metabolic engineering, bioenergy production, and forest products research.
- Led policy setting and goal planning for the \$220 million Competitive Programs Unit as a leader on the Competitive Programs Leadership Team.

Assistant Professor of Paper Science and Engineering University of Washington

09/1995 - 09/2004 SEATTLE, WA

- Developed curricula and delivered lectures and laboratory training to undergraduate and graduate students on scientific and engineering topics.
- Conducted scientific laboratory research including overseeing the work of research and graduate teaching assistants.
- Served as a faculty representative to the faculty senate and student athletics.

BOARD SERVICE

Board of Visitors North Carolina State University

01/2021 - present RALEIGH, UNITED STATES
Higher Education

Board Member, Ex Officio Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research

04/2014 - 01/2025 WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES
Agriculture Research and Development

Council of Advisors World Food Prize Foundation

10/2021 - present DES MOINES, UNITED STATES
Poverty Alleviation, Global Hunger

Board Member, Board Chair (2015-2017) The U.S.-Israel Binational Agricultural Research and Development Fund

04/2015 - 06/2022 TEL AVIV-YAFO, ISRAEL
BARD Agriculture Science and Technology

AWARDS & HONORS

ACC UNITE Award Atlantic Coast Conference

2023

Dr. Jacobs-Young is a three-time ACC high jump champion.

AWARDS & HONORS

2022 Distinguished Presidential Rank Award United States Government

2022

Only 1% of federal career senior executives may receive this rank.

2022 Fall Commencement Speaker North Carolina State University

2022

Career Achievement in Government Award Women of Color STEM Conference

2020

Elected Fellow, NAPA National Academy of Public Administration

2019

Elected Fellow, AAAS American Association for the Advancement of Science

2017

2016 Meritorious Presidential Rank Award United States Government

2016

No more than 5% of federal career senior executives may receive this award.

FLC Laboratory Director of the Year Federal Laboratory Consortium - Mid-Atlantic Region

2016

N.C. State University Outstanding Alumnus Award North Carolina State University, College of Natural Resources

2008

Outstanding Achievement in Government National Consortium for Minorities in Engineering - GEM

2006

Featured In: "African American Scientist and Inventors (Black Stars)"

Eds. Otha Sullivan and Jim Haskins, John Wiley & Sons

2002

EDUCATION

Public Policy Implementation | Executive Leadership Certificate American University

01/2007 - 12/2008

Wood and Paper Science | Ph.D. North Carolina State University

01/1994 - 12/1998

EDUCATION

Wood and Paper Science | MS North Carolina State University

01/1990 - 12/1992

Paper Science and Engineering | BS North Carolina State University

01/1985 - 12/1989

PUBLICATIONS

- Fleischhacker, S., Chandran, K., Cotwright, C., Winters, M., Abley, M., Chester, D., Jacobs-Young, C., Long, C. (2024). Progress to Implement the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health at the US Department of Agriculture. *Nutrition Today*. 10.1097/NT.0000000000000726.
- Kretser, A., Murphy, D., Bertuzzi, S., Abraham, T., Allison, D. B., Boor, K. J., Dwyer, J., Grantham, A., Harris, L. J., Hollander, R., Jacobs-Young, C., Rovito, S., Vafiadis, D., Woteki, C., Wyndham, J., & Yada, R. (2019). Scientific Integrity Principles and Best Practices: Recommendations from a Scientific Integrity Consortium. *Science and engineering ethics*, 25(2), 327-355. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-019-00094-3>
- Jacobs-Young, C.J., Mirando, M. and Palmisano, A. (2007), "USDA-CSREES National Research Initiative Support for Agricultural Research: The Competitive Grants Program in the US," In: *Agricultural Research Management*, Ed. Loebenstein, G. and Thottappilly, G., Springer Netherlands, pp. 259-270.
- Jacobs-Young, C. J., (2005), "Overview of USDA-CSREES Support for Biobased Products and Bioenergy," In: *Industrial Crops and Rural Development*, Ed. Pascual-Villalobos, M.J., Nakayama, F.S., Bailey, C.A., Correal, E. and Schloman, W.W., Instituto Murciano de Investigacion y Desarrollo Agrario y Alimentario, Murcia, Spain, pp. 105-110.
- Paun, D., Tachawachira, P., Ho, T., Miele, B., Jacobs-Young, C. J., Cantrell, R., Comnick, J., Cross, J., Gardner, S. and Bramhall, C. (2001), A Performance Assessment of the North American Paper Industry," *Solutions Journal* (formerly TAPPI Journal), 84(12).
- Jacobs-Young, C. J., Heitmann, J. A., and Gustafson, R. R. (2000). "Conventional kraft pulping using enzyme pretreatment technology: Role of diffusivity in enhancing pulp uniformity," *Paperi ja Puu*, 82(2):114-119.
- Paun, D., Jacobs-Young, C. J., Trendel, O., Sonne, E., Howard, K., Ceder, K., Crump, C., and Oliver, C. (2000), "A Financial Performance Review of North American Pulp, Paper, and Packaging Firms," *Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry Journal*, 83(7):5-10.
- Jacobs-Young, C.J., Venditti, R.A., and Joyce, T.W. (1998), "Effect of Enzymatic Pretreatment on the Diffusion of Sodium Hydroxide in Wood," *Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry Journal*, 81(1):260-266.
- Jacobs-Young, C.J., Venditti, R.A., and Joyce, T.W. (1998), "Effect of Enzyme Pretreatments on Conventional Kraft Pulping," *Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry Journal*, 81(2):143-147.
- Jacobs-Young, C.J., Venditti, R.A., and Joyce, T.W. (1998), "Enzyme Applications in Conventional Kraft Pulping," In: *Enzyme Applications in Fiber Processing Series No. 687*, Ed. Eriksson, K. and Cavaco-Paulo, A., American Chemical Society Books, Washington, DC, pp. 55-65.
- Jacobs-Young, C.J., Heitmann, J.A., Venditti, R.A., (1998). "Conventional Kraft Pulping Using Enzyme Pretreatment Technology: Role of Chip Thickness, Specie and Enzyme Combinations," In: *Innovative Advances in the Forest Products Industries; AICHE Symposium Series No. 319*, Ed. Brogdon, B., AICHE Books, Atlanta, GA, pp. 1-15.

PUBLICATIONS

- Bjorkman, A., Paun, D., and Jacobs-Young, C.J. (1997), An Analysis of Financial Performance, Capital Expenditures, and International Activity in the North American Pulp and Paper Industry, Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry Journal, 80(10):71-84.

CERTIFICATIONS

Federal Senior Executive Service Certification U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

2009

ESCOP/ACOP Leadership Development Program Association of Public Land-Grant Universities

2003

COMMUNITY SERVICE

AAAS IF/THEN Ambassador American Association for the Advancement of Science

10/2019 - 12/2021

Actively engaged in outreach to serve as a scientific role model to attract middle school girls to the STEM profession. Featured in National AAAS IF/Then Statue Exhibit.

Diamond Life Member Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

12/1996 - 12/1996

STRENGTHS

Public Policy Implementation

Strategic planning

Innovative problem-solver

Financial Leadership

Crisis Management

Business Transformation

High Performance Team Building

Data-driven decision-making

Visionary

Results driven

Grant Management

Public speaking

Nutrition Security

Board Leadership

Extensive scientific organization leadership

Excellent communication