Greetings Grambling Family:

It is with a sense of humility that I enter into these legendary halls of greatness at Grambling State University. I am feeling an unparalleled kinship to the founder, President Charles P. Adams. He arrived from Tuskegee in response to a request from a group of farmers, who had a vision for a better life and the wherewithal to develop a mechanism to make their vision a reality.

These farmers collaborated and formed the North Louisiana Farmers’ Relief Association (NLFRA) to move their vision forward. They wrote to Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee requesting help to establish an industrial and agricultural school, and he sent Charles P. Adams. In August 1901, Mr. Adams established and began the Colored Industrial and Agricultural School, known now as Grambling State University.

When Charles P. Adams arrived, he was well-received by the people of the community who were eager to work with him to move the vision forward. Like our legendary founder, I, too, was greeted with similar enthusiasm from the students, faculty, staff, alumni, the local community, and other university stakeholders. I was extremely impressed with the passion and commitment demonstrated by members of the Grambling University National Alumni Association, and the Grambling Legends, who have both pledged their allegiance to our great institution.

In an effort to conduct an accurate assessment of the current status of the university, I have engaged in several meetings, not only with my Executive Team, but also with students, faculty, staff and other university stakeholders. I have also reviewed the current strategic plan and various consultants’ reports regarding the status of the university. I am forming various committees to increase collaborative decision-making and to improve communication at all levels of the university. When meeting with each group, I have communicated the core values that I expect to see reflected consistently in each employee as they perform their daily job duties and responsibilities at Grambling State University.

We are each responsible in some way for the success of our students. However, we can only claim success when we produce students who can compete successfully in a global society. Grambling State University will better serve our students and enhance our brand when each day we operate with honesty and integrity. Everyone must comply with established rules and guidelines. Those who fail to adhere to rules and guidelines will be held accountable.
I will be transparent regarding all matters that impact the university. At this time, I will share with you some recent decisions that I have made to improve services for our students and strengthen our budget.

- The University Police Department has been reassigned to Dr. David Ponton, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs/Dean of Students. This reassignment will enhance the Police Department's educational and crime prevention initiatives with our student leaders and other student organizations. The police officers and administrative staff will work collaboratively with students to strengthen the relationship with the police department. The university will continue to develop its relationship with the Grambling City Police Department and the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Department to bolster the safety and security of our university community.

- The Center for Student Professional Development has been reassigned from the College of Business to the Division of Research, Advancement and Economic Development, to work collaboratively with the Student Career Services Center. Although the two units are not merged at this time, they will work in tandem to provide unparalleled services to all of our students. This realignment will enable us to provide all of our students an opportunity to gain valuable business acumen, and expand opportunities for internships and job placement after graduation.

- We are also making plans to enhance services to students who are awarded Work Study this year through the following initiatives:
  
  o Students will now be required to take a series of basic training courses on basic job protocol (i.e. proper office attire, telephone etiquette, office protocol).
  o Students will be required to interview with university staff before being placed on the job.
  o Once a student is assigned to a department, they will be provided with a work schedule, job description, and detailed job duties.
  o The student will be trained and evaluated on their assigned job tasks.
  o The Grambling Achievement Program Department, Student Financial Aid Office and many other campus faculty and staff will work collaboratively to prepare our students to compete in the twenty-first-century workforce.

All of these initiatives are intended to place Grambling students in a more competitive position to perform on the world stage.

Our main focus is to engage our students throughout their Grambling experience and to provide them with avenues to develop both personally and professionally, and enable them to accelerate their critical thinking skills. We want our students to have a plethora of opportunities for entrepreneurial engagement and professional growth. The objective is to empower them with the knowledge and skills that will increase their marketability in the national and global workforce. We will increase our efforts to engage our students both academically and professionally.

- Athletics has been reassigned to the Division of Finance and Administration to ensure that our budget remains intact as we meet the needs of our Athletic Department and stay on course with the budget objectives for FY15-16. I will constantly review all budget and finance activities to make sure that the university is being operated according to best business practices.

- Since I have concluded my first level assessment of the university's finances, I have also decided to eliminate the positions of Special Assistant to the President and the Executive Dean in the College of Business. I believe that this decision will place the University on firmer financial ground. I
appreciate the services provided by Mr. Eric Eaton and Mr. Otto Meyers while serving the university in those respective positions.

- We are also moving in a different direction in the Division of Research, Advancement and Economic Development. Mr. John Rosenthal has laid a foundation that will continue under the leadership of Mr. Otto Meyers. Mr. Meyers has been reassigned to serve as the Interim Vice President for Research, Advancement, and Economic Development. His legal background as an attorney and his time spent in corporate America will allow him to bring a different kind of vision, energy and leadership to this position. The business acumen he possesses will accelerate the achievement of goals for the Division. I expect this change to allow the university to expand its reach and opportunities within corporate America. Additionally, this unit, under Mr. Meyers’ leadership, will be expected to open up greater avenues and opportunities for our faculty to pursue more contracts and grants within the federal government. Our faculty should be engaging in more research and entrepreneurial endeavors.

- I have also decided to move forward with a national search for a permanent Director of Athletics. I am reviewing some search firms to help us with this hire. We must get this one right.

- Other personnel changes will be forthcoming, and you will continue to be included in discussions and informed of my decisions regarding the various moves at the University.

For 114 years, Grambling has prepared students to be productive members of society, and many alumni have reached state, national and global acclaim and impact, through a variety of pursuits. We are now poised to take Grambling to the next level of preeminence. Our growth trajectory will continue upward, from good, to better and ultimately to BEST in CLASS. We will not rest until we have exhausted every resource within our arsenal to stabilize and move Grambling to GREATNESS. Producing exceptional graduates will continue to be our primary mission, and I believe we can, and will, do it better than we have ever done it before. We will do what is required to remain a viable HBCU and become the premier institution we once were.

Finally, I knew coming in that Grambling was facing certain challenges. I want you to know that I don't fear a challenge or hard work. However, I believe the key to our success is not only for us to work hard, but we must also work SMARTER. We all should be looking for more efficient ways to perform our jobs. We should all be asking ourselves questions when we hit the same bump in the road every day, or every season. We should all be asking ourselves, what else can I do to make Grambling better? I know we have the intelligence and commitment to propel Grambling State University to the next level of greatness, but we have to pull together and get it done.

I am interested in hearing your suggestions for improvement. I am setting up an electronic suggestion box, which will be announced shortly, with instructions on how to access it, so that you can share your creative ideas and solutions on how we can improve the operations within our various departments, or Grambling State University in general. It is with great enthusiasm that I accept the challenges that are facing us now and those in the future. I have every confidence that the Grambling State University Family and I will work through and overcome every challenge in front of us. I invite you to partner with me to revive Grambling.
It has been said that "organizations don't get things done; plans don't get things done, ONLY people get things done!" So, let's get to work and fight for Dear Old Grambling!

With Great Enthusiasm,

Willie D. Larkin, Ph.D.
President

WDL: jpb