

Grambling State University
Is Fighting for Her Life

By

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President

Grambling State University Dear Grambling State University Faculty,
Students, Staff, Alumni, Friends, and Allies:

Grambling State University is fighting for her life. Yes, I use the gender 'she' when referring to our beloved Grambling. Boats are often referred to as 'she'. And countries are also oftentimes referred to as 'she'. As I think of Grambling State University, I have witnessed, firsthand, how 'she' has given birth to thousands of beautiful minds, rising stars, and intellectual explorers. She, Grambling State University, has also birthed all who walk her halls, enjoy her splendor, teach in her classrooms, eat in her dining halls, work in her offices, and marvel at her majesty, no matter one's views.

Yet, in the light of all her glory, the embrace of all she selflessly gives, and in the midst of her greatness is, once again, a major battle she is fighting. A fight for her life! A fight for her very existence and continuation! I script these words, these prose, these metaphors with an unrequited resolve to protect her, cherish her, and lead her back to health and greatness.

She, Grambling State University, has charged me, her president, her healer, with the duty and responsibility to heal her many wounds and bruises through many fights she has endured, through the ravages of time, and through the legacy that is aging her. As her president, her surgeon to carry this metaphor, I have looked deep into the bowels of her inner operations and have seen the cancers that must be removed, the healing that must occur, and the wounded legacy that must be mended.

While Grambling has given birth to countless thousands of graduates, she was also birthed by a group of Black farmers who, in many ways and through many untold stories, sacrificed, fought, and died to birth, nurture, and cultivate a new life for many of our legacy students that starved for learning. Those were times many cannot even imagine. Still, in 1901, there were those farmers who had created a

vision, which did not occur in a few months; there were those farmers who battled racism and all other ism's that begot Black Americans at the turn of the century; and those farmers who shed blood, sweat, and tears to keep her, Grambling, alive to grow into a major, respected center of intellectual strength; a citadel of discovery.

Please, join me in saving her! Join me in healing her! Join me as we fight this battle to strengthen her. While many presidents nationally are experiencing the same or similar confrontations, I can only fight one major battle at a time—and my fight is to save Grambling! My fight is to battle all those who inflicted pains on her infrastructure while she opened her arms for the past 115 years. My fight is to battle all those systems that want to do her harm. And my fight is to battle all those who might want to stay the course that could become a cancer to her. She, Grambling State University, needs time to regain her strength, chart a new direction, and recover from thousands of knife cuts to her legacy. My fight is to save her life for generations to come!

And, let me say to the over 200 faculty and those faculty on the Faculty Senate that understand the delicacy of our plight, thank you for your support! Thank you! And, to those who expressed their lack of confidence in my ability to heal Grambling over these short seven months of my tenure, please allow me to turn the page, repair these wounds, and heal a wound with more than a Band-Aid as a solution.

As Grambling's president, her healer, I see, clearly, that our beloved Grambling is navigating minefields of destruction. As her president, her healer, I am mending her tragic and aging wounds, while, at the same time, fighting battles on many fronts to save her life. Join me on a short journey as I script this narrative to paint a picture of her prognosis, because, she, Grambling, is confronting, a long dark hallway of legislation.

Yes, I titled this letter; "Grambling State University is Fighting for Her Life." Quite literally, Grambling is confronting a time when its life support has been weakened through the 2016 mid-year budget cuts, totaling over \$38,037,806, with \$2,509,045 from our Grambling alone. Grambling is facing unprecedented financial times in higher education in the State of Louisiana and on her campus, our campus. Just as a point of clarification, when I took office as Grambling's 9th Permanent President on July 1, 2015; the financial woes at the university were as follows: the structural deficit for the operating budget was \$5,158,109.00. And, the Athletics Department's

budget had a whopping deficit of \$5,746,321.00. So, this administration began its presidency having to dig out of a huge hole. Although a mammoth task, I am certain we can stay the course and return to financial respectability as a proud and thriving university. She, Grambling, has been struggling over the past eight repeated cuts to higher education from the state budget. The current budgetary crisis not only threatens the entire higher education system in Louisiana but on a more personal level, to our own Grambling State University. There is no Medicare or Medicaid for her. She pays out of pocket!

And, as many who read this letter know, I expressed during our recent town hall meeting that Grambling is working vigorously to come up with both short-term and long-term plans to cut costs on campus, while, at the same time, putting a human face to our programs we retain. Students and faculty are our priority. But, as the years and aging of Grambling marched along, student numbers kept dwindling, decreasing. Academic programs were fighting to retain students while, at the same time, tried to increase enrollment. Yet, again, many of these wounds need time to be fixed, healed. I only wish I could heal all of her wounds over my short seven month tenure, but that is impossible, for anyone.

But, healing begins and continues as we ALL help in this operation. Our first stitch can be going as a force to the Wednesday, February 24, Higher Education Day at the legislature. There, Grambling faculty, students, staff, and allies can rally on the Capital steps. In addition, an upcoming special legislative session will occur where discussion will involve budgetary concerns, cuts, and Louisiana's higher education future. Another stitch to heal will be to see vast numbers of faculty and students who want to help me heal Grambling so she does not continue to bleed. To help me in this operation to heal Grambling, heal her from the blood she has shed for ALL who enjoy her bounty, join me in placing another stitch to stop the bleeding by making our voices heard! Join me as we heal our lady, through social media with messages to her foes; contacting through phone calls, letters, and community organizing. Please, help me to stop her bleeding!

Please join me as we work to heal Grambling and remove her bandages and mend her legacy. Please join me as we fight to save her life. And please remember that in all operations, it is never just one person doing the operation to save the life. Please, let's stop creating new wounds while we are trying to heal other wounds. Join

me as we sanitize our hands and roll up our sleeves to heal our Grambling so that new and emerging brilliance will make a better tomorrow, a new day for Grambling State University!

Together we can do it!

Go Tigers!