

# Robert Z. Carr, Jr., Ed.D.

November 3, 2024

Search Committee  
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff  
1200 University Dr.  
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am writing to express my interest in the Chancellor position at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). As a higher education leader with extensive experience in managing academic affairs, community engagement, and institutional advancement, I am drawn to UAPB's land-grant mission, especially its focus on advancing food security and agricultural innovation in the Delta region. My current role as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Fisk University, as well as my previous experience at institutions like UAPB, Alcorn State University, and Langston University, has equipped me with the skills, vision, and passion necessary to lead UAPB into a future of excellence and impact.

UAPB's role as an 1890 land-grant institution is critically important, especially given the urgent global challenges surrounding food security and agricultural sustainability. Land-grant universities have historically been at the forefront of agricultural innovation, and today, the mission has expanded to embrace cutting-edge solutions such as precision agriculture, data-driven crop management, and sustainable resource utilization. At UAPB, there is a unique opportunity to leverage the strengths of the institution to address these challenges head-on, positioning the university as a leader in agricultural research and community impact. I am committed to advancing this mission by fostering a culture of innovation, strengthening academic and industry partnerships, and creating learning experiences that equip students to be at the forefront of 21st-century agricultural practices.

## **Visionary Leadership and Strategic Innovation for the Land-Grant Mission**

Throughout my career, I have provided visionary leadership that emphasizes strategic growth, innovation, community engagement, and data informed decision making. At Fisk University, I oversee a team of 95 employees and a student body of 1,050, managing a comprehensive academic affairs budget and implementing initiatives that advance our institution's profile on a national scale. I have streamlined operations, increased technological integration, and fostered partnerships that enhance the student experience, such as the Fisk-Kaplan partnership. My leadership philosophy centers around the belief that strategic planning and innovative thinking are essential for institutional success, especially for a land-grant university like UAPB, where the mission is so deeply intertwined with the future of food security and agricultural resilience.

The challenges facing agriculture today require a multifaceted approach, blending research, technology, and community outreach. As Chancellor of UAPB, I would champion the development

and expansion of programs in precision agriculture, which offers transformative solutions to manage resources efficiently and increase yields sustainably. My experience in leading strategic initiatives, such as developing a performance-based quality assurance system and integrating smart classroom technology, has taught me the importance of aligning institutional resources with community needs. At UAPB, this would mean actively pursuing funding and partnerships to equip the university with state-of-the-art agricultural technologies and to provide hands-on training for students in real-world agricultural settings.

### **Strengthening Partnerships and Enhancing Community Engagement**

Building strong partnerships within the local and regional community is essential to fulfilling UAPB's mission. My tenure at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff from 2017 to 2022 allowed me to see firsthand the importance of community engagement, especially in rural areas where agriculture is the lifeblood of the economy. As Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, I worked closely with community leaders in the Delta region to develop programs that addressed workforce needs and promoted economic development. I am committed to deepening these relationships, ensuring that UAPB remains an anchor institution that uplifts the Pine Bluff community and the surrounding Delta region.

An essential aspect of the land-grant mission is ensuring that research and education have a direct, positive impact on local communities. As Chancellor, I would prioritize outreach programs focused on food security, sustainability, and agricultural education. By collaborating with community stakeholders, industry partners, and government agencies, we can expand UAPB's reach and effectiveness, particularly in areas like food security and resource management. My track record of working with local, state, and federal policymakers to secure support for academic programs and campus improvements demonstrates my commitment to fostering relationships that drive meaningful change. These partnerships would be essential for advancing UAPB's agricultural research initiatives and making an impact on food security across Arkansas and beyond.

### **Fiscal Stewardship and Sustainable Growth**

Responsible management of university resources is crucial to ensuring long-term viability. At Fisk University, I have streamlined the Academic Affairs budget to create a more efficient and effective division that maximizes resource utilization. My approach to financial stewardship combines fiscal prudence with strategic investment in high-impact areas, a philosophy I would bring to UAPB to ensure sustainable growth. At UAPB, where the institution's role as a land-grant university necessitates robust agricultural research programs, my priority would be to align budgetary decisions with the university's mission areas, particularly those that address food security and precision agriculture.

One of my primary goals as Chancellor would be to expand UAPB's capacity for research and development in precision agriculture. By seeking new funding opportunities from federal grants, private partnerships, and state initiatives, I would work to ensure that UAPB has the resources needed to innovate and lead in agricultural technology. This could include expanding facilities, enhancing lab resources, and investing in cutting-edge equipment, all of which would support the university's mission and strengthen its position as a leader among land-grant institutions.

### **Commitment to Student Success and Faculty Excellence**

Recruitment and retention of talented students and faculty are at the heart of a thriving academic institution. At Alcorn State University, I led efforts that resulted in the School of Education and Psychology becoming the first CAEP-accredited HBCU in the nation, a distinction that reflects my commitment to excellence and rigor in academic programs. I am passionate about creating an environment where students receive a transformative education that equips them with the skills and

knowledge to succeed. UAPB's emphasis on student success aligns closely with my approach to fostering a supportive and enriching campus culture, where students are prepared to excel in and out of the classroom.

Faculty excellence is equally critical to achieving UAPB's mission, especially in agricultural disciplines where hands-on learning and innovative research are paramount. As Provost, I have implemented robust faculty development programs, created performance-based quality assurance systems, and facilitated team-building workshops to inspire academic staff. I understand the importance of supporting faculty in their research endeavors, particularly in areas that align with UAPB's land-grant mission. Through strategic hiring, mentorship, and professional development, I would work to attract and retain top talent, building a team of educators and researchers who are dedicated to advancing UAPB's goals in agricultural research and beyond.

### **Advancement and Fundraising for Institutional Success**

Promoting UAPB's advancement initiatives and securing resources from public and private channels would be a central focus of my leadership. At Langston University, I developed one of Oklahoma's first completely online master's degree in educational leadership, a program that was approved by the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation. This experience reinforced my understanding of the power of innovation and adaptability in higher education, qualities that are essential for a successful advancement strategy. As Chancellor, I would work closely with UAPB's advancement office to identify funding opportunities that support student scholarships, faculty research, and infrastructure improvements.

In particular, I see tremendous potential in advancing UAPB's initiatives in precision agriculture and food security, areas that align with federal priorities and are ripe for external funding. By cultivating relationships with federal agencies, private foundations, and industry leaders, I would strive to bring in resources that fuel research, student scholarships, and facilities improvements. My experience with securing grants and collaborating with funding bodies positions me well to lead these efforts, ensuring that UAPB has the resources to fulfill its land-grant mission effectively.

### **Accessible, Inclusive Leadership and Open Communication**

A successful university thrives on open communication and collaboration among its constituencies. Throughout my career, I have prioritized accessibility, fostering an environment where students, faculty, and staff feel valued and heard. I believe in transparent decision-making processes that engage the university community, ensuring that all voices contribute to the institution's future. As Chancellor, I would continue this practice, maintaining an open-door policy and encouraging dialogue across campus. I am committed to creating a culture at UAPB where every individual feels empowered to contribute to the university's mission, and where collaboration drives innovation and success.

Thank you for considering my application for the position of Chancellor at UAPB. I am inspired by UAPB's commitment to educational access, agricultural innovation, and community impact as an 1890 land-grant institution. I am eager to bring my experience, vision, and dedication to UAPB, leading the university into a new era of growth, innovation, and excellence.

Warm regards,



Robert Z. Carr, Jr.