

January 31, 2024

Via email

Allyson Leggett Watson, Ph. D.
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
Office of the Provost
Division of Academic Affairs
1601 S. Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
Tallahassee, FL 32307

Dear Provost Watson,

I am writing to formally resign from my position as Dean of Florida A&M University College of Law, effective immediately.

It has been a privilege to serve in this role and contribute to the growth and success of the College of Law. I will always be proud of the work I have done alongside the College's dedicated students, staff, and faculty.

I have made this decision after careful consideration and believe it is the right time for me to step back to the faculty and explore new opportunities and challenges. I am grateful for all that I have learned in my time here but I would be remiss if I didn't use this opportunity to clearly articulate the reasons for this decision at this time. Specifically, at this juncture, it is clear that the University's vision for the College of Law no longer resonates with my vision for sustained success at the College. My efforts to strengthen the College's student body, its relationship with the bar, bench, surrounding community, its alumni and the University have recently been met with behavior on the part of the University that can only be properly characterized as abusive. This is exemplified by two recent incidents.

First, you sent me a list of questions from the Academic and Student Affairs Chair including questions such as "How many touches does the student have for each concept?" As I explained in our meeting on January 18, this request (and several of the others included in that list) was both impossible to answer and irrelevant to the project of addressing the College's bar pass challenges. After the conversation we had in December in which I made completely clear that the constant Board interaction was impeding my ability to do my work in Orlando, the insistence that I not only respond to this set of questions but conduct individual meetings with members of the Board in advance of the February ASA meeting, made very clear that my protestations fell on deaf ears.

I then received an email from Associate Provost Cecil Howard, at 4:51 this morning (attached) in which he mischaracterized statements I made to members of the Board of Trustees and then stated, "I don't see how the Dean's statements could be validated." This is clearly an attempt to impugn my integrity, made in front of two of my direct reports. This is neither management nor oversight.

These two recent examples come in the wake of steadily escalating unreasonable demands which make doing my work – managing the College – impossible.

I am committed to ensuring a smooth transition and I am, of course, willing to assist in any way possible to ensure a seamless handover of responsibilities.

I want to express my gratitude for the valuable experiences and relationships developed during my time at Florida A&M University College of Law. I look forward to staying connected with the College and witnessing its continued success.

Thank you for understanding, and I appreciate the opportunities for professional and personal growth provided.

Sincerely,

Deidre Keller

Deidré A. Keller
Dean and Professor of Law

From: [Howard, Cecil](#)
To: [Williams, Eurilynne](#); [Keller, Deidre](#)
Cc: [Fineman, Jonathan](#)
Subject: Re: Requesting Materials for Bar Prep
Date: Wednesday, January 31, 2024 4:51:13 AM

Hello Eurilynne,

I'm not sure I understand what you're saying, but it appears you're saying you will not and do not release the requested materials. That's disappointing given the fact that our students are struggling immensely with use of bar prep materials.

According to statements by Dean Keller to members of the Board of Trustees, many of our students tend to not complete their bar prep modules. If that's the case, and if members of the faculty are committed to volunteering to assist the students, then those faculty members should be given as much resources and support as possible to succeed. I'm surprised we would do anything otherwise.

Dean Keller constantly mentions to the members of the Board of Trustees the fact that faculty are engaged in bar prep efforts with students. As a matter of fact, she hails this as one strategy the College of Law is engaged in to enhance bar pass rate outcomes. As an example, she mentions Zoom meetings where Professor Jones engages with the students. I've not heard of other instances. Based on her comments, however, I would expect there to be a plethora of examples robustly highlighting the College's efforts. If we're not wholly supporting those efforts, I don't see how the Dean's statements could be validated.

I would therefore request that you meet with any faculty member and provide requested resources that they may utilize to assist our struggling students. This would include the faculty member in question.

Thanks,
Cecil

Cecil E. Howard, J.D.
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From: Williams, Eurilynne <eurilynne.williams@famuedu>
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 8:26 PM
To: Keller, Deidre <deidre.keller@famuedu>; Howard, Cecil <cecil.howard@famuedu>
Cc: Fineman, Jonathan <jonathan.fineman@famuedu>
Subject: RE: Requesting Materials for Bar Prep

Good evening,

The supplemental bar preparation resources the College of Law purchases for alumni (PMBR