

Ravi K. Perry
ravi.perry@gmail.com

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Greetings,

Hello, I am Ravi. I write to express my keen interest in being your next Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville!

Personal and Administrative Background

My favorite movie is a musical, *The Sound of Music*. There is a scene in the classic film where Maria returns from the Abbey to find the Captain engaged to be married as she meets with the children in the courtyard. When asked by the oldest daughter why she came back, Maria replied, ‘you can’t run away from your problems; you’ve got to face them.’ Leadership in higher education necessitates an attitude like Maria’s because there is always a challenge and we cannot afford to be cynical about the possibilities because some circumstances look a particular way at the moment. I hope my candidacy for this A&S Dean role stands out as unusual from the pack, just as unusual perhaps, but a perfect fit such as Maria and her story ultimate becomes.

My expertise in American politics and public policy has allowed me to study elected officials who in their roles as executives confront challenges daily and find solutions. I have learned much from them and I too have sought to lead by problem-solving, utilizing a leadership framework I call inclusive pragmatism. As a scholar of political representation and Black mayors, I learned how they find avenues of success to identify ways to improve the lived conditions of marginalized peoples in communities where said people don’t amount to a majority. I was led to this work because I believe government is a public service for the public good and therefore must play a role in equitably distributing the goods as John Rawls’ describes as ‘distributive justice - to everyone. At our best, I see the public academy as justice’s distribution center; for we mold the minds that will carry justice forward.

Since 2017, I have been a Department Chair at two different institutions with two unique cultures. While I was Chair of the Department of Political Science at Virginia Commonwealth University (2017-2019), one of few R-1 urban institutions, I was elected unanimously by the faculty and then appointed by the Dean to serve a three-year term. Under my leadership, we successfully completed annual tenure-track hires while increasing the diversity of the faculty, especially in reference to consistent searches with qualified women candidates and candidates of color in the final pool. We also raised record external dollars for student experiential learning, laid the groundwork for a new master’s in human security, and implemented changes to the curriculum to expedite time to degree.

For the last three-plus years, I have served as Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Howard University (also elected unanimously by faculty). My commitment to enduring the sustainability of the world’s only PhD program with a concentration in Black Politics led me to Howard unexpectedly. Moreover, I felt drawn to help lead the historic department for/of Black political scientists globally and that also has the distinction of being the program where my academic mentor was the first to earn the PhD in 1967. Now, after doubling the number of undergraduate majors *and* faculty grants, graduating 13 PhD students, hiring 6 new full-time faculty, and with a recently released graduate program record ranking in *US News* (#68), I feel as though I have accomplished what I came to do. As someone that studies leaders, I believe in leadership change. I now feel compelled to join the UofL A&S family. I hope this letter effectively conveys the sincerity of my interest.

For more than five years, I've had the title of department chair in two large departments at institutions on the road to R-1 sustainability. In both institutions, I have created new faculty positions, increased our disciplinary breadth, hired an historic number of women and minority faculty, and oversaw two departments' successful transition to R-1 status by creating a culture and department environment that generated the conditions for collective engagement, shared governance, accountability and incentives. These results I am proud of as they also occurred during on-campus periods of historically lower discretionary resources, and during a pandemic of global health proportions; meanwhile, amidst a national social crisis that fosters greater global racial and ethnic insecurity due to fears about demographic change.

However, even during challenging times, growth is possible where the conditions for shared governance are established, normalized, and faculty are incentivized to participate. At VCU, for example, our undergraduate-only program had about 500 or so majors upon my arrival and at the time of my departure our majors had risen to nearly 800. At Howard, the department undergraduate population is now similar in size to what I left at VCU; we have about 800 primary majors. However, we also have 30 MA and PhD students, 200 minors and 21 full time faculty (32 in all). We also house the newly-established Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies minor and the International Affairs major and minor, with more than 150 students.

I hope this letter effectively conveys how my leadership philosophy aligns well with the A&S mission "to improve life in the Commonwealth and particularly in the greater Louisville urban area, creating knowledge through its research, sharing knowledge through its teaching, and guiding all its students to realize their potential" and the current Provost's A&S Strategic Planning Committee's stated goals to strengthen the divisional model stipulated in the college's existing by-laws. From 'foster[ing] greater interdisciplinarity and curricular cooperation to 'Provide a greater sense of identity and better communication,' A&S's role as "the largest academic unit" is evidenced in the diverse, large urban population of 8,000 undergraduate students, 700 graduate students, 641 full and part-time faculty, and 155 full and part-time staff. This framework is particularly attractive to me as I have had the experience of co-creating success in similar environments. A gifted orator and motivational speaker, my vision of the power of arts, humanities, and social and behavioral sciences prioritizes how our work improves the world and sheds light on the myriad of contributions in years past.

Over the course of 4 academic institutions, I have developed a reputation for innovative leadership that produces results and creates an appreciative culture of collaboration. I've worked at small and large institutions, liberal arts colleges, and big state schools. I've lived everywhere except the West coast long term, including in the rural south and the urban Northeast. I've served in leadership positions at a majority Black institution and at several predominantly white institutions. In each place, I've raised money, created social change, built academic programs, and have worked to improve the communities around the campuses.

My career began at Clark University, a liberal arts research university in Worcester, Massachusetts. In that role, I was integral in creating the school's diversity plan, MLK and Black History Month celebrations, and related social justice academic programs and public events. However, I left Clark as I wanted to be at a public school because of my parents' influence. They have decades of experience as public-school educators at the post secondary and higher education levels as experts in literature (British/Shakespearean/Black), race/crime, and ethnic studies. Sadly, my Mom for the past decade has been afflicted with vascular dementia no longer able to speak much nor write at all; and while my Dad's faculties are strong, he is approaching 90 years young in the coming weeks. He was the founding chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies at BGSU, which recently renamed the veranda outside the building after him for his contributions over thirty years at the institution. Among many successes, in 1992, he was the first in the nation to successfully implement a university-wide requirement that all students at BGSU must take a class in race and ethnicity to graduate; his department also hosted James Baldwin for years as a

visiting professor.

Coming Home to A&S at UofL

The opportunity to apply for this position has come at a time when much of what A&S values has called into question the legitimacy of a liberal arts education today. Despite the inaccurate naysayers, I believe our work is empowered because it connects to our lived experiences and in turn that work has an impact on the lived conditions of everyday people. We who are assigned the august responsibility of nurturing the minds of today and tomorrow within research-intensive, community-engaged, urban centered, and globally impactful institutions, hold within our hands the balm to what plagues the world around us: access to knowledge. It is in this space that I believe we each are called to enter every day as leaders in urban public higher education, especially in a society experiencing shifts in what Rogers Smith labels in *Civic Ideals*, as ‘ascriptive characteristics.’

My ‘arrival’ at genuine excitement about the position at UofL came about with the original search two years ago and is enhanced by the coordinated work of the steering committee. Since the re-posting of the position, I’ve learned more about UofL, and I’ve experienced a cacophony of events, including recording a digital news show I hosted about midterm elections, planning and attending the 50th anniversary conference of the Association for Ethnic Studies, teaching two classes in American Politics and Black Political Activism, and I rescued a new dog, a cane corso named Byson!

I have since learned how eerily ideal the environment at UofL so fits my research and professional skills and interests: the large urban campus, the commitment to diversity, the achieved R-1 status, the multiplicity of academic programs in A&S in fine and performing arts, humanities, and social sciences – these three areas of study have encompassed my personal and professional academic life since inception! (For example, at VCU, I was instrumental in ensuring the new ICA museum built on campus was free and open to the public and curated exhibits relevant to the Black urban community nearby. Each of these hallmarks are too representative of the vast opportunities at UofL and A&S that are ripe for even greater innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration. Daily, I would naturally champion these and related interdisciplinary, community-engaged concepts, unique identities, and shared synergies.

Your Advocate for A&S

I am an advocate; it’s in my spirit; for causes I believe in, I position myself to be of the most productive use to help advance collective progress. The position of advocate I have long taken seriously. The opportunity to represent others and work on their behalf to improve their conditions is how I naturally view my self-defined role of a scholar-activist. Raised as the youngest child by my dynamic parents in the uniquely academic, musical, and community open-door home, I believe in pragmatic coalition-building to bring about dynamic change within institutions. And as an urban American political scientist, I certainly believe in the power of institutions to foster change. In the Provost Steering Committee notes, I am quite attracted to the identification divisional deans to help streamline the A&S Dean’s equitable distribution of resources and attention to divisional needs.

I have significant experience with innovating new curriculum within a similar framework where needs of units are better advocated for and addressed more efficiently. Presently, for example, I sit on the university’s general education committee, a newly established body that is updating the entire university’s curriculum. The beta test for the campus is largely derived from the revised political science curriculum I directed our faculty to engage in my first year in office as department chair. The semester-long effort was led by a tenured woman in the department whom I appointed and entrusted with the task because of her identifiable leadership skills.

At each of my institutions of employ I have developed new curricula, and have co-created the committees and processes to see their implementation path. At Clark, I expanded the curriculum in the race and ethnicity concentration; At Mississippi State, I added new courses on race and sexuality to Political Science undergraduate and graduate curriculums and to the African American Studies minor. At VCU, I was actively engaged and served on the committee that established a new undergraduate minor in LGBTQ+ Studies, and I was active in developing service-learning curriculum as one of my courses was among the early beta tested models before university-wide implementation. I also added new courses on race and sexuality in African American Studies and partnered with the university inclusive excellence office in developing teacher development workshops on similar diverse pedagogical course development across all majors.

Finally, here at HU, I have been instrumental in the development of the newly established women gender and sexualities studies minor. Presently, I serve on another committee at HU to establish a new program in leadership studies that is targeted toward students that haven't finished their degrees in several years. To 'reclaim' the students, this program will offer 8-week semesters with recorded online lecture content, ensuring working professional can finish long languished degrees that are affordable and accessible and credible. These experiences have taught me how to advance contemporary curricula that is responsive to societal change and an increasingly competitive academic environment with more choices for students. Central to these efforts for me has been ensuring faculty equity in the process; I'm the guy in the room that asks, 'so, how are we taking care of the faculty, how can we ensure equitable access and market rate compensation where applicable, and so on?' Surely, there is a correlation: newly established institutional programs and curricular opportunities are as effective as are the faculty incentives to ensure the program(s)' success.

Budget Management, Revenue Generation, and Resource Allocation Experience

At Howard, the Department of Political Science budget is approximately \$2.5 million. At VCU, the budget I managed was roughly \$1.7 million. I believe in being a good steward of resources and in transparent budgeting. At both of my stints as Chair, faculty have commented on how they appreciate my public sharing of how dollars are spent. I would do the same as Dean of A&S; whereby I would, for example, ensure all Chairs see the decisions made about each unit's budget. At VCU, I even purchased an app that allowed our department to track money spent by the dollar while awaiting line items to finalize in university offices outside of the department. This new step ensured greater efficiency and a balanced end of year budget.

In my three plus years as Chair at HU, the discretionary budget for all department expenditures (including faculty travel, events, etc) has tripled, which signals their support of well-managed budgetary resources. The spending budget when I arrived in 2019 was \$8,000; it is now \$25,000. My discretionary budget at VCU was \$30,000.

I also believe that budgeting provides an opportunity to demonstrate values. At VCU and at HU, salary inequity at the rank of Associate Professor is vast, whereby some scholars at the same rank make \$50,000 or so less than others. At VCU, with scheduled salary increases from SCHEV, Chairs were empowered to make recommendations based on merit. I proposed a new merit process that asked the senior faculty (already the highest paid within their respective ranks), if they'd be willing to take a smaller than merited increase so that we could collectively contribute to the equitable salary increase of colleagues within the same rank with lower salaries. I'm proud of the success at building a culture where salary equity became a shared goal even as one's salary remained private (unless someone chose to look it up as base salaries at VCU were public). At Howard, I have sought to establish similar equity with the added variable of gender dynamics, seeking to ensure our women associate professors' salaries are on par with newly hired assistant professors and their male peers within rank.

At VCU, department chairs had the benefit of a college-designated development director to help identify prospective donors, cultivate relationships, and establish department programming that would be attractive to donors on their radar seeking innovative opportunities. This led to more than a million in funding for experiential learning and to send political science students annually on a trip throughout the US south to study sites of civil rights significance. As Dean at A&S I believe each of these experiences prepares me for the varying ways in which to manage budgets, bring in additional revenue, and to expand on proven successes already in action.

Supporting A&S Faculty

The approach I take with faculty governance begins with my own orientation to myself professionally. I am a faculty member. It is the experience of being a faculty member that first opened the door of higher education to me as a career choice. This is who I am and have been at many institutions during challenging times across the country. It is the experience of being one of 4 Black faculty at Clark; of being Montessori grade-school alumni where I once called all of teachers and administrators by their first names, often the only openly-gay faculty in the department, the dubious title of being the youngest faculty member regularly mistaken for a student!, or even the witness as a child that observed how my faculty parents often were treated ‘less than’ – these experiences have provided for me the natural ability to co-partner with colleagues in creating an appreciative culture that rewards excellence, acknowledges success, invests in leadership development and social mobility, and that celebrates diversity in all of its hidden and seen forms.

Though I identify as a member of the faculty, I expressly understand that does not mean every decision made all faculty will like all of the time. In fact, one of the reasons I believe I have achieved the measure of admin success I have so far is largely due to my ability to effectively work with faculty across all kinds of lines of difference to produce forward-thinking collective action that produces tangible results in limited time. From re-structuring bylaws in weeks, to building a new curriculum in one semester, to organizing interdisciplinary on-campus conferences annually, faculty inclusion must be prioritized. Support should be whole. Faculty need support with salary issues, inclusive pedagogy development, classroom management, tech and media knowledge and more. And yes, faculty need support to apply for external grants; especially in fields where many have not as quickly adopted (as others may have) to the external funding process of their research.

UofL is recently a new R-1 (again). I have significant experience with the newer R-1 restructuring and the many concerns of faculty throughout what can be an unsettling roller coaster for some, even those who like the change but want to ensure who they are and what they do (still) have a central place. When I became chair at VCU in 2017, VCU had recently migrated to R-1 (and later to a minority designated institution) but the department faculty and administrative structure was not R-1 ready. As one small example, faculty had few external research grants and even fewer had initial interest to develop the skill mid-career.

Additionally, many senior faculty publications did not meet the standard now being set with newer tenure-track hires. To address this, we established brown bag lunches between faculty; and we established a junior and senior faculty mentoring program. The result: new grants, new course proposals, and new collegial relationships. This is an example of how I would seek to support A&S faculty that may be experiencing significant challenge amidst new expectations with an R-1 status. This new approach, however, cannot sterilize academic freedom nor creativity; hence, it must be recognized and understood that not all disciplines will lend themselves to R-1 sustainability in the same ways; however I believe each academic unit plays a pivotal role in ensuring A&S is one of the top producing colleges in the state in

terms of generating the support for faculty across disciplines to contribute to the research, teaching and service enterprise.

Prioritizing Community Engagement in A&S

Every aspect of my personal and professional life engages community. In my personal life, I have stood on the frontlines for civil rights with the NAACP and for civil liberties with the ACLU. I've trained urban and university police departments in anti-bias and I have volunteered for clinical trials at local hospitals to increase minority representation in vaccine research. At every institution, I have personally engaged community and have created new opportunities for the institutions where I worked to also engage in community. At Clark in Massachusetts, my work as President of the local NAACP chapter led to university-sponsored programming where permissible. At Mississippi State, my work as a member of the Board of Directors at the ACLU helped to organize the first community interracial non-denominational MLK unity choral service and a university sponsored march for human rights in the aftermath of *Ferguson*. In my work at VCU, off-campus I was active in the development of first statewide Black LGBTQ awards program, and re-establishing the city's Human Rights Commission amid the fight to remove confederate monuments from Monument Ave; on-campus I was especially active in community engaged service-learning for academic credit and was among the few early faculty supporters that quickly adopted in my syllabi; I've started a similar model at HU in my classes, but now one that is being implemented in our entire POLS curriculum which is also being beta-tested for the entire campus.

I mention the above experience to convey how embedded 'community' is into who I am as a person. I grew up in a home where there was always someone who did not live there every day. Often, our spare bedroom was occupied by people of all walks of life needing a bed. I was raised to spread the privilege afforded me by way of education. Hence, my expertise in urban politics, space and communities, lends community involvement a natural for me. I see a vital role for A&S to play in the surrounding Louisville and greater Commonwealth area. Increasing ties to the neighborhoods and businesses nearby will further A&S's reach, and expand our opportunity for new investments to support all that we do.

Most Recent Administrative Leadership Outcomes

Here's a sample of what faculty colleagues in Political Science (POLS) and our admin leadership team have recently accomplished at Howard during my leadership tenure:

- The POLS Graduate Program is now ranked in *US News and World Report* (#68)
- The Department successfully hired 6 fulltime faculty members (4 tenure-track Assistant Professors – 3 in International Relations/Comparative Politics, and one in American/Black Politics, 1 Fulltime Lecturer in Pre-Law, and 1 tenured Associate Professor in Black/American Politics and Political Theory). Four of those six new hires are women.
- Sadly, Mrs. Drake, our longtime administrative assistant of nearly 30 years, passed. We successfully hired Ms. Binta Chauncey (she/her) and Glenn Miller (he/they) – a second admin assistant! (For a semester, I was the effective AA).
- Faculty and Staff relocated offices from Locke Hall and all over campus back into our historic home in Douglass Hall.
- Faculty completed the modernization the POLS curriculum and anticipate its implementation next academic year.

- Faculty adopted new department bylaws, and tenure/promotion documents
- Three faculty have earned/successfully applied for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor.
- Staff updated the POLS website to highlight student/faculty success, and to improve student services with downloadable forms and FAQs.
- The Department hired industry experts and leading influencers as part-time faculty to teach new courses in corporate governance, policing, lobbying, disability, campaign management, and pre-law to expose students to real-world career opportunities.
- The Department appointed the first-ever Associate Chair, a tenured woman in the department, to improve the departmental operational efficiencies and shared governance with faculty.
- We hosted a US presidential candidate, annual International Model NATO and Model African Union Conferences, and welcomed several international dignitaries
- POLS undergraduate majors doubled in the past three years. The number of students enrolled in the International Affairs major/minor almost quadrupled; and several faculty in POLS were integral to the development of the Women, Gender, and Sexualities Studies minor
- POLS graduated more than a dozen new students with PhDs, including one that graduated at the tender age of 70 years young!
- Several undergraduate students have won prestigious external awards, including, but not limited to, a Truman, Sasakawa, Douglass, Pickering, Roberts-Harris fellowships and many other internal/external opportunities, and internship placements.

Ravi's Research Record

My academic training, teaching, and research have intersected the broad fields of American Politics and Policy, Urban Policy, LGBTQ+ Policy, African American Studies, Political Theory, and Ethnic Studies. In the American politics sphere I have focused on representation and Black communities. The latter has included significant work on the mayoral dimensions of urban policy in Black communities of majority white cities in the United States generally, southern civil rights movements, and the Black LGBTQ executive leadership experience. In short, I have always been interested in the intersectionality of American urban policy, the LGBTQ experience, and Black communities, and have brought these together in my activity. The corpus of my work has generated funding and a sustained published record. I have a growing record of publication: 3 monographs/edited books; and several refereed articles in many journals in political science and related disciplines.

Presently, I am writing *Black Queer Electoral Politics: Introducing America's Openly LGBTQ Black Politicians*, a book that studies the campaigns and elections of 'out' LGBTQ Black elected officials in a myriad of sub-national level jurisdictions. Examining candidates' contextualization of their sexuality as a political variable, and how Black communities respond to their out candidacies, the book identifies the conditions under which African American communities support openly LGBTQ Black political candidates for public office. Reviewers have noted that, "the proposal and two chapters that were included are all of high quality. The proposal charts out a clear path toward a potentially award-winning book" and "No one is really writing about Black LGBT politics. This will be a groundbreaking and

pioneering book.”

My teaching has encompassed these broad fields as well. I have taught a diverse population of undergraduate and graduate students. I have served as principal adviser and committee member to masters and doctoral students, some of whom are now pursuing the profession. An even more substantial number of undergraduates have gone on to enter the legal profession or aspects of the public service profession. Over the years I have had sustained engagement with students as academic adviser, organizational adviser; and, in building disciplinary and pedagogical units that enhance student professional development and learning.

An Active, University Citizen

As an example of my cross-campus effectiveness, while at VCU, I was asked by the Dean to be the first permanent Co-Chair of the College of Humanities and Sciences Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee wherein for the first time in the committee’s decades long history we established bylaws, a structure of membership to open to students, faculty, and staff, got approval to make the committee a permanent standing committee, and we hosted dialogues on topics including Demystifying Disability, Being Black on Campus, and Understanding the Experiences of Women in Higher Education. To this day it is the only standing committee with representation of staff, students, and faculty from each academic division.

Select Recognition

Recently I was named one of 20 under 40 "Shapers of the Future" worldwide by *Encyclopedia Britannica* in social activism and politics. In 2015, I was named one of 50 “Hero Citizens” by the Andrew Goodman Foundation, an international civil rights organization committed to voting rights. In 2014, I was awarded the Clarence Stone Young Scholar Award from the Urban Politics Section of the American Political Science Association. In 2014, I was also awarded the Outstanding Book Award for *Black Mayors, White Majorities* from the Association for Ethnic Studies. In 2011, I was recognized as one of the “Hidden 105” by *Out Magazine* and “40 Under 40” by *Advocate Magazine*.

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Finally, UofL’s A&S is a great fit for me at this time. I have significant family in the region. Additionally, my research on political representation will be enhanced by being in closer proximity to minority elected officials throughout Kentucky whose careers have yet to be examined. Colleagues, I believe my academic background and the significant aspects of my scholarship, other administrative experience, and national reputation would be valuable for enhancing the A&S at UofL to meet and exceed the strategic goals as outlined in the position profile for future growth and development.

Sincerely,



Ravi K. Perry, Ph.D.