



PHILANDER
SMITH UNIVERSITY

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

MEDIA CONTACT:

S. Nelson

501-541-9173

scole@philander.edu

Philander Smith University Announces Dr. Tionna L. Jenkins as New Board Chair

Little Rock, Ark. (June 10, 2024) — The Philander Smith University Board of Trustees has announced its new slate of officers, with Dr. Tionna L. Jenkins elected as Board Chair effective June 1. A Little Rock native, she is a distinguished public health executive, professor, and entrepreneur who has served on the institution's board since 2018.

With 20 years of public health policy experience, Dr. Jenkins has made significant contributions in her roles as a senior advisor with global foundations and leaders, including the Clinton Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and several presidential libraries. Additionally, Dr. Jenkins and her husband co-own Plate It Healthy, a public health and wellness company offering plant-based and vegan meals through their food truck, along with wellness consultative services. They also run O'nita Lee Foods & Products, an e-commerce business that sells small-batch jams, granola, and cookies.

Her academic achievements include a Ph.D. in public policy from the University of Arkansas, an MPH from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, and a B.S. from Philander Smith College, now Philander Smith University. She also holds certifications in plant-based nutrition and diabetes management from Cornell University and Emory University.

As a 2001 alumna and proud fourth-generation HBCU graduate, Dr. Jenkins has remained actively involved with the university. As a student, she was initiated into the Gamma Alpha Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and served as president of the Natural and Physical Sciences Club, among other leadership roles. She was also crowned and served as Miss Black and Gold 1998-1999, Miss Philander Smith College 1999-2000, and Miss United Negro College Fund (UNCF) 2000-2001.

Other newly elected Philander Smith University Board of Trustees officers include Dr. Patti Freemyer Martin, Vice Chairman, and Rev. Mark Norman, '94, Secretary.

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Founded in 1877, Philander Smith University is one of the oldest private, historically Black institutions of higher learning in Arkansas. A four-year liberal arts University, the institution is affiliated with the United Methodist Church and is the only United Negro College Fund member school in the state. Philander Smith University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of NCA. <https://www.philander.edu/>