

May 9, 2022

Mays Dean Search Committee:

With excitement and humility, I am writing to convey my intent to seek the opportunity to serve as the next Dean of Mays Business School. I am applying because of my desire to help unite Mays as “one school with one spirit and one vision.” As the new Dean of Mays Business School, I would be honored to stand on the shoulders of the leaders who have built the remarkable foundations of our school. I believe we must simultaneously hold onto the rich traditions that define our school, while also being willing to challenge the status quo and embrace the changes that will ensure Mays Business School becomes one of the most preeminent and innovative public business schools in America. In this letter, I will explain why I believe I am prepared for this opportunity and why I hope to receive the chance to lead the school I love as we work together to “advance the world’s prosperity.”

Personal Background at Mays

When I joined Mays Business School as an assistant professor 15 years ago, I never could have imagined all the ways my life would be profoundly influenced by that choice. At Mays Business School, I found a community of exceptional scholars who care deeply about creating impactful knowledge; I found the most extraordinary students on any university campus I know of; I found faculty and staff whose passion for teaching students and developing transformational leaders defines who they are; and I found current and former students, faculty, and staff who choose to let the Aggie core values guide their lives. I could never repay the debt I owe to Texas A&M University and Mays Business School for shaping me as a scholar, a teacher, and a leader. Every professional success I have experienced since 2007 can be traced back to my decision to join Mays Business School. If I am given the opportunity to serve as Dean, my guiding purpose will be to ensure that Mays continues to transform lives the way it has positively transformed mine.

Defining Success as a Dean

If I am given the chance to lead Mays, I will seek to foster increased interdisciplinary collaboration across campus, and I will work closely with external stakeholders including the Dean’s Advisory Board. I believe a Dean should demonstrate *servant leadership*, which includes being humble and teachable as a leader and demonstrating genuine respect and compassion for the people within the organization. A clear vision for the future of Mays Business School must originate with the new Dean, but that vision must be jointly developed and embraced by the Mays leadership team and by faculty, staff, and students throughout the school. Mays Business School needs a new Dean who can unify the college and bring together faculty, staff, students, alumni, and external stakeholders as “one school with one vision and one spirit.”

Our new Dean must embrace the things that move us toward our vision of preeminence, while eliminating the things that distract us from that vision. As a leader, I will strive to surround myself with others who are willing to respectfully challenge my way of thinking. I will not seek to shut down colleagues or advisors who have different or even opposing views, because I believe seeing and understanding a challenge or opportunity from a variety of viewpoints is critical to reaching the best decisions.

Looking to the Future

We stand at a critical inflection point in the history of Mays Business School. Our students are changing; what they care about is changing; the skills and experiences they need for the jobs of the future are changing;

and how they want to experience learning is changing. In addition, expectations about the positive impact of scholarly research are changing, and we will be called upon to demonstrate the societal impact of our scholarship. Even the sources of funding we need to keep Mays on the path to preeminence are changing. The next Dean of Mays Business School must lead our college through a process of adapting and innovating, so that we can embrace the opportunities and challenges before us. Becoming the business school we need to be for the decades ahead will require vision, big ideas, collaboration, and courage. What has worked in the past may not work in the future. I am excited to lead the process of updating our strategic plan to guide Mays into the future, while maintaining our unique position as a tier-one research institution that remains relatively affordable and accessible to the students we exist to serve.

Fundraising and Development

One of the new Dean's responsibilities that I am most excited about is the opportunity to work with the Mays Development Team and the Texas A&M Foundation to build on the fundraising momentum we have experienced in recent years. As a department head, I have been highly engaged in fundraising and building relationships with donors during the last two years, including working closely with the Mays Development Team. We have made numerous trips together to Houston and surrounding areas to visit prospective donors, and I have also hosted multiple prospective donors on campus (even during the pandemic). These efforts led to the creation of a new \$615,000 endowed Main Street Capital Excellence Fund in Accounting and a \$200,000 endowed Foundation Excellence Award scholarship for underrepresented students, among other successes. Fundraising is an activity I genuinely enjoy, and I look forward to every opportunity to tell Mays Business School's amazing story to prospective donors. In a future that will likely reflect continuing reductions in state government support for universities, the new Dean must be prepared to build our school's financial strength through expanding our revenue streams (e.g., executive education, private philanthropy, revenue-generating programs).

Challenges for the New Dean

Forces such as automation and artificial intelligence have already significantly changed the employment landscape for students graduating from business school today, and it's common for employers to say that many of the jobs our graduates will have in the next 20 years are jobs that do not even exist today. That is the environment into which the new Dean must lead our school. We must continually examine and assess whether our programs and our curricula are preparing our students for the jobs of the future. We must also ensure that our students leave Mays Business School with the skills that will allow them to succeed regardless of the next disruption or change: skills like emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and leadership. We can leverage technology and innovation to provide an expanding pool of students with the education they want, when and where they want it. One example of my leadership in this area is the fully online MS Accounting program I announced in Fall 2020, which we are preparing for a Fall 2023 launch. This program will allow Mays to reach a very different profile of student than we normally reach on campus (i.e., mid-career, working professionals) and to deliver a world-class education to these students in a different way (using a combination of asynchronous and synchronous remote delivery). The new Dean will need to identify additional opportunities to innovate and reach a greater number of students.

I believe one common attribute of most preeminent business schools is that they are well known for their preeminent MBA programs. The Mays full-time MBA program is highly ranked (#35 overall in Bloomberg BusinessWeek 2021-22, #25 overall in Fortune Magazine 2021-22, #41 overall in U.S. News and World Report, 2022). Nevertheless, to achieve our vision of national preeminence, another challenge awaiting the new Dean will be to raise the profile, rankings, and impact of our full-time MBA program. It will be critical for the next Dean to lead a process of examining our entire suite of MBA programs to identify ways we can reshape those programs to make them even more competitive on a national level. For example, the structure of our current full-time MBA program and its relatively small enrollment do not allow for the same degree

of specialization that other top MBA programs offer. Similar to an effort I led to “Reimagine PPA” in the James Benjamin Department of Accounting during 2020-2022, I would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with our MBA program leadership team to “Reimagine MBA” in an effort to improve the impact and preeminence of our MBA programs.

Opportunities for the New Dean

The opportunities that await the new Dean of Mays Business School are exciting. As we prepare to begin construction on the newest building in the Mays Business Education Complex, I believe our new building will create numerous opportunities for our school. Our student-centric building will have state-of-the-art classroom space for students in our undergraduate, graduate, and executive education programs. Expanding the clients of our executive education offerings through new strategic partnerships is one example of a growth opportunity the new Dean’s leadership can work to embrace.

I believe another important opportunity for the next Dean is to focus on expanding and enhancing the reputation of Mays Business School outside of Texas. Our business school has a story that deserves to be told beyond Texas. By developing relationships with leading businesses and employers in other important markets such as New York City and Silicon Valley, I will work to share the story of Mays Business School and to open doors for new strategic partnerships and recruiting pipelines for our students. The key to starting these partnerships will, of course, be connecting with graduates of Mays Business School who are leading companies and industries in places across the country and across the world. I have tried to do this during my tenure as department head. In early 2021, I asked Raja Akram, a Mays graduate who is the Deputy CFO and Chief Accounting Officer at Morgan Stanley in New York, and Devina Rankin, a Mays graduate who is CFO of Waste Management in Houston, if they would co-teach a new course for our students about the role of CFOs in providing financial leadership to firms. Raja and Devina taught this course *in-person* for the first time in spring 2022, and it was a tremendous success. Having stepped into the classroom this semester, Raja was so impressed with our students that he told me he “would not rest” until Mays Business School becomes a premier recruiting destination for Morgan Stanley and other investment banks in New York. This partnership with Morgan Stanley would be one small step toward national preeminence for our school, and it is an example of the type of partnerships I will strive to create as Dean of Mays, so that we can provide greater opportunities for our students.

I will share one last example of an opportunity for the new Dean to lead with vision. Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations have rapidly become one of the most important areas receiving attention from companies and investors, but I believe we have not yet sufficiently embraced ESG as an emphasis in our teaching and research at Mays. ESG is not a temporary fad or trend; I believe students and employers, now and in the future, will care deeply about topics like social impact and sustainability. I believe Mays can increase its impact toward “advancing the world’s prosperity” if we bring heightened emphasis to ESG across our curricula and prepare our students to lead in these important areas. I believe Mays should consider creating a Center or Institute focused on ESG, to help us expand our understanding of environmental, social, and governance-related issues, and to promote scholarship in those areas and the integration of those topics into our college-wide curricula.

Responsibility to Lead Scholarship at Mays

One of the new Dean’s other important responsibilities will be to drive academic excellence in our classrooms as well as excellence in scholarship and research, as defined by the highest national and international standards. I believe deeply that exceptional scholarship and the creation and dissemination of impactful research positively impact every aspect of who we are as a business school. Scholarly research is not an isolated activity confined to ivory towers; to the contrary, impactful scholarly research allows faculty members to bring knowledge and passion into the classroom; it teaches students to challenge conventional

wisdom; it brings credibility and accolades to Mays Business School; and it brings relevant insights to leaders and thinkers inside and outside of academia. I am proud of my research record as a scholar, having published numerous studies in the highest levels of scholarly journals in accounting and management, including one study that received the 2021 Distinguished Contributions to the Accounting Literature Award from our national academic organization, The American Accounting Association. My research has also received multiple Best Paper Awards and is frequently cited in financial media, and the latest (2022) research rankings indicate that during the most recent six-year period from 2015-2021, I am the #7 most highly cited Accounting scholar in the world (see [here](#)). With my record of impactful research and my respect for scholarly research, I am prepared to lead the college's efforts to continue creating impactful knowledge.


Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

I believe that an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) is essential to Mays Business School's becoming one of the most preeminent public business schools in America. I believe deeply in the importance of DE&I, and I have prioritized DE&I during my years of leadership as a department head. For example, I started an initiative to raise endowed funds in order to offer greater scholarship support to underrepresented students and to create a learning community that will support underrepresented students through friendship, leadership opportunities, and academic support. I also helped to restart our department's chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA), and I became the NABA faculty advisor in Fall 2020. In addition, I have led our department's outreach efforts with Prairie View A&M University. Through these ongoing efforts, we are working to identify ways we can deepen the association between the accounting programs at Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M. I have also worked to diversify the membership of the Accounting Department Advisory Council, so that the Council itself reflects the types of diversity we are striving to foster in our department. I would be honored to help lead Mays' efforts to continue improving its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As part of this effort, I will create a new DE&I Advisory Council to help our Mays Leadership Team understand the different ways we can improve, including through faculty hiring and student recruiting and retention.

Conclusion

If given the opportunity to serve as the next Dean of Mays Business School, my commitment will be to lead Mays toward our vision to become one of the most preeminent and innovative public business schools in America and to leave Mays Business School better than I found it. It would be the honor of a lifetime to lead Mays, and I am grateful for the opportunity I have to apply for this position. In the list of references I am submitting, I have included a variety of business and academic leaders, each of whom can provide a unique perspective on my leadership abilities.

Respectfully,



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