



FAMU STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Tallahassee, Florida 32307-4000

JUSTIN BRUNO

*Student Body President/University
Trustee*

Tuesday, November 28, 2017

Dear Student Body,

Let me start off by saying that it has been a high honor and great responsibility to serve you these past years, and I am thankful for my time and experiences with all of you here at Florida A&M University (FAMU).

Since the election chaos that denied me a full term in 2016, my family and I have engaged in periodic discussions regarding my future in student leadership at FAMU. Last spring, after painstaking consideration, I ran for and won a second term, genuinely believing that the moment called for me to put aside my own doubts and frustration and instead seek to pave a way forward for what was – and still remains – a badly broken student governing process. I believed it was critical for me to amplify the voices of those who were dedicated to effective and responsible governance, and while I still believe that was the right course of action, experiences over the past several months have convinced me it is simply not possible in the current climate of FAMU.

From serving in my role as a student senator, to serving as student body vice president, to now serving my second term as president, I have pushed myself and those around me as hard and far as I possibly could in efforts to make a meaningful, positive impact. I've worked to instill stability, certainty, and predictability in the halls of this Student Government Association (SGA). I've fought to fulfill the basic functions of any student government, like keeping the administration honest and transparent, responding to the needs of everyday students and enhancing the quality of student life.

Regrettably, not only has that not been easy, but it has been unusually and bafflingly difficult given the disruptive influences that thrive from increased polarization and ideological rigidity that leads to dysfunction, disorder, and chaos.

At a moment when it seems that student leadership is more defined by our discord and our dysfunction than by our own values and principles, let me note a somewhat obvious point: these offices that we hold

are not ours indefinitely. We are not here simply to mark time, and there are times when we must risk our position in favor of our principles. For me, now is such a time.

After prayer and careful consideration, I have decided to resign as Student Body President and Member of the FAMU Board of Trustees, effective immediately.

It must be said that I do so with no small measure of regret. Undoubtedly, there is regret because of the state of our disunion; regret because of the disrepair and destructiveness of our current actions; regret because of the indecency of our discourse, and regret because of the coarseness of our "leadership".

That regret came full circle just days ago when the Student Senate made a motion to impeach me. This is the fourth attempt to remove me from office in as many years, and the action is similar to that which was brought against several of my predecessors. And while all of the previous attempts have failed – just as their most recent salvo against me would have as well (if not for my resignation) – it does beg the question: who in their right mind would want to continue to endure such nonsense? And sadly, the nonsense I speak of has become the "new normal."

Make no mistake though, their actions are just a small symptom of a much larger cancer. We can all look forward to the day when this will not be so. In my estimation, it is time for our complicity and our accommodation of the unacceptable to end. This "new normal" of accommodation and undesirable order has crippled our ability to make progress on behalf of those we serve.

Despite this, we must never adjust to this "new normal." We must never regard the regular and casual undermining of the norms and ideals FAMU instilled in us as normal. Student leaders must stop the personal attacks, the threats against principles and institution, the flagrant disregard for truth and decency, the reckless provocations, most often for the pettiest and most personal reasons, reasons having nothing whatsoever to do with the fortunes of the people that we have been elected to serve. None of these appalling features of our current service should ever be regarded as normal. We must never allow ourselves to lapse into thinking that this is just the way things are now. We must stop pretending that the degradation of our politics and the reckless conduct of some in student leadership is normal. It is not normal. Reckless, outrageous and undignified behavior has become excused and countenanced as telling it like it is when it is actually just reckless, outrageous and undignified.

Gone are the days of student leaders like Patricia Stephens Due, Wilhelmina Jakes, Carrie Patterson, Daryl Parks, Kristen Tucker, Andrew & Monique Gillum, Ramon Alexander, and Phillip Agnew. I reject the idea though that we cannot return to these times and produce these type of leaders, and if we can't then I must ask – why are we here?

Right now, we are dishonoring our principles and forsaking our obligations. To me, those things are far more important than politics. And so, I have made the decision to free myself from the current environment. I know this spell will eventually break and we will be all the better for it and so will FAMU.

And so that is the story. Nothing less, nothing more; I wanted you to have it from me directly, unfiltered and unvarnished.

Page 3

I leave you in the hands of an able and capable Vice President, Devin Harrison. I remain thankful to him and our cabinet. I trust that with the remaining months of our term, they will continue to work hard on your behalf.

I want to thank you, the students of FAMU, for giving me this tremendous opportunity to serve and your steadfast support and confidence in me since I first arrived on the highest of 7 hills. Despite how I may feel today, I remain optimistic about the future of this great institution and all of those Rattlers yet unborn. With the short time I have left in undergraduate school, I will turn my full focus to continued personal, mental, and spiritual growth, academic and professional pursuits and most importantly, life after FAMU.

In short and in the words of Auntie Maxine, "I'm reclaiming my time." May God bless you all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Bruno". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Justin" being more prominent than the last name "Bruno".

Justin Bruno

Cc: Mr. Devin Harrison, Student Body Vice President
Mr. Rakeem Ford, Student Senate President
Dr. Larry Robinson, Interim President
Mr. Kelvin Lawson, Chairman, Board of Trustees
Members, Florida A&M University Board of Trustees