

# Jonathan W. Ambrose, Ph.D.

---

April 10, 2025

**University of Louisiana Monroe**  
**Presidential Search Committee**

c/o Mr. Rick Gallot, Search Committee Chair & UL System President  
Board of Supervisors  
University of Louisiana System  
1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-300  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Mr. Gallot and Members of the ULM Presidential Search Committee,

Higher education has the transformational power to change lives. I know this because it changed my family's. My father, a first-generation college graduate, reshaped his future through education and forged a new way for himself and those who followed him. I didn't know it then, but the University of Louisiana at Monroe would give me that same powerful change. My introduction to ULM began prior to stepping into a graduate classroom. As a high school football player at Tioga High School, I first introduced to campus, then Northeast Louisiana University, competing in a 7v7 tournament. I still remember stepping onto that field, unaware that I was standing in a place that would later play a defining role in my life. Years later, I returned to that same campus as a graduate student in Criminal Justice (M.A., 2004), delving myself in a rigorous academic environment that honed my skills and ignited my journey into leadership.

ULM is where my personal and professional lives merged. During my time as a graduate student, I met my wife, a devoted undergraduate alumna, and we established a life founded on principles this institution imparted: excellence, perseverance, and service. Monroe was greater than a college town; it was the bedrock of our shared heritage. Subsequently, working as a Monroe police officer, I swore to protect this community and witnessed firsthand Northeast Louisiana's citizens' strength and spirit. Now, I am prepared to return, not as a student or as an officer, but as ULM's next president. This is not merely a professional accomplishment for me; it is a reflective coming home to lead the university that shaped us.

The future president of ULM must be more than an innovative and strategic leader. They must be a bold champion of the institution, willing to fight for its future at a time when the very foundations of higher education are being challenged. College and university campuses are facing declining enrollments, shifting public attitudes, unstable funding models, and increasing competition for decreasing numbers of students. These real and pressing challenges require a president capable of thinking analytically, acting decisively, and leading with vigor and conviction. These are the kinds of challenges I have taken on and overcome throughout my career. As Vice President for the Student Experience at Mississippi College, I am a part of the President's Cabinet, where I have led institutional change in student success, enrollment growth, and operational efficiency so that all initiatives align with our mission and long-term sustainability. In years when institutions have to

accomplish more with less, I've spearheaded campus-wide solutions that generate impact without diminishing quality.

My American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship at the University of Mississippi deepened my understanding of what it takes to lead a complex public institution through today's volatile higher education landscape. Working closely with Chancellor Glenn Boyce and senior leadership, I witnessed first-hand how bold, reactive approaches can drive institutional resilience and growth. I witnessed efforts that produced the largest freshman class in Ole Miss's history, embracing cutting-edge fiscal strategies to ensure long-term sustainability, and cultivating high-level donor relationships to drive research and innovation. These experiences confirmed for me that university leadership today is not merely a matter of responsible stewardship, it is about courageous advocacy, imaginative vision, and an unyielding resolve for revolutionary change.

At the heart of any great university are its students, and that is what gives my leadership its greatest sense of impact and purpose. A university's highest value is not necessarily in degrees conferred, but in lives changed. At Mississippi College, I have led integrated, student-centric initiatives that positioned retention and recruitment at all-time highs. Under my leadership, we achieved the institution's highest first-year retention rate in history, a record 80%. These numbers are more than statistics; they represent the stories of students whose lives have been changed and futures reshaped. To drive this success, I developed and launched initiatives like the Freshman Leadership Initiative and the Servant Leadership Minor, mission-focused programs designed to develop the whole student. These programs prepare students not only to achieve success in their careers, but to lead with integrity, serve with purpose, and thrive throughout their lives with confidence and resilience.

ULM's recent 22% growth in first-time freshmen and 72.62% retention rate indicate diligence and real momentum, but my desire is to take this momentum and make it a movement. In this challenging time, we can't simply retain progress; we must become bold architects of change. At ULM, I will lead the way with an unwavering focus on student success, because when students succeed, institutions succeed. I envision a university where every Warhawk is more than just a number. I envision it being an institution where each student has a narrative, where their path is navigated, and their potential is maximized. That begins with an integrated, data-informed vision of student success, one that tracks progress but inspires it. We will build a culture of belonging that makes persistence inevitable and excellence the norm. At the very core of this work is one abiding truth: our students are not just our mission, they are our promise. I will work tirelessly each day to honor that promise—ensuring every ULM student is equipped not only to succeed, but to lead, to serve, and to make a meaningful impact on the world.

Regional public universities can no longer rely on funding solely based on state appropriations. Fiscal responsibility must be diversified, strategic, and future-focused. A university's capacity to transform lives depends not only on its vision, but on the resources necessary to bring that vision to life. At Mississippi College, I elevated community engagement by creating student-led philanthropic efforts that have raised over \$604,000 for Children's of Mississippi and supporting the launch of our Bicentennial Campaign to expand the endowment. My ACE Fellowship at Ole Miss refined these skills, allowing me to engage in senior-level budgeting and major gift development. At ULM, I will bring that same tenacity to oversee its \$106.5 million budget and grow its \$87 million endowment. I envision a close partnership with the ULM Foundation, leveraging private investment to fund scholarships, renovate facilities, and underwrite programs. During a period of uncertain funding, I will be disciplined and innovative, ensuring ULM not only survives but prospers.

Transforming lives through learning also requires a vision for research and innovation. ULM's pursuit of Carnegie R2 status is bold and a worthy challenge. I will lead ULM through the uncertainty of research dollars in the current federal climate with strategic vision and resolve. Knowing the unreliability of federal dollars, I will act to diversify revenue streams and form partnerships in order to ensure the vitality of our research enterprise. My ACE Fellowship gave me a front-row seat at research planning at a large R1 institution, where I learned the importance of political activism, federal relationships, and private partnership in diversifying resources and stimulating innovation while keeping students the focus.

Athletics on college campuses are a unifying element that raise institutional spirit and identity. As a member of the 2008 Saint Peters University Hall of Fame (football), I am familiar with its power to inspire pride and a feeling of community. My ACE Fellowship at the University of Mississippi strengthened this perception with exposure to the Division I athletic strategy. At ULM, I will use this understanding to serve the Warhawks' \$20.9 million athletic program, working with the Athletic Director to bring financial stability through focused fundraising.

As a Louisiana native and a former Monroe police officer (2005–2006), I value Northeast Louisiana's resilience and ULM's place at the region's heart. My professional career has been marked by building significant partnerships, enhancing educational access for military students via collaboration with the Mississippi Army National Guard, and aligning institutional priorities with regional and community needs. At ULM, I will build on partnerships with industry, government, and local leadership, maximizing the university's relevance and reach. With Louisiana's only public College of Pharmacy and the VCOM partnership, ULM is well-positioned to be a leader in health sciences and workforce development.

Beyond my professional qualifications, my personal experience with ULM fuels my passion for its future. From my first steps on campus as a high school athlete, to earning my graduate degree, meeting my wife, serving the city of Monroe, and now seeking the presidency, my life bears witness to this university's transformative power. I do not believe in leading from behind. I lead with vision, conviction, and an unshakable commitment to excellence. If given the opportunity to serve as ULM's next president, I would champion a culture of innovation, student success, and institutional growth. Together, we will build a university that leads, inspires, and alters the lives of students and our communities.

Thank you for considering my candidacy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JWA', written in a cursive style.

Jonathan W Ambrose, Ph.D.

# Jonathan W. Ambrose, Ph.D.

---

## PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

---

Seasoned higher education leader with a passion and commitment to more than 18 years of fostering student success, managing campus operations at scale, and spearheading strategic initiatives that drive growth, institutional sustainability, and long-term success. Accomplished professional recognized for steadfast commitment to improving the living and learning environment, coupled with proven successes in designing and implementing policy, developing high-impact teams, and forging strong partnerships across key stakeholders within diverse student, faculty, and community-wide constituencies. A student-centered professional with experience in managing change, public communications, and strategic planning in the development of changes that yield measurable results in improving student retention and engagement, and the effectiveness of the organization.

---

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

---

### MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE

---

June 2014-Present

Clinton, MS

#### The Institution

Mississippi College is a four-year, medium-sized private, faith-based university of liberal arts and sciences. Founded in 1826, Mississippi College, located in Clinton, MS, is the second-oldest Baptist-affiliated college or university in the United States and the oldest college or university in Mississippi. MC has an enrollment of approximately 4700 students within the Schools of Business, Christian Studies & the Arts, Education, Humanities & Social Sciences, Law, Nursing, and Science & Mathematics. Mississippi College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

- **Vice President for the Student Experience (2024–Present)**
- **Associate Vice President for the Student Experience & Dean of Students (2019–2023)**
- **Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs (2016–2019)**
- **Associate Dean of Students (2014-2016)**

#### **Executive Leadership and Strategic Vision**

- **Senior Leadership Role:** Served on the President's Cabinet to provide strategic guidance and leadership in determining institutional priorities. Fostered an environment of focus on student-centered learning, retention, and engagement. Provided championing for initiatives that would improve campus life while remaining within the faith-based mission of Mississippi College and aligning with its long-term strategic plan.
- **COVID-19 Leadership:** Led Mississippi College's COVID-19 task force, which developed a comprehensive strategy to deliver academic continuity, health protocols, and student

support services. Led the implementation of policies that kept residence halls open and delivered face-to-face instruction, finding an important balance between community health and the sanctity of the student experience in that difficult environment.

- **Data-Informed Decision Making:** Applied data analysis to policymaking; student feedback and performance metrics leveraged to target student service and methods of engagement. Ensuring continuous culture improvement via feedback loops and regular assessment of programs to meet the ever-evolving needs of students.

### Improving Student Experience and Retention

- **Record Retention Achievement:** In conjunction with data-informed strategies, student wellness programs, and community engagement, I led Mississippi College to retain 80% of first-time full-time freshmen for the first time in the college's history, speaking volumes about student success through a holistic approach-from academic achievement to mental health and social integration.
- **Program Innovation:** Developed Servant Leadership Minor, positioning Mississippi College as one of the leading institutions offering faith-integrated leadership education. This innovative minor would provide students with the skill sets required to apply ethical leadership principles both in their professional and community lives, so that they will be prepared, through the knowledge gained, for responsible roles of civic leadership.
- **New Student Engagement Programs:** In the development and implementation of an academic Freshman Leadership Initiative Program aimed at the early development of engagement, connection, and leadership skills, which has become vital in effectively working towards student retention and a sense of belonging among freshmen.

### Resource Development and Fundraising

- **Significantly Impactful Fundraising Efforts:** Successfully raised over \$604,000 via student-led philanthropic campaigns for Children's of Mississippi. Evidence of commitment to community impact and student philanthropy was demonstrated through these initiatives that empowered students to be more involved in giving back to the community, thus fostering a service culture.
- **Bicentennial Campaign Development:** Collaborated with University Advancement to develop Mississippi College's Bicentennial Campaign. Served as the primary point of contact for strategic development and planning by targeting potential donors and alumni mobilization in preparation for the college's 200th anniversary celebration. This will increase the endowment significantly, give more funding to new initiatives, and enrich relationships with the alumni.
- **Advancement Experience as ACE Fellow:** A one-year fellowship was served at the University of Mississippi to address strategic high-level fundraising, alumni engagement, and donor cultivation strategies for a structurally sound advancement operation. Participate in advancement initiatives and capital campaigns to continue to develop the skills necessary to secure major gifts and other resources to ensure the long-term growth and development of institutions.

### Diversity Issues, Inclusion, and Compliance with Policies

- **ADA and Title IX Leadership:** Promoted campus access through automating accommodations processes, reducing administrative barriers, and fostering a more inclusive

campus culture that welcomes all students. Oversee compliance with Title IX, VAWA, ADA, and other federal and state regulations to foster a campus culture of equity and inclusion.

- **Partnership with Mississippi Army National Guard:** Forged a strategic partnership with the Mississippi Army National Guard to develop new avenues for National Guardsmen to register and enhance their leadership potential. The program provided both recruitment opportunities and leadership development programs intended to increase access to higher education among military-affiliated students.
- **Diversity Programs and Student Advocacy:** Implemented programming and initiatives related to diversity in areas such as civic engagement, volunteerism, and cultural awareness. Conducted policy reviews and training among faculty/staff to work toward an inclusive campus culture embracing diversity of thought, background, and experience. Pioneered the establishment of the first Multicultural Student Association at Mississippi College, a student organization that helps foster interaction, support, and belonging among minority students on campus.

### Campus Facilities and Infrastructure Improvement

- **Major Renovation Projects:** Partnered with the Chief Operating Officer on a series of transformational renovation projects aimed at revitalizing campus living at Mississippi College. This included a \$4.3 million comprehensive renovation of Hederman and Gunter residence halls and a \$2.1 million renovation of Ratliff Residence Hall to meet the changing student needs. The areas in which these renovations have taken place include dorm room renovations, adding common space improvements, and new facilities for making life more comfortable and satisfying for the students.
- **Residential Life Space Enhancements:** Co-led a \$1 million project with the Chief Operating Officer to modernize facilities for studying and leisure in six residence hall lobbies. Modern facilities are furnished for concentrations in academics, relaxation, and community involvement within residential spaces.
- **Long-term Campus Planning:** Engaged in the planning of future campus development and the advocacy of student-centered facilities for academic and co-curricular needs. Played a key role in facility and improvement plans to ensure the alignment of the physical infrastructure to Mississippi College's mission of supporting a holistic student experience.

### Data-Informed Program Development and Evaluation

- **Student Feedback and Assessment Models:** Developed a multi-dimensional model for eliciting, collating, and compiling students' experiences, satisfaction, and needs through systematic feedback. The capture of this data informed the refinement of student services, adapted programming, and resourced decisions that would positively influence student outcomes and engagement.
- **AI-Driven Student Support:** Used AI-driven technology to implement truly effective and personalized support for students with needs and an array of elements, which includes establishing the Mississippi College Food Pantry to serve food-insecure students. This support structure enabled Mississippi College to be much more proactive in the challenges of its students and to further advance its support services on campus.
- **SACSCOC Reaffirmation Leadership:** Led critical elements of Mississippi College's fifth-year review and ten-year reaffirmation with the Southern Association of Colleges and

Schools Commission on Colleges. This included leading data collection, reporting, and policy reviews to ensure compliance while positioning to be successful in all areas of accreditation.

### **Enrollment Management and Growth Initiatives**

- **Record Freshman Enrollment:** Conceptualized and executed strategic recruitment plans with the Enrollment Management and Admissions staff, which successfully recruited the largest freshman class ever at Mississippi College. The need to align student support programs seamlessly with the overall goals of recruitment for better matriculation was emphasized to ensure student success.
- **First-Year and Second-Year Experience Programs:** I initiated the First-Year Experience Office and Second-Year initiatives by providing structural support for students transitioning into college life. Examples of these programs include orientation, peer mentorship, academic advising, and leadership opportunities that together enhance student retention and engagement.
- **Community and Civic Partnerships:** Established strong, effective relationships with local and regional groups, increasing the visibility of Mississippi College and making it more desirable to prospective students. Aggressively pursued partnerships that support the mission of the college and offer students relevant opportunities for service and leadership development.

---

### **AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP (ACE)**

**2023-2024**

The American Council on Education is a membership organization that mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice. ACE represents more than 1,700 college and university presidents and related associations. This program ran concurrent with my full-time possession.

#### **ACE Fellow**

##### **Host Institution: The University of Mississippi**

The University of Mississippi, affectionately known as Ole Miss, is a public research university in Oxford, Mississippi, United States, with a medical center in Jackson. It is Mississippi's oldest public university and is the state's largest by enrollment with 27,124 students (2024-2025). Ole Miss is included in an elite group of R1: Doctoral Universities – Highest Research Activity by the Carnegie Classification, it has a long history of producing leaders in public service, academics, and business. Its 16 academic divisions include a major medical school, nationally recognized schools of accountancy, law, and pharmacy, and an Honors College acclaimed for a blend of academic rigor, experiential learning, and opportunities for community action. Recognized among the nation's most beautiful, Ole Miss's main campus is in Oxford, which is routinely acknowledged as one of the country's best college towns.

##### **Mentor: Dr. Glenn Boyce, Chancellor**

- Collaborated closely with the Chancellor on significant initiatives related to advancement, alumni relations, and fundraising. This involvement provided deep insights into the intricacies of high-level fundraising strategies and donor engagement.

- Actively participated with the senior leadership team on key issues, including enrollment management during the enrollment of the largest freshman class in Ole Miss history, and contributed to the adoption of the FY25 budget.
- Worked closely with the Chancellor and athletics leadership to navigate the evolving landscape of Division 1 sports. This involved strategic discussions on the future direction of the university's athletic programs, ensuring that they remained competitive and aligned with the broader goals of the institution. Through this engagement, a deeper understanding of the complex challenges facing collegiate athletics was gained.

---

## SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY, HAMMOND, LA

---

2006-2014

**Director, Student Union (2007-2014)**

**Assistant Director, Physical Plant Services (2006-2007)**

### **Leadership on Campus Facilities and Operations**

- **Facilities Management:** Coordinated in all aspects of the Student Union including facility reservations, set-up/tear-down, and logistics for meetings, conferences, and programs. Provided direct oversight of skilled trades maintenance work and served as a contract coordinator for custodial services to maintain an environment that is student-centered.
- **Judicial and Conduct Leadership:** Presided over the Judicial Affairs Student Code of Conduct Board in support of campus standards of behavior and oversight of the application of the student code of conduct.

### **Strategic Accomplishments**

- **Technological Enhancements:** Provided technology solutions that streamlined the room reservation process, making it more efficient and easier to schedule for campus and external customers.
- **Revenue Generation:** Provided an inviting atmosphere for external organizations. Increased facility usage and created additional revenue through increased event hosting.
- **Major Construction Project:** Co-led the \$32 million renovation of the War Memorial Student Union, a major expansion that brought modernization to the facility to further support and engage the campus community. Facility improvements were finalized for student activities and involvement.
- **Student Engagement Initiatives:** Successfully created building utilization that supported Freshman Welcome Week to build an inclusive environment for entering students and foster community building.

### **Operations and Contract Management (Assistant Director, Physical Plant Services)**

- **Comprehensive Facility Management:** Coordinated custodial, material, and service contracts with 60 buildings on a 365-acre campus. Operated the Physical Plant Warehouse, Key Shop, and Moving Crew to support daily operations for smooth facility readiness for operations.
- **Fleet Management and Compliance:** Provided services as Fleet Manager for state compliance concerning operations of vehicle fleets, improving the reliability of services.



- **Infrastructure Development:** Initiated the university's shuttle system and procured new service contracts to bring a better campus transportation experience that supported the accessibility of the campus.
- **Branding and Institutional Identity:** Managed branding efforts that redefined the image of the campus, helping increase Southeastern's prominence as a modern and student-focused institution.

---

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

---

### Mississippi College

Assistant Professor, *Teacher Education and Leadership* (2015-Present)

- HED 6503: Student Development Theories/ Ethical Inquires -Student Affairs in Higher Education
- EDU 190: Foundations of Servant Leadership
- EDU 490: Servant Leadership Field Experience
- IDS 491: Servant Leadership Practicum

### Southeastern Louisiana University

Instructor, *Center for Student Excellence* (2010-2011)

- UNIV 101; Freshman Seminar

### Career Technical College, Monroe, LA

Instructor, *Department of Criminal Justice* (2006)

- Criminal Law

---

## LEADERSHIP CONSULTING

---

### Continental Tires the Americas

- *Foundations of Effective Leadership* – Onsite Workshop, (July 2024)
- *Empowering Leaders & Building Teams* – Offsite Workshops, (December 2023, January 2024)

### Educational and Community Leadership Workshops

- *Today's Leaders* – Clinton Christian School Student Council, (July 2023)
- *Leadership in Action* – On-stage interview with Mississippi Speaker of the House Philip Gunn, (April 2023)
- *What is Leadership?* – Leadership Clinton, Clinton, MS, (January 2021, January 2023, January 2025)
- *Leadership Professional Development* – Northside Elementary School, Clinton, MS, (August 2022)
- *Leadership Redefined* – Mt. Salus Christian School, Clinton, MS, (May 2021)

---

## INVOLVEMENT & AFFILIATIONS

---

### Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

- On-Site Reaffirmation Committee Member, (2022–Present)
- Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee Member, (2019–2022)

## University Service

### *Mississippi College*

- **Committee Involvement:** Active member on numerous university committees, representing the student experience team in collaboration with academic and administrative offices. Contributions include strategic initiatives on retention, sexual assault awareness, strategic planning, enrollment, and the Provost Search Committee.
- **Leadership Roles:**
  - Chair, Student Activities and Services Committee, (2019–Present)
  - Chair, Housing Task Force, (2019–Present)
  - Chair, Student Intervention Team (SIT), (2014–Present)
  - Chair, New Student Orientation Committee, (2014–2020)
  - Chair, COVID-19 Opening Task Force (Spring 2021 and Fall 2020)

### *Southeastern Louisiana University*

- Represented Student Affairs on 12 university committees, chairing two staff search committees and advising two student organizations.

## Community Involvement

- Leadership Clinton, Facilitator, (2020–Present)
- Brilla Soccer Ministries, Board of Directors, (2017–Present)

---

## AWARDS & HONORS

---

Athletic Hall of Fame, Football, 2008, Saint Peter's University

---

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

---

**Monroe Police Department, Monroe, LA (2005-2006)**

Police Officer

---

## EDUCATION

---

**Doctor of Philosophy, Urban Higher Education**

Jackson State University: Jackson, MS

**December 2014**

**Masters of Arts, Criminal Justice**

University of Louisiana, Monroe: Monroe Louisiana

**December 2004**

**Bachelor of Arts, Criminal Justice, Specialization in Jurisprudence**

Saint Peters University: Jersey City, NJ

**May 2003**