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Xavier University Announces 67 New Leadership, Faculty and Staff Appointments

New Orleans LA – [Xavier University of Louisiana](http://www.xavier.edu) introduced 67 new staff and faculty for the 2018-19 school year – including three major appointments – during the annual semester-opening fall Faculty/Staff Institute.

Xavier University President Reynold Verret, PhD. announced that Patrice Bell-Mercadel, who joined Xavier University as Chief Marketing and Communications Officer in Fall 2017, has been appointed Chief of Staff for the university. She will be charged with advancing Xavier’s strategic goals and will be essential to the implementation of Xavier University’s long-term future vision. She will maintain oversight of the Marketing and Communications function.

Verret announced a second appointment to his Cabinet. Curtis Wright joined Xavier University in August as Vice President of Student Affairs. V.P. Wright will guide student affairs into the future to meet the changing needs of today’s students.

Verret also announced the appointment of an academic leader in Dr. Camellia Okpodu. As the new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dean Okpodu is integral to creating an environment that embraces and expands the Arts and joins it to the STEM programs in an effort to create graduates who are capable of making real impacts throughout all corners of the world.

Additional new staff and faculty were also announced. They are listed below by academic department or support office:

Center for Undergraduate Research and Graduate Opportunity – Dr. Melvenia Martin, CURGO Associate Director and McNair Director

College of Pharmacy – Dr. Kierra Dotson, Clinical Assistant Professor; Dr. George Nawas, Clinical Assistant Professor; Varsha Castro Gusman, Clinical Assistant Professor ; Demikka Swopes, Research Assistant; Krishna Shah, Research Associate, and Dr. Rania El-Desoky, Dr. Micah Johnson, Dr. Anthony Nguyen, and Dr. Bolanie Soyombo (COP Residents)

Confucius Institute – Fangfang Hao, Supervisor of Non-credit Chinese Language Courses; Fan Wang, Supervisor, of Cultural affairs, Festivals, Workshops, Student Travel.; Lin Wang, Visiting Artist/Painter; and Guanru Yin, Head Teacher of Chinese Classes

Counseling and Wellness Center – Dorian Johnson, Counselor

Department of Chemistry – Jordon Coward, Wendy Dang, Kyazia Felder, Cory Gettridge, Linh Ha, Tyra Ivory, Jedera Nwoke, Timothy Spearman Jr., and Jazmin Stenson (BUILD Lab Technicians); and Pinghua Ling, Post-Doc Research Assistant

Department of English – Dr. Jimmy Worthy, Assistant Professor

Department of Languages – Dr. Carmen Cosme, Visiting Assistant Professor

Department of Mass Communications – Dr. Rachel L. Grant, Assistant Professor

Department of Physics and Computer Science – Dr. Shafiqul Islam, Assistant Professor; and Dr. Nawa Raj Pokhrel, Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology – Dr. Erika Perez, Assistant Professor

Department of Public Health Sciences – Dr. Amy Thierry, Assistant Professor; and Julie Hagan, Internship Practicum Coordinator

Department of Speech Pathology – Dr. Celeste Parker, Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology – Dr. Charity Clay, Assistant Professor

Division of Education and Counseling – Dr. Jimmy Caldwell, Assistant Professor; Shatiqua Mosby-Wilson, Assistant Professor; and Tonia Muse-Baker and Daphine Barnes (Site Mentors)

Graduate Program Office – Ryann Handy, Graduate Recruiter/Enrollment

Information Technology Center – Kanetra Tillotson, Sr. Applications Programmer

Office of Admissions – Jazmane Brown, Assistant VP, Enrollment Management/Director of Admissions

Office of Athletics Administration – Dyneisha Jackson, Intramurals; and Yhann Plummer, Head Coach, Track and Field /Cross Country

Office of Auxiliary Services – Monique Augustine-Fleury, Event/AES Marketing Specialist

Office of Campus Police – Jenard Blaine, Lissette Bolton, Rochella Iglus, Shelby Llopis, Jeremy Oden, and William West (Police Officers)

Office of Career Services – Ashley Dow, Career Coach; and Monique Worthy, Program Coordinator

Office of Career Placement – Monique Worthy, Program Coordinator

Office of Communications and Marketing – Ashley Irvin, Communications Specialist

Office of Fiscal Services – Kimberla Lemon, Special Projects Coordinator; Vi'Delaiah Memmezzwattay, Accounts Payable Clerk

Office of Housing – Anita Calvin, Residence Hall Director

Office of Student Academic Success – Dr. Richard Prevost, Chemistry Resource Center Coordinator; and Sean Hickey, Chemistry Resource Center Instructor

Office of Student Financial Aid – Christina Richardson, Technical Services Specialist

Physical Plant – John Carter, Maintenance Technician; and Keith Washington, Engineer

Registrar's Office – Marynaomi Galatas, Administrative Assistant

University Library – Ashaki Harron, Library Associate; and Kayla Siddell, Assistant Librarian

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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier was recently ranked as the nation's #2 HBCU (Historically Black College and University) by [College Consensus](#), a unique college ratings website that aggregates publisher rankings and student reviews, in its newly released publication, *Best HBCUs for 2018*. Xavier was also among the four colleges selected by Beyonce and her [BeyGood Foundation](#) as the recipient of a Homecoming Scholars Scholarship Award announced after her much lauded performance at Coachella, while actor and comedian Kevin Hart has joined forces with UNCF and KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) to help 18 more KIPP students earn a college degree – three of whom were Xavier students.

That's just the latest in national accolades Xavier has received as one of the best universities in the country. Most notably, XULA is ranked as the best value among southern regional colleges and universities in the 2018 edition of "Best Colleges" by the *U.S. News Media Group*. Xavier also ranked No.1 in its grouping, heading the list of only 15 schools that qualified for the Southern Region category listed under "Great Schools, Great Prices."

At Xavier *eXcellence awaits yoU*. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. Take a moment to learn more about how Xavier is preparing students for the future at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD4mb-jYzC8>. To book interviews about our recent accomplishments and/or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, education, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications and the arts, contact Diana Hernandez at (504) 520-5120 or dhernan1@xula.edu.



Patrice Bell-Mercadel
Chief of Staff



Dr. Camellia Okpodu
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences



Curtis Wright
Vice President of Student Affairs