



**NORTHWEST ARKANSAS  
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. COUNCIL**  
P.O. BOX 3453 FAYETTEVILLE, AR 72702  
[www.nwamlk.org](http://www.nwamlk.org)

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**Dear Members of the Board of Trustees and President Bobbitt:**

The Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas stands at the crossroads of history since its founding in 1871 as the Arkansas Industrial University, a land-grant institution of higher education for the purpose of uplifting the lives of citizens of the State of Arkansas. Despite having just celebrated its sesquicentennial, the University of Arkansas, the Board of Trustees, and the citizens of Arkansas have never celebrated the appointment of an eminently qualified African-American Chancellor of the Fayetteville campus. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “The time is always right to do what is right.” With respect to the permanent appointment of Dr. Charles Robinson as Chancellor, that time is now. On behalf of the Board of the Northwest Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr., Council, we rise to express our endorsement of Dr. Robinson for the Chancellor for many reasons.

For more than two decades in Northwest Arkansas, the MLK Council has conducted an annual recommitment banquet celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To further the legacy and teachings of Dr. King, our Council has raised tens of thousands of dollars and awarded scholarships to hundreds of students enrolled at the University. Indeed, in 2008, the MLK Council awarded Dr. Robinson our prestigious Ernestine White Gibson Award recognizing him as an individual who has given to the Northwest Arkansas community through service, leadership and commitment. At one banquet, Dr. Robinson accepted our Council’s invitation to be our featured speaker, and he received a thunderous standing ovation at the conclusion of his inspiring speech to a capacity-crowd at the Fayetteville Town Center. That night, Dr. Robinson challenged each audience member to take responsibility to stand up and do what’s right by taking action to improve our communities and our world. Today, we call on you as a member of the Board of Trustees to do the same.

Regardless of race, Dr. Robinson is the best person to become the next Chancellor. His credentials are impeccable in teaching, research and service. Similar to the inspirational journey of a teenager who began unloading trucks at a Walmart and ultimately rose through the company ranks to become its CEO, Dr. Robinson’s professional career at the UA is a model of inspiration. Dr. Robinson’s journey demonstrates that a person can arrive on campus and begin as an assistant professor, work hard, give back, and devote himself to being a servant leader in multiple professional roles over time and thereby uplift each student with whom he interacts and improve their individual lives and ultimately the State of Arkansas. Of note, the MLK Council points the Board of Trustees to the fact that Dr. Robinson is responsible for raising millions of dollars to benefit first-generation students throughout the State of Arkansas, including one of our most impoverished and challenged regions, the Delta.



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In his life, Dr. King asked us all the following question: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, "What are you doing for others?" As a proven leader, Dr. Robinson has lived this creed as one who always looks out for the best interests of the students and the University. His list of credentials is too long to include in this letter. Simply put, Dr. Robinson is committed to putting students first in authentic and meaningful ways. As just one of many examples, Dr. Robinson has notably kept tuition for Arkansas students as affordable as possible. He is steadfast in his devotion to helping students succeed at the University of Arkansas and in their lives. The record student enrollments and the endorsement of Matthew Shepherd, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Arkansas General Assembly, stand as testaments of Dr. Robinson's leadership and commitment to students and all citizens in every corner of our state and not a just a select few who benefit from stations of wealth and status. Based on published reports, the MLK Council notes that other leaders, including Johnelle Hunt and Bill Dillard, have endorsed Dr. Robinson's candidacy, and their support is not surprising but reflective of Dr. Robinson's character and ability to lead the University of Arkansas into the future. For those who question the qualification of a published historian such as Dr. Robinson to lead a research institution, we point them to the University of Florida where that institution's new leader is also an historian.

The fact that Dr. Robinson is African-American and would be the first African-American Chancellor at the University of Arkansas is meaningful and important for this campus. It is a fact to celebrate that opportunity truly exists at the University of Arkansas, and this institution is willing to move in a bold new direction. In short, it is a message to the world that merit and opportunity matter at the University of Arkansas. Dr. Robinson is a person who brings an exemplary record, proven leadership, and the skills and ability to lead the University of Arkansas into the future. From informal conversations with members of the campus community, we believe faculty, students, and staff support Dr. Robinson as well. Dr. Robinson is a trailblazer who should break the race barrier and lead the University of Arkansas.

We conclude as we began. The time is always right to do what is right in appointing Dr. Charles Robinson as Chancellor of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Thank you for leading our institution forward in an inclusive and meaningful way.

**Sincerely,**

*The Northwest Arkansas Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Council*

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