MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 1, 2021

TO: Academic Deans, Division/Department Heads, Faculty, Staff, and Students

FROM: James M. Palmer
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Participation in Commencement – December 11, 2021

Fall Commencement for undergraduate and graduate candidates is Saturday, December 11, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. in the William “Billy” J. Nicks, Sr. Building (Baby Dome). Candidates will receive five tickets for entry into the Baby Dome and two tickets for additional space to view the ceremony via livestream in the Willie A. Tempton, Sr. Memorial Student Center (MSC) Ballroom and the Opal Johnson Smith Auditorium in the MSC. For guests who are unable to be seated in the tiered Baby Dome seating and require accessible seating due to limited mobility, accessible seating accommodations will be provided in the Opal Johnson Smith Auditorium.

Candidates for graduation should report to the Recreational Center by 7:30 a.m. the morning of Commencement. The processional for students will begin at 8:45 a.m. Faculty will be pre-seated, wearing full regalia. Commencement rehearsal is Friday, December 10, at 8:30 a.m. in the Recreation Center.

The speaker for this semester’s commencement is Anna Deavere Smith, an award-winning actress, playwright, and scholar who has helped augment and reshape the American theatrical canon. Known for a unique style of performance called “documentary theatre,” she brings to life characters who have found themselves in the midst of some of the most searing events of our times, such as the 1992 Los Angeles Riots and the Crown Heights riot. As the sole performer of multiple characters, she has captivated theatre audiences with her ability to embody a wide range of personalities and voices. Her art has won her a host of honors, including the Drama Desk Award, the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, and the National Humanities Medal.

In addition to her work on stage, Smith has numerous film and television credits. She had recurring roles on The West Wing, The Practice, and Nurse Jackie and has appeared in the films Philadelphia, Dave, The American President, Rent, and Rachel Getting Married.

Smith holds an appointment in the Department of Art and Public Policy at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, where she is the founding director of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue. Prior to her appointment at NYU, she served on the faculties of the University of Southern California, Stanford University, and Carnegie Mellon University. She holds degrees from Beaver College (now Arcadia University; BA) and the American Conservatory Theater (MFA).

xc: Ruth J. Simmons
Carol Campbell
PVAMU Campus Community