



February 14, 2023

Members, Tenure and Promotion Committee

School of Social Work

Norfolk State University

Norfolk, VA

Dear Tenure and Promotion Committee:

I am exceedingly pleased to support the application of Dr. Sharon Alston for Tenure and Promotion at your university. I have known Dr. Alston since her graduate student days at Howard when I served as Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Research. During this period, I had the privilege of having Dr. Alston work with me directly as a graduate assistant on one of my grants from the National Science Foundation. Since that time, I have followed her career closely and have engaged her as a consultant from time to time on other federally funded projects.

While I do not know precisely the explicit criteria for promotion and tenure in your academic unit, I can unequivocally support Dr. Alston's consideration through the lens of one who has reviewed hundreds of such applications in my various roles as a senior faculty member and administrator at several universities. This includes over 35 years of service at Howard University in several positions including Department Chair, Dean, Vice Provost for Research and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

I first met Dr. Alston during her doctoral student days at Howard when she was an absolutely outstanding participant in our Graduate School's nationally recognized Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) Program, a program from which she earned a certificate in Future Faculty Preparation. Based on her performance in this program, I invited her to join me as a Graduate Assistant to further prepare Howard doctoral students for future careers in the professoriate. Since those days, Dr. Alston has become the consummate scholar-teacher herself.

In addition to her usual professorial duties at your institution, it is important to note that her track record in seeking and securing extramural funds to support her scholarly and professional interests has been truly exemplary. The record shows that she has received 10 grants to support her work, including significant awards from the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. It is also noteworthy that she has a robust publication record for an individual at the Assistant Professor level with a total of eight publications (4 of which she served as senior author) and three additional papers under review for publication. I am especially proud that she was a co-author with me on a paper published during her doctoral student days.



It is also significant to note that Dr. Alston's continued record of professional development is most impressive, especially as related to preparation in online education. As an outgrowth of COVID, it is clear that academic units of the future must have faculty who are well prepared to provide high quality higher education in the virtual space. Thus, Dr. Alston's professional development in online education could benefit NSU's likely long-term strategic goal of providing more online educational opportunities to grow enrollment and remain competitive.

In sum, I am pleased to strongly support the application of Dr. Sharon Alston for Tenure and Promotion at Norfolk State University without any reservations whatsoever. She is clearly an exemplar of the type of scholar-teacher that your university and your Social Work academic unit should want to retain as it seeks to further advance its mission and academic reputation. In short, I consider her to be one of the jewels of your institution.

If you wish any further information from me about this talented academic scholar-teacher, I would be pleased to provide it without hesitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Orlando L. Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue horizontal line.

Orlando L. Taylor, Senior Advisor to the President

Co-PI, Center for the Advancement of TM Leadership

Distinguished Fellow, Association of American Colleges and Universities