

Xavier University of Louisiana has a new Dean for its College of Arts and Sciences.

New Orleans - Camellia Moses Okpodu, Ph.D., Professor of Biology and Director of the Group for Microgravity and Environmental Biology at Norfolk State University and Director of a Designated IC Center of Academic excellence (DIA), will become the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

"We are tremendously excited about what Camellia will do to enrich Arts and Sciences and Xavier as a whole," Xavier's Senior Vice President and Provost Anne McCall said. "Given the unique role Xavier plays in America as the only Black, Catholic university founded with a mission of creating a just and humane society, Dr. Okpodu's leadership will be crucial to ensuring that Xavier continues its' tradition of excellence in educating our students to become servant-leaders of the future."

Previously, Dr. Okpodu was director of Norfolk's NIH Extramural Research Office and an American Council on Education Fellow. Her leadership experience also includes serving as Chair of the Biology department at Norfolk State as well as at Hampton University, where she held her first faculty position and at Elizabeth City State University, where she held the university's first endowed professorship.

Dr. Okpodu earned her B.S. in Biochemistry and Ph.D. degree in Plant Physiology/Biochemistry from NC State University. Her Post-Doctoral work in Plant Molecular Biology was conducted at Virginia Tech.

Her research focus on environmental topics including climate change, sea-level rise and coastal resiliency, and agriculture is timely and resonates particularly with our region. She has spoken at several national environmental conferences and published multiple articles in her discipline as well as on minority student retention in STEM fields. Dr. Okpodu readily shares her knowledge more broadly and has been a panelist on the *Oprah Winfrey* show.

Okpodu was drawn to Xavier University of Louisiana and its mission. Her goals include 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 going to the global corners of the world and make real impact on the world.

Camellia's approach as dean will be to strengthen the university's liberal arts enterprise by building and enhancing research capabilities and interdisciplinary collaboration. "Xavier University has a wonderful history and a distinguished reputation," Okpodu said. "The College of Arts and Sciences will continue to fill the strong and influential role that is expected of a premier institution educating students in an HBCU setting. I am strongly aligned with the history and mission of the University and look forward to expanding our work across all fields of inquiry to meet the evolving needs of our students."

The search committee consisted of a representative group of the Xavier community and included faculty, staff, students and alumni. The committee was chaired by Maryam Foroozesh, Chair of the Divisions of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and of the Division of Biological and Applied Health Sciences. She stated, "It is with pleasure that on behalf of the members of the Dean of Arts and Sciences Search Committee, I welcome Dr. Camellia Okpodu to Xavier. During the search process, we were very impressed with Dr. Okpodu's qualifications,

interdisciplinary background, and enthusiastic personality, and we are looking forward to working with her as she joins the College of Arts and Sciences”

“Xavier sits at the edge of her tomorrow. I am happy to welcome Camellia to our family as we grow and expand to meet the ever changing needs of our students while honoring the mission set forth for us by Mother Katharine Drexel contributing to the creation of a just and humane society,” said Xavier University of Louisiana President Reynold Verret.

Okpodu replaces Dr. Anil Kukreja, who has served as the Dean to the College of Arts and Sciences since June 15, 2011. Okpodu will officially join Xavier in her new role starting July 2018.

About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier was recently ranked as the nation’s #2 HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) 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.

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.