



For Immediate Release

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**HUSTON-TILLOTSON UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT
DR. COLETTE PIERCE BURNETTE ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT**

Dr. Carol McDonald, Chair of the Huston-Tillotson University Board of Trustees, announced today that Dr. Colette Pierce Burnette, President and Chief Executive Officer of the University, has decided to retire on June 30, 2022.

“Huston-Tillotson University (HT) has been blessed to have Dr. Burnette’s leadership for the past seven years,” said McDonald. “Her vision and perseverance have made HT a stronger, more vibrant, and more visible institution in Austin and beyond.”

Since being named president in 2015, Dr. Burnette’s tenure at HT has been one success after another. She has remained focused on HT’s mission, serving students with excellence and compassion while carefully stewarding the University’s resources and being active in the community. During this time, the HT endowment has increased by more than 55 percent. In 2021, she led HT through its Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) reaccreditation visit. The reaffirmation team reported no findings and fully recommended the SACSCOC’s Board of Trustees for continuing HT’s accreditation.

Under Dr. Burnette’s leadership, HT initiated a series of new degree programs and innovations. In Fall 2018, HT expanded its footprint by opening the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI) on Springdale Road in East Austin. The following year, HT began a Master of Business Administration program designed for working individuals. At the same time, HT expanded the Center for Adult and Continuing Education and created the Center for Academic Innovation and Transformation (CAIT). Other degree programs planned and initiated during Dr. Burnette’s tenure include undergraduate programs in Environmental Justice and Global Studies and the enhancement of the University’s Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs, with biology becoming the fastest-growing major at HT.

Dr. Burnette’s historic tenure also included HT’s collaboration with Tesla on a manufacturing engineering curriculum and a career progression internship for undergraduate students. She also solidified and expanded HT’s partnership with Apple, resulting in the University receiving global exposure and recognition for her passion project, the African American Male Teachers Initiative.

From the beginning, Dr. Burnette has focused the University on building fiscal strength, forging strategic alliances, and achieving a culture of excellence in academics and student life while remaining student-centered, collegial, and inclusive. She guided HT to years of increased student enrollment, campus initiatives, and community partnerships. These include the largest recorded freshmen class, advancement in the University's listing in the National Register of Historic Places, adoption of the UNCF Career Pathways Initiative as the University's Quality Enhancement Plan, and HT's recognition as the only All-Steinway School in Central Texas. HT also re-established its award-winning band program recently featured at the Council for Higher Education Accreditation's International Conference and the HT Jazz Collective's first-place finish at the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) C2 Spring Academy Battle of the Bands. In November 2020, the University launched the HT Center for Justice and Equity, dedicated to justice reform for all citizens.

Dr. Burnette completed numerous projects on the University's deferred maintenance list, making substantial improvements in many facilities. Among the highlights are the construction of the Sandra Joy Anderson Health and Wellness Center (the first new building on campus since 1974), remodeling of King-Seabrook Chapel, installing new marquee signage on Bluebonnet Hill, new entryway signage and perimeter fencing to maximize the University's curb appeal, and new campus lighting.

Within two weeks in March 2020, Dr. Burnette oversaw the entire University's successful transition to online learning at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, all while staying true to the University's core values (Integrity, Diversity, Excellence, Accountability, and Leadership), and maintaining a safe and healthy environment. This fall, campus reactivation took place as the University returned to in-person instruction for the first time since spring 2020.

Dr. Burnette's unwavering commitment to HT's mission has resulted in Huston-Tillotson University forging strong, sustainable, and reciprocal relationships with Fortune 50 companies, Austin tech companies and startups, independent school districts, and non-profits. Her roots of community engagement for the City of Austin are profound and numerous. She has proudly served as the Co-Chair for the Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities, Chair of the Leadership Austin Board, Chair of the Central Texas Collective for Racial Equity, Treasurer of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas. Dr. Burnette has also honorably served on several local and national boards: Austin Community Foundation, Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce, Austin Area Urban League, E3 Alliance, Austin Transit Partnership, Vision 2030, I-35 Cap and Stitch Project, Frontier Bank, DISCO, and Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Dr. Burnette credits the resounding success of her presidency at Huston-Tillotson University as the actual embodiment of the African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

"We know Austin and the HT community love Dr. Burnette. She cannot be replaced," McDonald said. "In the coming weeks, we will take steps to begin a national search to find a president who can succeed her and build on all Huston-Tillotson University has become."

About Huston-Tillotson University

Huston-Tillotson University, the oldest institution of higher learning in Austin, Texas, has roots dating back to 1875. HT is an independent, church-related, historically black, four-year liberal arts institution located on a 23-acre tree-line campus near downtown in East Austin. Huston-Tillotson University's mission is to nurture a legacy of leadership and excellence in education, connecting knowledge, power, passion, and values. The University offers associate and master's degrees in addition to Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in more than 19 areas of study.

#HTisIDEAL