

NAA NORTHEASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

From the Hill to the Room

What This Past Year Taught Me About Being a Rattler

Zayla Bryant • FAMU Class of 2025 • Immediate Past SGA President & Student Trustee

What Changed Last Year

The real story behind the headlines

● **New Leadership**

President Marva Johnson stepped in — 4,000+ meetings in her first 100 days, an interim CFO to stabilize finances, five pillars centered on students.

● **A Hard Lesson in Communication**

A spring campus emergency exposed a gap between alerts. The administration owned it publicly at a town hall and committed to doing better.

● **Fighting for Financial Aid**

Long waits, lagging disbursements, students choosing between textbooks and groceries — SGA pushed for published timelines and clearer guidance.

How It's Showing Up This Year

Last year's advocacy became this year's foundation

Progress, By the Numbers

40.9% 4-year graduation rate, up from 35.0%

88.1% Academic Progress Rate — an all-time high

\$45,800 Record median wage for bachelor's grads

2,000 New housing beds proposed for campus

Two Threads Worth Watching

- The strategic plan is finalized — and already being revisited to make sure it delivers for our most recent graduates, not just on paper.
- Campus safety is moving too: a CALEA accreditation review is underway, extra patrols were requested this year, and joint active-assailant training is being scheduled.

PART THREE

Supporting Students Beyond the Check

Money matters. It's not where our involvement should stop.

Before the Hill

A first real, human connection to the FAMUly before a student ever sets foot in Tallahassee a call, a coffee, a story, not just a recruitment flyer.

During the Hill

Witnesses, not just wallets. Mentors who've lived the same struggling major. Alumni in the room when students fight for housing and financial aid because administrations listen differently when we're in the room together.

After the Hill

A bridge, not a hard stop. Real onboarding into the alumni network before graduation, so the FAMUly doesn't go quiet the week after commencement.

PART FOUR

What I'm Asking This Room For

1

Grow what's working

Keep funding the NAA Scholarship Program and "Save Our Students." Some students aren't just choosing FAMU — they're choosing whether they can stay.

2

Scale chapter models

Chapter scholarship events work. Connect students to the faces behind the funding, not just the check.

3

Build real pipelines

Pair chapter members with graduating seniors. Make the NAA Job Board something juniors are told about — not something seniors stumble on in April.

**A Rattler is not made in four years and then set
loose.**

A Rattler is made — and remade — by every hand that reaches back.

STRIKE.