

Narketta M. Sparkman-Key, PhD; HS-BCP
Executive Leader • Faculty Affairs Strategist • Higher Education Innovator

Dr. Narketta Sparkman-Key is a nationally recognized higher education executive, tenured Professor of Education, and scholar whose leadership is distinguished by transforming academic systems, advancing faculty excellence, and preparing institutions for the future of higher education. Throughout her career, she has led complex organizational change by strengthening faculty affairs, restructuring continuing education, institutional effectiveness, accreditation, governance, advising, and innovation while fostering cultures rooted in collaboration, accountability, and academic excellence. She serves as Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Academic Affairs at Spelman College, where she provides executive leadership for faculty affairs and collaborates with institutional leaders to strengthen academic quality, faculty success, and organizational effectiveness.

As Associate Provost, Dr. Key oversees the Office of Faculty Affairs and provides strategic leadership across the faculty lifecycle, including faculty recruitment, appointments, onboarding, development, retention, promotion, tenure, evaluation, leaves, and recognition. She leads institutional efforts related to faculty credentialing and regional accreditation, ensuring compliance with accreditation standards, faculty qualifications, academic policies, and continuous quality improvement. She oversees the Teaching, Research, and Resource Center (TRRC) and created and leads the AI Salon at Spelman College, bringing together faculty, staff, and administrators to strategically advance artificial intelligence across the institution through collaboration, planning, and innovation.

In her role as Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Academic Affairs, Dr. Key provides leadership on faculty-related Title IX matters, supports policy implementation, and promotes equitable and inclusive academic environments.

Prior to joining Spelman College, Dr. Key served as Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives and Global Affairs and as a tenured professor of education at James Madison University. Previously, she served as a tenured Associate Professor of Counseling and Human Services at Old Dominion University, where she also held leadership positions including Academic Affairs Director for Faculty Recruitment and Retention, Department Chair, Assistant Department Chair, and Program Director.

An accomplished scholar, Dr. Key's research focuses on faculty success, organizational leadership, cultural competence, academic wellness, higher education leadership, and Black adolescent suicide prevention. She has authored more than 28 peer-reviewed journal articles, two edited books, multiple book chapters, encyclopedia entries, and invited publications. She has secured approximately \$2.5 million in external funding and has delivered more than 60 scholarly presentations nationally and internationally.

Executive Profile

Narketta Sparkman-Key, PhD

Dr. Key serves on the Strategic Advisory Council for Carnegie Higher Ed and is an HBCU Executive Leadership Institute Fellow, a Fellow of the Association of Governing Boards Leadership and Governance Institute, a member of the AAC&U Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum, and a participant in the AWS Machine Learning University Transformation Alliance. She also serves as Vice President for Academic Wellness for the Star Scholars Network and has contributed to numerous editorial boards, advisory committees, and professional organizations.

Leading Institutional Transformation

At Spelman College, Dr. Key has led the modernization of faculty affairs by redesigning systems that improve operational efficiency, strengthen accountability, and enhance the faculty experience. She oversees faculty recruitment, appointments, promotion and tenure, credentialing, faculty development, evaluation, and recognition while providing executive leadership for regional accreditation efforts and institutional compliance.

She also oversees the Teaching, Research, and Resource Center (TRRC), where she has expanded professional development opportunities that prepare faculty to excel in teaching, scholarship, leadership, and student success.

Recognizing that artificial intelligence will fundamentally reshape higher education, Dr. Key created and leads the AI Salon at Spelman College. The AI Salon convenes faculty, staff, and administrators to strategically explore the ethical, pedagogical, operational, and research applications of artificial intelligence. The initiative has become a catalyst for institutional planning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovation, positioning Spelman to thoughtfully integrate emerging technologies across the College.

Leadership Philosophy

Dr. Key believes that institutions become exceptional when they intentionally invest in people, systems, and culture. Her leadership philosophy centers on building sustainable structures—not dependencies—that enable faculty, staff, and students to flourish long after individual leaders have departed. She is known for leading with transparency, cultivating collaborative partnerships, strengthening institutional capacity, embracing innovation, and creating organizational systems that position colleges and university for the future of higher education.

National Leadership

Dr. Key's influence extends nationally through leadership roles that shape the future of higher education. She serves on the Strategic Advisory Council for Carnegie Higher Ed and is an HBCU Executive Leadership Institute Fellow and a Fellow of the Association of Governing Boards Leadership and Governance Institute. Her work also includes

Executive Profile
Narketta Sparkman-Key, PhD

participation in the AAC&U Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum and the AWS Machine Learning University Transformation Alliance, where she collaborates with institutional leaders exploring the responsible integration of artificial intelligence into higher education.

She currently serves as Vice President for Academic Wellness for the Star Scholars Network and has contributed to numerous editorial boards, national advisory groups, and professional organizations dedicated to faculty success, leadership, governance, and academic innovation.

Awards and Recognition

Dr. Key's leadership, scholarship, and commitment to advancing higher education have been recognized through numerous regional and national honors celebrating her contributions to academic leadership, faculty development, inclusive excellence, research, and community engagement. Her awards include the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award in Research and the Sciences, the Urban League of Hampton Roads Martin Luther King Jr. Community Leader Award, the Old Dominion University President's Award for Diversity and Inclusion, the Old Dominion University Provost's Award for Undergraduate Mentorship, the Kate Broderick Educational Accessibility Award, the Star Scholars Network Presidential Award for Service and Excellence, recognition as one of Virginia Business' Top 100 People to Meet, Inside Business Top 40 Under 40, and multiple Women in Business honors. Collectively, these recognitions reflect her sustained impact as a scholar, executive leader, mentor, and innovator dedicated to strengthening institutions and expanding opportunities for faculty and students.

Throughout her career, Dr. Key has remained committed to helping institutions navigate complexity while remaining grounded in their academic mission. Whether leading faculty affairs, strengthening governance, advancing accreditation, or preparing institutions for the future through artificial intelligence and organizational innovation, she believes higher education has the power to transform lives and communities. Her leadership reflects a deep commitment to building institutions where faculty thrive, students succeed, and excellence becomes part of the institutional culture.