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Reverend Jesse Jackson to Keynote FAMU College of Law Hooding Ceremony

Orlando, Fla. – The Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., founder and president of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, will serve as the keynote speaker for Florida A&M University (FAMU) College of Law’s Sixth Annual Hooding Ceremony on May 15, 2010.

Reverend Jackson will address the Spring 2010 candidates, who will have the Juris Doctor degree conferred in Tallahassee, Fla. at the University’s Commencement Exercises on May 1, 2010. The Hooding Ceremony will recognize more than 150 candidates, including the fall 2009 and summer 2010 classes. These are the first classes to be recognized since the College of Law achieved full accreditation from the American Bar Association.

The FAMU College of Law’s Hooding Ceremony will take place at the Hilton Orlando, 6001 Destination Parkway near International Drive. The ceremony will begin promptly at 10 a.m.

Reverend Jackson is one of America’s foremost civil rights, religious and political figures. Over the past 40 years he has played a pivotal role in virtually every movement for empowerment, peace, civil rights, gender equality, and economic and social justice. He has been called the “conscience of the nation” and “the great unifier,” challenging America to be inclusive and to establish just and humane priorities for the benefit of all. He is known for bringing people together on common ground across lines of race, culture, class, gender and belief.

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“We’re honored to have Reverend Jackson address our Hooding candidates and believe it is fitting given the history of the FAMU College of Law,” said LeRoy Pernell, dean of the FAMU College of Law. “Reverend Jackson’s stance on social justice speaks directly to the injustice that led to the closing of the original College of Law.”

Reverend Jackson participated in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery marches organized by James Bevel, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other civil rights leaders in Alabama. In 1966, King and Bevel selected Jackson to head the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, and SCLC promoted him to national director in 1967. When King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tenn., Jackson was in the parking lot one floor below. He resigned from the SCLC in 1971 and formed Operation PUSH. He eventually organized the Rainbow Coalition in 1984, which later merged with Operation PUSH to form the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition in 1986. He was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988 and served as Shadow Senator for the District of Columbia from 1991 to 1997. On August 9, 2000, President William “Bill” Clinton awarded Reverend Jackson the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor. He is a graduate of North Carolina A&T University and has a Master of Divinity from the Chicago Theological Seminary.

The FAMU College of Law was founded in 1949 on the main campus in Tallahassee. After graduating 57 lawyers, the law school was closed by the state of Florida in 1968. The Florida Legislature voted to reopen the law school in 2000 and Orlando was selected as the location. The re-established FAMU College of Law opened its doors in 2002 and is now housed in a state-of-the-art facility in downtown Orlando’s Parramore neighborhood. The FAMU College of Law received full accreditation from the American Bar Association in July 2009, and is ranked number one in the nation (tied with Texas Southern) for Diversity by *U.S. News and World Report*.