

North Carolina A&T State University
Homecoming 2009
Affirmation Service Keynote Address
November 1, 2009

Theme: “A New Beginning: Strengthening Our Legacy for Future Generations”
North Carolina A&T State University – Reaching Beyond Its Potential

Good morning Aggies...

To the Officers of the National Alumni Association, and to all the Aggies assembled here this morning, I bring greetings to you from our administration, faculty, and staff, and the more than 10,500 students we now serve at North Carolina A&T.

It has been an outstanding *Homecoming 2009* despite the loss to Bethune Cookman College – an exceptional number of Alumni returned this weekend, lots of friendships renewed, stories of events that took place 30-40 or more years ago took on new meaning, and lots of excitement and enthusiasm about the University.

A lot of colleges *and* universities have alumni who claim a certain special brand of devotion to their alma mater, but few can match the Aggies. We even have a name for ours. We call it *Aggie Pride*.

You often have to explain what Aggie Pride is all about. People really don't get it. Graduates of other institutions, especially HBCU's can generally understand the depth of gratitude that is a large part of Aggie Pride, but even they can't fully grasp what we mean when we say it - and I've learned from our students that you have to say it right.

Aggie Pride is about a lot of things. It's about gratitude. It's about appreciation. It's about pride. It's about faith in A&T's full potential. And, it's a love that each one of us experiences differently for the institution.

David and I feel that love for A&T. That's why we are so overjoyed to have come back *home*. We have both been very warmly received by all. We both realize how fortunate we are to be Aggies, but we also realize the *great responsibility* we have to serve our beloved alma mater as alumni.

As I prepared my comments for this morning, I reminisced a bit, as I often do and as I am sure many of you do, about my days as a student on our campus. North Carolina A&T State University had a tremendous impact on my life. I spent more than twenty-six years on this campus as a student, a faculty member, and an administrator. Each of those years spent here transformed my life immeasurably.

During my days as a student, there were many outstanding individuals who had come before me, or who were enrolled during the time I was here, who inspired me to want to do well. These students came to North Carolina A&T from all over America and beyond seeking a quality educational experience. They were drawn here for many reasons – the outstanding academic programs available to them; the visibility and success of its alumni who were making historic

contributions through leadership roles in politics, business, education, and entrepreneurship; or because of the history of involvement of students, faculty, and staff in social change.

For example, those in my era were all well aware of the legendary A&T Four (Ezell Blair (Jibreel *Khazan*), Joseph *McNeil*, Franklin *McCain*, and David *Richmond*), who as freshmen, on February 1, 1960, launched the civil rights movement of the south by demanding equal service at the Woolworth's lunch counter. Because of their great courage and desire for change and equality, they inspired many other students of the university to join them in their non-violent protest to desegregate the Woolworth's lunch counter.

Once you were immersed in an environment like this campus, you realized that you had to perform, you had to create a substantive plan for success, and you were motivated to get involved. You realized that your destiny would be forever and profoundly shaped by what you did while a student at North Carolina A&T.

Looking back on those days as a student, I recall a devoted faculty and staff who challenged us in the classrooms and laboratories; and classmates who challenged us in debate in the residence halls and the dining halls about the *important world issues of the day*.

It was because of the push and encouragement of *faculty and staff* members in the Department of Electrical Engineering that I decided to pursue a Ph.D. They wouldn't accept mediocre work from you or tardiness for class. They saw your talents as a student and wouldn't let you fall short of being your best.

Now as chancellor, it is my responsibility to make sure that our *dear A&T* continues to focus on these important historical traditions of the institution while also working to transform it to be much more competitive and relevant in today's increasingly challenging higher education arena. Working with our Board of Trustees, we must ensure that we are safeguarding the future of our alma mater. We must use all appropriate resources and make some important changes to stay relevant and compete for the best students, faculty, and staff against a new universe of global peers.

This will not be easy. There is growing national debate about the future of Historically Black Colleges and Universities:

- Is there a need for HBCU's any longer;
- Are HBCU's able to compete in today's growing global market;
 - Can HBCU's maintain relevance and competitiveness in their academic programs;
 - Are HBCU's able to recruit and retain the best faculty and staff;

- Can HBCU's compete for the best and the brightest; and
- Can HBCU's create a customer-friendly safe academic setting for its students.

In a new report entitled, *Changing Consequences of Attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, slated to be published shortly in a well-respected research journal, the researchers report their findings about the potential for diminishing value of a student attending an HBCU. Using nationally representative data files from the 1970s and the 1990s college attendees, the researchers find that in the 1970s matriculation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities was associated with higher wages and an increased probability of graduation, relative to attending a Traditionally White Institution (TWI).

By the 1990s, based on their findings, there is a wage penalty resulting in a 20-percent decline in the relative wages of HBCU graduates between the two decades. There is modest support for the possibility that the relative decline in wages associated with HBCU matriculation is partially due to improvements in TWIs' effectiveness at educating African American students.

Here in North Carolina in the UNC System, we can also observe a shifting of African American student interest in attending college. For example, in 1972, when the UNC System was formed, approximately 88% of all African American students enrolled on UNC campuses were enrolled at one of the five public HBCU's. In 2008, this percentage had declined to less than 60% and is expected to continue to decline. Moreover, African American students are continuing to

experience greater levels of academic success at the UNC TWI's in the form of retention and graduation rates.

So, as you can see, the theme for this year's Sunday Morning Affirmation Program, *New Beginning: Strengthening Our Legacy for Future Generations*, is most appropriate.

My comments this morning are not to alarm you but to inform you. We must be very deliberate about our efforts to *Strengthen Our Legacy for Future Generations*. Simply put, we must elect to position North Carolina A&T State University to compete more successfully going forward.

Dr. Warmoth T. Gibbs, President from 1955 to 1960, in his *Opening Day Address in 1958*, stated the following:

“The great challenge for us, the faculty and staff for this year and in the future is to keep this college ready and able to perform fully all of its duties and functions in the best possible way, and to keep it up to its own best standards and true to its great traditions. We have a good college here now, but we, the faculty and staff can make it better. We have good students, but we can make them better. We have good faculty and staff members, but we can make them better. It simply takes *unity of purpose, strong character, sincerity, devotion to duty, interest and development in our work and fair play in our dealings.*”

Dr. Gibbs goes on to say:

“...It will always be our aim to safeguard and develop it while sending forth in ever increasing numbers, graduates who, in strength of moral character, in high ideals, in technical proficiency, in devotion to religious duty and civic responsibility, will be prepared, ready and willing to render well some constructive and worthwhile service. These then are in general our thoughts, aims and objectives for the future of this college. With the loyal cooperation of our fine faculty, and with the enthusiastic and studious efforts of our alert student body and generous support of alumni and others, we face that future in the belief that the college will continue to expand its mission of service to the people of the state, *and, I might add, to the Nation and the world.*”

Dr. Gibbs could have made these comments today. Our University is at a crossroads today and we must decide that we're going to *take the road less traveled by*.

We have a tradition of our professors bringing out the best in every one of the students on our campus, whether they arrive at the top of their game, or whether they come here needing a little extra help.

As an institution, we must reach back and retrieve the best from our past. We have an outstanding legacy and great traditions to be proud of and to build on; chief among these are the long lists of alumni who have excelled. However, we cannot and will not rest on our laurels.

We are positioned well to begin to move more aggressively forward.

Over the past decade, more than \$350 million have been invested in new construction and renovations on the campus, including a six-building student residential complex called Aggie Village which replaced the aging historic men's residential facility called Scott Hall; a new Science Building; a new College of Arts and Sciences and School of Business and Economics Building; a new hazard materials storage and waste facility to support research; a new ladies softball field complex; a new NCAA eight lane track; and a new Bryan Fitness Center supporting team sports in football and baseball; and a fabulous new Wellness Facility (the Blue Building).

We have also successfully renovated and modernized twenty-nine buildings throughout the campus to support our teaching, research, and public service mission as well as to enhance our athletic competitiveness.

These investments in capital improvements have resulted in a remarkable transformation of our campus – enhancing our ability to meet our enrollment growth needs, new academic program and research needs, student academic support services such as the Academic Enrichment Center, and services to enhance student experiences such as the Honors Program and International Programs to name a few.

So, I hope your schedule has permitted you to get out and enjoy a stroll around our beautiful campus during this Homecoming Weekend.

On November 9th, we will break ground for a \$60 million facility in the Gateway University Research Park on Lee Street to house the Joint School of Nanoscience with UNCG. On November 19th, we will hold the dedication ceremony to name the new Education Building the *Dr. Samuel Procter Education Building*. We invite you to join us for these for these important and historic events.

These investments will help to position the institution to be increasingly more successful in recruiting top students to the institution and enabling our faculty, staff, and students to achieve significant levels of success in a variety of areas.

For example, the University experienced an overall enrollment growth this academic year that allowed us to exceed our goal of 10,500 with a final headcount of 10,554 students. This enrollment growth included:

- *a 17 percent increase in new freshmen enrollment* from 1,636 to 1,911;
- *a 37 percent increase in new transfer student enrollment* from 279 to 383; and
- *a 20 percent increase in new graduate enrollment* from 429 to 515.

- During 2008-09, we awarded:
 - Bachelors Degrees 1,172
 - Masters Degrees 437

- Doctoral Degrees 32
 - Total 1,641 Degrees awarded.

- Ranks North Carolina A&T as:
 - Highest producer of African-Americans with B.S., Master's, and Ph.D. degrees in Engineering among HBCU's.
 - Recognized as #1 producer of African Americans with BS degrees in Psychology.
 - The highest producer of African-American CPAs in the country; and
 - Third in awarding BS degrees in agriculture to African Americans.

Some of the academic achievements during the past year include:

- Successes in our Schools/Colleges
 - School of Education's overall pass rate for the Praxis II exam was 98%.
 - Nursing achieved a 91% NCLEX-RN examination scores.
 - *School of Nursing* was reaccredited for seven years by the *National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission*.
 - The *School of Education* successfully attained reaccreditation by the *Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs*.
 - The *Child Development Laboratory* in the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences received a *perfect score of 15 points, a Five-Star Rating*, the highest rating available from the North Carolina Division of Child Development.
 - *School of Business and Economics* opened the *Financial Trading Room*.

- Total research funding increased from \$45.0 million to \$57.7 million, an increase of over 26 percent this past year, ranking North Carolina A&T third in the UNC System behind UNC Chapel Hill and NC State University with the highest level of research funding.
 - Significant scholarly contributions of faculty to the scientific literature: 14 books, 36 book chapters, and 647 refereed articles.
 - College of Engineering was awarded an NSF Engineering Research Center (ERC), *Revolutionizing Metallic Biomaterials*, the only one ever awarded to an HBCU.
 - School of Technology received a \$689,521 HUD Grant to establish the *Business and Entrepreneurship Skills Training Center* in east Greensboro.
 - School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences is a major partner in the creation of the *North Carolina Research Campus*, with the development of the *Center of Excellence for Post-Harvest Technologies*.

- 110 of our students went abroad last year to study in 23 countries. This number should be 4 or 5 times what it currently is.
 - The Office of International Programs holds the distinction of consistently being among the top recipients of the Gilman Scholarships Award for Study Abroad (6th in the nation).

So, it was a very productive year on a number of fronts.

Let me share with you at this time a quick summary of an exciting study that has recently been completed by the University of North Carolina System, called the *UNC Tomorrow Initiative*, that will *change significantly* how the UNC Board of Governors and the UNC President will oversee planning and budgeting for the UNC System for the foreseeable future.

The *UNC Tomorrow Initiative* was designed to determine how the System would respond more directly and proactively to the 21st century challenges facing North Carolina both now and in the future through the efficient and effective fulfillment of its three-pronged mission of teaching, research and scholarship, and public service.

The outcomes of this Initiative are designed to guide and shape current and future priorities, resource allocations, existing and future programs, and strategic plans and missions of the University of North Carolina System, its 17 constituent institutions and its affiliated entities to ensure that UNC¹ not only *becomes* more proactive and responsive to the needs of our state, but *remains* so in the years to come as the people of North Carolina continue to confront the myriad challenges of the rapidly changing, knowledge-based global economy and environment of the 21st century.

The *Study* was guided by UNC Board of Governors past Chairman Jim Phillips, UNC President Erskine Bowles, and the *UNC Tomorrow Commission*, a 28-member blue-ribbon group including business, education, government, and nonprofit leaders from across the state.

¹ “UNC,” as used in this summary, refers to the University of North Carolina, its 17 constituent institutions, and its affiliated entities established under Chapter 116 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

The Commission was advised by the expert research, analysis, and advice of the *UNC Tomorrow Scholars Council*, a diverse 14-member panel of faculty from across the UNC system, including our own Dr. Beryl McEwen, Professor and Chair of the Department of Business Education in our School of Business and Economics.

There were seven major findings and recommendations. I will not go into these at this time, but you can find the report on our website along with our University's response to the report.

The UNC Board of Governors has adopted the UNC Tomorrow Commission's report and each UNC institution has now developed specific plans for how the campus will respond to the report's recommendations. These plans include requests for changes/enhancements to the campus mission, request for new degree programs, proposed new collaborations among institutions, partnerships with community colleges or K-12 school districts, etc., and included proposed changes to personnel policies related to faculty promotion and tenure, etc.

These campus plans are currently under review by the senior staff of the University of North Carolina General Administration. The reviews have been slowed some due to recent changes in personnel at UNC GA and the current 10% budget reductions the UNC System is managing through this year and an expected additional reduction of 10% next year.

As we look to the future, it is important that we build on the UNC Tomorrow Initiative and the growing need for greater relevance and impact of our University by:

1. *Position North Carolina A&T to distinguish itself by competing more successfully with its peers.*

North Carolina A&T, as classified by the Carnegie Foundation, is *a research intensive (high research) doctoral institution.*

Currently, the institution has two groups of peers against which it will *benchmark* itself:

- a. *Board of Governors-approved peers* – 14 quality public universities nationally that were approved by the BOG in 2005. Such institutions include – University of Maine, University of South Alabama, Portland State University, University of Tennessee Chattanooga, Florida A&M University, North Dakota State University, South Dakota State University, Montana State University, etc.
- b. *UNC Peers* who are similarly classified under Carnegie as research intensive doctoral institutions – ECU, UNCC, and UNCG.

Competing will require that we make tough decisions, improve our processes, think more positively, and act more responsibly. We will:

- plan more *strategically*
- create budget planning processes for more effective resource allocations
- hold ourselves more accountable – create a quality assessment process with realistic benchmarks against an appropriate set of *competitive* peers, and
- diversify our resource base.

2. *Per the request of the Business and Community leaders of Greensboro and Guilford County, we have been asked to contribute more significantly to helping to strengthen the economic competitiveness of the Triad Region.*

We will achieve this goal first by positioning the institution to be more competitive as indicated earlier. Additionally, we must ensure the success of the collaborations we committed to with UNC Greensboro, namely:

- Establish the Joint School of Nanoscience
 - Proposed new school has been approved by the UNC BOG
 - Funding provided for:
 - Operations to establish the School - \$4 million
 - e.g., hire a dean, hire faculty and staff, purchase equipment, etc.
 - Building a new building - \$60 million
 - Will soon finalize approval of *Request to Establish the MS and PhD in Nanoscience* by the UNC BOG

- Establish the Gateway Research Park – has enormous potential for both institutions as partners to leverage their growing research volume to impact economic prosperity for the region through:
 - Increased cutting edge research
 - Increased patent disclosures
 - Company spin-offs which create new jobs

- Attracting new high firms and jobs to the area
- Enhancing capabilities with current companies in the area which would create new jobs.
- Current Tenants:
 - USDA
 - JSNN – New \$60 million facility groundbreaking – October 2009
 - Expected Other Industry Partners affiliated with the JSNN or Engineering Research Center (ERC).

So, as you can see, there is much going on at North Carolina A&T. We have enormous potential and a very bright future that we must bring to life.

In closing, I want to thank you for your presence at this year's *Homecoming*. As Alumni, you are among our most important assets, and we must build upon our relationships with you. We look forward to keeping you informed, engaged, and excited about the great progress of the University.

In the words of Henry Longfellow:

Look not mournfully to the past - it comes not back again; wisely improve the present - it is thine; go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear; and with a manly or womanly heart.

Please travel safely on your return trips home. We look forward to seeing you throughout the year.

Thank you.