



**Eagle
Excellence**
North Carolina Central University

**NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY
INSTALLATION ADDRESS
DR. DEBRA SAUNDERS-WHITE
APRIL 4, 2014**

Good morning.

We find ourselves together at this hour to acknowledge... the installation of a new Chancellor ...to help build upon the foundation laid 103 years ago by Dr. James E. Shepard, an ordained minister, scholar and pharmacist who had the prescription to cure what ailed the African-American community — the opportunity to become better educated. As the seeds Dr. Shepard planted began to grow, so, too, did this great university. The National Religious Training School and Chautauqua for the Colored Race grew to become North Carolina Central University – the institution we have all come to honor today. We honor Dr. Shepard for his vision and all those who came after him for their dedication to that vision.

Today is a celebration of an illustrious “gateway to opportunity” called North Carolina Central University. From its humble beginning; to the addition of its

renowned law school; on through to its integration into the UNC System; its passionate embrace of the humanities; and its inclusion of the STEM disciplines, NCCU's commitment to truth and service remains unchanged, and I am humbled and honored to continue the legacy.

This week has been full of activities. The great work of our students has been showcased along with some of the award-winning research of our stellar faculty members at the BRITE, BBRI Center and the School of Education. Our law school reenacted historical civil rights litigation with our legal eagles who are current jurists serving as members of the appellate court. We had the remarkable Judith Jamison on our campus, our students performed the opera *Carmen*, and displayed the multitude of their talent in NCCU first contemporary talent show ...students you turn it up!

But what set the tone for me was our interfaith service. How fitting to return to our roots as we celebrate the advent of the 11th chief administrative officer.

Now, I hope you will pardon me ... but the spirit was certainly in this place on that day! Some of you may have heard of Judge Penny Brown Reynolds, but you may not have known that she is an ordained preacher.... and to round out

our diverse faith experience, the melodic voice of Pastor Shirley Ceaser Williams just filled our souls.

Thank you to Professor Rogers, Installation Committee, Michael, Nancy, Martina, Queen, Betty and Anita and all others who devoted many hours and days over the last several months to make today's and this week's activities special for our institution.

I would like to begin my remarks by recognizing several individuals who are with us this morning.

To members of the UNC Board of Governors: On behalf of NCCU, please know how much we value your service to our citizens and your unwavering commitment to ensuring that education remains an important asset for North Carolina.

President Ross: Thank you so very much for the ongoing support and dedication you have shown to me and North Carolina Central University, and especially for

being a higher education advocate in North Carolina. You are an extraordinary public servant, and I am honored to serve under your leadership.

Judge Elaine Bushfan: It is a privilege to have an alumna and a friend with such an important role in our justice system to administer my oath of office.

To all elected officials: Many of you have been with us all week. Thank you.

All platform guests: It is a privilege to have all of you participating in this special day for NCCU, and I am personally indebted to each of you.

Chairman Dwight Perry and North Carolina Central University Board of Trustees: I am most appreciative of your partnership with this university, your commitment to student success and support of me and my administration. Your insight and influence as leaders both locally and nationally is invaluable to us. All past NCCU board members thank you for your well wishes.

To the Shepard Family, thank you for joining us this morning and for your continued support of your grandfather and great-grandfather's institution.

Fellow chancellors, presidents and university delegates: We share a collective commitment to education and service. We have the awesome responsibility of leading our institutions and strategically positioning them and our graduates for future success. Thank you for traveling from both far and near to be with me today.

My friends from St. George's School, Hampton University, University of North Carolina Wilmington, the Department of Education, my sorors of Alpha Kappa Alpha and my sisters from Links Incorporated, my former students, Atty Moore and my dearest friend from middle school, Janet, Cass, Michael and Laz: You came, you all inspire me with your dedication to excellence, your spirit of giving and your deep love for humanity. I have learned so much from you, and I will carry your compassion for service with me always.

I am thankful for and would like to recognize former leaders of this institution, for these are the shoulders on which I stand...leaders like Dr. Albert Whiting, Dr. Donna Benson and Attorney Charles Becton, who are with us today. During their tenure, they promoted the value of higher education as one that serves a greater good for our society and reaches far beyond the walls of the buildings that make up the campus.

Eagles: Since I arrived, you have embraced me and my family. Each day, I am fortunate to serve with all of you as collaborators on our journey toward Eagle Excellence or E-squared. Thank you to the Executive Leadership Team, University Planning Council, all staff, faculty and, most importantly, our students who selected NCCU as their school of choice.

To my wonderful family: Mother, Elizabeth Paige and Cecil III, Roger, Ralph and Kyle, Sonya, Tanya, Sarah, Ruby, Rachel, Uncles Ralph and Meredith, and my cousins, nieces and nephews. Without your love and encouragement, I would not be standing here today. You are the wind beneath my wings. Thank you ... and you know that I know...Begin with S and end with S.

The scripture the judge Penny Brown referenced at our interfaith service mentions a time when *the young will see visions and the old will dream dreams*.

This is my vision for NCCU...We will provide the gateway to opportunity, which will allow our students the ability to catch hold of a vision and have the life of their dreams. Yes, it will be difficult at times but it is, indeed, possible.

It is often hard to believe that some 103 years ago, a minister, pharmacist and scholar by the name of Dr. James E. Shepard planted seeds of hope on this fertile ground that have now grown and blossomed into what we see today and has enriched the City of Durham, the Triangle region and the state of North Carolina. Each day I walk the sloping hills and verdant green of this campus, I am reminded of just how much care and nurturing has gone into this institution under the watchful eyes of the leaders, students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members who have tended to this rich enterprise over the years.

While we often recall the quote made famous by Dr. Shepard, "The eagle is no common, ordinary barnyard fowl. And while a sparrow clings to its flock, an eagle soars alone," behind it lies the distinctiveness and uniqueness of what makes us not only a premier, first-choice institution, but a place that instills a

proud sense of character and pride into its members. I am deeply inspired by the mission of our NCCU. As the gateway to opportunity a place where *the young will see visions and the old will dream dreams.*

- We cultivate scholars, many of whom are the first in their families to realize the dream and promise of higher education.
- We create leaders in industries, including the arts, social sciences, business, nursing, education, and law, who not only succeed in their professions but also believe wholeheartedly in giving back to their communities.
- We stimulate intellectual curiosity, creating new thought.
- We teach our Eagles the rewards of selflessness in carrying out the values of “Truth and Service” throughout their lives.

Today marks 46 years to the date that Dr. King was assassinated. It is only fitting that I borrow from his words now. “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow *is* today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late.

Procrastination is still the thief of time.”

But we *have* the opportunity to save higher education and our HBCUs, and we must act now.

Are HBCUs relevant? Yes. Can they and should we survive? Absolutely.

In his report *Facing the Future: A Fresh Look at Challenges and Opportunities*, Dr. Philip Clay states that “less than 40% of adults today have postsecondary degrees, but by 2030, it is predicted that 60% of new jobs will require some postsecondary credential.” Business leaders can often be heard lamenting the lack of adequately skilled applicants in job pools across the country. It may sound as if 2030 is a long way off, but it is only a little more than 15 years away. This is why we cannot wait! We need as many quality institutions as we can get to help reach our national goals.

Despite only enrolling 9% of all African American students, HBCUs produce the following percentages of undergraduate degrees earned by African Americans:

- 18% of engineering degrees
- 31% of biological science degrees
- 31% of mathematics degrees
- 21% of business & management degrees

- 42% of agricultural science degrees and
- 17% of degrees in the health professions

Additionally, the shifting demographic in both North Carolina and the United States is one that NCCU must respond to strategically and aggressively. A study released earlier this month the U.S. Department of Education indicates that the proportion of Blacks and Latinos enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions will reach 33.8 percent of all enrolled students by 2022, up from 30.1 percent in 2011. This provides us with a greater opportunity to serve more students of color while simultaneously expanding our reach to non-minority students.

It is estimated that roughly 37 million people in the U.S. are burdened with student debt totaling one trillion dollars. As a first-generation college student myself, I can appreciate the choices that our students must make today. I remember living on \$10 a week allowance without having a meal plan and having to support my collegiate experience.

76% of NCCU's students are first-generation and Pell-Grant-eligible. However, it is estimated that our student carry a lower loan indebtedness than their middle

peers who have more financial resources or options available to them. Our students are not just waiting for their financial aid checks; many of them are working in the Durham community to ensure that they are meeting their financial obligations, one pay check at a time. They are making a contribution to our economy. They are taxpayers.

As chancellor of this great institution, I am starting from a position of strength.

- Our faculty has positioned NCCU as fourth among UNC System schools in sponsored research, and with two biotechnology research institutes on campus, NCCU is emerging as a leader in the study of health disparities.
- Our community of academicians is dedicated to teaching, and our engaged staff are essential partners in student success.
- Because of the support of the state, our alumni and friends, NCCU is one of the most affordable and accessible institutions for low-income families in the University of North Carolina system, and it is one of the most affordable institutions in its peer group in the United States.

- Our students have a long tradition of dedicated public service, as our institution was the first of North Carolina’s state-supported universities to require community service for graduation. Last year, NCCU students performed nearly 200,000 hours of service valued at more than \$3 million to the Durham and regional economy.
- Three weeks ago, for the first time in NCCU’s history, we won the Mid-Atlantic Eastern Athletic Conference regular season and tournament titles and were invited to play in the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament.

As we embrace a year of Eagle Excellence, we must do so with the highest level of integrity, transparency and accountability. It will be our grit that will forge a new era at NCCU.

As we reflect on our past and look to the future — and specifically the next five to 10 years — we do so in the context of an uncertain economic climate.

There are increasing expectations from University of North Carolina (UNC) General Administration, the UNC Board of Governors and our own Board of Trustees that we will raise our retention and graduation rates, enroll better-prepared students, conduct cutting-edge research and stimulate the state’s

economy. As part of our ongoing strategic planning process, we have developed NCCU 2020, which focuses on current and future needs of the University in five priority areas:

1. Retention and Graduation
2. Enhancing Academic Distinction and Distinctiveness
3. Community Engagement
4. Internal Communications Using QSI
5. Teaching, Learning and Research

I am confident that the tenants within these priority areas are achievable and they can be exceeded. We will ensure Eagle Excellence in learning, scholarship and assessment of academic outcomes; leverage our technology and innovation to enhance the excellence of all of our academic programs; develop a culture of exceptional service to students, faculty, staff and alumni; expand global awareness and perspectives on campus; and we will celebrate and broaden inclusive excellence. And, moving forward, we will do business with a greater sense of urgency.

As a university, we collectively developed a comprehensive yet specific list of Key Performance Indicators that we are using to track and measure our progress.

Times of change and challenge often spawn unimaginable creativity and innovation. We have to stay relevant, foster new relationships and offer more opportunities that allow our students and university community to be leaders in the academy and the evolving global marketplace.

As the gateway to opportunity, we are a place where *the young will see visions and the old will dream dreams*. We are on the move. Our pipeline for students is extremely healthy, and NCCU is more desirable than ever for prospective first-time freshman and transfer students. For the 2014-15 academic years, we have received 12,000 applications for first-year students for 1,200 spaces.

Today, I am excited to announce three new partnerships that will enable North Carolina Central University to remain an institution focused on being a gateway to opportunity and a first-choice, premier, global institution. Working closely with

our academic affairs division, I am confident that these endeavors will positively position NCCU and ensure that the entrepreneurial spirit that is part of the fabric of our campus flourishes.

The humanities is an area that our institution is renowned for, distinguished by our faculty, including Doc Wiggins and our artists-in-residence, such as Branford Marsalis and Joey Calderazzo. We plan to expand our reach in this area by embracing the revolution of the hip-hop movement. In July, NCCU will welcome back one of its sons, Grammy Award-winning producer, social activist and college lecturer Patrick Douthit, or as he is known to the world, 9th Wonder.

9th is a quintessential hip-hop scholar who has taught at both Harvard and Duke universities. He has worked with top names in the music business that our students and alumni alike know well, including Jay-Z, Erkyah Badu and Drake.

9th will establish the **North Carolina Central University Hip-Hop Institute** that will examine and study how hip-hop music has influenced society and look at how it continues to evolve as both an art form and a culture. It will be housed in the College of Arts and Science's Department of Music.

In the years to come, this Institute will serve as an interdisciplinary intellectual discovery zone. Our students and others will have a unique opportunity to study the history, evolution and international impact of this creative genre with one of the world's most sought-after intellectual experts on the subject. 9th is being featured in a new documentary that will premiere at the Full Frame Film Festival here in Durham this weekend.

Second, as we actively engage in the development of techno-scholars, NCCU has partnered with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to launch a media lab on our campus. For those who are unfamiliar with this truly innovative interdisciplinary research hub at MIT, the lab in Cambridge is responsible for innovative products such as the world's first stackable electric car, HDTV technology, and an array of innovative software ranging from Guitar Hero video games to facial-recognition programs used by police departments.

NCCU is the only HBCU in North Carolina – and the first in the nation – to collaborate with MIT Media Lab. We know this partnership will pay dividends in

the form of new research and potential patents. Additionally, we plan to open the lab to serve the greater Durham community as we develop a pipeline of students focused on the STEM disciplines. Our media lab will provide hand-on access and opportunities for young, emerging entrepreneurs and motivate students to explore STEM as a chosen career profession. To Dr. Clarence Williams, a NCCU alumnus and MIT administrator for over 30 years: thank you for making this a reality for us.

Third, and finally, I talked about bringing more diversity and international focus to our institution. I am delighted to report that our School of Education has developed a partnership with Beijing Cultural and Language University. I will lead an NCCU delegation to China at the end of this month to formally sign a memorandum of understanding with BCLU. This agreement would supplement the Bilingual Speech Language Pathologist training program currently offered in the Communication Disorders Program. This collaboration would focus primarily on student and-faculty exchanges, joint research and educational programs and research contracts.

Dr. Shepard's dream of building an institution that would provide a first-class education for North Carolina's citizens is realized. Our proud tradition of

producing pioneers for North Carolina who embrace this fierce urgency of now, like Julius Chambers, a champion for civil rights, and Rose Butler Browne, an educator who fought for a better system of education, is alive today more than ever.

As we continue to deliver on our promise of developing leaders who can transform our global society, we must collectively raise our voices so NCCU students can continue to embrace a quality public education in North Carolina.

I will serve as your strong advocate to industry, the community and to our elected officials. I will be courageous enough to say unequivocally that quality costs and talent needs to be nurtured. All will hear the message that NCCU is a great return on investment.

It is indeed my privilege to be the servant-leader for North Carolina Central University...there is much work to be done and even more to accomplish...so let's get on with it!