



## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT ROBERT MICHAEL FRANKLIN '75

SEPTEMBER 2007

Take a careful look at our College seal above. You see the rising sun radiating above thickly gathered clouds and our motto in Latin, “*Et facta est lux*” or literally “and light was made.” Those words are from the biblical book of Genesis 1:3, after God says, “Let there be light.” Then, there was light. After the chaos, there was creation.

After the horrors of slavery and human degradation, there was Morehouse: an academy devoted to preparing educated and ethical leaders. And, for 140 years, we have allowed that light to shine and to inspire hope in our community and throughout the world. But, as the Morehouse symbol flies high, it should inspire us to see that wherever there is darkness and despair in the world, if there is a Morehouse Man nearby, there will be light, hope, and intelligent response. Gentlemen, let us make light and then, let it shine.

### New Student Orientation

The third week of August brought with it a rich, full week of New Student Orientation. Thanks to the students and numerous alumni who stationed themselves at the airport to welcome our men. A huge banner was placed in the grand atrium of the world’s busiest airport, and the world got to see some of America’s finest.

Back on campus, Miss Maroon and White and her court helped our staff greet the new students as they arrived. It was a festive and exciting time. My congratulations go to Academic Affairs and Student Services for orchestrating a superb program.

On the final night of orientation, 750 freshmen—dressed in white shirts and ties—sat surrounded by parents, grandparents and guardians. The chapel was packed, the air electric. The students had been oriented, tested and challenged all week. They had heard of the glories of Morehouse past, seen historical images of slavery and suffering, and encountered examples of Morehouse Men who led social and spiritual change.

Now, the finale had arrived; the night of the famed Parents Parting Ceremony. Dr. Anne Watts stood at the podium and invited all parents and guardians to stand. She declared, “Now, knowing that this will be the last time you see him before you leave the chapel, as loud as you can, shout the name of your son. Call his name...louder!”

It was a moment of high drama as the adults of

the village shouted the names of their most precious investments in a great cacophony of pride and pain. After only a few moments, there was not a dry eye in the place. That is a tiny glimpse of New Student Orientation at Morehouse. All I can add is, ‘no one does student orientation like Morehouse.’

### From Good to Great: First Faculty Meeting

On August 16, the first meeting of the faculty convened. Provost Sheftall and I set aside the planned agenda for a more interactive conversation. Faculty members were divided into four groups and were asked to respond to three questions:

- What are the challenges the College faces in moving to the next level of greatness in higher education? And, why are they challenges?
- What are the major opportunities we have not yet to seized? Why have we not done so?
- If you were advising the president of first-year action priorities, what would you recommend?

We had a spirited conversation and their full report will be coming soon. I will use their responses to inform the strategic planning for the next five years. The important thing to note is that the Morehouse faculty is an engaged, insightful group of teachers and scholars who are having the right conversation at this time of transition for Morehouse. There will be more to report in the future about these deliberations,

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but—in the spirit of improving Morehouse—let me offer one candid note: It was reported that faculty members often feel that there is far too much red tape in getting what they need to teach more effectively. I responded by noting that our core business is excellent teaching and learning and any obstacles to those goals will be solved in short order.

### **A Call to Dignity and Decorum**

After stating my expectation that Morehouse students look and behave like the future leaders of the nation, staff and student government leaders quickly convened a town hall meeting with upperclassmen to ensure that they also had an opportunity to engage in dialogue on this subject. It was a very good session.

Similar to the meeting with faculty, Morehouse students offered a long list of important issues that will find their way into our strategic plan. I was very proud of our students, who focused on community concerns (crime, poverty and the condition of our neighborhood) as much as on campus matters. Most of the students appeared to embrace and appreciate our call for dress, speech and conduct becoming of Morehouse men. Only a couple of them expressed concern about stifling their creativity in dress.

Healthy dialogue always includes and even encourages disagreement and clash of perspectives. However, we will not allow the culture's standards to lower the Morehouse standard. Our ancestors would not approve of this. So, I ask each of you to support us as we seek to infuse, not impose, these values deep into our campus culture. Again, we invite all of our students to refrain from plagiarism, theft, profanity, inappropriate dress and disrespectful attitudes on and off campus. Morehouse can and should become a way of life for all of us.

### **Friend Raising and Fund Raising**

Dean John Williams informs me that Morehouse received a \$278,000 faculty development grant from Morgan Stanley. A portion of the grant paid stipends and lodging for two of our stellar faculty members, Dr. Cheryl Allen and Dr. Kasim Alli, who interned with the bank in New York City for six weeks this summer.

In addition, the Pequot Nation awarded our Entrepreneurship Center a \$1.5-million general business consulting and training contract agreement. The BP Company presented a check for \$30,000

towards the Benjamin McLaurin International Fellows Fund and general support of the Division of Business Administration and Economics.

Over in the Division of Science and Mathematics, a new joint initiative between Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and Morehouse will help improve the College's science programs, aid ORNL's recruiting efforts and promote research collaborations at both institutions. The ORNL-Morehouse Mentor Protégé Agreement is the first such agreement between an HBCU and a Department of Energy Office of Science lab.

Members of our Institutional Advancement Office and I spent an intensive day on Capitol Hill with the Georgia delegation. We are seeking major support for several initiatives, including the Hopps Scholars Program and the Morehouse Male Initiative. Our largest request includes support for the Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Research and Education Initiative at the College.

We met with alumnus and Rep. Sanford Bishop '68 (who invited us to lunch in the House Dining Room), Rep. David Scott, Rep. John Lewis, and Sen. Johnny Isakson. Also, we had brief corridor conversations with Rep. Hank Johnson, Rep. Danny Davis of Illinois and Rep. Jack Marshall. My favorite two moments occurred when we passed Rep. Stephanie Tubbs-Jones (D-Ohio), who beamed as she declared that her nephew is a Morehouse student. Also, I learned that Rep. John Lewis' chief of staff is a Morehouse Man, Michael Collins '94. We are very proud of him

### **Gridiron Greatness**

By now, you know that the Fighting Tigers are 2-and-1, having recently defeated Lane College. As I wrote in my last reflection, titled "A Salute to Champions," I want the entire Morehouse family to appreciate the quality of our team, coaching staff, trainers and especially our new head coach, Rich Freeman. He has challenged them to be great sportsmen and to "play fast, play hard, and play smart."

Our scholar-athletes are clean-cut, disciplined leaders on campus. They remind us that intercollegiate sports should be a laboratory where character is developed and tested. They are helping to lead part of the renaissance of Morehouse for which I have called.

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### Morehouse Hosts Nation's Black Journalists

Morehouse also enjoyed a big splash at the National Association of Black Journalists in Las Vegas. Thanks to the team in the Office of Communications for organizing a hugely successful reception to introduce me and Ron Thomas, our new director of the Journalism and Sports Program, to the black media. The event was sponsored by Georgia Power and The Southern Company. Thanks also to trustee Mike Garrett for Georgia Power's support of the reception.

Ron Thomas was the celebrity guest and, judging from the number of people who crammed into our reception hall, Morehouse was the talk of the town. People around the country are excited about the impact on the complexion and quality of sports reporting that our Journalism and Sports Program will make. Thanks, again, to Trustee Spike Lee '79 for his leadership and generosity in launching this exciting initiative.

### Hearts Turning Toward Homecoming

We are now just weeks from Homecoming (October 19-21) and I am looking for all of you to be here for a great celebration. I look forward to a great town hall meeting with all alumni on Friday, Oct. 19, at 3 p.m. in Sale Hall. And you will not want to miss the Homecoming game and half-time show as we defeat our friendly rivals at Clark Atlanta University.

Most importantly, this will be one of our first big gatherings in which alumni can express their commitment and generosity to the College. Our students need your support. Our College is ready to take a great leap forward and she needs your love and investment. Let's make history this year with record giving.

*"Do not ask what the world needs. Do what makes you come alive. What the world needs are people who have come alive."*

—Howard Thurman '23

