



Robert M. Franklin'75
President

The Morehouse Model: Dressing the Part

Morehouse College recently implemented an “Appropriate Attire Policy.” The policy is the result of more than two years of discussions on aligning our student development with the College’s historical mission of producing educated and ethical leaders. I have said since taking the Office of the President that it is my vision to produce Renaissance Men with a social conscience and global perspective. The Appropriate Attire Policy communicates standards of dress and behavior that reflect the Renaissance Man at Morehouse.

The attire policy is only one element of a comprehensive student development program that not only outlines appropriate on-campus dress, but also challenges students to discuss the balance between individual expression and social responsibility. This is an ageless debate that calls each generation to discuss, discern and formulate solutions that work for their time and their circumstances.

We better than most understand the need for self-expression of young African American males in this society. Many of their expressions, such as spoken word and socially conscious rap, styles of dress, and even hairstyles are forms of self-expression designed to further define their identity and set them apart. But other forms, including wearing sagging pants, do-rags and “grillz,” have become associated with negative stereotypes of black manhood.

Since the policy was released, a lot of attention has centered on the standard that prohibits men from wearing women’s clothing on campus. Some critics have concluded that Morehouse seeks to discriminate against certain groups of students, specifically gay, transgendered and bisexual men. This is not our intent. In fact, we have worked diligently to ensure that Morehouse is a safe, inclusive, and respectful community with a strong commitment to social justice, diversity and respectful tolerance.

We welcome lively and creative debate on diversity, civility, and open-mindedness with the understanding that these are qualities that serve as the foundation of every liberal arts institution. As we seek to implement our expectations and values, we have felt it important to identify specific behaviors (like sagging pants, caps in classrooms, profanity in public and aggressive conflict resolution) that are contrary to the College’s traditions.

As the nation's premier educator of black men, we are taking the lead in offering our informed guidance on producing graduates ready to lead in our communities, the nation and the world. Our mission is predicated on building a strong culture of high expectations, integrity, nonviolence, academic excellence, community service and fostering strong bonds of brotherhood, mutual respect and care. Our approach to student development and leadership training has been validated by our track record of success.

Each year, nearly 800 new students and their parents *choose* Morehouse because of our traditions, values and ideals, and because of our results. Students enter our gates expecting the same experience and academic rigor that inspired leaders like Howard Thurman, Martin Luther King Jr., Maynard Jackson, Spike Lee, Julian Bond, David Satcher and Edwin Moses.

For those who decide that the Morehouse experience is not conducive to their personal and academic development, we respect their decision to select other educational options.

I stand firmly behind the five qualities of a Renaissance Man: well-read, well-spoken, well-traveled, well-dressed and well-balanced. The holistic development of *all* of our students is the mark toward which we press. "Dressing the part" is only part of our student development story.