Morehouse Ranked Top College for Black Students…Again

BLACK ENTERPRISE announced its 2004 list of the “50 Best Colleges & Universities for African Americans” and for the third consecutive term, Morehouse holds the No. 1 spot.

“We could not be more proud of this honor, nor more committed to continuing our historic mission,” said President Walter E. Massey ’58. “For more than 137 years, Morehouse has enjoyed a reputation for academic excellence, which has produced some of the nation’s most outstanding leaders. We are proud to aim even higher as we move into the 21st century.”

Closely following Morehouse is No. 2 ranked Spelman College. Of the 10 highest ranking schools for 2004, Historically Black Colleges and Universities hold six of the top 10 positions; seven of the top 10 are located in the South; and nine of the top 10 are private institutions.

Morehouse also claimed the top spot in 2003 and 2001. Starting in 2004, the ranking will be done annually.

“The goal of the 50 Best Colleges for African Americans survey was to be as inclusive as possible while targeting schools that would be of interest to black students,” writes BE consumer affairs editor Tanisha A. Sykes. Four hundred eighty-two colleges were selected based on the following criteria: accredited four-year colleges in which black enrollment was at least 3 percent, or colleges that are large or well known.

BE surveyed a group of 1,855 black higher education professionals with titles such as president, chancellor and provost. Each was asked to rate schools based on whether they felt the institutions provided a good social and educational environment for African Americans. Each school surveyed received a rating from two to negative two, with zero being neutral and two meaning the school is “strongly recommended.” Respondents were only to weigh in on the schools they were familiar with.

Jaye Prince, a junior business marketing and music performance major from Anniston, Ala., said the ranking helps him appreciate the benefits of attending a prestigious school and makes him want to put more time into his studies.

“[It] raises a sense of pride in yourself and makes you work harder to sustain that achievement in yourself and your school,” he said.

The complete “50 Best Colleges for African Americans” listing appears on pages 154 to 168 in the October 2004 issue of Black Enterprise. ■

— Elise Durham

Morehouse College
2. Spelman College
3. Hampton University
4. Howard University
5. Xavier University (New Orleans)
6. Florida A&M University
7. Stanford University
8. Columbia University
9. Harvard University
10. Duke University
Crown Forum participants, from left, Ricky Watters, Darren "Bo" Taylor, James Ingram, Jim Brown and Harry Belafonte, sing "Dear Old Morehouse" with sophomore Devin Brown.

ON NOV. 4, a scant two days after the contentious presidential election, five men appeared at Crown Forum to challenge the men of Morehouse to use political astuteness and service as tools to become better human beings.

Entertainer and activist Harry Belafonte, NFL running backs Ricky Watters and Jim Brown, Grammy-winning songster James Ingram and Darren “Bo” Taylor, a gangster turned motivational speaker, made up the impressive panel.

Although the five talked on a wide range of experiences—from Watter’s loss of an infant son to Ingram’s decision to put family before fame—the discussion ended on the need to continue the fight for equality. With a gravelly voice that spoke of ageless ideals, Belafonte stirred the audience with a message that alternated between admonishment and a call for selflessness.

“Some of you will be glaringly successful; some of you modestly so. What will you do with what you have been given?

“I say to you, do not waste the gift you have been given. If you have not touched the human heart and raised it to a new level, you have failed yourself.”

For the past four years, Glenwood Ross (5th from left), assistant professor of economics and urban studies and director of the Economic Studies Abroad Program in South Africa, has taken a group of Morehouse and Georgia State students to South Africa. The joint program between Morehouse Division of Business and Economics and the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University exposes students to South Africa’s economy, history, culture and people. As the students were touring the Cape of Good Hope, they ran into Morehouse supporters Carol (2nd from right) and Peter Abreu (taking the photo). From left: Morehouse students Charles Beverly, Dalan Vanderpool, Marcus Newman, Lawless Turner, Ross, Marquis Martin, and Garrett Webster (far right).
WHEN BREAST CANCER attacked Sandra Walker’s body five years ago, she decided to fight back—with both aggressive chemotherapy and an awareness campaign to raise consciousness about early detection of the disease.

Walker, executive assistant to the vice president for Business and Finance and CFO, and Mary Peaks, administrative assistant in the Counseling and Learning Skills Resource Center (formerly the Wellness Resource Center), annually organize the Breast Cancer Awareness Walk to benefit research at the American Cancer Society.

Walker estimates that more than 400 people participated in this year’s walk, which is nearly doubled last year’s. And $15,300 was raised, bringing the total amount donated to ACS to $66,300 since the walk’s inception.

Several student groups stepped up with big contributions this year, including the Bonner Scholars, who gave $500; the Glee Club, which gave $440; and the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, which gave $520.

President Walter E. Massey ’58 and his wife, Shirley, walked the two-mile course, along with guests, including representatives from the state capitol and the mayor’s office.

In recognition of the walk’s 5th anniversary, Walker also pounded Atlanta’s pavement to talk with several local media outlets, including Fox 5’s Suchita Vadlamani of “Good Day Atlanta,” V-103’s Porsche Foxx and UPN Atlanta’s public affairs director Keisha Williams on “Focus Atlanta.”

Walker said she was proud that the men of Morehouse spent a Saturday to aid in a cause that affects them in the minority.

“It shows that we are not only educating men academically, but also [training them] to serve the community,” she said.

— MC
DO WE ARRIVE at our names by chance or fate? Are our monikers simply a result of how pretty they rang in our mothers’ ears? Or is there something more to a name?

Take, for instance, Theda: Greek for “a gift from God.” When more than 100 people from across the campus came to bid farewell to Theda Jackson, who retired June 30, 2004, after nearly three decades as the print shop coordinator, many, indeed, extolled her as a rare gift. In fact, some said her unique ability to design, edit and coordinate the steady tide of printing that often flooded the Print Shop made her Morehouse’s own Tethys, the Greek goddess of waters.

But as she addressed well-wishers in June during her retirement party, her words were more modest than lofty; more human than divine.

She could have dropped names by mentioning the fact that she had, at points in her career, worked closely with other Morehouse gods like Benjamin E. Mays, Hugh M. Gloster Sr. ’31 and Maynard H. Jackson Jr. ’56. She could have bragged about working in offices of presidents and public relations.

Instead, her departing words were characteristically unpretentious: “I’m a little embarrassed by all the attention. I’ve always tried to help the students,” she said, after numerous accolades and gifts—including a Morehouse rocking chair—had been bestowed upon her.

Theda Jackson has retired to a leisurely life of cooking, taking care of her family, and reading. Lots of reading. “I plan to read at least three hours a day,” she said.

For Theda, life has finally taken on some of the qualities associated with the leisurely existence of the gods and goddesses from which her name is derived.

For Morehouse, her departure was more like a Greek tragedy.

LAGREE JONES, a maintenance supervisor known for stories about his grandchildren and a ready opinion on any topic, died Saturday, July 17, 2004, at 11 a.m. of lung cancer. He worked at Morehouse for more than 25 years.

Felicia Damron, physical plant operations assistant, said Jones was like a “big brother” with all the answers, even to moral and religious quandaries. “He was going to say pretty much what was on his mind, and some people put that as being mean, but you had to know him,” she said.

Jones was a person who tackled any job—even those he didn’t know how to do—and would always give you his last dollar. Selfless to the end, he took care of his wife and son, who both recovered from illnesses.

Jones was a choir member and deacon at Greater Liberty Hill Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., and he coached his grandchildren’s Little League baseball team.
Eddie Gaffney '70 has a way of seeing the bright side of things. At a roast in his honor to mark his departure from dean of Student Services, nearly every speaker lamented the fact that there simply wasn't much to poke fun at, given his ubiquitous smile and sincere desire to help and serve students.

“I haven’t heard from anybody else on this campus asking ‘how can we help [a student],’ ‘how can we straighten him up’ more than Eddie,” said Terrence Dixon ’87, associate dean of Admissions.

So prevalent is his sunny-side disposition that he even came up with a good spin on his two battles with cancer, first of the prostate cancer (he’s been cured of since 1996) and, earlier this year, of colon cancer.

“I’m happy to publicize this if it helps others. When everybody found out I had prostate cancer, people all over the campus went in for prostate screening. And when they found out I had colon cancer, they started going in for colon cancer screening.”

His glass-is-half-full perspective is admirable, considering that his latest bout with cancer has forced Gaffney to reevaluate his life. After nearly 10 years as dean of Student Services, a job that required many long nights and sometimes weekend duty, Gaffney has decided to give up the position. He is now special assistant to the senior vice president for Academic Affairs and an instructor in the psychology department.

“I’ll miss the students,” said Gaffney. “I had an open-door policy. I would meet students on the grounds and start to talk. I wanted students to feel comfortable coming to talk about any issue.

“But I love teaching. I don’t know why I ever left it. I can impact students in a very different way in the classroom.”

He said there are only two things a person has to give: love and labor. “Give it or leave it alone,” he added.

As Gaffney tells it, when John Elway retired from the Denver Broncos, he said his mind was in the game, but his body couldn’t take it. When Gaffney’s body could no longer take the rough and tumble life of a student services dean, he simply followed his own advice and left it alone.

“Sometimes the job could totally consume you,” he said.

David Brice is currently serving as the interim dean, while a search is in place for Gaffney’s replacement.

Willis “Butch” B. Sheftall Jr. ’64 has decided to leave his post as a full-time administrator for the College and return to his first love: teaching. He will begin serving as a full-time faculty member at the end of the 2004-2005 academic year.

“Most of the major objectives of my term as the College’s chief academic and operating officer have been accomplished and those that remain seem imminently achievable,” said Sheftall. “As I have expressed on several occasions, I would like to spend the remaining years of my career at Morehouse teaching and doing research.”

At President Walter E. Massey’s ’58 request, Sheftall assumed the position of senior vice president for Academic Affairs in July 1999. Prior to that appointment, he had served for 20 years as a member of the faculty and then as chair of the Department of Economics and Business Administration.

“I joined the central administration during a time of significant challenges for the College,” said Sheftall. “Over the past seven years, Morehouse has met most of those challenges and has made remarkable progress toward realizing our vision of
Anna Grant, One of College’s First Female Department Chairs, Dies

ANNA HARVIN GRANT, one of the first women to head a department at the College, died on Saturday, Nov. 6, 2004.

For 35 years, Grant served the Department of Sociology as a tenured professor, department head, researcher and community activist. She also served on the steering committee to establish the Morehouse School of Medicine, where she also lectured for numerous years.

Grant was a charter member of Phi Beta Kappa, Delta of Georgia Chapter, at Morehouse. She initiated and implemented various research and community service projects, such as the Black Life Study Project, the Family Institute and the Community Urban Relations Enterprises.

Grant earned an undergraduate degree from Florida A&M University, a master’s from Fisk University and was the first woman to earn a Ph.D. in the Department of Sociology at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. She pursued additional studies at Syracuse, Harvard University and the University of Wyoming.

Grant previously served as an assistant professor at Dillard University, an associate professor at Grambling State University and dean of students at Fisk University.

Named one of the 10 Leading Ladies of Atlanta, Grant was honored by the Fulton County Department of Family and Children’s Services with an office building dedicated in her name in 1995. She also served on numerous organizations, including the Governor’s Advisory Committee on Mental Health and Retardation, the Atlanta Judicial Commission, the American Association of University Women, the National Commission of Human Relations and Health of the Episcopal Church in the USA, and the American Council on Education’s National Identification Program for Women Administrators. She was an alumna of Leadership Atlanta and a consultant for Leadership Georgia.

“I would like to spend the remaining years... teaching and doing research.”

—ASH
KARL AUGUSTE OFFMANN, president of the Republic of Mauritius from February 2002 to October 2003, is a prime example of a leader who recognizes the importance of reaching back and cultivating the community where he was raised.

In a private dinner with Morehouse students on Sept. 22, 2004, in Sale Hall Chapel, Offmann talked about being raised in the then-struggling country and the role he later played in his country’s resurgence.

“I went to school with no shoes and lived in a high-concentrated area of disadvantage housing. I share this with you all for you to know that I was not a person of high status, but a man with determination,” he said.

Offmann told of his life as a boy—a life largely spent in the poverty typical of developing nations. Growing up, Offmann never considered going into politics. He did know, however, that he didn’t like trying to live on an empty stomach. His impoverished condition fueled his determination to get an education and make a difference in his country.

He became a part of the political group that led a dynamic wave of economic revitalization of Mauritius, a small African island off the east coast of Madagascar. Called the “Mauritian Miracle,” he helped turn his country into a global phenomenon where an economy centered on sugar and other agricultural production gave way to tourism and business investments that bring in enough capital for the country to offer its citizens free social services.

Offmann is the second African president to visit the College as part of the “President-in-Residence” program sponsored by the Leadership Center and the African Presidential Archives and Research Center (APARC) at Boston University.

Senior Mykwain Gainey, an English major from New York, found his first meeting with the African president inspiring in a time when many of the news reports about African countries have more to do with war and famine than an economic uptick. Said Gainey: “I appreciate President Offmann for explaining [that] it’s not important where you come from, but it’s a matter of where you’re going and how many people you take with you.”

— Gregory Jackson Jr.
SEVERAL TIMES EACH YEAR, the Morehouse College Corporate Alliance Program and the Leadership Center invite senior-level executives from the world of business to participate in its Presidential Chat Series and Executive Lecture Series to share their experiences and expertise with a group of business students and other members of the campus community. The session includes a short presentation by the visiting professional and an opportunity for informal interaction between the executives and students.

Photos:

- Jim C. Kennedy, chairman & CEO, Cox Enterprises, Oct. 18, 2004
- Sanders C. Coulter (right), vice chairman, J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., Ken R. Lay (left), managing director from J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., Oct. 6, 2004
- Bernie Marcus, chairman, The Marcus Foundation, Sept. 17, 2004
- Michael T. Duke, executive vice president, president and CEO, Wal-Mart Stores, USA, Oct. 4, 2004
- Michael L. Eskew, UPS chairman and CEO, Sept. 28, 2004
- Dave Ferguson, retired CEO of Wal-Mart’s Canada division (3rd from left) with Andre Bertrand ’76, vice president for Campus Operations, Shaun Thomas ’91, corporate relations officer, Kenneth K. Jones, junior, sociology major; First Lady Shirley Massey, Keith B. Hollingsworth, associate professor of Business Administration, Sandy Ferguson, Cassandra D. Wells, assistant professor of Business Administration; President Walter E. Massey ’58, Hosein Abghari, associate professor of Business Administration and department chair for the division of Business Administration and Economics, Sept. 14, 2004