



THE Value of a Morehouse EDUCATION

By Add Seymour Jr.

A midday stroll across campus during the spring of 2007 completely crystallized for Carlton Willis, now a senior, why Morehouse has been the right place for him.

It was in the midst of his walk that he came across a man who was relaxing under the bright, Atlanta sky. Turns out he was a vice president for the PepsiCo Corporation.

"I saw him sitting on a bench on campus and walked right up to him and started talking," recalls Willis. "He told me that he likes Dunkin Donuts, so I took him there. We had the opportunity to talk one-on-one and

eat donuts. He asked me to shoot him a resumé. That's how I got an internship."

Willis is quick to point out that his chance meeting wasn't just a lucky break. Not only did Morehouse give him access to influential movers and shakers, he said, but the College educated, trained and taught him how to make the most of whatever opportunity comes along—even a chance meeting with a top executive hungry for donuts.

It is one of many examples of what allows Morehouse to continue to provide a special educational value, even as the nation is going through the most severe

economic downturn since the Great Depression. The global economic meltdown, triggered by the collapse of the U.S. housing market, buckled Wall Street as the Dow Jones Industrial Average, at one point, sputtered to 6,000—less than half of the 13,000 average one year ago. A standstill in the credit markets followed as financial institutions became extra cautious in making new loans and tightened the qualifying criteria for credit applicants.

The effect of Wall Street's woes on Main Street has been a ballooning unemployment rate that hovers around 8 percent, the highest it has been in 25 years. An estimated 4 mil-

DESPITE THE TOUGH **FINANCIAL** CIRCUMSTANCES MANY FAMILIES ARE FACING, FEW STUDENTS HAVE GIVEN UP ON **ATTENDING COLLEGE**. ONLY 4 PERCENT SAID THAT THE RECESSION HAD PROMPTED THEM TO MORE SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WORKING INSTEAD OF ATTENDING COLLEGE; **78%** SAID THEY HAD NEVER CONSIDERED THAT OPTION.

—Based on findings from a student survey conducted by the College Board and Art and Science Group

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—Alex Akbari
senior psychology major

Tuition, room and board, fees, books and supplies and other expenses will be \$39,497 at Morehouse for the 2009-2010 academic year.

But Financial Aid Director James Stotts says his office is diligently working to assist students and parents in identifying all possible financial resources, such as scholarships, grants and loans, for making Morehouse affordable.

“The College makes a number of awards to students in recognition of their accomplishment either in pursuit of academic excellence or demonstrated skills and talent,” he says. “In addition, numerous corporations, employers, professional organizations and foundations make scholarships available to Morehouse students.”

Morehouse offers an array of financial aid programs and invests some of the College’s institutional resources to assist students. Approximately 75 percent of students received some form of scholarship – academic, talent or athletic – support during the 2008-2009 school year.

Some of those scholarships come from the Oprah Winfrey Foundation, the Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship program, United Negro College Fund, along with other Morehouse endowed and restricted scholarships.

The College also hired a scholarship coordinator to counsel and assist students and parents with finding additional funds through a wide variety of internal and external sources.

Besides adhering to all deadlines, Stotts

offers one important bit of advice:

“Students/parents should develop a financial plan for College to make sure that they are able to cover the appropriate costs associated with their educational expenses,” he says. He suggests a six-step plan:

1. Apply for financial aid
2. Understand the cost-of-attendance budget
3. Develop your budget
4. Review and secure all funding sources
5. Do calculations
6. Determine if additional resources are needed

“The financial plan will help students understand the direct cost and the actual cost of attendance, allowing them to determine what is needed from one year to the next,” Stotts says.

Investing in Black Male Development

Colleges and universities, private and public, large and small, are in a fierce and competitive search for talented African American male students.

The rough economy has parents and students seeking new ways to afford a college education. But it also has institutions digging deeper and being more creative in attracting black males.

That makes the job of Terrance Dixon ’87, associate dean for Recruitment, a little tougher.

lion jobs have been lost since December 2007, according to MarketWatch.com.

American families are now in a serious belt-tightening mode as they keep a closer watch on expenditures of every type, including the escalating cost of sending their children to college.

With ominous economic conditions forecasted to persist for a while yet, it is no surprise that financially insecure parents are asking the big “A” question: affordability. The euphoria of receiving an acceptance letter is often tempered by the subsequent award letter and the question, “How can we afford a college education for our son?”

“And it’s tough because I think more now than ever people are shopping for education like they are shopping for anything else,” he says.

But Dixon urges parents who are worried about actual costs to calculate the value of intangibles, like the College’s legacy of producing leaders and its unique focus on black male development.

“We spend a lot of time telling parents about what makes Morehouse the value that it is,” he says. “We think we do something different for an African American man than they’d get from any other campus.”

What’s already well known is Morehouse’s stellar academic reputation: from 2002 to 2004, *Black Enterprise* magazine ranked the College the best in educating African American students; the College has produced three Rhodes Scholars, scores of local and national politicians, several college presidents, a surgeon general and history’s pre-eminent civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr. ’48.

Classes have a 15:1 student-to-professor ratio; 100 percent of tenure-tracked and tenured faculty hold Ph.Ds in their academic area, and students are getting placed into some of the top graduate school programs in the country.

sic in the Morehouse experience: the process of building strong, knowledgeable black men who are full of spirit and self-worth and ready to contribute something to their communities, both locally and abroad.

Says Will O. Cobbs Jr. ’95, president of Chicago-based, federal government statistical consulting firm Ahiman Consulting and Research, Inc.: “Morehouse made me redefine what it is to be a black man—and it’s belonging to a group that shows what the epitome of what a black man can be.”

“I don’t think that is cultivated in other institutions... It may be, but not to the degree of Morehouse.”

The experience comes together in an environment completely unlike any other higher education institution in the world as the student population at Morehouse is almost totally comprised of males of African and African American descent.

“So the gender piece is removed and that’s important for a lot of brothers,” says psychology professor Bryant T. Marks ’94. “Morehouse provides a space where black men can bond and be vulnerable, to an extent, and be accepted.”

Artist and theologian Carey Wynn ’70 points to the vague, indescribable, yet very

American community, particularly the African American male,” Wynn says.

“Through [the weekly, mandatory gathering for students] Crown Forum, classroom experiences and general extra-curricular activities, each student every day is provided with an opportunity – in fact, it is demanded of him – that he serves to see himself as a purposeful student who is able to challenge the stereotypes that have dogged the African American community, and the African American male, since the dawn of African slavery,” he says.

The Value of Brotherhood

From the first day of New Student Orientation, men of Morehouse are taught not only how to become scholars, but how to develop into moral and ethical leaders – and to hold their own Morehouse brothers to those same high standards, day in and day out.

“From the moment you step onto campus as a freshman, you are indoctrinated into a fraternity of brotherhood,” says senior psychology major Alex Akbari. “You immediately feel the support system that’s 2,800-men strong. I know that I’m going to become a doctor and Morehouse is going to help me get there.”

That brotherhood becomes a unique bond that lasts a lifetime.

For example, Marks said he was once alone in a new city, his car adorned with a Morehouse license plate. After leaving and then returning to his car, he saw a note on the windshield: a fellow Morehouse Man – someone Marks had never met – saw the plate and left a number for the fellow Maroon Tiger to call.

When Terry Mills, dean of the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, went to Beijing, China, in 2008, Marketus Presswood ’98 and Shaan Price ’98 were his interpreters and tour guides.

HALF OF STUDENTS IN A RECENT SURVEY SAID THEIR FAMILIES HAD **SAVED MONEY FOR COLLEGE**, BUT ONLY HALF OF THOSE HAD SAVED MORE THAN \$20,000. TEN PERCENT SAID THEY HAD SAVED BETWEEN \$40,000 AND \$70,000, AND 5 PERCENT SAID THEY HAD SAVED MORE THAN \$100,000.

-The College Board and Art and Science Group

In 2003, The *Wall Street Journal* named Morehouse one of the top 50 most successful schools across the nation when it comes to sending students to well-known, well-respected graduate and professional schools.

But Dixon speaks not just about the high-level education that the College provides, but of something different and intrin-

real concept dubbed the Morehouse Mystique. It is, in simple terms, what makes Morehouse so different, he says.

“The Morehouse Mystique is translated in various mantras, manners, virtues and visions that call to mind the salient characteristics of manhood that are critical to the reformation of the African

Presswood is the founder of the BSA Minority Study Abroad Program, which gives minority college students opportunities to study in countries around the world. Price is the program's student adviser.

Presswood believed that students at his alma mater needed to be a part of his program.

"A college is only as strong as the graduates it produces, as well as the different forms of capital those graduates produce for the college," Presswood says. "It was a logical step for us to reach out to Morehouse students in conjunction with Dean Mills, who shares a similar vision of preparing students for a competitive global economy. As a Morehouse alum and study abroad advocate who has spent 10 years living abroad, I obviously would like to see the majority of Morehouse students have some kind of overseas experience."

Adds Mills of what has now become a one-week Asian/Middle East cultural immersion program: "We came up with this idea of doing this winter break tour. It's not only an example of what Morehouse offers students, but more importantly, how students respond to what Morehouse has to offer."

Marks is now director of the Morehouse Male Initiative, a program that, through research, surveys and focus groups, will scientifically measure for the first time the impact of the Morehouse experience. He says that for all of the tangible evidence of the strength of the Morehouse experience, there remains an "X-factor" that makes it different.

"There is something we will never be able to totally identify, that makes this such a unique place," he says. "There is something special about this place – that's the mystique piece."

The spirit of helping students and fellow Morehouse brothers was never more on display than during the beginning of the spring 2009 semester.

More than 200 students who had just started the semester were on the verge of having to pack their bags and head home because they couldn't come up with the needed 60 percent of their total bill to pay for school, even though the school extended

IN A SURVEY OF **NEARLY 40,000 HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS**

AND THEIR PARENTS, ABOUT 61 PERCENT OF THE SENIORS AND 64 PERCENT OF SENIORS'

PARENTS SAID CONCERNS ABOUT THE ECONOMY "SOMEWHAT" OR "GREATLY"

AFFECTED THE COLLEGES TO WHICH STUDENTS APPLIED.

-The 2009 College Decision Impact Survey, Maguire Associates

the deadline by three weeks.

President Robert M. Franklin Jr. '75 stepped in and wrote a letter asking alumni, fraternities and other organizations to dig into their pockets to help keep those students in school.

"To be sure, these are extraordinary times that call for extraordinary sacrifice," Franklin wrote in his Feb. 4 e-mail. "...Now, I'm calling on you to help keep these students on track to becoming Morehouse Men."

The response: within a few days, 200 gifts totaling more than \$88,000 were given, keeping 188 students in class.

"These acts of generosity demonstrate the commitment to our great College

that has always been a part of the Morehouse value system," Franklin said.

For Cobbs, who gave one of those gifts, it is only a small price to pay to be part of a strong Morehouse family. That, Cobbs says, is the value that is gained over a lifetime.

"It is like the motivation to continue a relationship that has been an important source for me," he says. "I struggled through Morehouse financially. But those struggles made me stronger. I wanted current students to have the opportunity to overcome those adversities and to become stronger because I know what a value Morehouse has been to me." ■

-Chandra Thomas also reported for this article.

Top 5 REASONS WHY Morehouse IS STILL A Good Value

- 1 Reputation** NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AS A TOP FEEDER SCHOOL TO THE NATION'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS
- 2 Selectivity** COLLEGE OF CHOICE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN
- 3 Academic Excellence** ONE OF TWO HBCU TO PRODUCE THREE RHODES SCHOLARS
- 4 Focus on Leadership Development** ONE OF ONLY A FEW LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES THAT OFFERS A LEADERSHIP STUDIES MINOR
- 5 Emphasis on Community Service** NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE STUDENT BODY PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS