



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT ROBERT MICHAEL FRANKLIN '75

AUGUST 2007

Summer at Morehouse is a much busier time than I had expected. Looking out the office window, daily I see busloads of visitors, prospective students and families touring our campus. As they pose for photographs at the King monument and the Mays memorial, they seem to share in the pride that the Morehouse legacy inspires. This reminds me of how important Morehouse is to the hope and vitality of the village, the nation and the world.

Board Visits

July began my 100-day period of “looking, listening and learning,” as one board member put it. That process will continue even as we refine plans for early initiatives in the areas of student welfare, faculty vitality and fundraising. I am meeting with members of the Trustee board and placing courtesy calls to all of the other members in anticipation of meeting them before or at our November meeting. As Dr. Massey noted in his final letter to the Trustees, they are a wonderful board, and Morehouse is fortunate to have such a devoted, talented and resourceful group of governors.

Morehouse Alumni

One of the great pleasures of the month has been sitting with alumni to talk about our beloved school. Whether in Atlanta, San Francisco or Oakland, it is clear that alumni want to strengthen the bonds between the school and the alumni family. I am excited about this and will do all I can to sustain this important partnership. I’ve had good meetings with National Alumni President Phil McCall, and several local presidents thus far. I look forward to Morehouse’s staff-directed, alumni-driven fund-raising plans and projects. The alumni family will hear more from us soon.

SACS External Review

As we prepare for our Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) reaffirmation of accreditation visit in 2008, we want to ensure that we become a better organization in the process. Of course, our goal is to be found in full compliance with standards. But, in addition, we want to become smarter and more agile in the process.

We are using this period during my transition to undertake a full external review of our administrative departments. Working with Dr. Ronald Sheehy, associate vice president of Academic Affairs (and a former SACS executive), Kathleen

Johnson, special assistant to the president (fundraising), and others, we have invited a blue-ribbon panel comprised largely of distinguished former college presidents and the provost at Emory University. Their report will assist both with the SACS process and with providing me with benchmark information for refining our current administrative operations.

Campus Matters

With respect to the senior administrative team, I accepted the resignation of Provost David Taylor, whose last day was July 31, 2007. We are grateful for his contributions to the vitality of our Academic Affairs programs. I am very grateful to Dr. Willis “Butch” Sheftall for his willingness to step in and serve as interim provost until we undertake a search.

We also welcome Fran Phillips-Calhoun as special assistant to the president (operations). Phillips-Calhoun, who comes to us after serving as executive director for Wesley Community Centers, has extensive experience in legislative affairs with local and federal government. I am also pleased that Beverly Crane will continue in her valuable role as executive assistant to the president.

I’ve had good meetings with leaders of the student government who are working to improve the conduct of fellow students. Also, they are challenging the College to improve the quality of our customer service practices. Student leaders will be undertaking a quality service audit to document their experience and interactions with staff members. The bottom line is that Morehouse will be a campus that operates in an efficient, friendly and respectful manner to all of our students, stakeholders and the public at large.

Later in August, we will begin construction on the Ray Charles Performing Arts Center, and the new parking deck and welcome center. We ask that you pardon and celebrate the signs of our progress.

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The Unfinished Commencement Address

On July 21st, we graduated 65 young men who proudly pushed our graduation rate upward toward where we belong. Although we still have a way to go, we are closing the gap and will continue to do so. One note of high drama: as I stood to introduce our summer Commencement speaker, Dr. John Maupin, president of the Morehouse School of Medicine, I learned that he had not yet arrived due to an emergency. I began to deliver the address until three minutes later when Dean Carter whispered that “the speaker is here!” At that point, mid-sentence, I declared, “in my conclusion...” and introduced Dr. Maupin.

Harvard New Presidents Seminar

During the third week of July, I spent five days at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education along with 45 other presidents. Alumnus Charles Willie joined us for lunch one day and shared his latest book, titled “The Black College Mystique.” As I spoke of the traditions and legacy of Morehouse and shared our stunning publications, other presidents were impressed by the great landmarks of Morehouse’s heritage.

Summer Sadness

One of the heaviest dimensions of this job is having to deal with the death of Morehouse family members—especially the sudden, premature deaths of young people. This July has been an especially challenging time as we said farewell to Dean Eddie Gaffney, alumni Freddie Rayford and Donnie Morris, Mrs. Kilgore and returning student David Boyd Jr. We also remembered the anniversary of Mr. Carnell Walker’s tragic murder.

Stanford Friends

During a brief visit to San Francisco, I visited with Dr. Clayborne Carson, who is working to produce a comprehensive online directory of various collections of Dr. King’s written work. He also serves on the advisory board of the Morehouse College Martin Luther King Jr. Collection. We are exploring a larger role for Dr. Carson in

cementing the collaboration between Morehouse and Stanford. In addition, I had a good visit with Stanford’s major gifts director, who has offered to be helpful as we consider the exciting development opportunities ahead.

Ready for New Men of Morehouse

Next week, we will welcome more than 700 new students. The campus is looking great and staff members are on their toes as we prepare for an exciting orientation program. Also, I have directed the New Student Orientation team to post welcoming teams of students and alumni at the airport, where not only our students and parents can see them, but the travelers who pass through the busiest airport in the world can see Morehouse’s “charm offensive” as we take our story and brand into the public square. Perhaps you have seen Henry Goodgame’s call to action on this. Alumni, we need you now.

A Final Word

We will challenge these new Men of Morehouse to comport themselves with the dignity, self-respect and commitment to the high ideals of Morehouse that have made us world-famous. We will not tolerate bad behavior, profane speech or offensive clothing on campus. **We are Morehouse. We are different and the world hopes we will remain different—a cut above the rest.**

So, hold a good thought for us, whisper a prayer and prepare to rally around Dear Old Morehouse and her ideals.

Next month, I will report on the numerous fundraising triumphs we have amassed during the past six weeks, including a million dollar gift from the Ford Foundation. I will highlight several faculty members whose research and grant proposals have attracted major gifts to Morehouse. Also, I’ll begin to highlight special ‘employees of the month’ who are extending themselves beyond the call of duty to make Morehouse magnificent.

Finally, if you know of Morehouse family members who are not receiving these email messages, people for whom we do not have good addresses, or those to whom we should mail a hard copy, please do me the favor of alerting us so that we can respond promptly and with gratitude. ■

*“It is not what you keep, but what you give that makes you happy.”
-Benjamin E. Mays*



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