



PHILANDER SMITH COLLEGE

Little Rock, Arkansas
Founded: 1877

*Inaugural
Address*

TRUDIE KIBBE REED, Ed.D.
ELEVENTH PRESIDENT

Delivered: February 25, 1999

Inaugural Address

February 27, 1999

DR. TRUDIE KIBBE REED

To the Philander Smith College Board of Trustees, the Honorable Mike Huckabee, Governor of Arkansas, to Lt. Governor Winthrop Rockefeller, to the Episcopal Leaders of The United Methodist Church, to Philander Smith College Alumni, members of the platform party, distinguished guests, to the great faculty, staff and students of Philander Smith College, to President Emeritus, Dr. Myer L. Titus, to the wonderful citizens of Arkansas, and to my extended family gathered from many diverse places - it is indeed an honor to stand before you today as the 11th president of Philander Smith College.

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, the late president emeritus of Morehouse College and one of the greatest educators of the 20th century, explained that each of us can reach our level of **true greatness** - if we know what greatness is. For over 121 years, Philander Smith College has educated prominent citizens of this state, nation, and world. We have enabled generations of learners to achieve their very best at all levels and they have shared and continue to share their gifts with the world.

Philander Smith College has done far more than simply enable students to obtain degrees; the College proudly claims an important role in empowering students for true greatness in all endeavors. At our institution, learners discover how to reach for the stars, how to envision a preferred future for themselves and their neighbors, how to replace fear with hope, and how to inspire their peers with the gift of team leadership.

It is important to celebrate that Philander Smith College continues an important mission that calls students to realize their potential for the "true greatness" that Dr. Mays speaks of. This greatness is characterized by one's ability to **overcome all obstacles**, to achieve academic excellence, and to arrive at a new way of viewing the world that will make a significant difference in the community and among global neighbors. Greatness is expressed through the ability to envision many new horizons that offer hope to all. At Philander Smith College, students continue a rich legacy of **Building Traditions of Excellence** where lives are transformed daily and students become passionate lifelong learners and civic leaders.

In our future society, college graduates will be measured not only by the knowl-

edge or expertise they possess, but by their capacity to learn from the unknown, the unexpected, and the unexplored. Our students are moving to greater levels of awareness and accomplishment as we create cultures of commitment to: academic excellence, globalization, civic leadership, and family systems. We also participate in solutions that foster human dignity, racial harmony, and individual self esteem.

HISTORY

Founded in 1877, by Freedmen's Aid Society and The United Methodist Church, Philander Smith College was born in the aftermath of the Civil War and slavery. The College represents one of the earliest attempts to make education available to freed slaves west of the Mississippi River. Moved by the tragic circumstances in which many freed slaves in the region found themselves, a group of ministers and dedicated lay persons resolved to form an institution to make education available to those who had long been excluded from educational opportunity. The result was Philander Smith College, which in its very inception, represented a joint enterprise and an interracial undertaking designed to solve a problem that was both acute and immediate.

Over the course of its long history and despite limited resources, the College has demonstrated its ability to solve new problems equally acute and immediate. Most recently, the College's focus on a new minor in Black Family Studies (first in the nation) is a response to a modern day concern impacting the family system and community values across our nation.

The College's mission is to maintain an academic environment that fosters a love of learning, a spirit of independent inquiry, the free exchange of ideas, a broad and active Christian life, and a concern for the world at large.

For over a century, Philander Smith College has cherished a mission that is both broad and challenging. Although born in difficult circumstances, the College has challenged itself over the course of its history to produce outstanding African American scholars and community leaders. Integral to the College's mission from its inception has been the commitment to offer access to higher education to any student who has the potential and the desire to learn regardless of social, economic, or educational background. We are very pleased with the growing number of culturally diverse students who come from many countries and racial backgrounds to celebrate an important mission, that continues to offer meaning and hope for achieving a better future.

At Philander Smith College, the Christian vision infuses the College, and inspires a community to re-commit itself to a rich educational legacy by focus-

ing on the spiritual development of students, along with academic and personal development. By enhancing its value-centered approach to education and promoting an environment of care that permeates every aspect of life at the College, Philander Smith hopes to create an educational milieu in which students are free to explore important questions about the meaning of life, and to express their religious beliefs.

The College's new academic program in **Black Family Studies** and the Arkansas Delta Initiative, are built on the Philander Smith College philosophy of holistic education. Central to the vision of these new academic and community programs is an insight that community leadership is instrumental in the development of **lifelong learning** and critical thinking skills. Through these new programs, learners not only explore the root causes for the disintegration of the family system but also participate in solutions. Through their study of the family, students will build important bridges between classroom learning and life experience. The new family studies curriculum will allow students to experience first hand the fundamental value of claiming responsibility for their learning by engaging critical issues that impact their everyday lives and realities.

The Philander Smith College story of rising to meet difficult challenges with pride and a pronounced sense of mission is most persuasive when one listens to the stories of its graduates. One such story is that of Russell Mason, a 1996 graduate now employed by Alltel Information Systems in Little Rock as a program analyst in the tax division. A Memphis native, Mr. Mason came to Philander Smith College in 1991 on a choir scholarship, and earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in computer science.

Russell is now an adjunct faculty member in his discipline at his alma mater. Both as an educator at the college and a leader in his chosen professional field, he promotes the Philander Smith College mission with enthusiasm. Wherever he goes, Mr. Mason makes a point of letting others know that his degree has not only given him an education, but has helped build faith, character, spirituality, integrity and worth. The values and vision Philander Smith College imparted to Mr. Mason have remained central to his life after graduation - so central that he maintains, "I wouldn't trade the experience I had at Philander for anything in the world."

Recognizing that its unique character and mission are bound up with the challenge to meet the needs of both under prepared and gifted students, Philander Smith College strives to develop a learning environment in which various constituencies of students will feel welcome. As a family bound together by shared commitment, faculty and staff dedicate themselves to **mentoring and nurturing** students, and to instilling a passion for learning. The Philander Smith College

community prides itself on transforming individuals into perpetual learners and leaders throughout their adult life cycle. The College's goal is to make the learning experience affordable, rewarding, and transforming.

With its historic mission of promoting **academic excellence** for many kinds of students, and its historic emphasis on community leadership skills, Philander Smith College is ideally situated for reaching an audience that goes beyond the traditional student population to include more adult learners at various phases of their lives and careers. Another new component of Philander Smith College is an educational initiative that will be offered in the Arkansas Delta region.

As Philander Smith College has grown, the vision and mission that were born in the circumstances of its founding have grown along with it. The College's vision continues to expand as the College attracts an increasingly diverse student population. As the College meets the challenges of growing diversity, and of an increasingly complex society, its vision has broadened; poised to enter a new millennium, Philander Smith College envisions itself capable of becoming a top liberal arts college in the South, one distinguished by its emphasis on lifelong learning - the development of learners who acquire skills to overcome educational deficiencies, and societal obstacles through the **power of knowledge**.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

An educational philosophy is central to the leadership that will carry this great institution into the next millennium. Education is power, hope, and faith in a better tomorrow. Regardless of economic and social background, every person deserves an opportunity to pursue higher education. Furthermore, it is my opinion that in the absence of spiritual growth, intellectual stimulation is meaningless. Providing **an effective learning environment** that will enhance spirituality and citizenship, while strengthening linkages to the African American community remains a crucial goal of all historically African American colleges. A distinctive educational program characterizes opportunities for students to compete internationally as they learn the values of globalization, negotiation, and cultural synergistic problem solving.

Learning should be fun, empowering, and life changing. To learn is to unearth new meaning - to make a difference - to find one's voice - to develop new ideas - to engage in self discovery - and to re-examine prior beliefs.

Institutions of higher learning that are truly *student-centered* will offer choices and challenges as well as the ability to listen and to be heard. Unique experiences and opportunities within such a learning community will enable students to realize their dreams.

Colleges that are **esteem builders** facilitate greater consensus and team building among the entire learning community. Team building is essential for the development of a shared mission that can be owned and articulated with excitement!

Through academic excellence, innovative programming, and effective marketing, national and global visibility can be attained, leading to increased enrollment and outstanding scholarship. While education builds citizenship, students prepare for this important role through cultural and **community service**. Therefore, learning cannot be separated from the community or society at large.

WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES OF A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION?

A liberal arts education will continue to foster a deeper exploration of human knowledge in diverse subjects that will facilitate inquiry into meaning, while building a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES OF A HISTORICALLY AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE?

Traditionally African American United Methodist Colleges are entrusted with building a future for the youth of our nation. In essence, they offer a *map* and *compass* to direct the African American community, impacting the nation at large. Historically African American Colleges transmit history and preserve legacies of truth and knowledge. They pave the way for generations to journey through history armed with faith, the capacity for hard work, and a quest to learn. For many, African American colleges continue to provide the greatest gift: a supportive community for the pursuit of learning. **Education** becomes **power**, a liberating force that offers justice, equity, and hope for the African American Community for generations to come.

As we approach the 21st century, trends in education indicate that every college and university in the nation will experience greater competition in generating revenue and funds. Given this reality, for Philander Smith College to flourish in the next millennium, a focus must be placed in seven critical areas: (1) enhancing **academic excellence**; (2) provision of more **internships and service learning**; (3) supporting distinctive initiatives that will gain the college a **national reputation**; (4) keeping pace with **technological advances**; (5) maximizing the use of campus facilities through the on-going **Philander Smith Management Institute**, and other non-traditional academic programs (i.e. Certificate/Continuing Education Programs); (6) the development of **leadership/entrepreneurial skills**; and (7) the development of tools for **lifelong learning**.

LEADERSHIP

Leading the Philander Smith College community into the 21st century will require vision, passion, excitement, entrepreneurial spirit, and sheer determination. I am prepared to take that journey in the building of greater local, state, national, and international prominence. As both an administrator and scholar, I value a team leadership approach that will enhance current successes while envisioning new creative directions. As a leader, I take delight in inspiring hope, excitement, vision, and confidence in others. I enjoy having fun, working hard, and being positive.

My leadership is characterized by quality in relationships - through the respect for others, effective communication, linkages with resource persons in the community, mutual accountability systems, quality in performance, and **team action** that will make a positive difference. As a **principle-centered leader**, I take great pride in modeling integrity, trust, and honesty. While goal attainment is personally fulfilling, what is equally important to me is the "*process*" of how a team reaches goals through participatory involvement of the entire team. Yet at the same time, I can make tough decisions and hold others accountable for quality work that will best represent a beloved institution.

I favor an *open door* policy where everyone is welcome and heard. While never abdicating leadership responsibility, it is important to receive input from many constituent groups in order to form a **collective wisdom**. As both a transformational and transactional leader, I take delight in the combination of the two leadership styles, where vision and management are combined to advance an institution toward greater success and excellence.

Providing incentives for outstanding work, scholarship, and service are the characteristics of empowered leadership that build confidence and trust in others. Collaboration, participation, and excitement in the workplace can and should be contagious! Courage, determination, and a vision for the future are the foundations for effective leadership. I value continuing the sacred traditions of an institution while also leading the way to **write a new chapter for the future**. For students to compete in our society, they will need to develop entrepreneurial leadership skills. And the added value of an education from Philander Smith College will be the acquisition of such skills and knowledge that will prepare our graduates to create, innovate, and motivate.

Finally, as a Christian leader, I lead through the inspiration of the Christian faith, with the knowledge that God is always present through our discernment and decision making. With such an understanding, my leadership focus is **student-centered** because the hope of the world rests with **knowledge seekers** and **faith builders**.

Throughout history, African Americans have struggled for liberation and a place to share their dreams for a better world and existence. At this inauguration ceremony, we celebrate the dreams that were shared and acted upon in 1877 by The United Methodist Church. This faith group dared to birth an institution in a controversial time. They lived out their faith by standing in solidarity with an oppressed group of people, in order to serve the special needs of these sojourners who were recently released from slavery. They dared to look into the future to set in place a course of destination for oppressed persons who were without options for new opportunities. The vision of liberation led to the cultivation of leadership that ultimately would bring harmony, justice, and empowerment to not only African Americans, but to a nation that soon realized the importance of **human rights and dignity.**

During my youth, I remember vividly growing up in a predominately African American community and experiencing an educational system that was segregated. Our role models helped us to survive. They taught us leadership by example. Whether through peacemaking activities, church and community events, or the civil rights movement, we learned how to lead and how to follow. In fact, our stories, experiences, methodologies, and contributions are encoded in our journey with many mentors and community elders. Their role was to transmit hope, leadership, and the power of getting an education. While their opportunities were limited, they left an imprint that can never be forgotten. Those of us who benefitted from their hard work, lessons of leadership, and courage must now take up the leadership mantle and make a difference. "Servant Leadership," is a description of the roles and acts performed by our community elders. Being a servant leader means that we receive as much as we give. My time at Philander Smith College has been a gift. For, the story of Philander Smith College is about the mantle of leadership being passed from one generation to the next. We will accomplish what my community elders did for me - **vision, hope, pride, knowledge, and leadership formation.**

Leadership must always be viewed as dynamic, evolutionary, and fundamentally a part of life that cannot be relegated to position, role, individual, or a set of characteristics. Leadership is as complex as life itself. One thing is apparent, leadership engages the **whole person in "community."**

William Butler Yeats once stated that "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." At Philander Smith College, we light students' fires. They are transformed into beacons of light for a world that sorely needs such beacons. From the past to the future, Philander Smith College has been blessed by a relationship with The United Methodist Church, its alumni, and many friends in the community. Today, each of these constituencies issued a leadership charge that

addressed both challenges and opportunities. So, what does this leadership charge mean to a new president?

A charge is a **covenant or commitment** to continue our rich legacy. It is an expectation that I will look far enough into the future to determine necessary directions while staying focused on present day needs. A leadership charge has to do with listening and responding to the needs of students as well as the community. This charge is an expectation that a president will enable and ensure learners that they are receiving a quality education and are prepared for a changing and a new reality.

Taken seriously, a presidential leadership charge within a Christian learning environment will serve as a reminder that I must have faith that God will continue to bless our institution regardless of crises and challenges. The acceptance of leadership involves determination to succeed in the hard times and to envision challenges as opportunities. Today, I receive the charge to dream with the trustees, with the students, with the faculty, and with the staff in order to enable a new community to reach for true greatness that will leave a legacy for the next generation.

This investiture challenges me to meet all of the responsibilities given by the Board of Trustees, to provide effective leadership, to foster a Christian heritage, to remain student-centered, and to raise the bar for academic excellence. This leadership charge therefore becomes my compass for the future and a map for true greatness.

I am pleased to serve as the eleventh President of Philander Smith College and to accept the leadership charge given to me today.

Who will join Philander Smith College, in helping the world to understand the meaning of the word greatness? With the help of the community, Philander Smith College will enter the new millennium with a sense of greatness because we are ready to respond to the challenges of the world. So, I am pleased to accept the charge given to me today, with the help of God, my family, and this community of great people.

Together, college and community will enable all to understand and to claim **greatness**. Beloved community, may God continue to bless you and the great Philander Smith College!

PHILANDER SMITH COLLEGE

812 West 13th Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

(501) 370-5275