

# NORTH CAROLINA A&T MAGAZINE

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FALL 2023-SPRING 2024

## **R1:** WITHIN REACH

CHANCELLOR  
MARTIN'S  
**TRANSFORMATIVE  
LEGACY**



# Future site of **BLUFORD RESIDENCE HALL**

- Approximately 136,000 SF
  - 4-5 stories
  - 405
  - 90% double room
  - hearing im
  - and 4-bedr
  - each floor
- NC STATE UNIVERSITY  
CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL  
MECHANICAL STATE

# 405

NUMBER OF STUDENTS  
BLUFORD RESIDENCE HALL  
WILL HOUSE

Members of the Residence Hall Association join Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. to break ground for Bluford Residence Hall, N.C. A&T's first new residence facility in nearly two decades. For details, see page 8.

# NORTH CAROLINA A&T MAGAZINE

FALL-SPRING 2023-2024

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**NORTH CAROLINA A&T MAGAZINE**  
is published biannually by the Office of  
University Relations for alumni and friends of  
the university. All editorial correspondence  
should be directed to the editor at the  
address/email below.

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**Send address changes and requests  
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65,000 copies of this public document were  
designed and printed at a cost of \$89,701.11  
or \$1.38 per copy.



64

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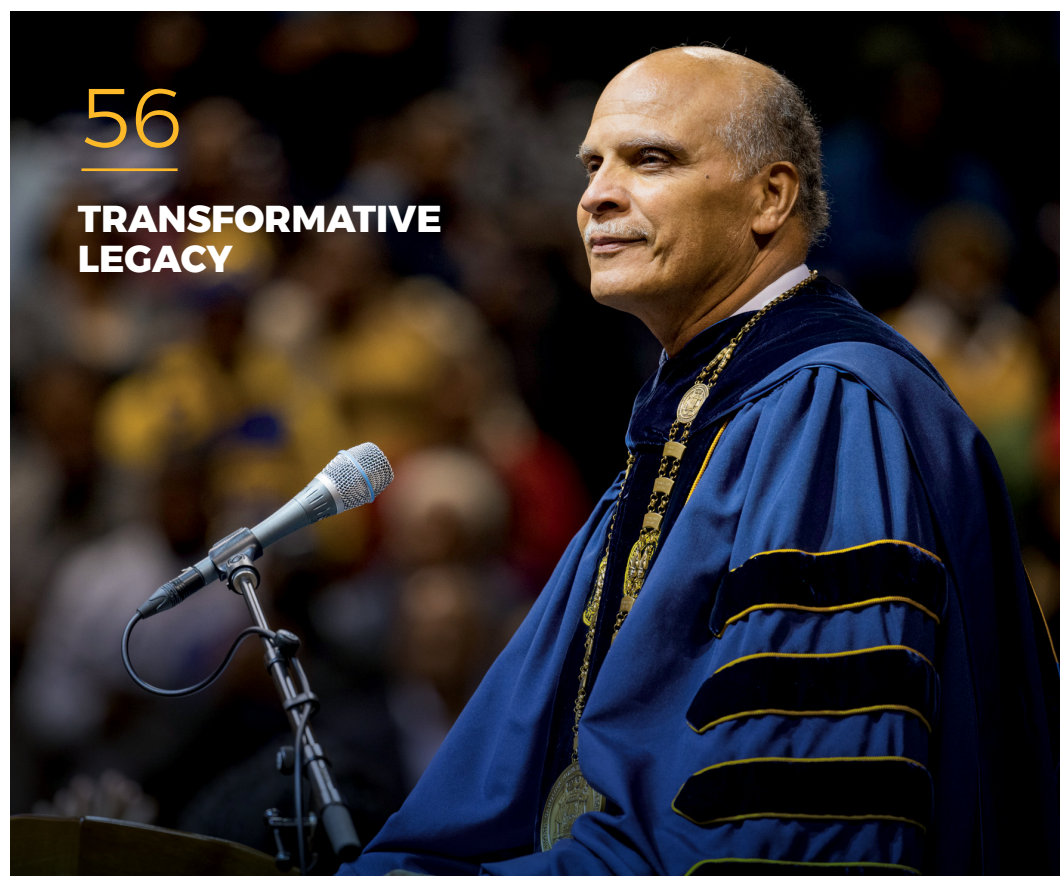


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## DIVISION 1 MARCHING BAND OF THE YEAR



## 50 | ON THE COVER

N.C. A&T's rapid growth in research funding  
and reputation signal progress in its drive  
toward R1 status.

MAKING NEWS

**N.C. A&T is a 2023-2024  
Voter Friendly Campus**



# VICE PRESIDENT HARRIS URGES STUDENTS TO REALIZE THEIR VOTING POWER

By Jackie Torok, Director of Media Relations

Vice President Kamala Harris, who made history as the first woman and first historically Black college or university (HBCU) graduate to hold that role, visited North Carolina A&T State University on Sept. 15, as part of her “Fight for Our Freedoms College Tour.”

Two N.C. A&T alumni — U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan and Oscar-winning producer, actor and entertainment reporter Terrence “Terrence J” Jenkins — accompanied Harris in Corbett Sports Center, where thousands gathered for the event.

“North Carolina A&T has a rich history in the ongoing fight for our freedoms,” said Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. “From our establishment in 1891 as the Agricultural and Mechanical College for the Colored Race to the four A&T freshmen who led a 1960 sit-in that electrified the civil rights movement, we have always understood that freedom requires our enduring commitment to equality and justice for all.”

Among the dignitaries on hand for the visit were Congresswomen Alma Adams and Kathy Manning, Gov. Roy Cooper and Sierra Club Executive Director Ben Jealous.

“If you can’t change policy, then you need to change the policymakers. The way to do that is to vote,” said Adams, a two-time A&T alumna. “Every vote you cast is a seed you plant for the future.”

Student Government Association President Jasmine Amaniampong introduced Jenkins, Regan and Harris, calling their visit “a call to action to fight for our freedoms,” before the trio began their discussion on issues ranging from climate change, reproductive freedom and student loans to gun violence and voting rights.

“Madame Vice President, in the height of the pandemic, in 2020, we saw record voter turnout. In 2022, we saw near record voter turnout for young people,” said Regan. “Here today, we have the very students who voted in those elections. And we have students here who will vote for the first time in the 2024 elections.”

“I voted for the first time right here in this room,” said Jenkins. “I remember how proud I felt casting that ballot.”

“I do believe there is a national agenda, which is about a full-on attack on hard-won, hard-fought freedoms,” said Harris. “But when you vote, you have the ability to determine the future of our country in a way that might challenge a lot of peoples’ notions about what is possible and who can possibly do it. And so, when we look at these attacks on voting, let’s understand that there is an effort to make it more difficult for you to vote so that you don’t vote.”

On the topic of climate change, Harris applauded Regan’s leadership of the EPA “because you’ve been extraordinary, Michael Regan, and bold, because when you get to Washington, D.C., you find that people are really happy with status quo. They’re happy with the way things are and have always been. And it takes a lot of willpower and determination and courage to change things, and that’s what you’ve been doing.”

Extreme climate changes affect everybody, said Harris, but they do not impact everyone equally. That is another reason why the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) remain so important.

Regan, who formerly served as secretary of North Carolina’s Department of Environmental Quality, asked Harris about attacks that go beyond DEI and into efforts to rewrite history, erasing the legacy that made HBCUs necessary.

“Black history is American history. Period,” said Harris. “And America’s full history must be taught.”

To conclude the discussion, Honors College students Brandon Daye, Kylie Rice and Charles-Anthony Woodfork,

asked the three panelists about what they can do as young citizens to combat environmental racism, restore women’s reproductive rights and end the nation’s gun violence epidemic.

Harris said it all starts with using the power of the vote.

“I have to tell you, all the young leaders who are here: we are counting on you. We need you. We need your ambition, your aspirations for the future of yourself and your country.

“I strongly believe that you have already decided to be leaders,” said Harris. “That is why you are here at this school.”

As America’s largest HBCU for the past decade, A&T’s record-setting

enrollment of 13,883 this year is the largest student body ever enrolled at a historically Black campus. Its growth in enrollment has been accompanied by A&T’s rapid ascent as a doctoral, research, land-grant university.

“When I look at the number, the excellence, the beauty, the brilliance of everyone who is here, I know the future of our country is bright,” said Harris. “What I want for you is that you have the freedom to live your best life. And you are going to play an active role in making that happen.”

“Get out there, own your power, tell your truth right now, because your country needs you,” she said. “And I say that as vice president of the United States.” ■



Vice President Kamala Harris rallies North Carolina A&T State University students during her “Fight for Our Freedoms College Tour,” which focused on key issues that disproportionately impact young people across the country and ways they can use their voice to protect their freedoms/rights and effect change.



L-R: N.C. A&T alumni Oscar winner Terrence J and U.S. EPA Administrator Michael Regan join Vice President Kamala Harris at N.C. A&T.

MAKING NEWS



## HAIRSTONS HONORED AT NAMING CEREMONY

By Amber Adams, Director of Communications, University Advancement

Family, friends and the university community gathered Nov. 17, for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and reception to celebrate the naming of the John R. and Kathy R. College of Health and Human Sciences.

“The Hairstons’ commitment to the naming of this college occurred in 2021, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic when we were unable to gather to celebrate,” said Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. “We are glad to be able to do what is long overdue in recognizing Kathy and John publicly for their great generosity to our university.”

John and Kathy Hairston, members of the class of 1975, bestowed a multimillion-dollar, multiyear pledge in unrestricted endowed funds to the college to address a variety of needs, including scholarships, department chairs, fellowships and distinct program offerings at the nation’s largest public historically Black university.

“The Hairston College is one of only two named colleges on our campus,” said Hairston College Dean Elimelda Onger, Ph.D. “Being a named college creates more visibility and elevates our programs, and we are so thankful to the Hairstons that we are named after them and can receive that kind of recognition.”

Naming the college for the Hairstons elevates its reputation of excellence, allowing it to continue attracting first-rate talent in both faculty and students. It also raises the profile of the college within the realms of academia and research.

“It’s heartwarming that John and Kathy’s beautiful love story started in a freshman science class in Hines Hall,” said Onger. “Today, Hines Hall is home to the College of Health and Human Sciences, the college that bears their names.”

Speaking on behalf of the Hairstons’ home community in Charlotte, North Carolina, the Rev. Jordan B. Boyd, pastor of Rockwell AME Zion Church, commended the couple for their generosity, not only to N.C. A&T but also to other causes in their community.

“We are compelled to contribute to A&T and to our community because so many people provided us with the opportunities to succeed,” said Kathy Hairston. “We want to do our part to make sure others receive opportunities for success.”

Founded in 2015, the Hairston College has grown to be the largest college on A&T’s campus.

“John and Kathy’s ongoing gifts help to dramatically enhance the work we are doing at N.C. A&T State University,” said Martin. “These gifts are helping us support students, research and facilities and enhancing the visibility and prestige of our College of Health and Human Sciences.”

The Hairston College offers six undergraduate degree programs: health services management, kinesiology, nursing, psychology, speech/language pathology and audiology, social work and sociology.

It also offers a new master’s degree in health psychology, as well as master’s and doctoral degrees in social work. The graduate degrees in social work are jointly administered with UNC Greensboro.

A master’s degree in physician assistant studies is in development, while a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), Ph.D. in applied psychology and Ph.D. in sociology offerings are in the pipeline.

The Hairston College is also home to the Center of Excellence in Integrative Health Disparities and Equity Research (CIHDER). ■

From left, N.C. A&T Board of Trustees Chair Kimberly Gatling, Hairston College Dean Elimelda Moiger Onger, Kathy R. Hairston, John R. Hairston and Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. cut the ribbon for the John R. and Kathy R. Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences at Hines Hall.

MAKING NEWS

## GROUND BROKEN FOR BLUFORD RESIDENCE HALL



By Jackie Torok, Director of Media Relations

Local dignitaries joined North Carolina A&T leaders and students to officially break ground Feb. 22, for Bluford Residence Hall, the university's first new residence facility in nearly two decades.

The building under construction at Bluford and Stewart streets will be N.C. A&T's 16th on-campus residence hall. It is named for Ferdinand D. Bluford, the university's third president who served for 30 years and for whom A&T's library also is named. His nephew, John W. Bluford III, a former vice chair of A&T's Board of Trustees, was on hand for the celebration and called it a testament to his family's proud legacy of service.

Bluford Residence Hall's four floors, each with its own full kitchen, will have 405 student beds in 66 two- and four-bedroom suites for a total of 94 traditional double rooms, as well as two staff apartments. Amenities will include a gaming room, multipurpose room, private courtyard, on-site laundry and retail operations on the first floor and close proximity to academic classrooms, Williams Dining Hall, F.D. Bluford Library and student gathering spots.

A&T, which remains the nation's largest historically Black university for a 10th consecutive year, has a record-setting enrollment of 13,885 students

this academic year. About 6,000 of them live in on-campus housing.

The university first announced plans for Bluford Residence Hall in 2018. William Barlow, interim associate vice chancellor for business and finance-facilities, noted those plans evolved under the leadership of his retired predecessor, Andrew Perkins, with guidance from N.C. A&T Real Estate Foundation Executive Director Kim Cameron, support from the university's budget and finance officers and input from A&T students who worked on the project's scope and design.

The North Carolina General Assembly approved the project, which will cost about \$64 million.

The University of North Carolina Board of Governors issued about \$59 million in bonds on behalf of A&T last summer to pay for construction.

Construction is expected to be complete by spring 2026.

Bluford Residence Hall symbolizes the growth of the university, said Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. It also embodies its response to the demand for more student housing to accommodate more of the tens of thousands of prospective students who seek admission here each year

from across North Carolina and around the country.

Bluford Residence Hall also will be the university's first development in Precinct F of the campus master plan. Bounded by Lindsay, Dudley, Laurel and Bluford streets, its south end is adjacent to A&T's National Historic District and its north by World War Memorial Stadium, which also is on the National Register of Historic Places.

"This will be A&T's most dynamic area of construction over the next 14 years," said Martin. "Bluford Hall will be joined by a new complex for the John R. and Kathy R. Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences—which continues to grow—as well as athletics fields and a new wellness and recreation center, a performing arts center, two more residence halls, a new University Police Department building and more.

"The facilities in Precinct F will support our university for many generations to come, and create an exciting new dimension of North Carolina A&T that signals to the world our focus on the future and that this university is here to stay." ■



## BGMM WINS DIVISION I HBCU BAND OF THE YEAR BEFORE PASADENA TOURNAMENT OF ROSES® APPEARANCE

By Jackie Torok, Director of Media Relations

North Carolina A&T's Blue and Gold Marching Machine (BGMM) ended 2023 on a high note by claiming the 2023 Division I HBCU Band of the Year title.

On Dec. 15, the band faced off against Jackson State University's Sonic Boom of the South at the Mercedes-Benz Dome in Atlanta. The competition, presented by ESPN Events, was simulcast on ESPN3 and ESPN+.

Watch the winning performance at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHTIUEcC5Dc>.

Throughout the season, a panel of experts in marching bands provided rankings of HBCU band performances based on musicianship, accuracy, drum line, drum majors, dance corps and other relevant criteria. The top two ranked bands from Division I and Division II conferences earned the

right to compete for the national championship and the title of Band of the Year ahead of the Cricket Celebration Bowl (Dec. 16).

The BGMM performed again on Dec. 17 in Charlotte, North Carolina, during halftime of the NFL matchup between the Carolina Panthers and Atlanta Falcons. It was showcased as part of the home team's Inspire Change game with the theme "Representation Matters: Celebrating Black Culture," presented by Daimler Truck North America.

Both events were a prelude to the BGMM's performance in the 135th Rose Parade® presented by Honda on New Year's Day in Pasadena, California, where the BGMM joined 19 other bands from diverse corners of the world and marched 5 1/2 miles down Orange Grove and Colorado boulevards for the iconic event.

The estimated viewership was more than 45 million people worldwide. Presented by Honda, the theme was "Celebrating a World of Music: The Universal Language."

"These events are great opportunities to not only showcase the excellence of our students to national audiences, but also to expand our students' horizons," said Kenneth Ruff, Ed.D., A&T director of bands.

With about 200 students from diverse majors and concentrations, the band is the largest student organization on the A&T campus. It performs different genres of music, incorporating all styles of marching and maneuvering, at a variety of school and community functions throughout the year. ■

MAKING NEWS

## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AT N.C. A&T LEADS HEIRS PROPERTY SUMMITS FOR LANDOWNERS

By Lydian Bernhardt,  
Director of Ag Communications

Cooperative Extension at North Carolina A&T is leading a new effort with N.C. State Cooperative Extension to help property owners protect and preserve land in North Carolina that their families have held for generations.

Heirs property is land passed down through a family, often over multiple generations and to numerous descendants, without the use of wills or probate courts.

Heirs of the original owner can use the property and claim joint ownership of the land. But without proper documentation or clear title, owners can not sell the property, borrow against it or qualify for federal farm loans or disaster relief.

These complications can strain family relationships and make farmland vulnerable to being sold — often at below-market prices — and developed. Because it is disproportionately held by Black landowners, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has called heirs property the leading cause of Black involuntary land loss.

In North Carolina, the value of land owned as heirs property is estimated at nearly \$1.9 billion.

“Heirs property is a very critical issue in North Carolina,” said Biswanath Dari, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and agriculture and natural resource specialist with Cooperative

Extension at N.C. A&T. “Too many people are not aware they have heirs property issues. They do not know there are legal pathways and useful resources available to secure their property. This project will bring these resources to those who need them.”

Dari is the principal investigator (PI) on the project, “Understanding Heirs’ Property at the Community Level in North Carolina.” In collaboration with North Carolina State University, the project aims to identify and educate heirs property owners across the state. This project marks the first time A&T and N.C. State — North Carolina’s two land-grant universities — have collaborated on a project to educate the public about heirs property.

Using an heirs property curriculum developed by Alcorn State University in Mississippi, these full-day summits will cover the history of heirs property, inform participants about estate planning and legal strategies to secure their land and provide other technical assistance. The summits also will feature a panel discussion among landowners who are or have previously dealt with heirs property issues.

Property summits kicked off Jan. 31 at the Farm Pavilion at the N.C. A&T University Farm, followed by presentations in Stokes, Halifax and Caswell counties on Feb. 1, March 6 and April 10, respectively. Additional dates include May 8, Robeson County, and July 17, Union County.

Lisa Hinton, a participant in Cooperative Extension at North Carolina A&T’s Small Farms Leadership 360 Initiative, has land that has been in her family for more than 100 years. Other farmers of color are not so fortunate; heirs property is one of the leading causes of agricultural land loss in North Carolina and of Black involuntary land loss in the U.S., according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The project has a website that serves as an heirs property resource and produce professionally-produced videos to help people understand heirs property issues and available resources.

The project is funded by a \$150,000 USDA Risk Management Agency grant.

There’s no charge to attend a summit, and lunch will be provided. For more information, email Dari at [bdari@ncat.edu](mailto:bdari@ncat.edu). For additional information about heirs property visit <https://www.ncat.edu/caes/cooperative-extension/small-scale-agriculture-development/hpp.php>. ■

MAKING NEWS



## CONNECTING THE FUTURE: AUTONOMY AT N.C. A&T

By Jordan M. Howse, Director of Communications, College of Engineering

North Carolina A&T's exciting and innovative Aggie Auto self-driving shuttles headed in a new direction: Downtown Greensboro.

The autonomous shuttles, unveiled fall 2022 with the university's rural test track at Gateway North Campus, navigated a new track: the real-world obstacles of the approximately one-mile ride from the Harold L. Martin Sr. Engineering Research and Innovation Complex to the Miriam P. Brenner Children's Museum.

Local, state and federal leaders were among the first to experience the autonomous pilot program that was open to the public on weekdays, Sept. 19 through Oct. 13, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Under the pilot program, students, faculty, staff and members of the community were able ride the shuttles from campus to the downtown area. This new research testbed of micro-transit vehicles will provide mobility services for connecting disconnected communities.

"The launch of this new autonomous shuttle between our campus and downtown Greensboro is the latest example of the exciting and innovative research of our faculty

and students at North Carolina A&T," said Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. "This research represents more tangible evidence of how the university realizes its mission of improving the human condition and facilitating economic growth in North Carolina and beyond. Developing groundbreaking, equitable and efficient transportation solutions enhances the quality of life for all in our communities, especially those in underserved areas."

The fleet is comprised of three low-speed self-driving shuttles, a high-speed self-driving van and two regular autonomous sedans. The shuttles can perform all driving tasks under specific circumstances, and a human driver can override and take control of the car. Additionally, the cars are in compliance with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.

As a historically Black university, A&T has been a leader in preparing diverse populations to enter transportation-related professions. The university is the home to the first Summer Transportation Institute, now funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which has been running successfully for 30 years.

"The College of Engineering strives to create an environment for not only successful students but innovative researchers who will lead the future of our community and society," said Stephanie Luster-Teasley, Ph.D., interim dean of the College of Engineering. "This state-of-the-art fleet of autonomous vehicles can provide on-demand mobility services in a flexible way to reduce transportation time and cost for rural and underserved areas in A&T's community."

"The Federal Highway Administration is proud to support North Carolina A&T University's efforts to develop and operationalize autonomous vehicles and lead the way in showing how Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are innovating the transportation sector," said Keith Benjamin, FHWA associate administrator of highway policy and government affairs. "This project will help fill gaps in the current transportation network and demonstrate how technology can better connect underserved communities and people from all walks of life in Greensboro and the surrounding community."



*The fleet is comprised of three low-speed self-driving shuttles, a high-speed self-driving van and two regular autonomous sedans.*

With a maximum speed of 25 mph, the shuttles were thoroughly tested to detect obstacles and share the road with passenger and commercial vehicles.

As part of the research, the Aggie Auto team developed an app that will show riders live tracking of the shuttles as well as the history of the program, university and city of Greensboro. Through this application, A&T researchers also collect feedback from riders who have used the shuttles to form comprehensive outcomes of the research program.

"It is exciting to live in an era where autonomy and artificial intelligence are changing our world," said Ali Karimodini, Ph.D., director of Center for Regional and Rural Connected

Communities Regional UTC and NC-CAV Center of Excellence. "N.C. A&T researchers have a strong presence and contribution to this evolving world and push the boundaries of research."

This innovative research is made possible through partnerships with North Carolina Department of Transportation, FHWA and U.D. Department of Transportation University Transportation Centers (UTC) program, as well as industry partners including Google, Verizon, Volvo, Intel and RTI.

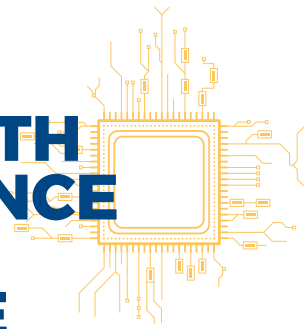
"The future of transportation includes shared mobility options that are as convenient, reliable, affordable, clean and safe as driving and allow every person equal access to opportunities and services," said N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Secretary Eric Boyette. "This project and partnerships like it demonstrate NCDOT's commitment to this goal."

For more information, view this Aggie Auto video at <https://youtu.be/vPznZwcn1Us>. ■



MAKING NEWS

# N.C. A&T PARTNERS WITH USC, OTHERS TO ADVANCE MICROELECTRONICS, DEVELOP WORKFORCE



By Jordan M. Howse, Director of Communications, College of Engineering

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University has partnered with regional innovation hubs led by North Carolina State University and the University of Southern California for the massive Microelectronics Commons project to bridge and accelerate the lab-to-fab transition.

Under the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act of 2022, the Department of Defense has awarded \$238 million to establish eight hubs involving more than 360 institutions nationwide to promote economic growth as they develop the physical, digital and human infrastructure to support success in microelectronics research.

“As a land-grant university, North Carolina A&T is charged with creating better opportunities for our students and our communities,” Daniel Limbrick, Ph.D., associate professor of electrical engineering in the College of Engineering at A&T. “We are also the nation’s largest producer of Black engineers, so being a part of ‘The Commons’ helps us create more defined pipelines of talent into fields like microelectronic/semiconductor engineering, a necessary component of the CHIPS Act strategy. This partnership with DoD and USC demonstrates A&T’s continued commitment to innovative research, national partnerships and critical workforce development.”

N.C. State has teamed with A&T, WolfSpeed and five other industry partners for the Commercial Leap Ahead for Wide Bandgap Semiconductors (CLAWS) regional hub.

CLAWS focuses on wide bandgap semiconductors which offer higher voltage and temperature capacity than traditional silicon chips. They are used in power electronics, but also in RF and wireless devices for communications and radars, as well as photonic devices for sensing, communications, artificial intelligence, and future quantum technology applications.

The hub will also explore next-generation ultra-wide bandgap materials with even greater voltage and temperature capabilities, including diamond and gallium oxide electronics.

The USC-led hub, California Defense Ready Electronics and Microdevices Superhub (CA DREAMS), includes researchers at Information Sciences Institute and the USC Viterbi Ming Hsieh Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering and A&T. Other partner institutions within higher education include Caltech, Morgan State University, Pasadena City College, University of California, Irvine, UCLA, University of California, Riverside, University of California, San Diego and University of California, Santa Barbara.

Industry partners included in CA DREAMS are The Boeing Co., HRL Laboratories, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, PDF Solutions, Raytheon and Teledyne Scientific Co.

This coalition will quickly translate the sophisticated materials and devices developed in academic labs to fabrication. Its work will also focus on 5G/6G technologies.

“President Biden’s CHIPS Act will supercharge America’s ability to prototype, manufacture and produce microelectronics scale,” said Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks. “CHIPS and Science made clear to America—and the world—that the U.S. government is committed to ensuring that our industrial and scientific powerhouses.” ■

— *Tiniya Martin, Communications Intern, College of Engineering contributed to this report.*

HBCU-Colleges.com 2024 Rankings:

> **BEST** HBCU IN NORTH CAROLINA

## GRADUATE DEGREES IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE APPROVED

By Labrina VanCliff, Information and Communication Specialist, Division of Academic Affairs

The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) will offer new master’s and doctoral degree programs in criminal justice as soon as fall semester 2024, following a rigorous review by the university and the UNC System, and the UNC System Board of Governors’ approval on Nov. 16.

The new programs are designed to provide high-quality graduate education and training in criminal justice with the four areas of specialization: investigative science, digital forensics, research methodology and social justice. These programs will emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to academics, research, professional development and leadership.

N.C. A&T will work in partnership with local and regional law enforcement agencies to provide educational opportunities to address the need for additional officers and staff, the retention and promotion of officers, and the prevention of and response to crime in the community. Both degree programs will offer resources to provide efficient and effective public safety by establishing relationships with local, state and federal law enforcement offices.

“Our Ph.D. programs in criminal justice mark a significant milestone at A&T

*I’m proud to say North Carolina A&T is the first in the UNC System to offer a Ph.D. program in criminal justice.*

— **CLAY GLOSTER, PH.D.**, *vice provost of graduate research and dean of The Graduate College*

and for the UNC System,” said Frances Ward-Johnson, Ph.D., CAHSS dean. “The Ph.D. will be the first in criminal justice in North Carolina and the first doctoral program in the college.”

Both graduate degree programs will offer parallel on-campus and online course delivery.

North Carolina ranks in the top five for states with the highest employment level for criminal justice educators and with the highest concentration of criminal justice-related jobs in the nation, according to The Bureau of Labor Statistics. In the state alone, nearly 11,000 jobs were posted from January to June 2023 for those seeking careers in criminal justice who had earned a master’s degree.

“Our undergraduate criminal justice program is one of the largest undergraduate programs on campus, so it was natural to pursue graduate degrees in that area,” said Clay Gloster, Ph.D., vice provost

of graduate research and dean of The Graduate College. “I’m proud to say North Carolina A&T is the first in the UNC System to offer a Ph.D. program in criminal justice.”

The criminal justice master’s and doctoral programs align with the university’s land grant-oriented mission in providing students access to a field that will advance the human condition by giving them a preeminent and diverse educational experience through teaching, research and scholarly application of knowledge.

The programs will be at the vanguard of contemporary academic and professional innovation, providing students with the skills they need to pursue advanced careers in law enforcement, finance, risk management, government and corporate agencies, as well as the analytical skills needed to conduct basic and applied research. ■

MAKING NEWS

## DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP) PROGRAM APPROVED

By Labrina D. VanCliff, Information and Communication Specialist, Division of Academic Affairs

In February, the University of North Carolina System Board of Governors unanimously approved a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program at North Carolina A&T. The new degree is the latest major milestone for the John R. and Kathy R. Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences, which is now N.C. A&T's largest college and growing rapidly.

As one of the fastest growing health careers in the nation, research cited in the proposal for the A&T program projects 50.7% growth within North Carolina for DNP graduates by 2031. DNP enrollment is surging nationwide as states and communities struggle to meet the demand for health care professionals.

The DNP is a terminal degree that prepares nurses for advanced clinical practice and leadership. At A&T, it will have two tracks: Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) and Transformational Nursing Leadership (TNL). Coursework will be delivered in a

hybrid mode to meet the needs of nursing students working full- or part-time.

A&T's DNP program will "integrate emerging technology as well as health equity and social justice components in the curriculum to ethically and innovatively address health care challenges, increase minority student representation in advanced nursing practice and leadership, bridge workforce gaps in PMHNPs and equip future nursing leaders with DEI and emerging healthcare technology skills."

The proposal projects that by its fifth year, the program will have an abiding full-time enrollment of 50 students, with each new DNP cohort totaling 20 students.

"I am excited about the new DNP program approval and the opportunity to engage in training advanced clinical professionals. Nurse practitioners play a critical leadership role in the clinical environment and in areas outside

of direct patient care that impact community health," said Hairston College Dean Elimelda Moige Ogeri, Ph.D. "Integration of emerging technology and health equity competencies into the DNP program will enhance access and improve the quality of care afforded to diverse patient populations in the state of North Carolina. This new program reflects N.C. A&T's legacy of advancing social justice through strategic workforce development, research and community engagement."

Bureau of Labor statistics show as of May 2022, the mean annual wage for nurse practitioners was \$124,680, with those working in psychiatric and substance abuse hospitals and in home health care earning significantly higher.

The 36-credit hour, post-master's DNP degree and the 70-credit BSN-DNP degree options are a cost-effective degree path with significant return on investment for both in-state and out-of-state students. More



importantly, the 70-credit BSN-DNP option will enable students to move directly from the bachelor's degree through to DNP graduation without a master's degree.

"The new DNP program will prepare students for careers as expert nurse clinicians and leaders who develop, implement and evaluate programs of care and transform healthcare systems by using evidence-based innovations and technologies, said Ogeri. "Through their leadership, they will facilitate interdisciplinary processes that transform healthcare

systems, health-related industries and academia."

The program has begun accepting applications for admission to its first cohort in fall 2024. ■

***As one of the fastest growing health careers in the nation, research cited in the proposal for the A&T program projects 50.7% growth within North Carolina for DNP graduates by 2031.***

MAKING NEWS



## U.S. NEWS RANKS EIGHT N.C. A&T PROGRAMS AMONG NATION'S TOP

In the fast-growing world of online learning in higher education, North Carolina A&T stands out with eight academic degree programs ranked among the best in America, including two in the top 12 in their respective disciplines.

Released Feb. 7, U.S. News & World Report's "Best Online Programs" rankings evaluated more than 1,600 online bachelor's and master's programs using metrics specific to online learning. This is the widely followed magazine's 12th year in ranking online programs.

In every category in which North Carolina A&T secured a ranking, it is the most highly ranked historically Black college or university (HBCU) in America. A&T remains the largest HBCU in the United States for a 10th consecutive year.

"In the highly competitive online education space, universities nationwide are rapidly expanding their programs," said Tonya Amankwatia, Ph.D., head of A&T's Extended Campus and assistant vice provost for Distance Education and Extended Learning. "At A&T, we view this landscape as a prime pathway for serving learners not just across North Carolina but also nationwide, granting them access to the high-quality, affordable programs crucial to meet their career aspirations and fostering lifelong learning and professional development."

A&T master's programs in information technology scored higher than all other A&T programs, coming in at No. 8 in such programs for veterans and No. 11 in IT programs overall. In the veterans category, A&T shows up alongside the University of Southern California (No. 7) and the University of Massachusetts-Lowell (No. 9). In the overall IT master's rankings, A&T moved up one position to finish ahead of the Stevens Institute of Technology and West Virginia University.

Three more veterans programs earned Top 50 rankings at A&T: the master's in education (No. 18), bachelor's degrees overall (No. 35) and MBA (No. 46). The MBA for veterans jumped 10 positions from last year's ranking.

In bachelor's degrees overall, A&T moved up five positions to a tie at No. 50, bringing to six the number of A&T programs landing in the top 50.

Rounding out its numerical rankings, A&T's master's in education ranked No. 58, while the MBA program tied with seven other programs at No. 66 on the strength of a 19-position jump from last year. ■

## \$5.8M AWARDED N.C. A&T TO LEAD GENOMICS EDUCATIONAL HUB

By Jordan M. Howse, Director of Communications, College of Engineering

North Carolina A&T was granted \$5.8 million by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to create a genomics educational hub that will provide new educational and research opportunities for undergraduate and master's students who are historically underrepresented in biomedical sciences.

The Genomics Research and Data Science Center for Computation and Cloud Computing (GRADS-4C) will be led by Kristen Rhinehardt, Ph.D., principal investigator and co-director, an associate professor in computational and data science engineering, College of Engineering (COE); and Joseph L. Graves Jr., Ph.D., co-principal investigator and director, MacKenzie Scott Endowed Professor of Biology, College of Science and Technology (CoST).

GRADS-4C will use cloud computing platforms to share educational resources for genomic data science to ensure its accessibility to various institutions who may not have sophisticated computing facilities. Other N.C. A&T faculty include co-principal investigators Christopher C. Doss, Ph.D., associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, COE; Perpetua M. Miganda, Ph.D., professor of biology (CoST); and Scott H. Harrison, Ph.D., associate professor of biology (CoST).

"GRADS-4C will have a transformative impact on genomic, data science, and cloud computing research and training at HBCUs and MSIs," said Graves. "We will provide educational

and hands-on research training and resources in computational genomics, data sciences, and cloud computing for the future workforce in these fields. This award is particularly important in that this is one of the first times that the NIH has awarded a project of this scope to a consortium where an HBCU is the lead institution. It further makes the case for the transition of North Carolina A&T to Research-1 status."

GRADS-4C will be based at A&T and will anchor a community of institutions — including Shaw University, Winston-Salem State University and North Carolina Central University — that are serving students from diverse backgrounds, including those from groups historically underrepresented in biomedical sciences, and are invested in genomic data science education. The hub will facilitate educational and research initiatives at these institutions through workshops and hands-on learning sessions while developing strategies to address their educational and training challenges in underserved communities.

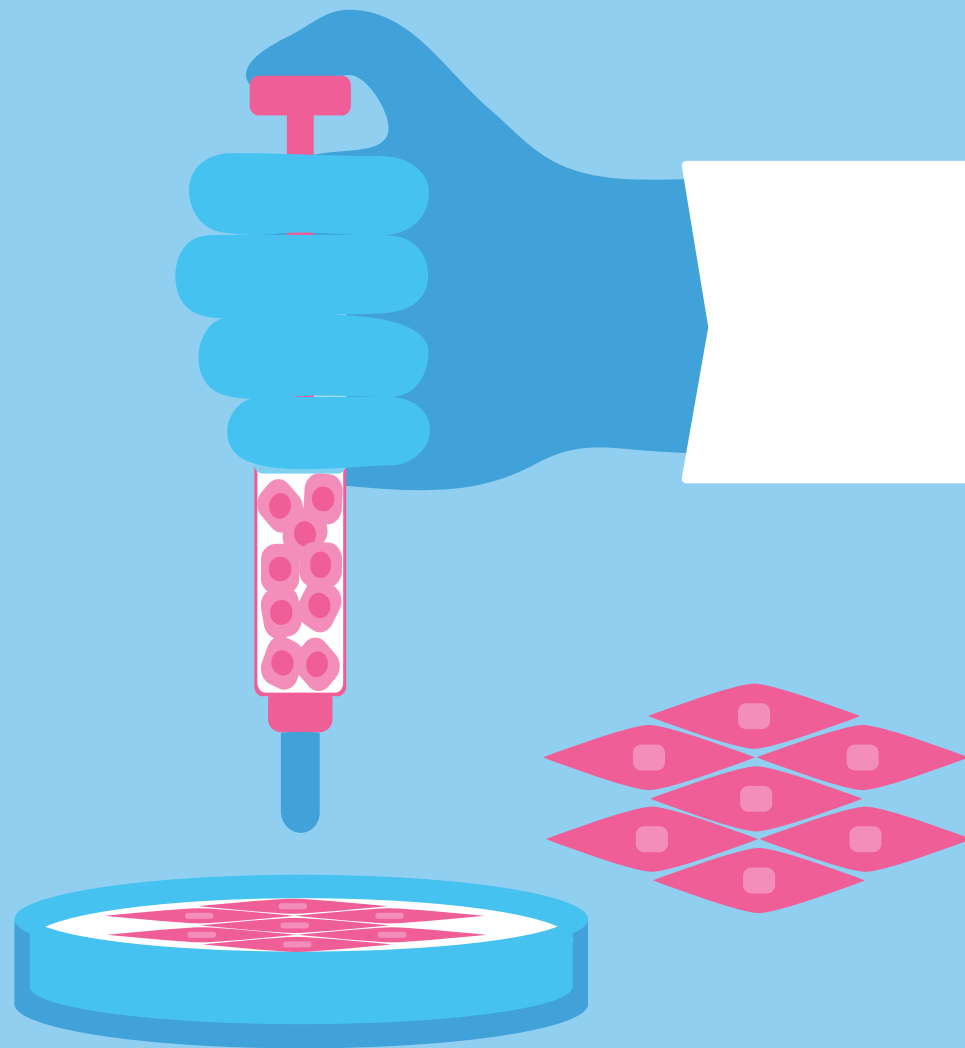
"This award will provide opportunities for students from different backgrounds to experience genomic data science research, individuals who may otherwise not have access to these topics through their institutions," said Shurjo Sen, Ph.D., program director in the Office of Genomic Data Science within the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI).

"Instead of requiring their college or university to have its own high-performance computing infrastructure, students will be able to access genomic data and resources with only a laptop and an internet connection. Through the hub, cloud computing will be used as an educational tool, which will make genomic data and analysis tools more readily available."

With the recent growth of cloud computing technologies, researchers have more access to genomic data sets, tools and resources. The educational hub will use NIH-funded cloud-based platforms, such as the NHGRI Genomic Data Science Analysis, Visualization and Informatics Lab-space (AnVIL) and the All of Us Research Program's Researcher Workbench to enable researchers to gain research skills in the genomic data science field.

"Genomics crosses so many different disciplines and there is so much within the NIH AnVIL network that will allow users to better reach their research goals as well as provide resources to those who may not have the computing infrastructure or the knowledge base to have their research come to fruition," Rhinehardt said. "An inclusive workforce, not just in genomics but in every field, helps foster creativity and diversity of thought, which leads to scientific breakthroughs." ■

MAKING NEWS



## NSF AWARDS N.C. A&T, PARTNERS UP TO \$160M TO TRANSFORM REGENERATIVE MEDICINE RESEARCH

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded a 10-year, up to \$160 million grant to establish the Piedmont Triad Regenerative Medicine Engine (Regen Medicine Engine), one of 10 inaugural NSF Regional Innovation Engines across the nation.

This investment is one of the largest across federal agencies to date and the effort, led by Wake Forest

University (WFU) School of Medicine, is in collaboration with a core team from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Winston-Salem State University, Forsyth Technical Community College and industry partners ReMDO and Axiom Space.

The Regen Medicine Engine team describes regenerative medicine's goal as a means to "replace or restore

function to tissues and organs compromised by injury or disease" through interdisciplinary expertise.

The core team will establish Innovation, Translation and Education Cores that focus on five areas:

1. **Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine (WFIRM)** - Process development and manufacturing - serving partnering institutions by providing training and access to specialized equipment
2. **N.C. A&T** - Biomaterials and bioengineering - developing biomaterials, cell scaffolds for regen products
3. **Winston-Salem State University** - Cell biology - developing chemically defined non-traditional cell culture technologies to support specific human cell phenotypes
4. **Forsyth Technical Community College** - Technical skills - developing automated and standardized clinical manufacturing capabilities including additive manufacturing, bioreactors and in-process biosensors
5. **ReMDO and Axiom Space** - In-space manufacturing technology - modular bio manufacturing capabilities for point-of-care applications

A&T Distinguished Professor and Regen Medicine Engine's Co-chief Research and Development Officer Salil Desai, Ph.D., is an expert in various areas including hybrid nano/micro and biomanufacturing, regenerative tissue engineering and drug delivery. He is looking forward to the opportunities students will receive while working on this project.

"A&T's leadership of the biomaterials and biomanufacturing core of the Piedmont Triad Regenerative Medicine Engine will give students hands-on experience that will develop the next generation workforce providing novel therapies for human well-being," said Desai, who also directs the university's Center of Excellence in Product Design and Advanced Manufacturing (CEPDAM) and is an adjunct professor at WFIRM.

Desai will work with A&T staff and faculty members Del Ruff, university chief diversity officer; Sanjiv Sarin, Ph.D., professor of industrial systems engineering and special assistant to the chancellor; Narayan Bhattarai, Ph.D., and Yeohung Yun, Ph.D., professors of bioengineering; Mohammad Azad, Ph.D., assistant professor of bioengineering; Bishnu Bastakoti, Ph.D., assistant professor of chemistry; Geleana Alston, Ph.D., professor and interim chair of the Department of Leadership Studies and Adult Education; and Kristen Dellinger, Ph.D., assistant professor of nanoengineering.

This interdisciplinary team represents the university's long-standing capabilities in convening leading experts to conduct groundbreaking research that has practical applications, including in related areas such as CEPDAM's bio, agro environmental systems manufacturing cluster.

"CEPDAM was formed in 2019 as part of an intentional strategy focused on Centers of Excellence to grow preeminence in research, teaching and outreach at N.C. A&T," said Eric Muth, Ph.D., vice chancellor for research and economic development.

"This significant award, and the excellent work happening under the leadership of Desai, illustrate how the intentionality of the past is and will create an impactful A&T today and in the future."

The NSF kicked off its inaugural Regional Innovation Engines announcement Jan. 26 by first revealing the Winston-Salem-based Regen Medicine Engine and the North Carolina Sustainable Textiles Innovation Engine, based in the Raleigh and Gaston areas.

The agency also highlighted Regen Medicine Engine's capacity to become a self-sustaining "regional project to provide an innovation ecosystem to stimulate workforce development, job creation, and economic growth through the development of technologies that benefit the emerging regenerative medicine industry."

More than 80 partners have committed to support this ecosystem, which includes local businesses, nonprofits and government agencies.

Each NSF Engine team will initially receive \$15 million within the first two years, followed by a larger investment over the next five years during the "ramp-up" years. ■



MAKING NEWS

L-R: Sterling K. Brown and alumnus Ray Trapp (Feb. 16, 2023)



L-R: Alumna Danya Bacchus and Kerry Washington (Sept. 21, 2023)

**AWARD-WINNING ACTORS AND VENTURE CAPITALIST HEADLINE CHANCELLOR'S SPEAKER SERIES IN 2023, 2024**

By Tonya D. Dixon '04, '21, Director of Digital Content

Positioned to align with critical topics, the Chancellor's Speaker Series is part of North Carolina A&T's overarching goal of cultivating an intellectual climate and creatively exchange ideas.

"MENTality," the spring 2023 edition of the speaker series featured three-time Emmy Award-winning actor Sterling K. Brown, in conversation with A&T alumnus Ray Trapp, vice president for strategic engagement for the Research Triangle Foundation (RTF). The event was Feb. 16.

The dialogue touched on mental health, education and the dichotomous relationship/attitude between the African American community and law enforcement, and was underscored by a simple message from Brown: You have the power to choose your own path.

Brown is best known for starring in NBC's critically acclaimed drama "This Is Us." For his role as Randall Pearson, Brown received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series, as well as five consecutive nominations in the category and a Golden Globe Award

*"I don't think there is such a thing as being happy. It's not a destination. I think it's a practice."*

— KERRY WASHINGTON

MAKING NEWS

L-R: Issa Rae and alumna Toya Bynum (Feb. 21, 2024)



for Best Performance by an Actor in a Drama Series.

On Sept. 21, award-winning actor, director, producer and organizer Kerry Washington was the guest for "Finding My Own," the fall edition of the series. A&T alumna and CBS News correspondent Danya Bacchus was the moderator.

Washington navigated topics such as finding one's voice, purpose, happiness, identity, strength and

peace. One of the evening's biggest takeaways was Washington's thoughts on happiness.

"I don't think there is such a thing as being happy," said Washington. "It's not a destination. I think it's a practice. We have to engage in the activity of encouraging and inviting more and more happiness into our lives."

Washington said that in the midst of cultivating happiness, you will begin to love yourself in the process.

Washington surprised the audience with copies of her then not yet released memoir, "Thicker Than Water." Before leaving, she asked them to join her in a TikTok singalong to Earth Wind and Fire's iconic song, "September."

CEO, actress, writer and producer Issa Rae headlined the first spring 2024 installment with alumna and marketing executive Toya Bynum '05 as moderator, on Feb. 21. "Standin' on Business" focused on entrepre-

neurship and development. The event provided an opportunity for students and other attendees to gain insight toward their enterprising goals.

Rae touched on numerous topics: her roots as a Senegalese American woman, her creative process, the importance of mentors, racial disparities in media, self-advocacy and more. She is best known for her award-winning web series and accompanying New York Times bestseller "The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl," her Peabody Award-winning HBO show "Insecure," and films "The Photograph" and "The Lovebirds." She is CEO of HOORAE, a multifaceted media company she

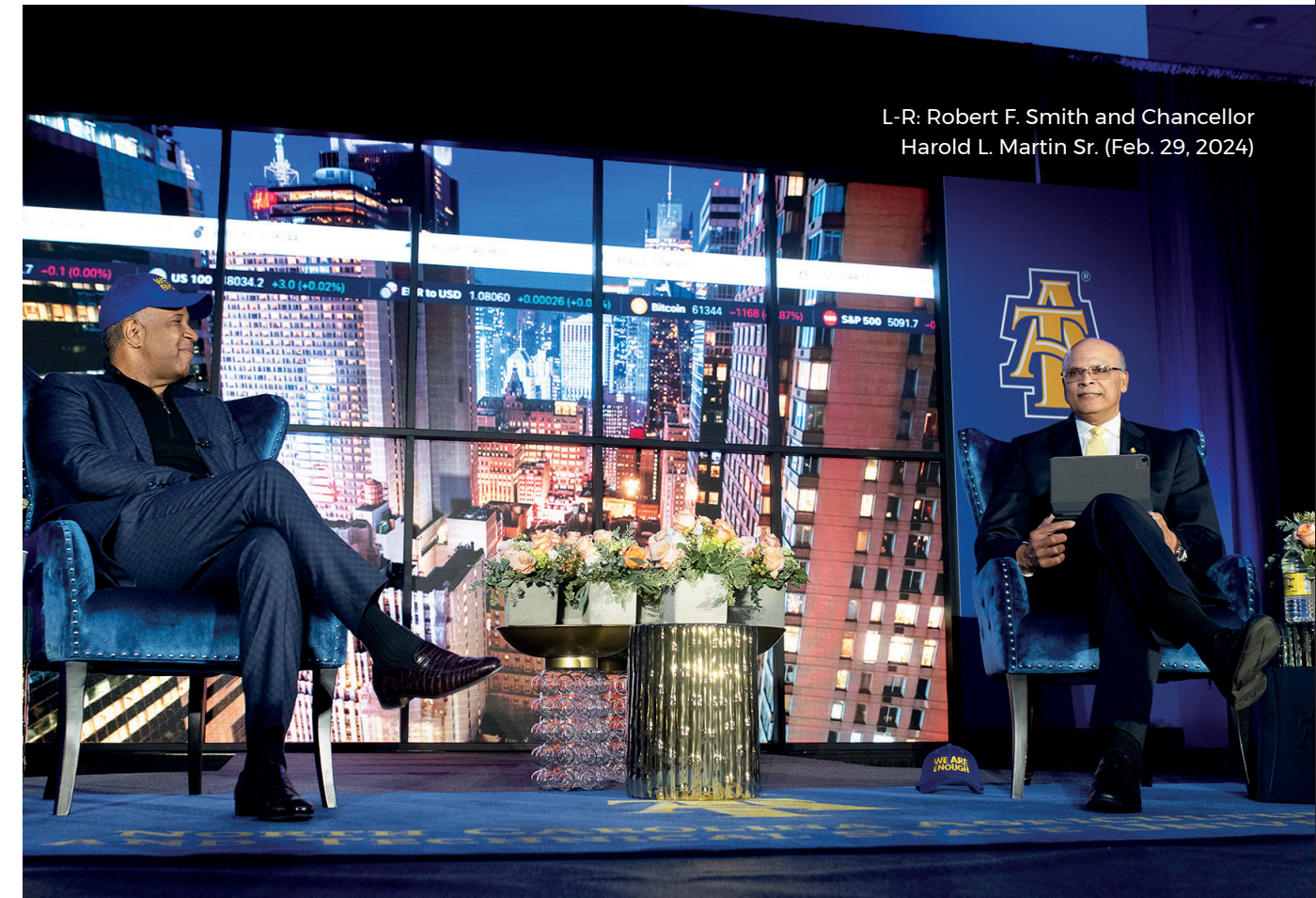
formed to develop content across mediums in an effort to continue to break boundaries in storytelling and representation.

Vista Equity Partners founder, chairman and CEO Robert F. Smith closed out the 2023-24 series on Feb. 29, with Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. serving as the moderator for "Visionary Ventures."

Named one of TIME's 100 Most Influential People in the World, Smith shared his career path from engineer to venture capitalist. Smith is the Chairman of Carnegie Hall, and he also serves on the Business Roundtable Board of Directors and

the Columbia Business School Board of Overseers, among others.

Smith has been a leading voice advocating for companies to take diverse internship candidates in STEM fields. In 2019, Smith made headlines by announcing he would cover the student loans of nearly 400 Morehouse College 2019 graduates in a commencement address. After his Morehouse pledge, Smith founded the Student Freedom Initiative to relieve the crushing burden of student debt for STEM students at all HBCUs. ■



L-R: Robert F. Smith and Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. (Feb. 29, 2024)

MAKING NEWS

HBCU-Colleges.com 2024 Rankings:

> NO. 4 IN THE USA

## “THE SHOP” STOPS IN AGGIELAND

By East Dockery '23, Staff Writer

North Carolina A&T hosted “The Shop” for the last stop of their HBCU Tour during the university’s 97th Greatest Homecoming on Earth festivities.

“The Shop” is the marquee franchise from LeBron James and Maverick Carter’s The SpringHill Company with an Emmy Award-winning unscripted show co-created by Paul Rivera and Randy Mims. Each episode is a barbershop experience featuring authentic conversations with various athletes and entertainers from around the world.

Guests for the taping at N.C. A&T were hosts Maverick Carter and Paul Rivera alongside fencer and Olympic bronze medalist Ibtihaj Muhammad, actor and activist Aldis Hodge and decorated entertainer Darren “Big Baby” Brand ‘07.

“Partnering with HBCUs to do a live tour was the easiest decision we’ve ever made at our company,” said Rivera. “That’s because our entire foundation at The SpringHill Company and “The Shop” is one of empowerment and we feel empowerment starts with our own community. We wanted to make sure we came out to HBCUs to have live,

two-way dialogue between people that come from where we come from and look how we look.”

The taping in Harrison Auditorium consisted of a conversation centered on faith and what the path to success looked like for each panelist.

Muhammad, the first Muslim American woman to wear a hijab/headscarf while competing (and winning) for the United States in the Olympics, offered her perspective of being a Black woman in a predominantly white field. She discussed how that experience developed her into the woman she is today and gave her the freedom to find her true passion and discover other interests, such as becoming an author and developing her own fashion brand, Louella by Ibtihaj.

Hodge discussed his journey from beginning his acting career at age 3 to maintaining and achieving even greater success. A Screen Actors Guild Award-winning actor, he has played significant roles such as MC Ren in the 2015 biopic “Straight Outta Compton,” Hawkman in the DC Comics film “Black Adam” and Alec Hardison in the TNT series

“Leverage.” At 37, he said he is just now understanding what it means to truly love himself.

Brand, who has had success as a TV personality on the MTV series “Wild ‘N Out” and has done multiple stand-up comedy tours, discussed how A&T gave him a platform to find his niche and explore his talents. He encouraged students to follow their dreams and use social media to showcase their talents.

Brand, who credits A&T for his success, said it was surreal to return to his alma mater as a guest for “The Shop” taping.

“I can honestly say my success came because I chose this university and the people I met, the people who instilled positive energy in me and positive thoughts and made me believe in myself,” he said. “It feels good. It feels like I’ve come full circle.”

The recording of “The Shop UNINTERRUPTED” that was taped during A&T’s Homecoming 2023 can be viewed on the UNINTERRUPTED YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kV4nAionROU>. ■

*We wanted to make sure we came out to HBCUs to have live, two-way dialogue between people that come from where we come from and look how we look.*

— Paul Rivera, host, “The Shop”



## CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

### FACULTY, STAFF & ADMINISTRATORS



**LAUREN BERRINGS DAVIS, PH.D.**, a professor of industrial and systems engineering in the College of Engineering, has been inducted into the Edward P. Fitts Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering Alumni Hall of Fame at North Carolina State University, where she earned her Ph.D. in industrial and systems engineering.

DAVIS

Davis was the only recipient of the department's 2023 Outstanding Young Alumni Award, which is bestowed upon alumni who have been out of school for less than 20 years and distinguished

themselves through professional practice or service. She has mentored more than 40 master's and doctoral industrial and systems engineering students, positively influencing their lives and the field of engineering.

Her work has appeared in 28 peer-reviewed journal publications, three book chapters and more than 40 refereed conference proceedings. Her research interests include humanitarian logistics, supply chain optimization, and emergency preparedness and response. In addition to mentoring graduate students, she serves as a board member for Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina.

Before joining A&T, Davis spent 12 years as a senior software engineer at IBM. ■



**ERIN HILL HART**, chief of staff, is one of 25 extraordinary leaders named to the Triad Business Journal (TBJ) 2024 class of Outstanding Women in Business.

HART

Hart is the principal liaison and senior adviser to the chancellor and is a member of the Chancellor's Cabinet, the university's senior executive leadership team. In collaboration with the Cabinet, she is responsible for planning, organizing and driving initiatives and activities of North Carolina A&T, providing strategic and operational support for internal and external constituencies of America's largest historically Black university (HBCU) and one of North Carolina's top three public research universities.

Before becoming interim chief of staff (July 2018) and being chosen for the permanent position (June 2019), Hart served for two years as associate vice provost for enrollment management where she led A&T's record-setting enrollment successes and significantly raised the academic profile of incoming first-year students.

Under Hart's leadership, A&T in 2019 completed a holistic redesign of its website, which was completed just as the COVID-19 pandemic was surfacing and online instruction gained a sudden new importance. It also supported A&T's emergence as the largest HBCU in the history of the nation in 2021 through strong integration of marketing, application and admissions tools across the site.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Hart gives back to the community through a range of service commitments to Jack and Jill of America, the Grandiflora Chapter of The Links (the invitation-only national social and service organization of prominent Black women), The United Way of Greater Greensboro, The V Foundation and the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

Before A&T, Hart served in leadership roles at Appalachian State University and Delaware State University. She earned her bachelor's degree in communication and master's degree in higher education administration from Appalachian State. She is also a graduate of A&T's Executive Leadership Program and the UNC System's 2021 Executive Leadership Institute. ■



JACKSON

**KAREN T. JACKSON, PH.D.**, assistant professor of leadership studies in the College of Education, is president-elect of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) for 2024-2026.

With more than 5,000 members representing all 50 states in the U.S., as well as more than 80 foreign countries, AEA's mission is to improve evaluation practices and methods, advance the effective practices of evaluation use, promote evaluation as a profession, and support the contribution of evaluation to the generation of theory and knowledge about effective human action. Jackson has been a member since 2013, and has served the organization in many capacities including board member at large (2020-2023). She has promoted AEA's organizational role as educator of evaluators, policy informant and advocate for justice.

As president-elect, Jackson will dedicate herself to development and implementation of the strategic plan for the professional association. ■



**MICHELLE ELEY, PH.D.**, community and economic development specialist with Cooperative Extension at North Carolina A&T, has been named the first 1890 Fellow of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC).

ELEY

As an 1890 Fellow, Eley provides guidance on existing and new project developments to ensure they are relevant to the interests, needs and assets of 1890 land-grant institutions. She will contribute to research reports and assist in developing and delivering educational and Extension training materials. Additionally, Eley works to identify opportunities for mentoring and teaching students from 1890 universities, participate in SRDC's Board and Technical Operating and Advisory Committee meetings, and support coordination, growth, direction and development of the SRDC's Plan of Work. ■



**LASHONNA FREDERICK**, senior internal auditor in the Division of Legal Affairs, Risk and Compliance, received the 2023 North Carolina Internal Audit Award of Excellence from the Office of State Budget and Management. The award recognizes commitment and dedication in advancing the profession of internal auditing within North Carolina state government.

FREDERICK

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations. ■



FACULTY, STAFF & ADMINISTRATORS



**ROBERT POMPEY JR., MBA**, vice chancellor for business and finance, was named one of 15 C-Suite Award winners for 2023 by the Triad Business Journal, which previously honored Pompey as its CFO of the Year in 2012.

Pompey has served as vice chancellor and as a member of the Chancellor's Executive Cabinet for 16 years. The C-Suite Award recognizes him this year for his management of financial assets that has enabled N.C. A&T to keep up with the strongest growth trend of any UNC System institution and get ahead of the curve.

POMPEY

The Kinston, North Carolina, native is an alumnus of A&T (B.S., Accounting) and Wake Forest University (MBA). He is a Certified Public Accountant and member of the National Association of Certified Public Accountants. He began his career as an auditor in public accounting (specializing in higher education), was a senior audit manager for KPMG and worked for WFU's Reynolda Campus before coming to work at A&T in 2007. ■



SIMKINS

**SCOTT SIMKINS, PH.D.**, chair of the Department of Economics in the Willie A. Deese College of Business and Economics, is a co-recipient of the 2023 Kenneth G. Elzinga Distinguished Teaching Award from the Southern Economic Association® (SEA) for his contributions to economics education.

The award recognizes individuals who have developed innovative methods of instruction, teach unusual courses that explore the boundaries of economics, implement interdisciplinary instruction that links economics with other disciplines, and/or have performed research on how to effectively teach economics or evaluate economic learning.

Simkins discovered his passion for teaching while an undergraduate student at Saint John's University in Minnesota. Now in his 29th year at N.C. A&T, Simkins served as director of the A&T Academy for Teaching and Learning (precursor to the current Center for Teaching Excellence) for 12 years before returning to the economics department in 2016. He has made numerous contributions to economic education research, including publishing 23 articles, books and book chapters in the areas of economic education and higher education innovation. He also has served as the principal investigator (PI) or co-PI on six National Science Foundation grant projects totaling more than \$1.4 million, including the development of the Starting Point: Teaching and Learning Economics, a web-based portal that makes innovative pedagogic resources and evidence-based teaching practices easily accessible to economists. ■



PRICE

**PAULA GROVES PRICE, PH.D.**, dean of the College of Education, was selected as a 2023 recipient of the Joseph R. Biden Lifetime Achievement Award and Presidential Medal for her community and volunteer service efforts.

The award—including a letter from Biden, a presidential lapel pin, the Lifetime Achievement recognition and the Presidential Gold Medallion—was presented during a special ceremony for regional awardees at North Carolina Central University. Other ceremonies were held in Georgia, Florida and the District of Columbia.

As a recipient, Price stands among great company. Former awardees include U.S. Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton; former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher M.D., Ph.D.; Hon. Shirley Franklin; The Isley Brothers (Ronald and Earnie); Chancellor Johnson O. Akinleye; Pastor John P. Kee; Honorable Julian Bond (posthumously); and many more.

The Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award was established by former President George W. Bush for citizens to be recognized who have made major differences within their communities and around the world. Each recipient was vetted and nominated by both former presidential award recipients and community leaders. ■



SMITH-JACKSON

**TONYA SMITH-JACKSON, PH.D.**, provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs, has been inducted into the Edward P. Fitts Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering Alumni Hall of Fame at North Carolina State University, where she earned her M.S. in interdisciplinary psychology/ergonomics and industrial and systems engineering, as well as her Ph.D. in psychology/ergonomics.

She first joined A&T in 2013 as a professor and chair of the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, facilitating enrollment growth and significant increases in research awards, international visibility and alumni donor participation. She also founded and directed an analytics lab and two cyber-human systems labs. In 2018, she served at the National Science Foundation for a year as program director of the Computer and Information Science and Engineering Directorate before returning to A&T in the role of interim director for the Center of Excellence in Cybersecurity, Research, Education and Outreach, then becoming senior vice provost for Academic Affairs. She served as interim provost and executive vice chancellor of Academic Affairs for 10 months before accepting the permanent post in September 2022.

Smith-Jackson was one of four recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Award, the highest honor the department can give any graduate who has been out of school for at least 20 years and whose contributions to their profession, the community, and the department, college and university are notable and deserve special recognition.

Before joining A&T in 2013, Smith-Jackson was a professor of industrial and systems engineering at Virginia Tech. Prior to Virginia Tech, she served as a human factors engineer at IBM and Ericsson Mobile Communications, faculty member at community colleges and universities in the U.S. and Germany, and an engineering scientist at the Consumer Product Safety Commission in Bethesda, Maryland. ■

FACULTY, STAFF & ADMINISTRATORS



TEIXEIRA-POIT

**STEPHANIE TEIXEIRA-POIT, PH.D.** has been named a Triad Business Journal 40 Under 40 honoree for 2024. Honorees were selected from a competitive group of nominees and represent a group of leaders who are making great contributions to North Carolina's Triad Region before age 40.

Teixeira-Poit is an associate professor of sociology in the John R. and Kathy R. College of Health and Human Sciences and associate director of community engagement in the Center of Excellence for Integrative Health Disparities and Equity Research. ■



WEBB

**PADONDA B. WEBB, DNP, FNP-BC**, has been appointed assistant vice chancellor of health and wellness in the Division of Student Affairs. Webb has a diverse work experience as a board-certified health care provider that includes emergency medicine, critical care, urgent care, primary care and student health services.

Webb has been employed at North Carolina A&T for the past eight years and has served in various clinical and leadership positions within the Alvin V. Blount Jr. Student Health Center, where she most recently served as executive director (2020-24) and led the university through the COVID-19 pandemic. In this position, Webb has received numerous awards to include N.C.

A&T State University Award for Excellence in Aggie Pride (Going the Extra Mile) and 2021 Student Affairs Outstanding Employee. She also serves as Co-PI for the HBCU Healthy Equity Data Consortium partnership with North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

On a national level, Webb has been awarded the 2021 Hannibal E. Howell Jr. Award for Promoting Diversity in College Health from American College Health Association. Her experiences within the American College Health Association includes establishing and serving as co-chair for HBCU Coalition and co-chair for the Racial Marginalization and Health Inequities Task Force.

Webb received her BSN from A&T, MSN from Winston-Salem State University and DNP from the University of South Alabama-Mobile. She has a diverse work experience as a board-certified health care provider that include emergency medicine, critical care, urgent care, primary care and student health services. ■



WANG

**YUDAN CHEN WANG, PH.D.**, an associate professor in the Department of Counseling and senior researcher in the College of Education (CEd), received a 2023 Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award from the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

Wang will serve as Fulbright Canada Research Chair in Mental Health and Societal Wellbeing at McMaster University's Centre for Advanced Research on Mental Health & Society (ARMS). She will use the Ontario Child Health Study and other data sources to examine how individual developmental trajectories are influenced by neighborhood and community characteristics for her research project, "Developmental Trajectories of Social-Emotional Skills from Early Childhood to Early Adolescence."

Her Fulbright Scholarship includes delivering a research talk, participating in other academic events in McMaster University's Faculty of Social Sciences, and engaging with the university's Offord Centre for Child Studies.

Wang's research focuses on the health, functioning and wellbeing of youth and adolescents. Her work has been funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the National Science Foundation, N.C. Governor's Highway Safety Program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other government and non-government organizations. She is leading a project studying the employment trajectories of transitional youth with disabilities in North Carolina and another project examining the impact of COVID-19 on postsecondary choices among North Carolina high school students. ■

**S**ix professors in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Science have projects that are part of a nearly \$2 million competitive grant program from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture:

- **MARK BLEVINS, ED.D.**, associate administrator in Cooperative Extension at N.C. A&T, is leading a study of biodegradable mulches—a more environmentally-friendly alternative to plastic mulch—in commercial vegetable production, in both high tunnels and open fields.
- **REZA TAHERGORABI, PH.D.**, associate professor of food and nutritional science, is leading students in conducting plant-based food research with the goal of developing plant-based surimi (minced) seafood.
- **LEONARD WILLIAMS, PH.D.**, director of the Center for Excellence in Post-Harvest Technologies at the UNC Research Campus in Kannapolis, is developing courses to familiarize food and agricultural sciences students with the principles of food allergies and immunology, and to develop food-grade research strategies for safer, controlled immunotherapy, including desensitization to allergy-producing foods.
- **MEESHAY WILLIAMS-WHEELER, PH.D.**, professor of family and consumer sciences, is working to increase the number of students enrolled in department programs and grow their communication, critical thinking, interpersonal and problem-solving skills and cultural competencies.
- **JIANMEI YU, PH.D.**, a food and nutritional science professor, is working to developing a safe, natural alternative to antibiotics in livestock feed. ■



*Kellogg Distinguished Professor Kathleen Liang uses USDA grant and an innovative approach to train Ag educators across disciplines.*

## AGRICULTURAL LITERACY

North Carolina may be one of the most agriculturally diverse states in the nation, but as rates of agricultural literacy decline among younger generations, teaching middle and high school students where their food comes from—and how to grow more—becomes a vital strategy for combating food insecurity, preventing malnutrition and maintaining the environment.

But who will teach the teachers?

**CHYI LYI “KATHLEEN” LIANG, PH.D.**, Kellogg Distinguished Professor of Sustainable Agriculture at

North Carolina A&T, is seeking to answer that question with an innovative approach to agricultural education and a new, \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to implement it.

“Agriculture is embedded in every subject; the trick is just to know how to bring it out,” said Liang. “We all know food is important. What’s lacking is communication about how to incorporate food and food security concepts into education. Instead of developing students into agriculture teachers, I propose to develop teachers, at every level, so that they

can see how agriculture has a space in every subject.”

With the grant, part of the USDA’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative program, Liang is leading a three-year, statewide effort to bring agriculture out of the greenhouse and into a broad spectrum of classrooms by training K-12 teachers of every subject how to find the agricultural opportunities within their existing curriculum. The project is one of 16 targeting ways to increase the food and agriculture educational workforce supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

In the fall of 2023, Liang began recruiting 30 K-12 teachers from across the state, who teach students from kindergarten to technical program age, to learn online and in-person strategies.

The group gathers at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems in Goldsboro, North Carolina, to learn, through experiential learning opportunities, how agriculture relates to our daily lives and to the subjects they teach.

The program will particularly welcome teachers from limited-resource communities of the state who may not otherwise get such opportunities, Liang said, but teachers from urban areas are welcome, too.

With 30 K-12 teachers each year, each teaching 20 to 25 students apiece, Liang estimates the program will have reached 90 teachers and more than 2,200 students by the end of the grant’s three-year cycle. Teachers will receive a stipend during their time in Goldsboro.

“Previous research has shown that an agriculturally literate society is vital if food production is to meet the needs of an anticipated global population projection of nine billion people by 2050, but at the same time, the number of farms in North Carolina has continued to decline,” she said.

“Not every student may be inspired to pursue an agricultural field, but I want to be sure that we bring the knowledge back to its roots in the community and the family. Each student should have some sense of how they, and their health, relate to food systems and to agriculture.” ■



UZOCHUKWU

**GODFREY A. “UZO” UZOCHUKWU, PH.D.**, a professor in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and founding director of the campuswide Interdisciplinary Waste Management Institute, was named chair of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) Clean Air Status and Trends Network (CASTNET) review panel. The network was established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1991 “to assess the effectiveness of emission reductions programs by reporting trends in pollutant concentrations and acidic deposition.” Uzochukwu was named to the SAB in 2021.

Uzochukwu brings expertise in science, strategy and leadership to CASTNET’s review panel as a licensed soil specialist with a B.S. in general agriculture and an M.S. in agronomy soils and land use from Oklahoma State University. He earned his Ph.D. in soil genesis and mineralogy at the University of Nebraska. He was a post-doctoral scholar of soil mineralogy at Texas A&M University.

Uzochukwu has taught nearly 12,000 students over his 30-year tenure at N.C. A&T, including EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan ’98, and more than 2,300 students have graduated with a certificate in waste management. ■

STUDENTS

## BROWN, LANIER CHOSEN FOR 2023 HBCU WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE

By Jackie Torok, Director of Media Relations

The White House Initiative (WHI) on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) selected **KAIYAH BROWN** and **VICTORIA LANIER** as 2023 HBCU Competitiveness Scholars. They were among 101 students chosen from 70 HBCUs to receive the initiative's highest honor based on academic achievements, campus leadership, civic engagement and entrepreneurial spirit.

Brown, of Charlotte, North Carolina, is a junior pursuing a B.S. in psychology from the John R. and Kathy R. Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences. She has earned recognition on the Chancellor's List with a 3.82 GPA and is a member of Alpha Lambda Delta Honors Society. Additionally, she serves as parliamentarian of A&T's Psychology Club and has been a member of the Psychology Research Club, Minor Association of Pre-Medical Students, Leadership and Civic Engagement, National Council of Negro Women, and Association of Black Psychologists, among others.

Lanier, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, is a senior pursuing a B.S. in industrial and systems engineering, with a minor in supply chain management, from the College of Engineering (COE). She has interned with Collins Aerospace, Lockheed Martin Space and TE Connectivity, and is a 2020 National Science Foundation Revolutionizing Engineering Departments Design Fellow. She has served as treasurer of Aggie Toastmasters since August 2022 and as a Girl Scout troop leader since September 2021. She also served on COE's E-Week Committee,



BROWN



LANIER

as COE's Student Government Association senator and as parliamentarian for A&T's National Society of Black Engineers.

As 2023 HBCU Scholars, Brown and Lanier were invited to monthly master classes hosted by the initiative and its various partners representing a wide range of disciplines, as well as to the 2023 Annual National HBCU Week Conference, "Raising the Bar: Forging Excellence through Innovation and Leadership," which convened in Arlington, Virginia, Sept. 24-28.

Scholars are expected to carefully assess their personal and career aspirations, as well as the needs of their institutions and communities, to help determine the best ways the initiative and its partners might provide support. ■

**KRISTI BARNES, MAYA ODOM** and **BREYANA ROBINSON** were selected as 2023 Astronaut Scholars, an elite scholarship awarded annually to the nation's most academically accomplished students pursuing STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) degrees. Each of them received up to \$15,000 for eligible educational expenses and lifelong engagement with astronauts, executives, STEM researchers and innovators, Astronaut Scholar alumni and the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation (ASF), the nonprofit founded in 1984 by surviving members of the Mercury 7 crew. In addition, they received an all-expense paid trip to the ASF Innovator's Week & Gala in Orlando, Florida, in August 2023 to present their research at a technical conference.

Barnes, a graduating senior from Columbia, Maryland, who was a NASA Goddard intern in high school, is studying chemical engineering with an applied mathematics minor. She earned a cumulative 4.0 GPA and secured an internship with Abbott before completing her first semester. In July 2021, Barnes earned the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation HBCU National Racial Equity Initiative Scholarship to pursue her interest in applying her studies to better treat diabetes and other diseases that disproportionately affect Black populations. She co-authored the study "Do masks matter? A study on the effectiveness and the adherence to mask mandates in stores in Greensboro, North Carolina" in April 2022, completed a second internship with Abbott in summer 2022 and interned with Eli Lilly in summer 2023. A member of the University Choir and treasurer of the Society of Women Engineers, Barnes was one of A&T's Astronaut Scholarship candidates last year.

Odom, a graduating senior from Crofton, Maryland, is a Cheatham-White Scholar studying computer engineering. In fall 2021, Odom was selected as a

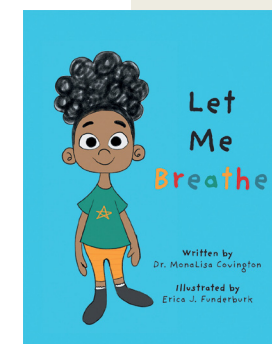
recipient of the inaugural Diverse Internship from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and wrote a paper on cloud technology. In summer 2022, Odom served as a Disney Streaming Software Engineering intern and completed an internship with Amazon in summer 2023 after studying in Cyprus. She is an endorsed applicant for the 2024-25 Fulbright Program grant.

Robinson, a third-year student from Garland, Texas, is a Dowdy Scholar studying laboratory animal science with a minor in chemistry. Robinson earned her Veterinary Assisting Certification through the Texas Veterinary Medicine Association in high school, and is a Diversity In Veterinary Medicine Coalition Scholar. She interned at the University of Utah in summer 2022 and at Boehringer Ingelheim in Ridgefield, Connecticut in summer 2023. Odom was also endorsed for the 2023 Goldwater Scholarship.

The three Honors College students were publicly recognized by astronaut and retired Air Force Col. Frederick Drew Gregory during a special campus presentation and lecture in January 2024.

Created in 1984, ASF awarded its first seven scholarships in honor of its founding members, the Mercury 7 Astronauts. Over the past 39 years, more than \$8.3 million has been awarded to nearly 800 students.

In 2023, 68 Astronaut Scholars from across the country were selected from 46 nominating institutions. Only two other institutions later had three 2023 Astronaut Scholarship recipients: the University of Central Florida and Purdue University. N.C. A&T is the first historically Black university (HBCU) to have more than one Astronaut Scholarship available in an application cycle. ■



Graphic communication systems senior **ERICA J. FUNDERBURK** of Greensboro, North Carolina, illustrated the children's book "Let Me Breathe," which includes life lessons currently faced by youth and adults alike. Through the lives of the main characters Barry and Maggie, author Monalisa Covington addresses historic and current societal issues children might have questions about while encouraging faith in God. ■

STUDENTS

Sophomore public relations majors **RENEE DOUGLAS** and **STEVEN MATTHEWS JR.**, along with junior multimedia journalism majors **GABRIELLE HEYWARD** and **CHRYSTA NICHOLS**, were chosen to participate in the McClatchy Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Internship.

This internship program provides HBCU students with a transformative experience in the world of media and publishing. Its goal is to nurture the next generation of professionals who are committed to McClatchy's mission and values.

Douglas, Heyward, Matthews and Nichols have made a three-year commitment to spend 10 weeks each summer working full-time at McClatchy, where interns are paired with senior-level mentors who guide and support their professional growth throughout the program. They will have the opportunity to work on impactful projects that address recurring industry challenges and contribute to improving McClatchy's business operations. Upon graduating, they will commit to working for McClatchy for a full year in a position aligned with their interests and aspirations. ■



Junior computer engineering and supply chain management student **ALIYAH TERRY**, of Charlotte, North Carolina, is among 15 students selected to participate in the highly competitive Boeing Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMC)F Scholar Program's fifth cohort.

The Boeing TMC)F Scholar Program, which targets students for opportunities in the functional areas of engineering, IT and data analytics, finance/accounting, supply chain management, human resources, environmental health and safety, and facilities management, provides an unparalleled career opportunity and scholarship for outstanding students attending Boeing HBCU partner schools. This opportunity comes with full college to career support, opening the door to a full-time career with the world's largest aerospace company and lead manufacturer of commercial jetliners and defense, space and security systems.

This past summer, Terry worked as a multi-disciplinary engineering intern at Boeing Global Services in Long Beach, California, where she excelled as a member of the Avionics and AP&S Electrical Team doing wire design and installation.



**ESSENCE CONNOR-BARRINGER** is the Aggie Poet Laureate for academic year 2023-24.

An M.A. student in English and African American literature from Charlotte, North Carolina, Connor-Barringer holds a B.A. in English with a concentration in creative writing from N.C. A&T. She serves as a writing consultant in the University Writing Center and has published two books of poetry, "Maple Sunrise" and "An Ochre Road."

Connor-Barringer's selection as the sixth Aggie Poet Laureate comes as a result of her achievements as a writer, commitment to craftsmanship and tireless efforts to cultivate her unique voice within the literary landscape, according to A&T's Aggie Poet Laureate selection committee. The committee, comprised of professional writers and F.D. Bluford library staff, carefully reviews application portfolios and selects the most qualified poet.

The Aggie Poet Laureate serves for one year and during that time, gives public readings and initiates projects to help promote poetry awareness and literacy. ■

## JAMES PRESENTS STUDY ON BLUE LIGHT EXPOSURE

By Markita C. Rowe, Public Communications Specialist, CAHSS

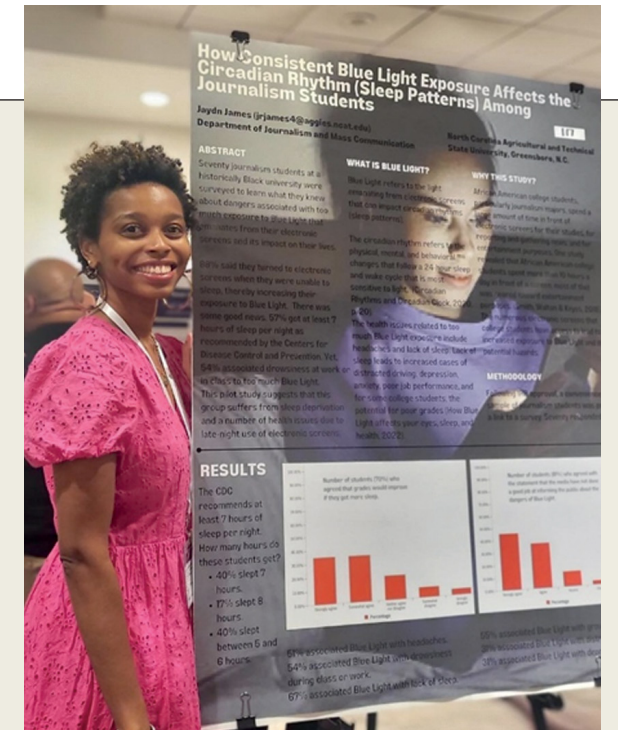
Multimedia journalism student **JAYDN JAMES** presented her innovative research study, "How Consistent Blue Light Exposure Affects the Circadian Rhythm (Sleep Patterns) Among Journalism Students," at the Black Doctoral Network (BDN) Undergraduate Research Poster competition in Atlanta in October.

The BDN is a nonprofit that values the promotion and support of excellence and diversity in graduate education, research and scholarship among Black scholars. James, a senior from Charleston, South Carolina, is a contributor to the student-led newspaper The A&T Register and an on-campus newscaster for Aggie News.

The genesis of her study stemmed from personal experiences, suffering headaches she believed were linked to excessive exposure to blue light. Intrigued by her observations, James conducted a pilot study involving 70 N.C. A&T journalism students to gauge the effects of blue light on their physical and mental well-being. Her findings indicate the students experienced sleep deprivation and associated physical and mental ailments due to prolonged exposure to blue light from electronic screens for their studies, reporting and gathering news.

"As journalism progressively becomes more technological, there is no question that more of that blue light will be taken in at an excessive rate," said James. "This could lead to more headaches and grouchiness, as the pilot study that I conducted proved."

Among the key findings from her study, 51% of journalism students surveyed associated blue light with headaches, while 54% reported experiencing drowsiness during class or work because of exposure. James hopes her research will raise awareness,



particularly among African Americans and journalism students, about the potential dangers of excessive blue light exposure from electronic devices.

James suggests that the results align with national trends indicating that college students are grappling with sleep deprivation and related ailments caused by blue light exposure.

"I hope this study helps African Americans and journalism students to know about the potential dangers of taking in too much blue light from electronic devices and screens," she said.

Her research contributes insights that may shape discussions around media consumption habits and their potential consequences on overall well-being.

According to the study "Exploring Screen Time Habits and the Life Empowerment Divide at an HBCU," authored by Kim Smith, Ph.D., Tobin Walton, Ph.D., and Alvin Keyes, Ph.D., African American college students spend more than 10 hours a day in front of a screen, mostly for entertainment.

"I believe it's important to keep investigating and uncovering potential issues that might arise when we expose ourselves to blue light from electronic devices," said James. "There could be more hidden effects that we need to understand, and I plan to continue pursuing this research." ■

STUDENTS

## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS BLAZE TRAIL THROUGH TOYOTA PROPERTY

By Lydian Bernhardt, Director of Ag Communications



Landscape architecture students from the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences prepare to chart a course for their work on the Toyota Battery property in Liberty. A lake, natural areas and overlooks are all a part of the environmental education project, the students' senior year project.

A 300-acre tract of woodland in Liberty, North Carolina, on the southwest corner of Toyota North Carolina's battery manufacturing plant site, will soon take on new features as an environmental education forest, thanks to the talents of seven students from North Carolina A&T's landscape architecture program.

Under the direction of professor **STEVE RASMUSSEN CANCIAN**, the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences students will design and build a culturally inclusive, environmentally friendly outdoor experience involving a

trail system and a variety of outdoor educational environments.

It might be called "Tranquility Trails." Or, possibly, "Wild Wonderwoods." Or maybe "Froggy Lagoon," on part of the tract near Lake Dodson, which is on the property.

Sean Suggs, president of Toyota North Carolina, and members of his team visited the landscape architecture program in Carver Hall recently to hear those students' ideas and more, and to see first-hand how their designs will mesh with Toyota's goal

of engaging children with nature while preserving nature.

He left impressed.

"Un-be-freakin'-lieveable," Suggs told the seven student presenters. "I am blown away with the level of detail that you all have displayed. Your 'thinking way' and creativity are really impressive."

The connection between the giant automaker and the landscape architecture department began with a lucky meeting between Cancian and Michael Robinson, a senior engineering manager for Toyota North Carolina.

Robinson was interested in finding a way to engage children with nature while preserving nature on the giant site, and in creating opportunities for children to overcome the sedentary lifestyle

Cancian's senior class decided to take the project on, envisioning nature trails, overlooks, identification stops and even a floating platform for identifying fish.

Robinson steered the idea through its approval process and the students made their first "scouting" visit to the tract earlier this fall.

Robinson joined Suggs and two other Toyota employees—environmental engineer Natasha Montiel and engineering manager Darius Weatherford, an A&T alumnus—in the visit to the university program,

where they asked questions and probed the students' thinking during their presentations.

"The overall goal of my design is to relieve stress," said senior CARRINGTON LIGHT in explaining the name of her project, 'Tranquility Trails.' "In the woods, the stress of school can fade away as you feel the breeze, see the pattern of the sunlight through the trees, maybe read the IDs on the trees or make finds along the path."

**BRITTANY ANGELL** envisioned areas within "Wild Wonderwoods" where children could climb to elevated platforms, or learn in a garden classroom.

"I wanted it to be fun, an experience you can remember and take with you," she said.

**CIARA KNIGHT**'s designs took advantage of the natural wetland on the property, including a butterfly garden and plant identification.

"Nature allows the mind to be employed without being fatigued," she said. "Safe, social access to the outdoors is not something all kids have. It's a form of environmental justice for them to feel that 'nature has a place for me.'"

The senior class will officially start work this spring at the 1,800-acre site, Toyota' first dedicated to battery electric, plug-in hybrid and hybrid battery production.

"Now, what we need to do is go back and go, 'Wow!' and 'Which one?' and think about how we can consolidate or add," Suggs told the students. "You all have set the foundation for us, now, to go back and say, 'We can really make this happen.'"

The environmental education forest is Toyota's second investment in A&T. In September 2022, the company awarded a \$500,000 grant to the College of Education to foster science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) education. ■

The newest cohort of Woodland Ellroy Hall Fellows includes 10 master's and doctoral students who are committed to excellence in scholarship, professional capabilities and leadership in a research university setting: **PIPPIN BUCHOLTZ**, of St. Louis, is pursuing an M.S. in agriculture and environmental sciences; **AARONDE SECKOU CREIGHTON** (Atlanta, Georgia), pursuing a Ph.D. in leadership studies; **KIANNA HENDRICKS** (Ahoskie, North Carolina), pursuing a Ph.D. and continuing bioinformatics research; **MADISON LAWSON** (Charlotte, North Carolina), pursuing an M.S. in English and African American Literature master's student; **MAYA MITCHELL** (Bowie, Maryland), pursuing an M.S. in industrial and systems engineering; **KIYANA ROBERTS** (Jersey City, New Jersey), pursuing an MBA; **SAQIB SHAHZAD** (Greensboro, North Carolina), pursuing a Ph.D. in leadership studies; **MARISHA WILLIAMS** (Danville, Virginia), pursuing an M.S. in adult education; **MICAH WYATT** (Moore County, North Carolina), pursuing a Ph.D. in counselor education and supervision; and **ABIGAIL YOHANNES** (San José, California), pursuing an M.S. in data science and engineering.

Fellows are selected on the basis of merit and academic potential, not financial need. The one-year award provides full tuition, fees and health insurance. Doctoral students receive a \$20,000 stipend and master's students receive a \$16,000 stipend.

The fellowship is named for Hall (1909-2004), the first student to earn a graduate degree from N.C. A&T in 1941. The native Virginian earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, a master's degree in agricultural education from A&T, a second master's at Columbia University and doctoral work at Pennsylvania State University. He went on to serve as a principal in Manteo, Burlington and Dunn, North Carolina. The state honors his legacy of exemplary service and leadership through this scholarship program. ■

**WATCH THE VIDEO:** <https://youtu.be/NMPKn6Z5yg4>

FOOTBALL

# COOKE ADDS TO HIS 2023 ALL-AMERICAN COLLECTION

By Brian M. Holloway '97, Associate Athletics Director/Communications

North Carolina A&T graduate kickoff returner **TAYMON COOKE** claimed two more All-American accolades on Dec. 19, as a return specialist, bringing his total to four following the 2023 college football season.

Stats Perform released its All-American team presented by FedEx Ground, with Cooke earning second-team honors as a kickoff returner. Phil Steele/Draft Scout also released its FCS All-American team, with Cooke securing first-team honors.

A wide-ranging array of talented players comprise the 2023 Stats Perform FCS All-America Team, which consists of 109 players representing all 13 FCS leagues and 57 schools. Across the Coastal Athletic Association Football Conference, 25 players were selected to either the first or second All-American teams. The 19 first-teams tied with the Missouri Valley Football Conference for the most of any league, and the 25 combined honorees were the most of any conference.

Cooke has racked up the awards for his outstanding season since it ended in November. In addition to these latest recognitions, Cooke was named HBCU special teams player of the year by BOXTOROW, which also named him an HBCU All-American. In partnership with Sports Illustrated, FCS Football Central named Cooke to their All-American team.

Cooke tied with Merrimack's Donovan Wadley for most kickoff returns (KOR) for touchdowns (TDs) during the 2023 season with three. His four career KOR for TDs ties the program record with Brian Rodman (1990-93) and Malik Wilson (2015-18).

In addition to finishing in a tie for the nation's lead in KOR for TDs, Cooke ranked second in yards per kickoff return (34.2). He led the Coastal Athletic Association (CAA) in the aforementioned statistical categories. All three of Cooke's touchdowns came at home inside Truist Stadium. Cooke's first kickoff return for a score came against chief rival North Carolina Central University (NCCU) on September 9. Cooke's 80-yard kickoff return in the second quarter helped the Aggies trail by just one at halftime to NCCU, 17-16.

His second was a 94-yard kickoff return against Villanova on October 7 that put the Aggies in front, 7-3, in the first quarter. His final return for TD came against Richmond two weeks later, when he went 91 yards in the second quarter for the Aggies' first score of the game. In his final season as an Aggie on the field, Cooke compiled 547 yards in kickoff returns, 148 yards receiving, and a touchdown on 11 receptions, and he rushed for 28 yards on seven carries.

In three seasons and 43 games played in Aggieland after transferring from Marshall University, Cooke returned 48 kickoffs for 1,340 return yards (27.92 per return). He also had 417 receiving yards in his career on 35 receptions (9.70) and two touchdowns. ■



BASKETBALL

# MEN'S BASKETBALL MAKES AN "IMPACT"

By Amanda Forrest, Student Intern

North Carolina A&T men's basketball head coach, Monté Ross, introduced a new player to the Aggies' lineup (Dec. 18, 2023) as 13-year-old **ISRAEL "IZZY" MATHEWS** became the newest member of the Aggie family.

Mathews came to Aggieland through Team IMPACT, a non-profit organization specializing in partnering children with serious illnesses or disabilities with a collegiate sports team. Through this partnership, student-athletes can become more involved in their community and aspire to be more compassionate leaders. A ceremonial signing and press conference for Izzy with local media and the 2023-24 men's basketball team in attendance was held Dec. 4, at Moore Gymnasium.

"Izzy is a very outgoing young man, who's going to help all of the shy guys that we have around this room, our family; he's going to help those guys come out of their shells," said Ross. "Whenever we can get somebody that can be a true, true contributor, we welcome them with open arms."

According to Ross, Colin Daly, director of basketball operations for the men's basketball team, was the force behind Mathews' recruitment process. Daly introduced Ross to Mathews, for which the coach's response was, "If you don't do anything, make sure you get Izzy."

Mathews is diagnosed with blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm (BPDCN), a highly aggressive form of leukemia that affects bone marrow, skin, lymph nodes and blood. This rare disease affects people of all ages and demographics, with fewer than 1,000 cases reported each year. Older men are commonly diagnosed with this disease.

N.C. A&T's men's basketball program is committed to helping Mathews achieve his goals. Jordyn Clark, a case manager for Team IMPACT, sings praises about the men's basketball program welcoming Mathews.

"When they were matched, A&T's men's basketball team was great from the start. They were excited and ready to make Izzy a part of their team. From the first visit, Izzy's mom stated that the team made Izzy feel right at home and really feel a part of the team, and that's what it's all about," said Clark. "They are authentic and ... don't treat him differently."

To conclude Mathews' signing event, he was presented with a No. 14 jersey and a photo shoot with the team.

The partnership between Team IMPACT and A&T's men's basketball program is their first collaboration. The men's basketball program is scheduled to meet with Mathews several times a month for over two years. ■

## FOOTBALL

## 12 FOOTBALL GAMES SCHEDULED FOR FALL 2024

*The Aggies will play five in-state schools, four HBCUs and four 2023 playoff teams.*

North Carolina A&T, in partnership with the Coastal Athletic Association (CAA) Football Conference, released the Aggies complete 2024 football schedule on Jan. 10. The schedule includes a long-awaited renewal of a historic HBCU rivalry, an ACC school, five home games and seven road games.

The 2024 season will mark the first time the Aggies have placed 12 games on the regular-season schedule since 2008. It also includes games against five in-state schools and four HBCUs. In addition to playing an FBS team, the Aggies must play four playoff teams from 2023.

The following is a breakdown of the Aggies 2024 season.

### THURSDAY, AUG. 29

**OPPONENT:** Wake Forest Demon Deacons

**LOCATION:** Winston-Salem, North Carolina (Allegacy Federal Credit Union Stadium)

**TIME:** TBD

**SERIES:** Wake Forest leads, 1-0.

**BREAKDOWN:** Before playing Wake Forest in 2004, the Aggies had never played an ACC school. Now, the Aggies are starting to make a habit of it. The Aggies have played Duke twice and UNC once since 2015. They also have a date awaiting against N.C. State down the road.

### SATURDAY, SEPT. 7

**OPPONENT:** Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) Rams

**LOCATION:** Greensboro, North Carolina (Truist Stadium)

**TIME:** 7 p.m.

**SERIES:** A&T leads, 36-12.

**BREAKDOWN:** Many have been waiting to see this one played for a long time. The Rams did land the last punch, beating A&T 21-14 in Greensboro. The WSSU Rams and A&T Aggies are bitter rivals like A&T and North Carolina Central, except the Rams and the Aggies never play. Many would love to see this game played yearly, but that is not likely with A&T on the Division I-FCS level and WSSU as a Division II. But why dwell on the future? Let's enjoy this while we have it.

### SATURDAY, SEPT. 14

**OPPONENT:** Delaware Blue Hens

**LOCATION:** Greensboro, North Carolina (Truist Stadium)

**TIME:** 1 p.m.

**SERIES:** Delaware leads, 1-0.

**BREAKDOWN:** A&T played one of its better defensive games of the season at Delaware last season. It will be the Aggies' conference opener in 2024. The Blue Hens will be making their first-ever visit to A&T, but it could also be their last. Delaware has informed the CAA of its intentions to leave the CAA for the Division I-FBS level. In the meantime, the Aggies will try to knock off a 2023 FCS playoff team that finished 21st in the nation in the USA Today Coaches poll and 22nd in the STATS Perform media poll.

### SATURDAY, SEPT. 21

**OPPONENT:** North Carolina Central University (NCCU) Eagles

**LOCATION:** Durham, North Carolina (O'Kelly-Riddick Stadium)

**TIME:** TBD

**SERIES:** A&T leads, 54-36-5.

**BREAKDOWN:** Winston-Salem State and NCCU on the same schedule? Heaven must be like this. It has been a long time since the Aggies were in Durham to play the Eagles. The last time the Aggies were in Durham, they had a good time, defeating the Eagles 45-0. The last two years versus NCCU could have been better. The Aggies have lost the previous two games by two touchdowns apiece.

### SATURDAY, SEPT. 28

**OPPONENT:** South Carolina State University (SCSU) Bulldogs

**LOCATION:** Orangeburg, South Carolina (Oliver C. Dawson Stadium)

**TIME:** 6 p.m.

**SERIES:** SCSU leads, 31-24-2

**BREAKDOWN:** It will be the third game of a four-game agreement the two schools signed once A&T departed the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference. Former A&T offensive coordinator Chennis Berry is now the head coach at SCSU after the retirement of legendary Bulldogs head coach Buddy Pough. The Aggies won the last seven matchups, their longest winning streak in the series.



### SATURDAY, OCT. 5

**OPPONENT:** Richmond Spiders

**LOCATION:** Richmond, Virginia (Robins Stadium)

**TIME:** 2 p.m.

**SERIES:** Richmond leads, 2-0.

**BREAKDOWN:** A&T will return to Robins Stadium for the first time in eight years after losing to the Spiders in the 2016 NCAA FCS playoffs, 39-10. The Aggies will be playing in their third straight road game when they head to the capital city of Virginia. Richmond won a share of the CAA Football Conference title last season and appeared in the 2023 playoffs. A&T failed to score an offensive touchdown against the Spiders last season at Truist Stadium.

### SATURDAY, OCT. 19 - HOMECOMING

**OPPONENT:** Hampton Pirates

**LOCATION:** Greensboro, North Carolina (Truist Stadium)

**TIME:** 1 p.m.

**SERIES:** Hampton leads, 28-18-2

**BREAKDOWN:** There will be some old-school Aggies, and perhaps some new-school ones too, who will be happy to see an HBCU opponent come to town for the Greatest Homecoming on Earth. The Aggies have not defeated the Pirates since both schools left the MEAC. But the two teams have yet to play against each other in Greensboro since leaving the MEAC. In 2021, in a Big South Conference game, Hampton defeated A&T 30-9 at home. Last season, the Pirates won 26-24 in a CAA Football Conference game in Hampton.

### SATURDAY, OCT. 26

**OPPONENT:** Campbell Fighting Camels

**LOCATION:** Buies Creek, North Carolina (Barker-Lane Stadium)

**TIME:** 4 p.m.

**SERIES:** The series is tied, 1-1.

**BREAKDOWN:** Campbell is another Big South opponent turned CAA opponent on the Aggies schedule. A&T won a Big South game over Campbell in 2021 at Truist Stadium before returning to Truist to defeat the Aggies in 2022. Therefore, A&T will make its first trip to Buies Creek for a football game. Campbell will be under the leadership of new head coach Braxton Harris.

### SATURDAY, NOV. 2

**OPPONENT:** William & Mary Tribe

**LOCATION:** Greensboro, North Carolina (Truist Stadium)

**TIME:** 1 p.m.

**SERIES:** First meeting

**BREAKDOWN:** A&T head coach Vincent Brown spent four seasons at William & Mary as its defensive coordinator under Mike London. Brown will invite his former team to Truist Stadium for a late-season CAA Football Conference game. That is about where the familiarity with William & Mary ends. The two teams will be playing each other for the first time.

### SATURDAY, NOV. 9

**OPPONENT:** Villanova Wildcats

**LOCATION:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Villanova Stadium)

**TIME:** 1 p.m.

**SERIES:** Villanova leads, 1-0.

**BREAKDOWN:** There was a three-way tie for first place in the CAA Football Conference in 2022. The Aggies have two of those three teams on their schedule, including Villanova. The Aggies will play at Villanova for the first time. It will be the first of a challenging back-to-back road trip for A&T toward the end of the season. Villanova is also one of four teams on the Aggies schedule who reached the playoffs in 2022.

### SATURDAY, NOV. 16

**OPPONENT:** Towson Tigers

**LOCATION:** Towson, Maryland (Johnny Unitas Stadium)

**TIME:** 1 p.m.

**SERIES:** Towson leads, 1-0.

**BREAKDOWN:** After going to Philly, the Aggies will head north for the second straight week to face Towson at Johnny Unitas Stadium for the first time. The Aggies will try to return the favor with a road win over Towson after the Tigers defeated the Aggies at A&T's Greatest Homecoming on Earth.

### SATURDAY, NOV. 23

**OPPONENT:** Elon Phoenix

**LOCATION:** Greensboro, North Carolina (Truist Stadium)

**TIME:** 1 p.m.

**SERIES:** A&T leads, 8-5.

**BREAKDOWN:** The placement of this game as the season finale could aid in making it a spirited Piedmont rivalry. It will never be on the level of NCCU or WSSU for various reasons, but it will be a good end-of-the-year matchup, nevertheless. What will make it even more fun is if there is a conference championship on the line between the two teams during the finale. That would be truly awesome for the community. ■



BASEBALL

# AGGIES THRIVE IN 2023 SEASON OF MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

By Amanda Forrest, Student Intern

Five former North Carolina A&T baseball players — pitchers **XAVIER MEACHEM**, **EVAN GATES** and **LEON HUNTER JR.** and sluggers **GREGORY WHITE** and **DUSTIN BABER** — are doing well in the professional baseball ranks.

“I am really proud to see the guys continuing to thrive in the professional ranks,” said A&T head baseball coach Ben Hall, who coached all five gentlemen during his time at A&T. “It is a grind in professional baseball, and it is a job. So, to see them continue to do well and perform is exciting. We as a program want to continue supporting them in their walk and look forward to preparing the next group of guys who may generate the same opportunity for themselves.”

**Xavier Meachem**  
Meachem, a right-handed pitcher out of Winterville, North Carolina, has excelled in baseball since leaving the A&T baseball program in the summer of 2023. During the 2023 season, he held a 2-1 record with 47 strikeouts, five saves and a 5.59 ERA in 48.1 innings pitched.

After an outstanding three-year career with A&T, the Miami Marlins drafted Meachem in the 10th round with the 293rd overall pick on July 10, 2023. The organization assigned Meachem to the Jupiter Hammerheads, where in 10 appearances, he has a 2.66 ERA, 28 strikeouts and a 1-0 record in 20.1 innings pitched.

Meachem’s march toward the professional ranks received a boost over the summer when Major League Baseball (MLB) invited him to the Draft Combine in June, an event for prospective players entering the 2023 MLB Draft.

A month later, Meachem was one of four players from an HBCU who earned a tryout for Team USA. He started and pitched in the USA Baseball Collegiate National Team’s Stars versus Stripes game for the Stripes, as a part of the tryout process. In a momentous event, Meachem became the first Aggie to pitch for Team USA.

Meachem’s presence at the HBCU Swingman Classic on July 7, in Seattle, increased his profile. The event highlights the legacy of HBCU baseball programs and displays 50 HBCU baseball players’ talents on a national level.

Meachem graduated from A&T in December 2023 with a degree in business management.

**Evan Gates**  
Gates pitches for the Richmond Flying Squirrels, the San Francisco Giants’ Double-A affiliate. He started with the Flying Squirrels in August of 2022. During the 2023 season, Gates made 42 appearances and posted a 4.39 ERA in 55.1 innings. He received the 2023 Flying Squirrels Community Service Award. Gates is active within his Richmond community and

volunteers his time by mentoring youth baseball teams in Richmond. He worked with the ASK Childhood Cancer Foundation 5K & Fun Walk. He also visited children at the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU.

Gates transferred to A&T from Mott Community College in 2019. In 2021, he came out of the bullpen to post 79 strikeouts, a 4.37 ERA and five saves in 47.1 innings pitched. For his A&T career, Gates went 5-5 with a 3.59 ERA and 89 career strikeouts in 80.2 innings pitched.

**Leon Hunter Jr.**  
Hunter graduated from A&T with a degree in criminal justice. The Texas Rangers followed, making Hunter the 1,045th pick overall in the 35th round of the MLB Draft on June 12, 2019. Hunter played for two Seattle Mariners affiliates over the summer, including the Everett AquaSox of the Northwest League and the Tacoma Rainiers of the Pacific Coast League.

He played for the Peoria Javelins of the Arizona Fall League during the fall. Hunter did most of his work for the Single-A+ AquaSox, where he made 22 appearances, posted a 2.59 ERA, 42 strikeouts and a 6-1 record. He made one appearance for the Triple-A Rainiers and nine appearances for the Javelins.

An integral player to the 2019 A&T baseball program, Hunter made 25 appearances, posting a 3-1 record with a 2.87 ERA. He also posted 31



MEACHEM

strikeouts while walking eight in 31.1 innings pitched. Hunter made the Chancellor’s Academic List recurrently and was an All-MEAC academic team member. Hunter made 91 career appearances, had a 5.03 ERA, and posted 87 strikeouts.

During his minor league career, Hunter has made 103 appearances with an impressive 3.29 ERA, 200 strikeouts and a 22-7 record.

**Gregory White**  
White played for the Zurich Barracudas, Switzerland’s largest baseball/softball club, in 2023. He plays center field, shortstop and pitches for the Barracudas. At the plate, he batted .303 (20-for-66) with one home run, nine doubles and 12 RBI. He faced four batters in his one-pitch appearance and gave up one hit and no runs.

White is a Greensboro native who played on the Aggies’ 2018 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) championship team in 2018. In his



GATES

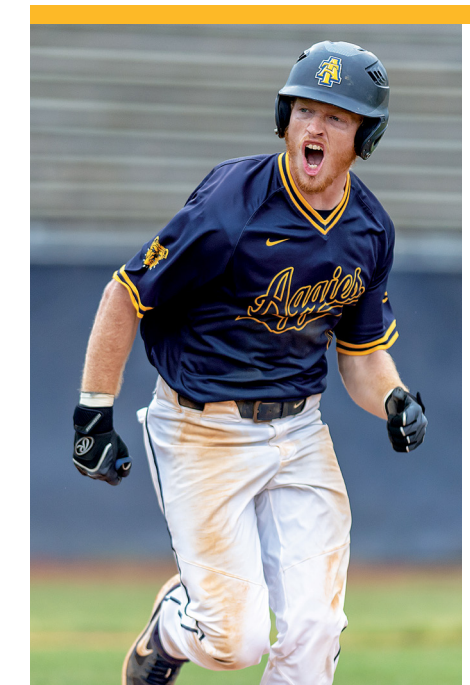
two years in Aggieland, he earned second-team All-MEAC honors in 2017 before winning third-team accolades in 2018. He hit .344 for his career with two home runs, 42 RBI, 23 doubles and two triples. He also stole 23 bases and posted a .420 slugging percentage.

**Dustin Baber**  
Baber played for the Savannah Party Animals as a part of the Banana Ball League, an alternative minor league baseball organization with 11 unique rules designed to speed up the game, entertain fans and add a different twist to traditional baseball. Baber batted .370 with five RBI but was once called out because a fan caught his foul ball. In Banana Ball, he is known as Dustin “Barber.”

Baber spent three seasons (2018-2021) with A&T, batting .306 with five home runs and 76 RBI in 122 games. He was named first-team All-MEAC in 2019. ■



HUNTER



BABER

## VOLLEYBALL

## DOCTOR MAKES AGGIE VOLLEYBALL HISTORY AS CAA ROOKIE OF THE YEAR, SAWTELLE EARNS FIRST-TEAM ALL-CONFERENCE



split at home against Hofstra. Doctor totaled 30 kills, six digs, three blocks and a .260 hitting percentage for the weekend. A week later, on Oct. 16, Doctor added another weekly honor after totaling 28 kills in a weekend sweep of Elon. Doctor went six straight matches with double-figure kills from Sept. 30-Oct. 15, including a season-high 19 kills in a five-set loss at Stony Brook.

Doctor totaled 238 kills on a .217 hitting percentage, adding 86 digs and 30 blocks. Doctor averaged 2.53 kills per set, ranking top-20 in the league, and recorded 10 or more kills in 11 matches this season with two double-doubles.

While Doctor's A&T career is just starting, Sawtelle's ended in the Aggies' season finale at home against Campbell. Sawtelle will not return for her senior season to pursue a graduate degree program not currently offered at A&T.

When Sawtelle received her undergraduate degree from A&T in December, she walked away having made an indelible mark on the university's volleyball program. Sawtelle ended her career with 1,207 kills, the second most in A&T history. She totaled eight weekly honors and 27 double-doubles in her career, including eight in the 2023 season.

Sawtelle leads the CAA in six statistical categories, including kills per set (3.82). She also leads the league in total kills (382), points per set (4.44), total points (443.5), attacks per set (10.29) and total attacks (1,029). ■

North Carolina A&T's future and outgoing superstar were represented as the Coastal Athletic Association (CAA) announced its postseason accolades.

Freshman **KAILI DOCTOR** became the fourth Aggie and the first volleyball player to earn a major superlative from the CAA in the Athletics Department's two years in the league as head coaches voted her the conference's rookie of the year. She joins track and field's **REHEEM HAYLES** (CAA Men's Indoor Track and Field Athlete of the Year), **JADA GRIFFIN** (CAA Women's Indoor Track and Field of the Year) and **PAULA SALMON** (CAA Women's Outdoor Track and Field of the Year) in that exclusive young club.

Doctor also made the CAA's All-Rookie team.

Meanwhile, teammate **NAIYA SAWTELLE** continued to make program history by earning her third straight all-conference honor, as the league named her first-team All-CAA. It is her first, first-team all-conference honor after earning second-team All-Big South as a freshman and second-team All-CAA her sophomore season. Sawtelle also has an All-Freshman Big South honor to her credit.

Doctor was certainly noticed throughout the season by the CAA. She earned three conference Rookie of the Week awards, the first on Sept. 25 after leading the Aggies to a weekend two-match sweep of the Hampton Pirates at Moore Gymnasium. Over those two matches, she compiled 13 kills and only one attack error on 24 swings.

Two weeks later, the conference recognized her again after a weekend

## NEW STUDY LINKS HYPERTENSION, LOW ENERGY IN BLACK DI ATHLETES

A first of its kind study led by North Carolina A&T researchers shows for the first time a clear relationship between low-energy availability (LEA) and hypertension in Black Division I athletes.

Although research has shown Black Americans are at elevated risk for cardiovascular disease, only two prior studies — both using outdated methods—focused on Black athletes, said Troy Purdom, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology, John R. and Kathy R. Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences, and the study's principal investigator.

Of the 23 Black athletes recruited to participate in the study, 14 were shown to have high blood pressure. Of the 14, 87% were found to be calorically deficient, with deficiencies in all micronutrient measured among all 23 participants.

LEA is defined as the under-consumption of energy, or nutrients, to meet activity demands. Therefore, the inherent nature of not eating enough is likely to accompany nutrient deficiencies. Some nutrient deficiencies such as shortages in calcium, vitamin D, poly-unsaturated fatty acids, omega-3 fatty acids, and iron are shown to negatively affect cardiovascular health.

"LEA puts the athlete in starvation mode, which creates a systemwide physiological response that when consistently reoccurring can perpetuate deterioration of several systems—gastrointestinal distress, compromised reproductive health in women and men, psychological health, and as it turns out, cardiovascular health," said Purdom.

"This study is the first to investigate nutritional deficiencies and cardiovascular health. It is also the first to investigate an all-Black cohort. Despite 16% of all NCAA athletes being Black — more than 80,000 students — this is the first to investigate the problem in Black athletes."

Energy deficiencies are common among athletes at all levels. But research shows that collegiate athletes lack an understanding of how much and what nutrients they need to support peak performance, leading to false perceptions and unhealthy eating behaviors that can perpetuate LEA conditions and related cardiovascular disease.

Black athletes have a cardiovascular disease risk 10 times greater than their white counterparts, with hypertension being the most prevalent risk factor, Purdom said.

"The elevated risk of hypertension puts athletes at an increased risk of sudden cardiac death, as well as experiencing about a two times greater risk of hypertension development in a five-year follow up."

Purdom conducted the study with colleagues: Marc Cook, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Kinesiology and associate director of the Hairston College's Center of Excellence in Integrative Health Disparities and Equity Research (CIHDER); Heather Colleran, Ph.D., an associate professor, and Lauren San Diego, a research assistant, both in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences; and Paul Stewart, Ph.D., a professor emeritus in the Department of Biostatistics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Gillings School of Public Health.

"Our hope is to heighten awareness of the prevalence of cardiovascular disease as a result of nutritional deficiencies in athletes and why those deficiencies occur, which historically has not been prioritized by the research community," said Purdom.



From left, Aggie athletes Jason Ivey, Janorris Robertson and Zach Yeager discuss their nutritional needs with Troy Purdom, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology in N.C. A&T's John R. and Kathy R. Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences.

A&T's Department of Athletics is pursuing nutritional support staff based on these findings.

Purdom, Cook, Colleran and San Diego also are conducting longitudinal testing to better understand the transient stresses student athletes are experiencing. At the same time, the researchers are working to educate these Aggies on the energy their bodies require to maintain health and promote performance.

Together, the researchers and athletics department staff are investigating the implementation of social determinants to improve their understanding of who Aggie athletes are and how to serve them better.

"Our goal is for all N.C. A&T athletes to participate in a healthy, resilient and thriving culture built on evidence-based practice," said Purdom. ■

NORTH CAROLINA A&T'S RAPID GROWTH IN RESEARCH FUNDING AND REPUTATION SIGNAL PROGRESS IN ITS DRIVE TOWARD A TOUGH-TO-REACH LETTER AND NUMBER: R1.

# R1: WITHIN REACH

By Todd H. Simmons, Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations

When fiscal year 2023 ended last June at North Carolina A&T, one thing was abundantly clear: External research and sponsored program awards had a breakout year.

Faculty researchers had brought in a total of \$147.4 million in contracts and grants, up an astonishing \$50 million over FY 2022. The total for that year was up \$20 million over the prior 12 months. Which was preceded by growth of \$18 million the year before.

All told: Growth of \$88 million—148%—over just four years.

“There is a psychology about certain thresholds, such as the 4-minute mile in track, the sound barrier in flight, and for N.C. A&T, \$100 million in new funded research,” said Eric Muth, Ph.D., vice chancellor for the Division of Research and Economic Development. “Once these thresholds are reached, even greater achievements occur. It is by design that A&T crossed the \$100 million mark. While it is exciting, and an achievement to be celebrated, I cannot wait to see what is next.”

The growth comes at an extraordinary moment for A&T, with a new strategic plan now in implementation that articulates the university's aspirations as a doctoral, research university, including attaining the top designation for such institutions from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. A&T currently holds Carnegie's “R2-High Research Activity” classification, but “R1-Very High Research Activity” is a twinkle now clearly in its eye.



MUTH

## R2 TO R1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### GENERAL R1 INFORMATION

#### What is R1?

R1 is a term used by the Carnegie Foundation to categorize doctoral granting universities with the highest performance in key areas associated with Research and Development (R&D).

#### What are the Carnegie classifications for doctoral granting universities?

There are three classifications for doctoral granting universities – R1 (very high research activity), R2 (high research activity) and D/PU (doctoral/professional universities).

#### How is N.C. A&T currently classified in the Carnegie classifications?

N.C. A&T is currently an R2 institution. We are 1 of 11 R2 institutions that are HBCUs. There are no HBCUs classified as R1.

#### What are the areas considered by the Carnegie formula to determine the research classification?

For the 2021 Carnegie Classifications, several variables are used to classify institutions: extramural research expenditures, number of doctoral degrees awarded in science and engineering, number of doctoral degrees awarded in other disciplines outside of science and engineering,

per capita faculty research expenditures, number of research staff such as postdoctoral employees, research associates, research faculty and research assistants.

For the upcoming classifications, the American Council on Education changed the research classification methodology to only include two variables: extramural research

expenditures and the number of doctoral research/scholarship degrees awarded. To become a R1 institution, an institution must meet a threshold of \$50 million in research expenditures and 70 doctoral research/scholarship degrees awarded annually.

To learn more about the new classification, visit <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/carnegie-classification/research-designations/>

Research development will also be guided by a task force analysis that identified challenges in four areas that the university is now addressing: Financial investments, new academic programs and centers, recruitment/hiring and process improvements. Doing so is expected to unleash new potential, especially as A&T makes support operations more efficient.

Following the recommendations of the task force (co-chaired by Muth and Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering Dean Sherine Obare), the university is investing \$35 million in adding research support positions throughout A&T, increasing support for graduate programs and tackling process headaches.

For a university that is simultaneously growing significantly in enrollment and reputation, the research funding spike is fueling a sea change in how leaders and influencers think about A&T, the largest of any historically Black college or university now for a full decade.

“The incredible momentum that our faculty and student researchers have built over the past five years, in particular, is opening significant opportunities for North Carolina A&T,” said Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. “Where we are now is quite honestly an exciting place. But what’s even more exciting are the possibilities that lie ahead. We plan to take full advantage of each and every one.”

\* \* \*

What’s in a label? you might ask. In higher education, plenty.

R1 and R2 are shorthand for research universities, each a quick reference point for how significant an institution is

in both scientific inquiry and graduation of students with terminal, doctoral degrees, two critical variables in the Carnegie equation. For public universities, R1 and R2 classifications are often involved in federal and state funding decisions, with the senior listing typically leveraging greater financial support. R1 institutions are more likely to serve as lead institutions on top scientific projects and to attract high-impact faculty who excel in the classroom and the research lab.

For an institution with R1 status, “you tend to be heard, you tend to be perceived to be more credible, people pay attention,” said Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Tonya Smith-Jackson, Ph.D., in a story last summer with WUNC-FM. “It’s like a magnet, being an R1. It draws people in because they, too, want to take advantage of that space. Because it signals that innovation is a value at that campus.”

In addition to R1 holding greater prestige and signifying a more impactful institution, there is also the fact that no historically Black college or university (HBCU) currently holds the R1 classification. A lengthy history of inequitable funding, inadequate support for facilities and restrictions on academic programs have laid inequity on top of inequity, retarding HBCUs’ development as research universities.

A 2022 story in Forbes, “How America Cheated Its Black Colleges,” identified inequity between the predominantly White 1860 land-grant campuses and the HBCU 1890 land grants of nearly \$13 billion between 1987 and 2020, adjusted for inflation. It was a staggering number that turned heads across America. In the 18 states on which the Forbes piece focused, each had a PWI land grant that

holds the R1 designation. For A&T, the gap between land-grant funding for North Carolina State University and itself amounted to \$2.75 billion, the biggest gulf of any state in the Forbes feature.

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and Education Secretary Miguel Cardona did their own analysis of the dynamics first raised in Forbes and sent a letter to governors of 16 of the 18 states (Ohio and Delaware were not included, as their support did not reflect differential funding) and urged them to address the “unacceptable funding inequities” reflected in the review.

WHEN FISCAL YEAR 2023 ENDED LAST JUNE,  
CONTRACTS AND GRANTS HAD GROWN  
**148%** OVER JUST  
FOUR YEARS.

North Carolina was ahead of the request. Funding already agreed to in the new 2023-25 biennial budget was significant for A&T: Legislators appropriated more than \$50 million in new, recurring funding for the university. While that funding doesn’t address past inequity, it establishes an important new baseline for A&T. This year was A&T’s best in the state budget process since the university’s establishment in 1891.

Driving that support, particularly for funding that supports A&T’s development as a research university, was A&T’s meteoric rise in external research support—proof that investments in A&T yield significant returns.

It also did not hurt that in 2021-22, senior A&T faculty Yeoheung Yun, Ph.D., and Arwin Smallwood, Ph.D., won the UNC System’s top two faculty honors for research and instructional faculty.

Yun, in particular, personifies the dynamic research environment at A&T and the mindset of the university’s top research faculty. His work focuses on using a mini-brain model he designed to study patients living with Alzheimer’s—a disease the Alzheimer’s Association estimates to affect 6.7 million Americans age 65 and older.

“As engineers, technology evolves so fast, and you have to guide and direct the research and continue to grow. For example, with in vitro, 3D models of the human brain, we have to think about the next 10 years. Can we really recreate the human brain where everyone has their own mini-brains stored in freezers they can potentially use later,” said Yun, a professor in the College of Engineering and director of the Fostering Innovation Through Biosystems for Enhanced Scientific Technologies Laboratory (FIT BEST).

“There are a lot of futuristic ideas ahead of us, and the brain is the most complex organ in our bodies. There are so many unknown things to discover and great opportunities for research.”

\* \* \*

Elimelda Ongeri, Ph.D., dean, and her colleagues in the John R. and Kathy R. Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences, are expanding the college’s research capacity. Hairston College’s research portfolio includes a major commitment to addressing health inequities that underserved populations often experience by

## R2 TO R1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### IMPORTANCE OF R1 TO N.C. A&T

#### Why is N.C. A&T striving to be an R1 institution?

Research and creative works are important to N.C. A&T. We continue to strive to expand our capabilities and contributions to the region, state and beyond. We earned R2 status in 2020 due to our excellence in research, creativity and the number of doctoral students we are graduating. Continued research expansion positions us to earn R1 status in the next Carnegie assessment.

#### Why does R1 matter to the mission of the university?

Expansion of our research to the next level will provide more opportunities to advance our mission. Our new mission statement approved by the UNC System Board of Governors in 2022 emphasizes our commitment to advance the human condition and facilitate economic growth. Our research efforts continue to support improvements in the quality of life for all and we continue to impact economic growth in the region, state and beyond.

#### How does R1 status align with our Preeminence 2030 strategic plan?

The “Preeminence 2030: North Carolina A&T Blueprint” aligns with the mission of the university and our commitment to be our very best in all areas, including research expansion. The strategic plan identifies five goals as well as several strategies and metrics, which will have either direct or indirect impacts on our R2 to R1 status.

#### How does R1 status affect Greensboro and the surrounding area?

R1 status correlates with economic growth. Moving to this status has benefits for the region and the state. Because R1 is associated with increases in research and development, more businesses are attracted to areas near R1 institutions, which also expands workforce opportunities.

#### What general benefits will we gain by achieving R1 status?

R1 status serves to increase our opportunities to make contributions that will yield outcomes in key areas such as disparities, social justice, and equity. Having a strong presence in the research and creative arena will advance more equitable outcomes and benefits for the region, state and beyond.

establishing the Center of Excellence for Integrative Health Disparities and Equity Research (CIHDER). When considering health disparities, social determinants of health like lack of housing, access to fresh food, health insurance and health care from providers who are representative of the populations they serve, all play a part.

“Research shows when patients receive care from doctors who look like them, their care is better,” said Onger. “So, clinical programs within our college—like our nursing, physician assistant and social worker programs—address this issue and underscore our commitment to parity in workforce development in strategic areas.”

Hairston is now A&T’s largest college, and Onger leads it while continuing her own research on diabetes and kidney disease (supported by the National Institutes of Health) in the biomedical research lab at Hines Hall that she shares with faculty and student researchers.

Onger is proud that the developing infrastructure at Hines Hall, which is undergoing renovations, constitutes a “health sciences research hub” for researchers to share ideas and resources, including high-tech equipment. In addition, the college goes above and beyond to build partnerships that enhance placement opportunities for students for internships and preceptorships, preparing them to improve the health of their communities upon graduation.

“Health equity is the social justice issue of our time,” said Onger. “The Hairston College is positioned to lead initiatives to address these inequities through strategic workforce development, research and community engagement.”

• • •

As A&T moved into a new fiscal year, faculty researchers showed no signs of slowing down. Research awards for the first three months of the year hit \$58.6 million, which as recently as five years ago, was about what A&T was taking in for a full year.

Unlikely? Perhaps. Still, indications point to another growth year of some yet-to-be-determined size. Beyond the science, that growth is helping the university in three additional, significant ways.

**Track Records.** With each new award and project, A&T faculty are building individual track records as principal investigators and scientists, and pushing science forward. Iterative success is rewarded by the governmental agencies that sponsor most university conducted research. It can be challenging to build a track record, but once one emerges, that faculty member becomes more competitive with funders across the board.

**Institutional Profile.** Individual faculty success adds up to a more prominent profile for A&T as a doctoral research university. Example: Individual researchers in the College of Engineering (COE)—Abdollah Homaifar, Ph.D, Ali Karimoddini, Ph.D., Ioannis Raptis, Ph.D., and numerous other colleagues—have each conducted significant research on autonomous vehicles. Their work has resulted in the creation of now four research centers and



ONGERI

institutes at A&T focused on autonomy, including the NC Transportation Center of Excellence on Connected Vehicles and Autonomous Vehicle Technology (NC-CAV).

Nationally, A&T is increasingly recognized institutionally as a leader in this field. But that reputation is built on the individual work of dozens of faculty, students and staff.

**Infrastructure.** In addition to the intellectual and scientific gains that are the purpose of any research project, there is an opportunity to grow and develop the physical infrastructure supporting the science. Federal funding agencies address this need through research overhead, which covers indirect costs in facilities, administrative and sometimes equipment costs.

Because most A&T research is funded through federal grants, research overhead has become a larger, more significant revenue stream over the past four years. It not only supports the individual scientific projects for which the overhead expenses are paid, but supports additional academic and research pursuits of faculty and graduate students.

The growth of the past four years supports greater scientific engagement and further success as a research university.

Professor Salil Desai serves as director of the Center of Excellence in Product Design and Advanced Manufacturing in historic McNair Hall. In addition to his administrative role, Desai is one of A&T’s most widely published faculty and holds a University Distinguished Professor position.



DESAI

Just before Thanksgiving, Desai got word that his application for \$200,000 had been funded. It will support the design of a new online and hands-on learning project to help meet the huge national need for more cybersecurity professionals. Sponsored by the Carolina Cyber Network, the project will see Desai and four COE colleagues create a cybersecurity curriculum and outreach activities to help grow cybersecurity expertise within existing businesses and work sites—a rich opportunity in our increasingly computer reliant society.

“At their best, our research and sponsored projects answer important questions and play significant roles in advancing science and the human condition,” said Desai, echoing A&T’s mission statement. “That can happen in scenarios ranging from lab-intensive bench science to applied research and learning in the field.

“As A&T grows larger and more complex as a research university, so will these sponsored research and programs. That’s great for our students, our faculty, the communities we serve and our university. The future looks very bright, indeed.” ■

• • •

Jamie I. Crockett, Science Writer, contributed to this article.

## R2 TO R1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### BENEFITS AND ROLES

#### **How does R1 benefit students?**

We are committed to student success. Students and parents choose institutions that are ranked on a number of different factors. Carnegie classification is one of those factors. Students seek more opportunities to learn outside of the classroom, such as in labs conducting groundbreaking research or studios creating innovative, high-impact works and technologies. Undergraduate and graduate students will have more opportunity to produce and disseminate knowledge.

#### **How does this journey from R2 to R1 impact our continued commitment to teaching excellence?**

Research informs teaching and teaching informs research. R1 status is another mechanism to advance our teaching. Both teaching and learning also occur inside and outside of the classroom. Expanding our research also expands our teaching capabilities. Students will be more prepared through unstructured activities such as inquiry-focused work in labs and creative spaces. Opportunities for experiential learning will grow.

#### **What role do faculty have in the journey from R2 to R1?**

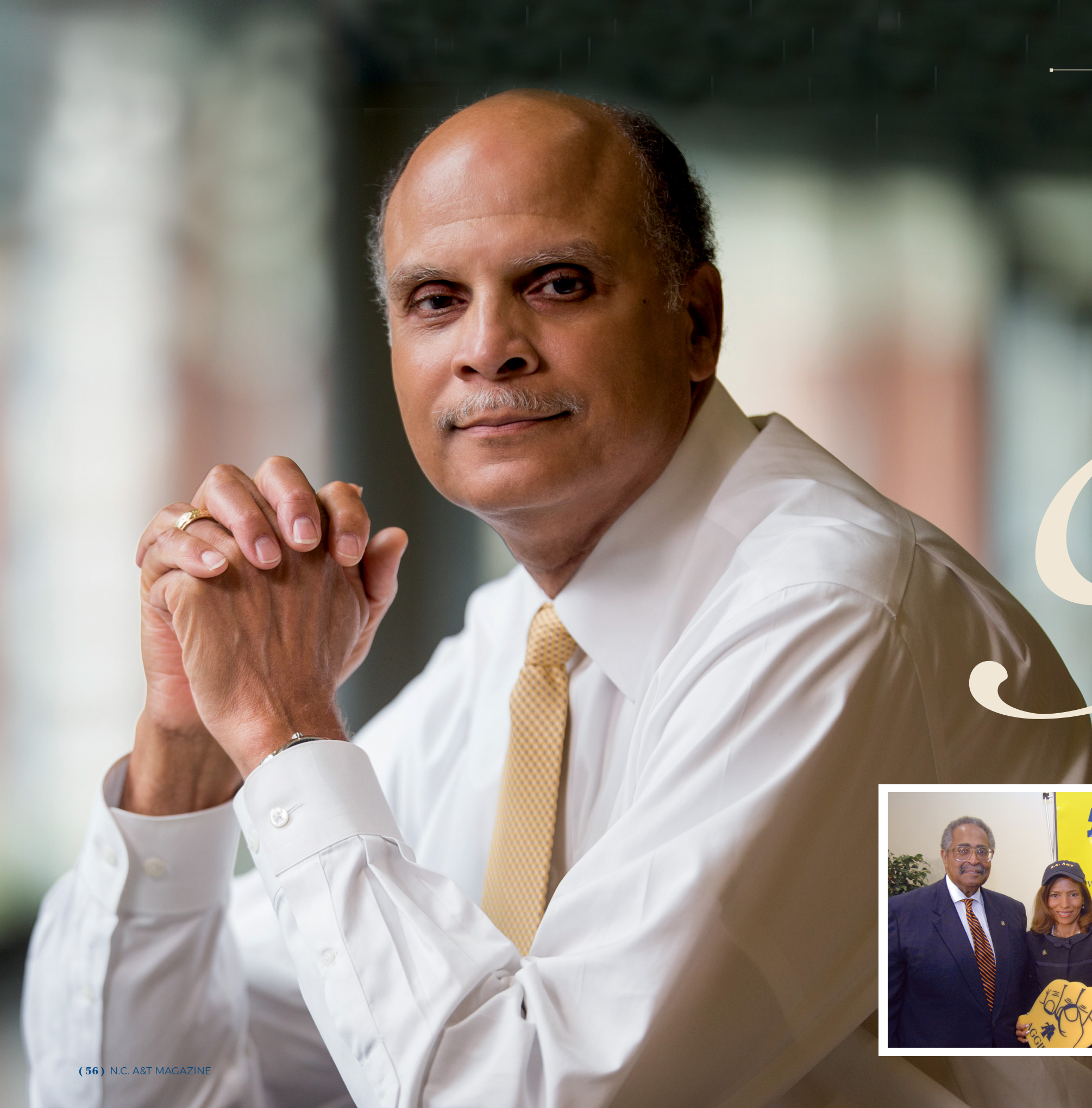
Our faculty are committed to teaching, research/scholarship and service/engagement and this commitment has been consistent for decades. Faculty are key to moving the university forward by acquiring extramural support to advance their activities around knowledge generation through research and creativity. Faculty also supervise students who conduct research and creative activities, and are key to the

preparation of these students. The dissemination of knowledge and engagement with the community are also key contributions of faculty on this journey to R1.

#### **What is the role of staff in the journey from R2 to R1?**

Every employee is needed to achieve R1 status. Staff provide essential actions necessary for the operations and advancement of the university. These roles ensure our campus spaces and practices are aligned in

ways that will achieve the mission of the university. Staff also support the efficiency of processes and operational effectiveness. These contributions facilitate the day-to-day activities necessary to expand our research enterprise. In addition, some staff are research staff, whose primary responsibilities are related to research and research spaces.



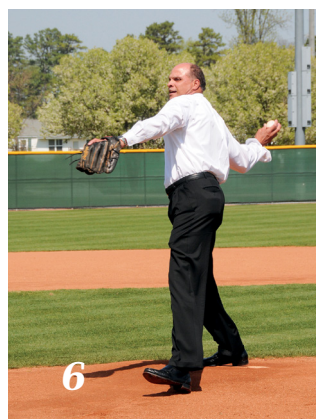
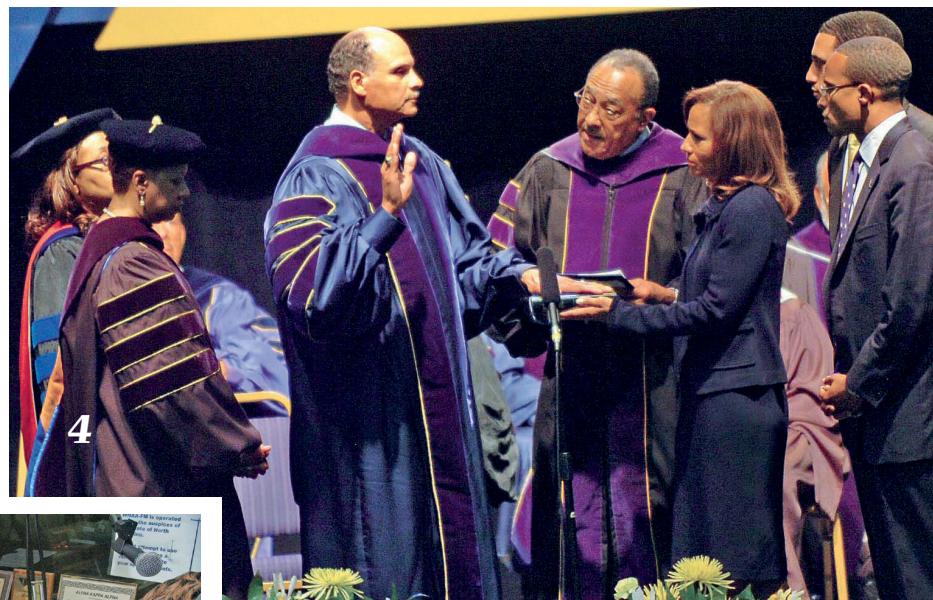
1. North Carolina A&T Chairman of the Board Franklin E. McCain Sr.'s first introduction of Davida W. Martin and Harold L. Martin Sr. as First Lady and Chancellor of N.C. A&T (2009)
2. Groundbreaking - Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering, first facility at Gateway Research Park South (2009)

# TRANSFORMATIVE LEGACY

Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr., who is in his **15th** year as leader of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, is retiring at the end of the 2023-24 school year.

By Todd H. Simmons, Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations





3. March of Dimes (2010)
4. Installation as 12th chancellor of N.C. A&T (2010)
5. WNAA 90.1 FM talk show with alums Shirley Frye and Velma Speight (2010)
6. First pitch at Greensboro Bats MLB game (2010)
7. Spring Commencement 2012 with U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama
8. Ribbon cutting - Aggie Stadium sky and press boxes (2012)
9. Preparing a heart healthy meal (2012)
10. Ribbon cutting - Center for Outreach in Alzheimer's Aging and Community Health (COAACH) facility
11. UNC Social Entrepreneurship Conference (2015)
12. 125th Anniversary Gala (2016)
13. Ribbon cutting - Deese Clock Tower (2016)

Currently the longest serving chancellor in the 17-campus University of North Carolina System and among the nation's 107 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU), North Carolina A&T Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. announced his impending retirement at the September 2023 Board of Trustees Meeting.

Martin has had a high-impact, transformative 14-year tenure during which North Carolina A&T has become a highly impactful research institution and

the nation's leading producer of Black STEM graduates, as well as the largest HBCU in U.S. history. He has done so as the first alumnus to lead A&T.

Martin's leadership has been recognized across the state and nationally—in a TIME magazine profile as a higher education thought leader, as winner of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund's national Education Leader Award, as HBCU Digest's "Most Influential" HBCU leader and as an honoree on the EBONY Power 100

list. In the Piedmont Triad, he has been named to the Triad Business Journal's Power Players and Most Admired CEOs lists, among numerous other honors.

Martin will step down at the end of the 2023-24 academic year. A national search is being conducted for a successor.

"Harold Martin is the very model of a devoted, effective public servant. He's a brilliant thinker, a disciplined leader and a great man," said University of North Carolina System President Peter Hans. "For more than three decades, he's been a friend, a mentor and an inspiration to students and colleagues across the UNC System.

"Under Harold's leadership, North Carolina A&T has become one of the strongest and most impressive institutions in all of American higher education. He's an Aggie legend—an alum who embodies the best of the A&T spirit and who helped

grow his alma mater into a powerhouse of research, economic impact, and life-changing opportunity. It's been a privilege to serve alongside him."

Martin earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in electrical engineering at A&T before completing his Ph.D. at Virginia Tech. While an undergraduate, he was a contemporary of NASA astronaut Ronald McNair, who was one year ahead of him in a different bachelor's program at A&T.

He immediately joined the A&T College of Engineering faculty and began a steady rise up the ranks of academia, becoming department chair, dean of the college and vice chancellor for academic affairs before landing his first chancellorship at Winston-Salem State University in 2000. He held that post for nearly seven years, steering the university through a strong period of growth and development, before being named



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“Under Harold’s leadership, North Carolina A&T has become one of the strongest and most impressive institutions in **all** of American higher education.”

PETER HANS, *University of North Carolina System President*

senior vice president of academic affairs for the UNC System in 2006.

As the System’s chief academic officer, Martin served under President Erskine Bowles and developed a keen understanding of how policies and politics affect the 17 campuses of the system. When the chancellorship of A&T opened in 2009, he quickly became the unanimous choice for the position, which he accepted in May of that year, joining the university the following month.

“Throughout his 35-year career within the UNC System, Chancellor Martin has championed affordable, accessible public higher education, helped North Carolina A&T to become the largest HBCU in the nation and cemented the institution as an education and research leader in science, technology, engineering and mathematics,” said UNC Board of Governors Chair Randy Ramsey. “The impact of Chancellor Martin’s career is felt far and wide, and we are indebted to him for his service and commitment to our students. We offer our deepest thanks to the chancellor and wish him all the best for retirement.”

Martin’s entrepreneurial leadership of A&T has yielded a long list of major accomplishments, chief among them:

- A&T has become one of the fastest growing universities in America, during a time in which many institutions have suffered serious enrollment declines. From 2011-2021, applications to A&T grew at one of the fastest rates (246%) of any doctoral research university in America. By way of comparison, UNC Chapel Hill recorded the second-highest application growth rate over the same period, 128%, roughly half A&T’s pace.
- Martin grew enrollment from 10,613 when he joined A&T to 13,885 (fall 2023). Along the way, A&T became America’s largest HBCU in 2014, a position it has held ever since. With its enrollment of 13,322 in 2021, A&T became the largest HBCU ever and has added more than 500 students to that distinction in the two years since. He has also overseen a sharp rise in academic performance, with

14. Facebook Town Hall with Mark Zuckerberg (2016)
15. ESPN’s The Undeclared with U.S. President Barack Obama (2016)
16. Chancellor’s Speaker Series featuring Common (2018)
17. Faculty-Staff Institute with Coach Carter (2018)
18. On the yard with students (2018)
19. Groundbreaking - University Farm Complex (2018)
20. HBCU Summit with Gov. Roy Cooper and U.S. Congresswoman Alma Adams (2018)
21. Chancellor’s Speaker Series featuring T.D. Jakes (2019)
22. Chancellor’s Speaker Series featuring Laverne Cox, Shaun Ross, Amber Riley and alumna Raushannah Johnson-Verwayne (2019)
23. Homecoming pop-up shop with N.C. Senator Glady Robinson, Mayor Nancy Vaughan and City Councilwoman Sharon Hightower (2019)



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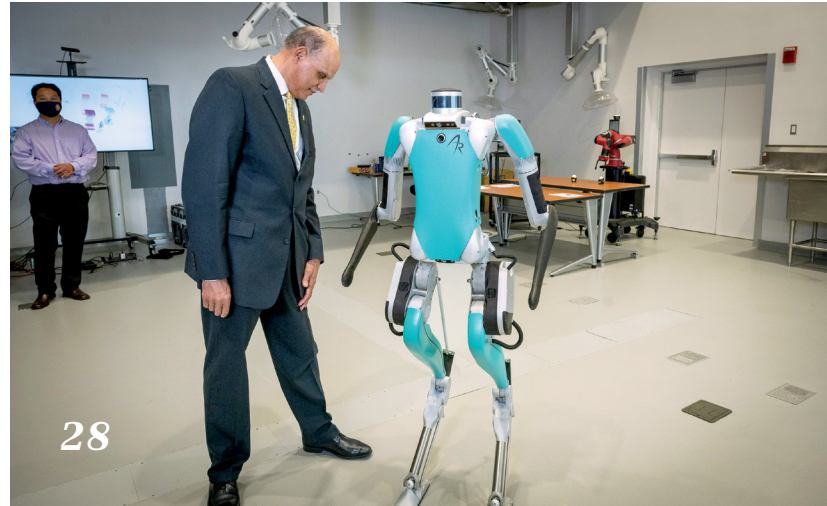
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first-year students now enrolling with an average 3.75 GPA and out-of-state applicants with an average GPA of 4.1.

- He laid critical foundations for A&T's development, obtaining significant annual recurring funds to support its development as a doctoral, research university; opening and developing the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering; and working on A&T's inclusion in a statewide bond issue that provided \$90 million for what is now known as the Harold L. Martin Sr. Engineering Research and Innovation Complex. Over the past four years, the university's research and sponsored programs contracts and grants have grown by 138% to a record \$147.4 million in FY2023.
- His development of A&T dramatically enhanced its economic impact. Measured

with 2012 data, A&T's footprint amounted to \$978 million in a study undertaken by the UNC System. A new study released this year documents a \$2.4 billion economic impact, much of it attributable to the exceptionally prepared STEM graduates that A&T produces for the North Carolina economy.

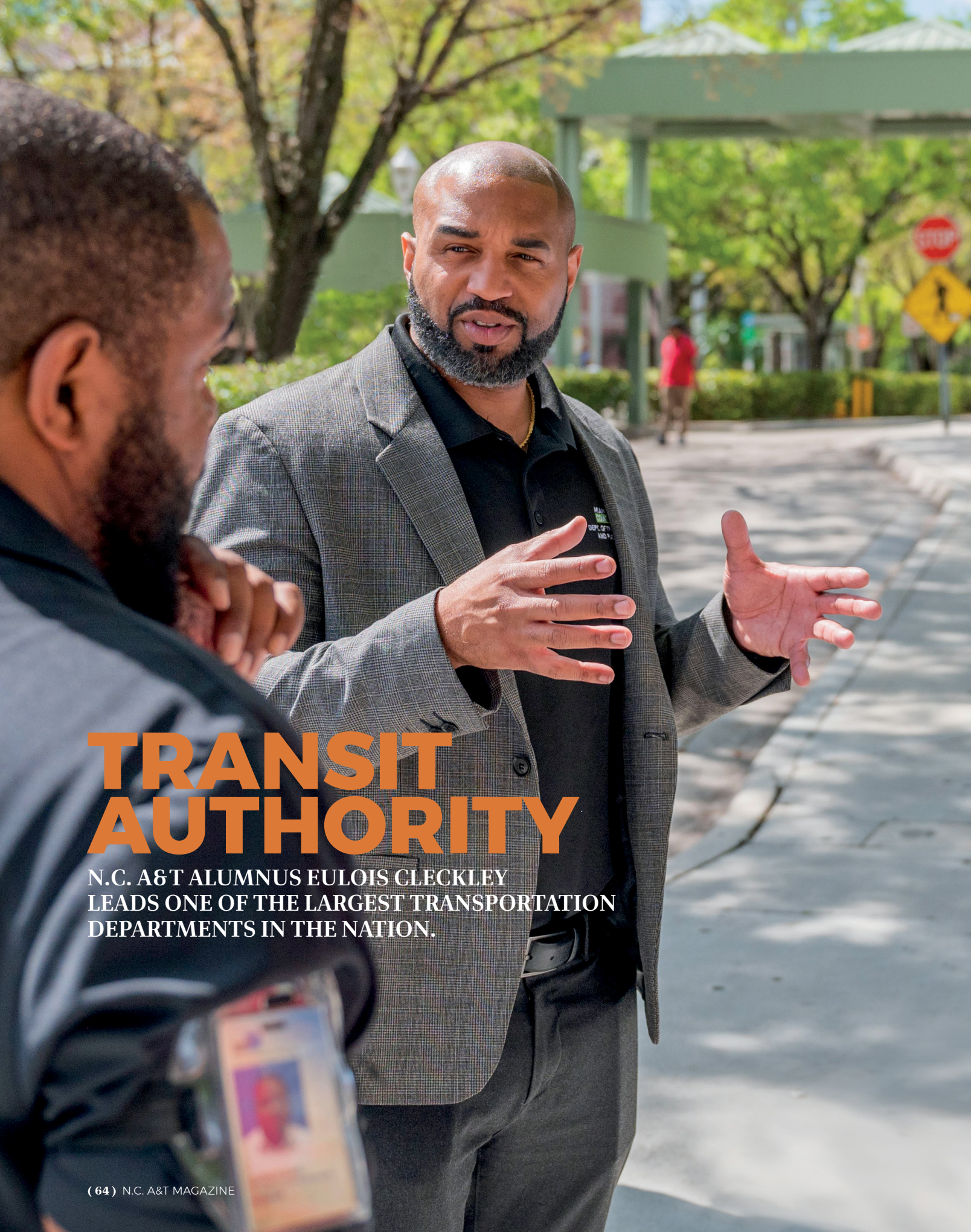
"Chancellor Martin's greatest gift to our university has been the 14 years he has served as our CEO, providing steady, ambitious and wise leadership, always calling us to rise to the next challenge," said then-outgoing A&T Board of Trustees Chair Hilda Pinnix-Ragland. "As a fellow alumnus of A&T, I can attest that his passion for this work is a reflection of his lifetime commitment to this special place. For many generations to come, Aggies will experience his legacy and benefit from the many things he did that opened the doors more widely for their success."

In a letter to campus, Martin thanked colleagues, alumni and supporters for their enthusiastic participation in A&T's ambitious ascent over the past 14 years, even as he looked forward to further milestones the university will experience over his remaining eight months as chancellor and the road ahead for him and First Lady Davida Martin, the former long-serving county attorney for Forsyth County and first African American woman to serve in that capacity in North Carolina.

"Davida and I are very much looking forward to this next phase in our lives, as I join her in retirement—one that is filled with grandchildren and family, travel and adventure and many visits to Aggieland, where we will continue to be enthusiastic members of the Aggie Family," he said. "She and I share a deep sense of gratitude for the enormous role that A&T has played in both our lives, a commitment to its strong and accomplished future and a great love for the many wonderful friends who make up our university." ■

- 24. The Martins after the Celebration Bowl national championship win (2019)
- 25. Deese College dedication with alumnus Willie A. Deese and former dean Quiester Craig (2020)
- 26. COVID-19 vaccination clinic with UNC System President Peter Hans and N.C. A&T Emergency Management Director Travis Auman (2020)
- 27. Chancellor's Speaker Series featuring Allyson Felix and alumnus "Terrence J" Jenkins (2021)
- 28. Robotics (2022)
- 29. Chancellor's Roundtable (2021)

- 30. Ribbon cutting - Harold L. Martin Sr. Engineering Research and Innovation Complex (2022)
- 31. Chancellor's Speaker Series featuring Tracee Ellis Ross (2022)
- 32. Good Jobs Challenge grant announcement (2022)
- 33. Road to Success Back to School Bus Tour with N.C. A&T education major Jayden Seay, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and U.S. First Lady Jill Biden (2022)
- 34. Chancellor Emeritus Edward B. Fort's retirement celebration (2023)
- 35. Faculty and staff celebration of Chancellor Martin's retirement (2024)



# TRANSIT AUTHORITY

N.C. A&T ALUMNUS EULOIS CLECKLEY LEADS ONE OF THE LARGEST TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENTS IN THE NATION.

By Alana V. Allen '07, Director of Alumni Communications

**EULOIS CLECKLEY '00** is the epitome of leadership, due to his 20-plus years of experience leading large organizations in the transportation industry. Currently, he is the director and CEO of the Department of Transportation and Public Works for Miami-Dade County, Florida, the largest transit agency in the state and the 15th largest public transit system in the country. The county is home to 2.7 million residents.

Cleckley, who grew up in the Washington, D.C., area, was inspired by his father who had a long career in transportation. He made his way to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and was embraced by the family environment and the campus' Transportation Institute that prepared him for his career.

## ONE OF CLECKLEY'S PERSONAL MANTRA FOR LEADERSHIP IS THE ACRONYM R.E.P.S., WHICH STANDS FOR RESULTS, EXPECTATIONS, PEOPLE, PATIENCE AND SACRIFICE.

Throughout his college experience, Cleckley worked at several internships, including Walmart, that gave him the confidence to go into his career knowing what it took to get the job done. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in transportation in 2000, and secured a full-time position with Walmart in the private fleet division managing supply chain operations.

"During my time at Walmart, one of my coworkers became my mentor immediately and expressed to me that he saw more within me as a leader," said Cleckley. "He took time to correct me and helped navigate me through the importance of servant leadership."

Cleckley found himself being promoted within months at Walmart. He continued to soar in his performance and secured high profile roles with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Washington, D.C. Department of Transportation, Houston-Galveston Area Council Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Department of Transportation and Infrastructure for the City and County of Denver Colorado.

In Denver, Cleckley was recruited by then Mayor Micheal B. Hancock in 2018 to create a new city department that would focus on multimodal transportation infrastructure projects, transit services and merge with public works

functions. He was responsible for one of the city's largest and most dynamic departments, managing the majority of services involving public infrastructure. In his portfolio he was responsible for a \$1.2 billion capital program, \$937 million bond program and a \$340 million operations budget which included transportation systems, sewer/sanitary systems and public facilities for residents and businesses.

"I have taken many risks in my career by not being afraid to set high expectations, step outside of my comfort zone, sacrifice personal time to dedicate towards achieving my goals, take on difficult roles and repeating the process again and again," he said. "Maximizing the opportunities I have been afforded and delivering results are some of the reasons why I continue to excel in this industry."

In 2021, Cleckley was appointed the Director and CEO of Department of Transportation and Public Works for Miami-Dade County. Under his leadership, he has implemented the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Program that is designed to connect communities through the enhancement of a rapid transit network that is accessible, integrated, efficient, and sustainable. The multibillion-dollar program will help reduce transportation-related emissions, significantly increase transit ridership, and improve reliability.

"In this role, I have been instrumental in building a stronger leadership team, resetting the vision of transportation and following through on major capital projects that impact millions of people," he said.

One of Cleckley's personal mantra for leadership is the acronym R.E.P.S., which stands for Results, Expectations, People, Patience and Sacrifice.

"I truly feel in order to be a good leader, you have to care about your staff and have a mindset that is focused on ensuring the people who work for you are optimizing their talents and achieving success throughout their careers," he said. "At the end of the day, it is all about delivering results through your teams that determine how effective you are going to be. Lastly, it's important to not only set high expectations for your people to achieve but set high expectations for a department or unit."

In the future, Cleckley is looking forward to improving the lives of the residents of Miami-Dade County by improving transportation infrastructure and reconnecting communities to the heart of the city. ■

# CAES' NEW URBAN AND COMMUNITY FOOD COMPLEX TO SERVE AS BUSINESS INCUBATOR

By Lydian Bernhardt, Director of Ag Communications



University officials, including Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. (center), Board of Trustees Chair Kimberly Gatling (seventh from right), Provost Tonya L. Smith-Jackson (sixth from right) and interim College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Dean Shirley Hymon-Parker (third from right), break ground on the Urban and Community Food Complex alongside state and local officials.

**N**orth Carolina A&T is planning for a sweet return on its investments in food science, nutrition and outreach.

On Nov. 9, the university broke ground on a new Urban and Community Food Complex. Located on N.C. A&T's 492-acre farm, the complex is designed to be a research and business incubation facility.

Included in the \$12 million, nearly 15,000-square-foot building will be a sensory lab for conducting consumer research; a post-harvest physiology lab for examining harvested products; a food processing lab, a commercial kitchen, and a food safety lab. Blue Cross Blue Shield Endowed Professor Hao Feng, Ph.D., will direct the facility.

But its standout feature will be a creamery, allowing the farm to produce Aggie Ice Cream for the first time since the 1960s, when the University Farm produced much of the food served on campus.

"In this building, food entrepreneurs will be able to

research and test their business ideas with assistance from the college faculty," said Shirley Hymon-Parker, interim dean of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES). "Students will be able to learn from an integrated curriculum, spanning animal science, food and nutritional science and agribusiness. The complex will expand the college's capabilities in all three mission areas: research, teaching and outreach."

And of course, there's the benefit of having ice cream.

Aggie Ice Cream will not only be good to eat, it will also use the milk from the farm's primarily Jersey herd.

"We are the only HBCU with a dairy," said Hymon-Parker. "Our A2A2 Jersey cows produce milk that is more easily tolerated, and using their milk, we will bring back Aggie Ice Cream, the ultimate sweet treat, for sale and for visitors. Our students will help shape the product, designing flavors and packaging."

The facility will also house a computerized consumer research unit as well as an office and meeting space for faculty and entrepreneurs.

The business incubator will assist farmers, rural businesses and urban entrepreneurs in developing "value-added," locally grown products.

**A STANDOUT FEATURE WILL BE A CREAMERY, ALLOWING THE FARM TO PRODUCE AGGIE ICE CREAM FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE 1960S, WHEN THE UNIVERSITY FARM PRODUCED MUCH OF THE FOOD SERVED ON CAMPUS.**



Prospective entrepreneurs can come to the facility for training in business and entrepreneurship, management, marketing, product development and quality control.

"By facilitating food processing, preservation, innovation, sustainability and training, the Urban and Community Food Complex will become a hub for local farmers, small growers, and residents of local communities to use to turn their ideas into reality," said Feng. "The final goal is to improve the well-being of all involved."

Like the entire A&T campus, the University Farm is located in a food desert. While it donates much of its produce to food banks and other organizations—more than 15,580 pounds last year—access to fresh food remains an issue for many in the area.

The new facility is expected to assist East Greensboro's economic revival by spurring food and agribusiness entrepreneurship, and will also provide the CAES with space to train small-scale producers on value-added product development, food safety testing and business practices.

"There needs to be a driver for promoting access to nutritious, fresh food in the East Greensboro area," Ahmedna said. "As the largest college of agriculture among all

HBCUs, we have a responsibility to be that driver."

The complex is the university's latest investment in the farm, which recently unveiled its Automated Milking System, the only one of its kind in the state. The new facility will also complement the college's emphasis on sustainability. In June, the college received an \$18.1 million grant to lead a major part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's NEXTGEN program, designed to build - and sustain - students' awareness of, and interest in, agriculture.

CAES set a research record this year, with a nearly \$40 million portfolio, part of a steady four-year increase.

"This facility will add a new dimension to the entire university and enable us to better serve our stakeholders," Feng said. "I am thrilled that we will see this first-of-its kind facility established at A&T." ■



## AUDITORIUM NAMED FOR BEASLEY

By Amber Adams, Director of Communications, University Advancement



In recognition of alumna **ROSA M. BEASLEY**'s contributions to North Carolina A&T and the Washington, D.C., chapter of the N.C. A&T University Alumni Association, the university has named Rosa M. Beasley Auditorium in the Academic Classroom Building in her memory.

Family, friends, faculty and staff along with other university administrators recently gathered Nov. 6 for a ceremony to celebrate Beasley's legacy on the first floor of the building where Beasley Auditorium is located.

"When Ms. Beasley committed, it was for life," said Lisa Owens-Jackson,

Ph.D. '90, interim dean of the Willie A. Deese College of Business and Economics. "She thought beyond her days on this earth and envisioned a future where her life's work could impact and help transform young people that she would never meet."

Beasley created an \$800,000 endowment at A&T to support both the Deese College and the College of Engineering. That gift has since been matched by the university

to form the \$1.6 million Rosa M. Beasley Endowed Scholarship.

"North Carolina A&T State University was the love of her life," said Diane Brice-Williams '82, Ph.D., a close family friend of Beasley. "She loved this university and always expressed her desire for A&T to have and to be the best."

Affectionately known as "Mama Rosa" to many, Beasley played a pivotal role in the lives of A&T alumni in Washington, D.C., where she helped with the purchase of the first chapter house in the 1960s, as well as the purchase of a new property in 2015. Throughout her life, she provided meals, advice, support and more to many A&T alumni in the D.C. area.

"I had the pleasure of knowing Rosa for over 50 years," said former Washington, D.C., Alumni Chapter President John Slade '55. "She was surely one of our Aggie greats. I am proud to have known her."

Beasley, class of 1949, passed away June 27, 2019, at the age of 91. ■

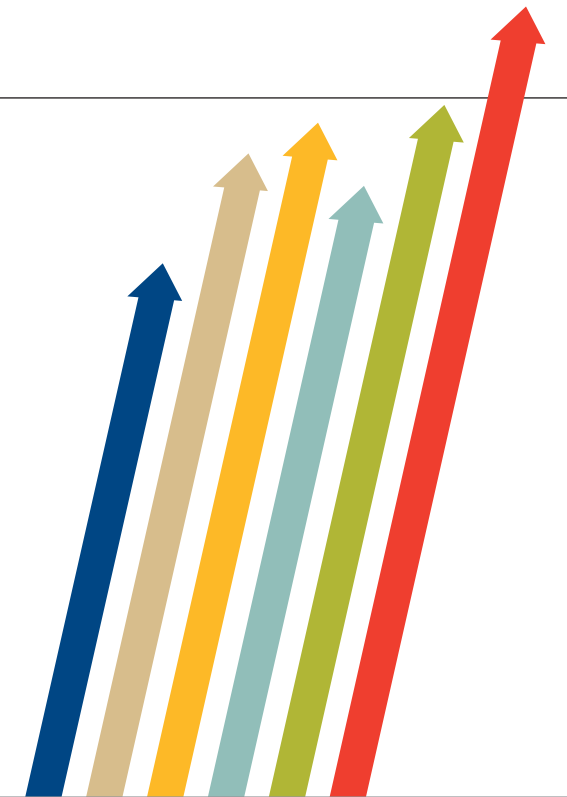
### 1970s



**BONNIE NEWMAN DAVIS '79**, award-winning journalist, educator, media consultant, managing editor of the Richmond Free Press and executive director of the BND Institute of Media and Culture Inc., is the author of "Truth Tellers: The Power

and Presence of Black Women Journalists Since 1960," which "tells the stories of 24 Black women whose journalism careers spanned the last 40 years of the 20th century ... and courageously bore the burden of being a Black woman in America's newsrooms."

Davis, who earned a bachelor's degree in English from N.C. A&T and a master's in journalism from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, once served as an endowed professor at A&T. ■



With enrollment of **13,885** in the fall of 2023, North Carolina A&T has the largest student body **ever** enrolled at a historically Black university.

Five new members have been appointed to North Carolina A&T's Advisory Council on Alumni Relations, a non-fiduciary, non-governing group that works with the Office of Alumni Relations by providing feedback that enhances programming for alumni engagement.

The council consists of up to 15 members appointed by the chancellor. A board of trustees member is appointed to serve as council chair.

Each new council member will serve for four years with term appointments that started Nov. 17. The new members of the council are:

**ISIAH GUINYARD '14** (Houston, Texas), program coordinator at Klein Independent School District in Klein, Texas; **KEITH GRAVES, PH.D. '70** (Burlington, North Carolina), full-time business administration instructor at Alamance Community College and Army veteran; **WAYNETTE KIMBALL '08, '10** (Raleigh, North Carolina), administrative specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency; **DONOVAN KIRKLAND '93** (Alpharetta, Georgia), vice president of global logistics at The Clorox Co. and an advisor for the company's Black ERG and Supply Chain Leadership Development program; and **TONY WATLINGTON JR. '20** (Washington, D.C.), director of government affairs at the Farm Credit Council. ■



NaTasha Yvette Williams at the 66th Annual GRAMMY Awards on Feb. 4.

GettyImages: Gilbert Flores / Contributor

## 1990s

**NATASHA YVETTE WILLIAMS '92**, singer and musical theater actress, won a 2024 GRAMMY Award for Best Musical Theatre Album for her contribution to "Some Like It Hot," a Jazz Age musical adaptation of the 1959 Billy Wilder film. This is Williams' second GRAMMY nomination and first win. She was nominated in 2012 as part of the Broadway musical ensemble, "Once: A New Musical."

In 2023, Williams also was nominated for a Tony Award (Best Featured Actress in a Musical) and Outer Critics Award (Outstanding Featured Performer in a Broadway Musical) for her performances in the Broadway musical "Some Like It Hot." The N.C. A&T theater arts graduate played the character Sweet Sue, who brought together an all-girl band as bandleader in the musical set in Prohibition Era Chicago.

Williams earned a BFA from N.C. A&T and an MFA in acting from Michigan State University. ■

**LENARD MOORE '97**, founder and executive director of the Carolina African American Writers' Collective, co-founder of the Washington Street Writers Group and award-winning poet, is one of five writers who will enter the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in October 2024.

According to the North Carolina Writers' Network, "Moore's poems, short stories, essays and reviews have appeared in over 400 publications and in more than 100 anthologies. He is the author of "The Open Eye," "Forever Home," "Desert Storm: A Brief History," "A Temple Looming" and "The Open Eye, Limited 30th Anniversary Edition."

Moore's work/poetry/interview featured on "The Poet and The Poem" podcast is included in the Lunar Codex, a pioneering project that sent a digitized collection of 30,000 works of art, poetry and books from 157 countries to the moon via unmanned rockets.

Moore earned his Master of Arts degree from N.C. A&T. ■



**WILLIAM BUSTER '99**, the first president and CEO of the New Hanover Community Endowment, was named to Business North Carolina's Power List 2023: North Carolina's Most Influential Leaders, in the area of Nonprofits & Philanthropies.

Buster is a leader in philanthropy who has dedicated his life's work to improving the social determinants of health and quality of life. In short, he helps "health care organizations make fundamental transitions in how they serve the public." His mission is to improve health, education, safety and economic opportunity for the region.

Buster earned his bachelor's degree from N.C. A&T, master's from the University of New Hampshire and an executive education certificate from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. ■

## 2000s



**LEVON T. ESTERS, PH.D. '01** is dean of the Graduate School and vice provost for graduate education at Penn State. In this role, Esters provides mission-critical leadership and oversight across all of Penn State's more than 200 graduate fields of study.

Prior to May 2023, Esters was associate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion and faculty affairs for Purdue's Polytechnic Institute and professor of agricultural sciences education. Since 2012, he also has served as director of the Mentoring@Purdue program, which enhances the experiences of graduate students, faculty and staff by fostering effective mentoring relationships within Purdue's College of Agriculture, and director of Cornell University's Thomas Wyatt Turner Fellowship Program.

Esters earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural business from Florida A&M University, master's in agricultural education from N.C. A&T and a doctorate in agricultural and extension education from Penn State. ■

**ADERO PAIGE '05, '07**, has been appointed to the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation (ASF) Board of Directors. Created by the six surviving Mercury 7 astronauts in 1984, the ASF is a nonprofit organization with the mission to aid the United States in retaining its world leadership in technology and innovation by supporting the brightest and most talented scholars pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The Astronaut Scholarship is known nationwide for being among the largest merit-based monetary scholarships, currently awarded to more than 60 undergraduate STEM juniors and seniors.

In 2004, Paige was one of 16 students across the country to be awarded the Astronaut Scholarship. He is the first Astronaut Scholar from an HBCU to serve on ASF's board of directors.

Paige earned his bachelor's degree in physics and master's in mechanical engineering from N.C. A&T. ■



**OLIVER M. THOMAS, PH.D. '06**, director of external affairs in the Office of the Chancellor and a former adjunct instructor at N.C. A&T, was a recipient of the 2023 Triad Business Journal "40 Under 40" award. In his work, Thomas strives to promote A&T so representatives and leaders

have a greater understanding of the university's values and impact. He is a member of the 2023 Class of Leadership Greensboro, and he is a member of the Civic Engagement Coalition, February One Planning Committee, University Awards and Convocation Planning Committee, GuilfordWorks Workforce Development Board, and North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships Advisory Group. He is the author of "Toward a Pedagogy of Critical Liberative Theological Consciousness: Cultivating Students as Agents of Social Change."

Thomas earned a B.A. in political science from A&T, Ph.D. in educational Studies with a cultural foundations concentration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and M.Div. from Wake Forest University School of Divinity. ■

2000s



**ALANA V. ALLEN '07**, director of alumni communications for N.C. A&T's Division of University Advancement, was a recipient of the 2023 Triad Business Journal "40 Under 40" award. Allen is also founder and executive director of I Am A Queen, a youth development nonprofit based in the Greensboro-High Point area of North Carolina. For 14 years, she has cultivated a thriving year-round mentorship program for girls ages 10-18 that focuses on building their self-esteem and leadership skills. She has 16 years of experience in communications and her career includes three years of service as a public relations officer and deputy press secretary for North Carolina's first female governor, Beverly E. Perdue.

Allen earned a B.S. in journalism and mass communication with a concentration in public relations from N.C. A&T. ■



**BRYLE HENDERSON HATCH, PH.D. '08, '10, '18** was a recipient of the 2023 Triad Business Journal "40 Under 40" award. Hatch is the director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. His past professional experiences

include executive director for community engagement at N.C. A&T and executive director of Thrive High Point, a multi-million-dollar initiative to support diversity and inclusion in local entrepreneurship. He is active in several community and civic organizations including the boards of directors for the North Carolina Conference on Community and Justice, Trailblazers Impact Foundation, Motivational Foundation Inc., and the International Society of Furniture Designers.

Hatch earned a B.A. in speech communication, master's degree in adult and higher education and a doctorate in leadership studies from A&T. He also completed post-baccalaureate studies in public communication at American University in Washington, D.C., and post-graduate studies at Hood Theological Seminary. ■

2010s

**CLINTON WILSON, PH.D. '10, '18** is a recipient of the 2024 Triad Business Journal "40 Under 40" award. Honorees were selected from a competitive group of nominees and represent a group of leaders who are making great contributions to North Carolina's Triad Region before age 40.

Clinton is the chief officer of student services for Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. He earned his M.S. in counselor education and Ph.D. in leadership studies and adult education from N.C. A&T. ■

**REGINALD N. JOHNSON '13** has a featured role in "The Color Purple," the 2023 movie-musical based on the 1982 Alice Walker novel and reimagination of the 1985 film by the same name.

Johnson is the principal dancer in the final scene, which is set to a reprise of the song, "The Color Purple." During the scene, the main character, Celie, performed by award-winning singer and actress Fantasia Barrino Taylor, finally gets her whole family to sit at the same dinner table in love and harmony.

The star-studded 2023 film premiered nationwide with the second-largest Christmas Day box office opening of all time. ■

**CANISHA CIERRA TURNER '14** is a recipient of the 2024 Triad Business Journal "40 Under 40" award. Honorees were selected from a competitive group of nominees and represent a group of leaders who are making great contributions to the Triad Region before age 40.

Turner is owner and CEO of Executive Reign, a nationally recognized, premiere coaching company for pageant competitors in systems such as Ultimate International Miss, Royal International Miss, America's Ideal Miss, Universal Miss, Elementary America, High School America, and the Miss America and Miss USA organizations, to name a few.

Turner was president of the Student Government Association at N.C. A&T and earned her B.S. in agricultural business. She currently serves on the university's Alumni Convention Board. ■

**BRANDON FREDERICK '16** is a recipient of the 2024 Triad Business Journal "40 Under 40" award. Honorees were selected from a competitive group of nominees and represent a group of leaders who are making great contributions to North Carolina's Triad Region before age 40.

Frederick is an engineering manager for Core Technology Molding Corp., a Certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) that provides integrated and innovative plastics solutions to the world's leading companies, where he is one of the founders of its Molding Kids for Success program, a nonprofit organization that educates youth in STEM through classroom and real-world application.

Frederick earned his B.S. in applied engineering technology from N.C. A&T. ■



The Catholic News Herald

**CHINONSO NNEBE-AGUMADU** was ordained to the priesthood on June 17, 2023, and he offered his first Mass of Thanksgiving on June 18 at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Nnebe-Agumadu earned a B.S. in biology from N.C. A&T, a pre-theology degree at Pontifical College Josephinum (Columbus, Ohio) and an M.A. in theology and M.Div. from Mount St. Mary's Seminary & School of Theology (Cincinnati, Ohio). ■

2020s

**JORDAN BROWN '22** received an Academy Award nomination for his production role on "The Creator," a 2023 American science fiction/action film starring John David Washington. The movie was nominated for "Best Sound" and "Visual Effects."

Brown has a B.S. in journalism and mass communication from N.C. A&T. Two weeks after graduation, he received an opportunity to intern for Digital Studio Services in Los Angeles where he worked as a production assistant. One month in, his supervisor recommended him for a role on the set of "The Creator." ■

**ALUMNI (2023)**

**KIMBERLY BAYLOR '82**, Dec. 12  
**GEORGE BEATTY JR. '61**, Dec. 28  
**DAISY BOONE '50**, Sept. 5  
**MARTHA BOSCHEN '83**, Sept. 5  
**GLORIA BROWN '77**, Dec. 19  
**HATTIE BRYANT '59**, Nov. 28  
**GREGORY BUSH '94**, Dec. 11  
**MARGARET CARR '45**, Sept. 26  
**BENJAMIN CARTER JR. '91**, Dec. 20  
**STEVEN COLEMAN '89**, Oct. 16  
**THOMAS CONLEY '64**, Dec. 4  
**CALVIN DIXON '60**, Sept. 10  
**DOROTHY DOBSON '57**, Nov. 19  
**LARRY FAIN '68**, Sept. 13  
**DONALD FISHER '80**, Nov. 8  
**CHARLES FLOWERS '84**, Nov. 8  
**DANIEL CHARLES FRITZ '84**, Aug. 14  
**KEVIN GRAY '93**, Sept. 15  
**LEONARD GRIFFIN SR. '60**, Nov. 23  
**W. SPENCER GWYNN '55**, Nov. 3  
**CHESLEY HARVIN '85**, Sept. 4  
**WILLIAM GRANT HILL SR. '72**, Aug. 30  
**DARRYL HILLS '97**, Sept. 6  
**REGINA HOPKINS '82**, Dec. 15  
**LEROY JOHNSON JR. '67**, Oct. 1  
**RUBY JOHNSON-HAMMOND '62**, Nov. 5  
**MARY JONES '53**, Sept. 25  
**RONALD KILGORE SR. '71**, Dec. 26  
**MILDRED LUCAS '52**, Nov. 19

**ALUMNI (2024)**

**JEFFREY BEAMON '82**, March 11  
**ANTOINETTE CANDIA-BAILEY '16**,  
 Jan. 8  
**SARAH COGGINS '59**, Feb. 22  
**HERMAN DANIEL '60**, Feb. 22  
**ELNORA DANIEL '64**, March 4  
**MAXINE DARGAN DAVIS '57**,  
 March 22  
**JOE L. DUDLEY SR. '62**, Feb. 8 \*  
**GEORGE EDWARDS '57**, Jan. 21  
**JOHN FINNEY '59**, Jan. 8  
**ARCHIE FORD '70**, Jan. 9  
**LESLIE GARRETT-YOUNG '89**, Jan. 30  
**LARRY GRADY '68**, Feb. 7  
**SHIRLEY HARDY '72**, Jan. 12  
**MARIE HARRIS '73**, Jan. 10

**HAROLD MARLEY SR. '74**, Dec. 10  
**JOHN MAYE JR. '73**, Dec. 8  
**ESTHER MILLIGAN-CRAWFORD '84**,  
 Nov. 28  
**GWENDOLYN MOORE**, Sept. 28  
**JEROME MURPHY '65**, Nov. 19  
**AARON NEELY '65**, Dec. 23  
**CHARLES NESBITT SR. '59**, Oct. 23  
**BERNARD OLIPHANT '70**, Nov. 2  
**JEFFERY OWENS II**, Nov. 4  
**ARNETTE PETERSON '68**, Nov. 8  
**REGINALD REEVES '47**, Nov. 17  
**THEODORE ROBERSON '55**, Dec. 23  
**WILLA ROBINSON '02**, Sept. 18  
**TOMMY SADLER '97**, Sept. 17  
**DEBORAH SCALES '91**, Dec. 11  
**DANIEL SHIELDS '66**, Dec. 4  
**NAKOMA SMITH '71**, Nov. 7  
**RODERICK SMITH '86**, Dec. 16  
**ROBERT SNIPES '63**, Nov. 12  
**MATTIE STALLINGS '90**, Oct. 12  
**HENRY TURNER '63**, Sept. 2  
**LULA V. WAGSTAFF '69**, April 22  
**WILLIAM WELLS JR. '74**, Sept. 26  
**JAMES WEST '64**, Nov. 18  
**JESSE WILLIAMS '54**, Oct. 3  
**TOMMY WILLIAMS '17**, Oct. 23  
**MICHAEL WRIGHT '18**, Sept. 24  
**WYLEDA YARBROUGH '90**, Dec. 12

**GWENDOLYN JUDGE '58**, Jan. 27  
**KEVIN MAXWELL '93**, Jan. 20  
**DONALD MCCLURE SR. '62**, Jan. 21  
**THORNTON MOORE '78**, Jan. 1  
**ANGELA PENDLETON '93**, Feb. 13  
**ABBIGALE PURVIS '80**, Jan. 7  
**AUDREY ROBERTSON '00**, Feb. 26  
**ALTON ROGERS JR. '79**, Jan. 5  
**PATRICIA STALLINGS '64**, Jan. 13  
**CHARLOTTE SWANN '64**, Jan. 29  
**BETTY TATE '00**, Jan. 6  
**PHYLLIS TOMLINSON '74**, Feb. 20  
**SAMUEL TUCKER '57**, Jan. 31  
**LEE WATSON '68**, Jan. 28  
**GLORIA WINSLOW '62**, Jan. 1  
**HARDY WOOTEEN JR. '66**, Feb. 14

\* Honorary degree recipient

**STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES & OTHERS (2022)**

**RABIN ACHARYA**, first-year doctoral student, Applied Science and Technology  
 (Applied Physics concentration), Dec. 28

**STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES & OTHERS (2023)**

**QUENTIN EVERETT BRYSON**, junior, Professional Theatre, Dec. 17  
**POLICARPO CASTAÑÓN DE MATTOS, PH.D.**, faculty, Department of Industrial and  
 Systems Engineering, College of Engineering, June 9  
**DEMARCO J. CATHCART**, senior, Management (Business Administration), July 23  
**ROY J. COOMANS, PH.D.**, associate professor and associate chair, Department of Biology,  
 College of Science and Technology, June 19  
**NATASHA GRAVES COVINGTON**, laboratory technician, A.V. Blount Jr. Student Health  
 Center, April 3  
**VIOLET FERNANDEZ**, doctoral student, Nanoengineering, Dec. 24  
**SERENITY HENRY**, freshman, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (Agribusiness  
 and Food Industry Management concentration), Nov. 13  
**ROBIN L. HOWARD**, technology support specialist, Division of Information Technology,  
 March 18  
**AMANDA ROBBINS HUGHES**, student services specialist, Department of Electrical and  
 Computer Engineering  
**GABRIEL J. JAMES**, senior, Industrial and Systems Engineering, May 22  
**MARIAN JOHNSON**, administrative support associate, University Police Department, Sept. 28  
**DEJA RAE REAVES**, first-year student, Criminal Justice, April 4  
**JEFFREY RICHARDSON**, professor of theatre, Department of Visual and Performing Arts,  
 College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, March 25  
**JAMES WATLINGTON**, associate director of contracts and grants, Division of Research  
 and Economic Development, Aug. 14

**STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES & OTHERS (2024)**

**RONTRELL JAMARI HENDRICKS**, sophomore, Applied Engineering Technology, Feb. 13  
**KEVIN MAXWELL**, access coordinator, Office of Accessibility Resources, Jan. 27  
**XIOMARA M. MOORE**, junior, Health Science Management, April 13  
**CLEON F. THOMPSON JR., PH.D.**, seventh chancellor, Jan. 27





Front row: L-R: Aggie Rides Founder Markus Perry, Queen City Alumni Chapter President Shontilla Guy, Fundraising Committee Chair Renee Leak, Kathy R. Hairston and John R. Hairston are joined by other Aggie alums and supporters for Aggie Rides III in Concord, North Carolina.

**QUEEN CITY ALUMNI CHAPTER** (Charlotte, North Carolina) hosted Aggie Rides IV, May 17-18, in Concord, North Carolina.

Founded by MARKUS PERRY '97 in 2020, Aggie Rides is a rolling car show (tour) that raises scholarship funds for students in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Gaston, Chester, Rowan and Union counties in North Carolina, and York County, South Carolina, who aspire to attend North Carolina A&T.

The ride began at Streetside Classics (800 Derita Road, Concord, NC 28027), toured Charlotte's I-485 Outer Loop and concluded at zMAX Dragway (6570 Bruton Smith Boulevard, Concord, NC 28027). Vehicle clubs from across the nation were in attendance, with the Midwest, North and South well represented.

Aggie Rides IV is one of Queen City Chapter's largest fundraising events. The chapter's goal is to fully fund an endowed scholarship, thereby providing a full perpetual scholarship to a deserving student from Charlotte and surrounding areas. Other chapter fundraisers include a Jazzy Brunch, skating events and 5k walks. ■

For more details about Queen City Alumni Chapter, Aggie Rides and scholarship opportunities, visit <https://charlotte.ncatsualumni.org>.





**NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL  
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The School of Nursing (SON) celebrated 70 years on the campus of North Carolina A&T with an event at Homecoming 2023, organized by the School of Nursing Affinity Group (SONAC).

Established in fall 1953, the SON is housed in the John R. and Kathy R. Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences. During the celebration, SONAC honored the first 15 graduates who received their nursing degrees in 1957: Dorothy Chavis, Betty Cox, Ernestine Biggs Denegall, Delores Watson Estes, Burdia Gwynn, Nora Hardy, Alice F. Oliver, Gertrude McAdoo, Julia Perkins, Bettie Wilson Reaves, Ranova Satterwhite, Joyce Lorick Summey, Wanda Vaughn, Vivian Vereen and Ethel Wright.

First School of Nursing Class, 1957

# SCHOOL OF NURSING CELEBRATES 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST CLASS