

Fall commencement at WSSU makes history

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

The podium became a pulpit the moment Ben Ruffin stepped behind it to deliver the keynote address at Winston-Salem State University's only second fall commencement ceremony Friday. Ruffin, a well-known local businessman who made history four years ago by becoming the first African-American to chair the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, spoke to a graduating class of 214, which included WSSU's first-ever crop of master's degree students and hundreds of the graduates' family members and friends.

During a speech that drew an equal amount of laughs and shouts of "amen," Ruffin reminded the graduates, who sat in the first few rows of K.R. Williams Auditorium, that the people who sat in the rows behind them — mothers, fathers, siblings, professors, grandparents — made it all possible for the graduates.

"No matter how high you get in life, no matter how many degrees you get in life, you will still be looking up to those people behind you....Don't you ever forget the bridge that brought you across," Ruffin said.

Winston-Salem State is the shining jewel in the UNC system's crown these days. It has had some of the largest increases

in enrollment in the last few years, and, as Ruffin pointed out, the school's chancellor, Harold Martin, is regarded as one of the nation's foremost educational leaders.

The evolution of WSSU, which began in 1892 as a trade school for blacks, was evident at the graduation. Students of all races and ages received degrees in several disciplines, from nursing to sports management.

Evoking the words of both Curtis Mayfield and Langston Hughes, Ruffin urged the graduates to "keep on pushing" and not let receiving a degree be their last great accomplishment.

"It is no sin not to reach your goal in life, but it is a sin not to have a goal to reach for," Ruffin said.

Among those listening intently to Ruffin from the audience was Tonya Smiley, one of five students who received master's degrees in physical therapy during the ceremony. First established in summer of 2000, the MPT program was WSSU's first venture into graduate education. The school has since



Ruffin



Gloria Green, left, stands beside Tonya Smiley, one of five graduates who received MPT degrees last week.

Photo by Kevin Walker

started other graduate programs, including a master's in nursing and an MBA program.

During the commencement, Smiley basked in her success. She said there was not much

time for her and her classmates to fully grasp the scope of their historic accomplishments while they were taking classes.

"It was rough....There was a lot of studying," Smiley said about the MPT program.

Smiley said she will be forever grateful that WSSU's MPT program came along at a time when she was interested in pursuing a career in the profession. Smiley, a Hartford, Conn., native, joined the Army after receiving her undergraduate degree. She was living in Fayetteville when she decided to attend an open house for the MPT program. That was two and half years ago.

"It has definitely been worth it for me," she said. Smiley started a new job Monday at a High Point nursing home.

Although the MPT program, which is fully accredited, is expected to graduate about 25 students in the next few years, Gloria Green, chair of the physical therapy department, said the program is evolving as it is helping students to evolve.

"It is a continuous tweaking process," Green said. "It is a better program now than when the first students started."

Green and her staff were perhaps more excited than the graduates on Friday. The physical therapy team had put in years of legwork and research to bring a master's program to WSSU. It was a process that

took not only a lot of work but a great deal of faith as well, Green said. Fittingly, last Thursday, during the pinning ceremony for the master's students, attendees broke into the gospel song "To God Be the Glory."

Seeing the five students walk across the stage last week was evidence that the work and the prayers had paid off.

"We are really an elated group today," Green said.

Students hoping to follow in the footsteps of the first five joined faculty and staff members after the commencement to congratulate the students. Karen Merritt snapped photos of Smiley as she received congratulatory hugs from supporters.

Merritt, a Raleigh native, is enrolled in the MPT program. "This gives me hope," she said, gesturing toward Smiley and the other students (Robert Gentry, Timothy Shore, Benjamin Hill and Morgan Kenney). "I hope that I will be able to accomplish the same thing and be where they are in 2004."

For more information on WSSU's new graduate programs, log onto the school's Web site at www.wssu.edu. There is a link for the school's new School of Graduate Studies and Research. The deadline for the MPT program's upcoming class is in mid-January. The program is still accepting applications.

A&T

from page A1

attended A&T, graduated from A&T or people who have recruited from A&T and love the legacy of academic excellence.

The university has good reasons for putting its faith behind Howroyd. She has a proven track record of turning dreams into realities and converting goals into successes. Howroyd's company, ACT•1 Group, has annual revenue exceeding \$200 million and a national network of offices. The Tarboro native started the company from scratch in the late 1970s after leaving home to live with one of her sisters in California.

Back in those days, Howroyd found that being North Carolina born and A&T bred had its advantages. Her first job on the West Coast was at Billboard magazine, where, she says, California culture allowed employees to wear just about anything they wanted to work. Howroyd stood out to management because of her sharp business suits and matching purses.

"I started coaching and encouraging the other secretaries and clerks and receptionists in the building on how they should look," Howroyd said.

People in the entertainment industry took notice and began approaching Howroyd to find them employees who possessed the same standards of professionalism for which Howroyd became known.

"Reputations build up very quickly," Howroyd said. "I was being called a (job) recruiter before I even knew what a recruiter was."

These days ACT•1 Group fulfills employers' needs in several states, including North Carolina, and has a client roster that boasts such names as Toyota, The Gap and Ford Motor Co. ACT•1 Group's success has also allowed Howroyd to start several affiliated companies, including the California National University for Advanced Studies, an accredited distance learning institution that offers bachelor's and master's degrees in everything from business administration to human resources.

Howroyd shared some of her keys to success with A&T's newest crop of graduates Saturday at the school's fall commencement, where 516 students received degrees. Howroyd was the keynote speaker. During her remarks, Howroyd drove home to students the importance of giving back to their alma mater.

Howroyd believes that alumni do not have to be beaten over the head with the mes-



Janice Bryant Howroyd and two of her siblings, Carlton Bryant and Patricia Bryant, look through an A&T promotional booklet with Eui H. Park, chair of the school's industrial engineering department. Almost the entire Bryant family attended A&T.

Photo by Charles Watkins/A&T

sage to give back. Her approach is to simply remind alumni that more than 90 percent of them received financial assistance to attend A&T and many of them enjoyed the benefits of the new facilities on the campus — both of which, she said, took money to make a reality.

"I don't think that there is a

lesson that needs to be taught here. I think there is a celebration (of A&T) that needs to be encouraged," she said.

A&T's \$100 million goal is lofty for any school, but especially for a state-run historical black institution. School

officials say that for A&T to continue to produce world-class leaders and offer first-rate instruction, it needs money that Raleigh couldn't possibly provide. Funds from the capital campaign, which has been themed From Genera-

tion to Generation, will be used mostly for scholarships and endowments. The campaign officially began in October during homecoming. But the campaign was in a so-called silent phase way before that. About \$43 million has already been raised. Officials hope the rest will be secured in the next five years.

Howroyd said she has already begun to concentrate her efforts on securing more West Coast support for the campaign.

For Howroyd — a woman who speaks with the bountiful energy of a motivational speaker and the determination of a politician — failure with the capital campaign is not an option.

"We will do it by any means necessary," she said, with a broad smile, "anything legal and godly."

For more information on the capital campaign, log onto www.ncat.edu and click on the Generation to Generation icon. Donations can be made by sending checks or money orders to N.C. A&T State University Office of Development and University Relations, ATTN: Mr. Michael Magoon, 1601 E. Market Street, Greensboro, N.C. 27411



File Photo

Michael Cunningham prepares to photograph a group of local women in 1999. His photos became a part of the best-selling book "Crowns."

Shutterbugs

from page A1

careers and avenues that may not necessarily be available to them by traditional methods," Cunningham said. "There are so, so many opportunities in photography — careerwise — and there are many creative outlets in terms of expression and self-esteem."

Cunningham is thrilled to be kicking off the program in Winston-Salem, where he got his start as a photographer at the age of 12. He also likes the idea of exposing African-American kids to the arts, something that he feels they do not receive enough of.

"The best challenges and roads for (black) folks come from skills that are already within you. The greatest chances of success can come from skills like music, painting and art that God gave you and that you didn't have to open a book to learn," Cunningham said.

Cunningham intends to teach his photography students how to create their very own darkrooms in their bathrooms at home where they will be able to develop and process the pictures they have taken.

Tycely Williams, president of the Urban Shutterbugs board, said: "Most programs like this exist in New York or California. Very few Southern cities do something like this, and it is good opportunity for someone (like Cunningham) with some hometown flavor that the community can connect with." Williams developed the idea along with Cunningham.

Williams explained that the Triad program will be duplicated in other cities where they hope to establish Urban Shutterbugs in a few years. Washington, D.C. has already been chosen as the location for the next Urban Shutterbugs program to be developed. Over the next few months, Williams and the rest of the board

— which Williams says has members scattered throughout the country — will focus on raising funds to purchase all of the equipment for program participants.

"Students can hopefully develop a skill that will lead to a profit, an internship or even a career," said Williams, noting that the annual goal for Urban Shutterbugs is \$130,000.

Class will begin in the summer of 2003 once the first group of 10 youngsters has been chosen. The photography students will meet with Cunningham one Saturday out of the month.

At the end of the year-long program, participants will showcase their work in a photography exhibit.

To make a donation to Urban Shutterbugs, contact Tycely Williams at (336) 918-1516 or mail your tax-deductible donation to P.O. Box 20488, Winston-Salem, NC 27120-0488.

SALEM COLLEGE

Courses for Community

A Workshop for Writers:
 Wordcrafting with the Pro's
 Wines of Europe
 The Fine Points of Vivid Prose
 Conversational Spanish for Beginners or Intermediates
 Sketching with Pen and Ink
 Winery Tour of the Yadkin Valley
 SAT Prep Classes for High School Students
 Career Notes: Learning to Build and Market Your Resume
 eBay 102: Building Productive Auctions
 Investment and Financial Strategies: Master the Basics of Financial Planning
 Ballroom Dancing for Beginners
 Well Traveled Colonial Roads: The History Beneath Your Feet
 Surrealist Cinema:
 Dreams and Subversion
 Painting Fundamentals:
 Back by Popular Demand
 Drawing Animals in Action:
 Animals on the Run
 Introduction to Wine
 Wine Varieties of the World

Give the gift of learning...
 Put a Salem course under the tree!
 To register, call 336-721-2855 or go to www.salem.edu/community