



Students hold a sign representing the class of 2020 during Ramdition, a week-long orientation for incoming students at WSSU. Last weekend 950 students, the most since 2008, kicked off their college journey during move-in day.

## WSSU welcomes largest freshman class since 2008

Incoming students first to enter university under new strategic plan

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

When Greensboro native Oshiana Simmons was making out her list of potential colleges, it began and ended with one



school: Winston-Salem State University (WSSU).

Simmons, a nursing major, is one of 950 freshman students that make up the largest incoming class since 2008. Simmons said although it's closer to home, she never even considered that other HBCU (Historic Black College and

**Berg-Jones** University) that wears dark blue and maize.

"There is no place I'd rather be," she said. "In my opinion, Winston-Salem State is the best HBCU; not just in North Carolina but the country."

When asked how it felt to be part of one of the largest groups of incoming students in WSSU history, Simmons said, "It's very exciting to be a part of such a large class of freshmen. I know the class of 2020 is going to do some great things."

As if being the largest incoming class in nearly a decade isn't enough added excitement, the class of 2020 is also the first class to enter the university under the new strategic plan that was adopted earlier this year.

The strategic plan has two main purposes.

The first is to advance the focus of liberal arts to a more comprehensive liberal education approach, one that builds knowledge and strengthens intellectual and interpersonal skills.

The second is to give students opportunities to engage important questions with

in their discipline, community and society at large. Chancellor Elwood Robinson said the plan aims to make WSSU a first-choice university among potential students in N.C. He said under the new plan, every freshman will have at least one internship experience before they graduate.

"I want this university to be the first school students and parents think about" he continued. "That process begins with carving out academic excellence, and I know we have done that."

"We have moved the needle in so many ways when it comes to academic outcomes. The word is really getting out, and our message is starting to resonate with people across the state."

As part of the rebranding process, the university also unveiled a new logo. The logo, which includes the Winston-Salem skyline seen through the archways on campus that were built in 1930, reflects the faculty and staff's commitment to advocating for students and providing them a safe and supportive environment to pursue their education.

Robinson said, "We're trying to send a message that everything we do matters and is important."

"We have the strategic plan and this grand vision about the type of education experience you want your students to have, then you have to market that plan," he continued. "The new logo is about branding the university to reflect the kind of experience you want to have."

Last Saturday, Aug. 13, WSSU officially welcomed the newest additions to the Ram family during move-in day. To help students transition into the college life, the class of 2020 has been participating in a week-long orientation. Better known as Ramdition, the week of welcome is an annual tradition.

Ramdition will end with a "Through the Archway" rite of passage ceremony on Saturday, Aug. 20. The first official day of class for WSSU is set for Monday, Aug. 22.

While scavenger hunts, classroom sessions and campus workshops are still on the list of scheduled events, the 2016 edition has an added twist. To reflect



A group of incoming freshmen work together to complete a scavenger hunt on Tuesday, Aug. 16 on the campus of Winston-Salem State University. The scavenger hunt was part of Ramdition, a weeklong freshman orientation for incoming students. This year WSSU welcomed 950 freshmen.

the changes at the university, students are also getting involved in the community.

According to a press release, each student has been assigned to one of 15 community service projects.

During a phone interview with *The Chronicle* earlier this week, Robinson said, it is important that students understand the importance of serving the community as soon as they step foot on campus. He said, "At WSSU we are looking to shape people that will someday change the world."

"We are looking to educate the whole student and extend the classroom to the campus, the community and the world," Robinson said.

Although the start of the college journey can be frightening, a number of students said they are ready for the voyage

and ready to change the world. A native of Goldsboro, N.C., Jeriq Bryant said although it was hard to say good-bye to his parents, he is ready to see what the future holds.

"I've been waiting for this all summer. I'm ready to get started," he said.

After piecing a giant puzzle together with her fellow classmates inside C.G. O'Kelly Library, Khadijah Smith from Lillington, N.C., said she is confident that WSSU will make her a better person.

"When I'm a senior and I look back on my four years spent here at WSSU, I know I will be a better person than I am today," She continued. "That should be everyone's goal, to become a better person, and I know the faculty and students here at WSSU will help me do that."

### Park

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ing, Goler CDC President Michael Suggs said that Goler has been focused on real estate development in the past, with projects like Goler Lofts. He told council members that the CDC found other needs in the community involving jobs and health that it wanted to address. After the City Council unanimously approved the measure, Suggs said Goler was glad to have the city behind the project.

"I'm excited to see the city take a stand to address an issue that has been very prevalent in a lot of our community, which is a lot of our citizens just don't have access to fresh food, fruits and vegetables," said Suggs.

The new facility will be in the North Ward, which

City Council Member Denise "D.D." Adams represents. Adams said that the city hasn't been able to get grocery chains to go into certain parts of the city where food deserts exist. She said the project provides an innovative solution to that problem.

"We can duplicate, replicate and move this into other areas of the city if it's successful," said Adams.

Also during the meeting, the city approved changing its incentive deal with Caterpillar. It changed the minimum number of jobs from 196 to 100 that the local facility has to have in order to not pay back the millions its received so far in incentives. Caterpillar subsidiary Progress Rail, which makes train parts, was also added to the deal. Caterpillar, whose local



Suggs

facility makes axels for mining trucks, is facing a worldwide downturn in the mining industry and has reduced its workforce. It plans to bring Progress Rail to the facility to bolster the jobs there, and wanted the change in the deal so it wouldn't go below the minimum job level during the facility's transition.

Jo Ann Allen, who is running as a write-in mayoral candidate, said during the public hearing that if the council changes an



Adams

agreement with Caterpillar, then other companies will want similar accommodations. The City Council defended the deal, saying that it allows the facility to stay open and continue employing workers. City Council member James Taylor described altering the deal as turning lemons into lemonade.

The city also allocated the additional \$50,000 added to this year's budget for Successful Outcomes After Release (SOAR), which gives grants to pro-

grams that assist at-risk populations like ex-offenders and at-risk youth. Grants were awarded to Silver Lining Youth Services, My Brother's Second Chance, Southside Rides, the YWCA's Hawley House/Project New Start, The Josh Howard Foundation, Hoops4LYFE and How Is Your Heart Project for a Beating Up Bad Habits summer boxing camp.

During the public comment period, residents from Rolling Hills Apartments spoke about the substandard conditions there that violate city housing codes. Carlice Roberts-Braddy decried the "patch work" way management has dealt with the problems and praised those who have helped the residents by providing food and water.

"We have tears that won't dry, hearts that won't heal, frowns that never go away and questions that can never be answered," she said.

Community and Business Development Director Ritchie Brooks said that repair orders have been issued at the complex, some of which have been complied with and some are still open with some civil penalty fines that are being assessed.

Though residents voiced concerns about the cleanliness of the water in their apartments, Brooks said that the water was tested in one apartment in each building of the complex and those tests concluded the water was not contaminated.