



(From left) The faces of freshmen Tamika Watson, Jamila Miles, Kim Rascoe and Clarissa Williams capture the spirit of the Fall Convocation held Sept. 28 in Moore Hall. Following a speech by Chancellor Mickey L. Burnim, the freshmen were formally welcomed into the University. University Relations photo

# Dr. Burnim urges freshmen to 'seize opportunity' during fall Convocation

by Troy Lewter

"You, the class of 2,001, have the opportunity of a lifetime," ECSU Chancellor Dr. Mickey Burnim told freshmen, during the fall Convocation, Sept. 28 in Moore Hall.

"It is up to you," added Burnim, featured speaker for the event, "to take full advantage of the University's resources." The Chancellor then challenged students to be serious about their educational mission.

To emphasize how important it is for students to "seize opportunity," Burnim used the 40th anniversary of the desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Ark. as an illustration. Burnim said the nine students who became the first African-Americans to attend Central High school participated in "the defining moment," in the history of the civil rights struggle in America.

"These students were trying to seize opportunity no matter what the obstacles," said Burnim. "They were trying to get the best education possible, as they had a right to do. They were trying to seize the opportunity the Supreme Court had afforded them. They

wanted an education not limited by dilapidated buildings and outmoded textbooks."

Pointing out that ECSU has a 106-year history of providing opportunities "for thousands of students," including doctors, lawyers, and elected government officials, Burnim added that the current class of freshmen have the same chance given to ECSU's graduates who have achieved success.

"This University continues the tradition, to help each one of you to shape your intellect and develop your talents regardless of your background."

Opportunities available to students on campus included work in "exciting biotechnical projects in labs," said Burnim, and the opportunity to study journalism from instructors with experience in the profession.

Referring to problems with air conditioning, parking problems and limitations of facilities, Burnim admitted that "working conditions aren't perfect, but students shouldn't let the small imperfections make them lose sight of their goals."

Burnim said it is "easy to complain and criticize, but it takes a special kind

of person to be part of the solution."

The Chancellor also reminded ECSU's staff and faculty that they, too, had "the opportunity of a lifetime by having the chance to inspire students to greatness.

"Individually, each of us can take advantage of the opportunity of a lifetime, and together we can achieve our shared vision of preparing leaders for the next millenium," he added.

Following Burnim's speech, ECSU students conducted the formal candlelighting ceremony, officially welcoming freshmen to the University.

Senior Fredrika Simons explained the purpose of the ceremony, to see that the "eternal flame of knowledge is passed to another generation of college students. Though there are times that the flame may flicker, it should never be extinguished."

In a rich, statement and response litany, six members of the student class, led by freshman class president Albert Walker and SGA Vice President, Nathaniel Issacs, conducted the ceremony. Lighted candles symbolized the eternal ideals of beauty, wisdom, faith, love, hope, truth and knowledge.

"In this hour of darkness," said a speaker, "the world has nothing else to give you except this lighted candle. Into each generation we thrust the ashes of our failure."

Addressing the collective youth of the world, a speaker said, "You give the worlds its dreamers—Joan or Arc, John. F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. When the dream smote them, they became as living flames."

Freshman class president Albert Walker lit the candle on stage and then he and the other speakers lit the candles of students on the ends of each row.

From the beginning of the ceremony, with the organ accompanying the entrance of the students and faculty, to the end, with the students leaving with their lit candles, the mood in the hall was solemn and dignified.

Freshmen candlelighting participants were Joshua Henson of Elizabeth City, N.C., Renesha Collier of Richmond, N.C., Kizzy Crawford of Rocky Mt., N.C., Issac Lister of Elizabeth City, N.C., Howard Barrow of Fayetteville, N.C. and Deanna Moring of Elizabeth City, N.C.