

# White House welcomes FSU journalism students



Photo courtesy of Professor Skye Dent

News Director Jim Asendio and Station Manager Karyn Mathys, both of WAMU, talk to students at the station.

By Professor Skye Dent

Road to The White House stories are generally reserved for presidential candidates. However, 13 Fayetteville State University students now have their own individual stories to share.

The students include Shante Elliott, Nikki Scott, Matthew Campbell, Brian Ashley Nance, David Antoine, Anna Lee, April Love, Jason Bouley, Terrance Autry, Quinton Graham, A.J. Hines, Charnell Harris, and James Jackson.

The project began last summer when I met Kevin S. Lewis, a communications specialist for The White House. We realized they shared a common belief that journalism students were essential to this country and needed encouragement.

I raised money. The Raleigh Observer and News, The Fayetteville Observer, and Charles Floyd Johnson (executor producer of the hit series N.C.I.S.) were the major con-



Photo courtesy of Professor Skye Dent

The group meets with White House spokesperson Jay Carney in his office.

tributors. Pooling additional funds were her friends, writers, producers, journalists and colleagues from The Closer, Law and Order, The WGA west, journalists from Raleigh, national and local chapters of the National Association of Black Journalists, a New York based best-selling novelist, the Ambassador to the Philippines, and members of the FSU community.

We held a weekly meeting in which the students updated their knowledge of journalism and presidential politics. The number of students was kept small to allow for a greater connection between the students and the professionals they would meet. Rounding out the trip were Sgt. Duane Whitaker and University Photographer Dennis McNair.

Elliott, Campbell and Lee are focused on journalism and write for The Voice. Scott is photojournalist who contributes to The Voice and several other local publications. David Antoine, Brian Ashley Nance

and A.J. Hines all work for the student radio station. James Jackson, interested in public relations, works as an intern for both FSU's media relations department and the Fayetteville Police Station.

Charnell Harris holds executive positions at both the student radio station and The Voice. ARMY ROTC cadet Quinton Graham severed as the sports editor for The Voice until he joined the National Guard where his communication skills give him the range of positions from journalist to strategic communicator. ARMY ROTC Cadet Jason Bouley's honed his communication skills so that the military can use him in positions ranging from journalist to strategic communicator.

"I wanted to show our students that it takes all kinds of people to have the kind of empathy, drive and intellect to be the kind of journalists that this democracy was built upon."

Kendrick Faison, a board member of the FSU-DC alum found out about the trip. He threw out the DC welcome wagon with an offer to host a swank Georgetown reception for the students, DC alum and DC journalists. The reception proved to be of tremendous benefit in terms of the students garnering valuable contacts that they can use for future job hunting.

The two-day trip included:

- A tour of The White House
- Attendance at a White House Press Briefing with spokesperson

Jay Carney

- A private meeting with Jay Carney and Kevin Lewis in Carney's office
- An interview with Michael Strautmanis (Deputy Assistant to the President and Counselor for Strategic Engagement to the Senior Advisor)
- A meeting with ABC Senior White House Correspondent Jake Tapper
- A visit to the famous Newseum (totally paid for by Orage Quarles, Publisher of the Raleigh News and Observer)
- A historical/cultural tour by famed historian American University Prof. Edward Smith
- A meeting with American University Production Professor Russell Williams, an Oscar winner for Glory and Dances With Wolves
- Meetings with WAMU-FM executives News Director Jim Asendio and Station Manager Karyn Mathys
- The FSU-DC alumni reception for alum, students, and invited DC journalists.

The meeting with Jim Asendio became an ethics in the making lesson. Earlier that week, WAMU management had arranged a meeting breaking the ethical firewall between WAMU journalists and financial donors. Asendio planned to resign in protest. But, he stayed until his meeting with the students because he had made.

As the FSU group finished their meetings and tour of WAMU and walked out the door, Asendio followed. Only when the DC media wrote about the controversy and included bits about FSU did the students realize what had happened.

Sophomore April Love even got to ask Carney a question in the press room along with the professional journalists. Both Carney and Lewis were so impressed by the entire FSU contingent that we were invited them to Carney's office for an impromptu hour-discussion.

The event, a first in the history of the White House press room, ended up paving the way for future visits by journalism students from other colleges and universities.

In all respects, I and Kevin said the two day experience was a success.

FSU-DC Alum Board Member Faison was so enthused that he wants to host a group of FSU journalism students each year.

And Matt Campbell summed it up for all the students.

"Just being in an atmosphere where decisions are made everyday that affect the world reaffirmed for me our country's tradition of a free press and a transparent government."