Fisk Inaugurates Williams

Photo top left: Fisk President H. James Williams; Photo top right: Former Mayor Bill Purcell with Dr. Paul Kwami after Investiture Ceremony; Photo right bottom: Dr. Shirley Rainey Brown greets President Williams at Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast
NASHVILLE, TN — Fisk University inaugurated her 15th president, Dr. H. James Williams, on Friday, April 11, 2014 at the 10:00 a.m. Investiture Ceremony in the Fisk Memorial Chapel. The Inauguration Weekend began on Thursday, April 10, 2014, with the Trustees’ Luncheon in Honor of First Lady Carole Campbell Williams in the Appleton Room of Jubilee Hall and ended on Sunday, April 13, 2014, with the Fisk Family Worship Service in the Fisk Memorial Chapel.

The Inauguration Committee, headed by alumna and Trustee Jacquelyn Denton Alton of Houston, Texas, meticulously planned and orchestrated each event to highlight the Fisk brand of excellence and showcase the historic Nashville treasure. The creative artistry of alumnus Winterbourne La Purcell Jones and his team of Fisk alumni was evident in all of the venues, but especially in the Henderson A. Johnson Gymnasium that they transformed into a lovely contemporary setting with just the right touches to make one forget, for a moment, that you were in a gymnasium. The accessories and table décor defined the Legends Ballroom of the Omni Hotel, which was the epitome of elegance and charm for the President’s Scholarship Gala on Saturday night. The fundraiser netted over $400,000 for student scholarships.

Many thanks are extended to all who assisted in making the Weekend a splendid success including the sponsors, purchasers of Gala tables and tickets, and the various committee members. You outdid yourselves! We attained our goals of having a memorable inauguration for President H. James Williams and raising funds for much needed scholarships for our talented and deserving students.
THE FISK RENAISSANCE: Fulfilling the Promise
Fisk President’s Scholarship Gala Held

By Jason Luntz
Tribune Social Media Director

NASHVILLE, TN — Community and business leaders along with Fisk faculty, alumni, and students gathered at the Omni Hotel for the University President’s Scholarship Gala. The event was the highpoint of a weekend dedicated to celebrating the inauguration of the 15th President of Fisk University, Dr. H. James Williams.

The event began with a “Conversation with Terrence Howard,” during which Willie Geist, co-host of NBC’s “Today Show” 9 a.m. segment and MSNBC’s “Morning Joe” interviewed Howard. Originally Lee Daniels, director and producer of Lee Daniel’s The Butler, in which Fisk was prominently featured, was scheduled to be interviewed.

According to Dr. Edwina Harris Hamby, University Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Daniels had an emergency and could not attend. Oscar-nominated actor Terrence Howard, who had a co-starring role in the film, was invited as the replacement speaker.

The star-studded evening continued with Fisk alumna, Kym Whitley, an actress and stand-up comedienne, emceed the Gala along with Jonathan Martin, national correspondent who oversees the Nashville bureau of Al-Jazeera America.

The internationally renowned Fisk Jubilee Singers® and Grammy Award winning jazz singer, Dee Dee Bridgewater, provided entertainment.

Fisk University, Nashville’s oldest institution of higher education, has a lot to celebrate. With the one-year run up to his inauguration, Dr. Williams has led the institution to reaccreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. A recent selling of some key assets, part ownership of its priceless Stieglitz collection of art photographs in particular, along with a rise in alumni donations have allowed the University to remain in the black for the first time in years. These factors have lead to a 5 percent increase in enrollment with the number of students expected to climb again next semester.

The energy surrounding the recent accomplishments of Fisk were clear to the many former students who attended the event. Attorney Allegra Walker, Fisk class of ‘93, was happy to be part of the grand celebration. “The overwhelming support at the Gala was clear and convincing evidence that Dr. Williams brings incredible energy, hope and confidence to Fisk University and the Nashville community,” said Walker.

Fisk alumna Diana Scales, a part-time liberal arts instructor at Tennessee State University, also felt the atmosphere of the night was proof of what was in store for university. “I thought the Inaugural Gala was a splendid event...”
for the University, Dr. and Mrs. Williams, their family, and the city of Nashville,” said Scales. “It was a testament to the rich legacy of Fisk and the commitment of her many supporters, many of Nashville’s finest were in attendance and the elegant evening was a top-notch affair.”

At $150 a plate, the Gala was able to raise a substantial amount of money for the President’s scholarship fund. Final figures are not in but preliminary figures reveal that over $400,000 was netted.

District 19 Council-Member Erica Gilmore, who is a former Fisk Adjunct Professor, believes that Dr. Williams has created an environment that allows for the raising of money. “The Gala was a stellar event that showed that Dr. Williams does not mind raising money; that is important for a President.” Gilmore continued, “We need money because all is not well; we need to protect our institution and our young people.”

As the evening continued, it was apparent to everyone in attendance that the university had made a real statement about the historic importance of president’s inauguration.

“It was an awesome night, and I was honored to be a part of it,” said Martin. “The more than $500,000 gross raised, truly underscores the strong leadership in place at Fisk.”
Oscar-nominated actor, Terrence Howard, delivering keynote address.

Harpist Melodie Moore provided music at Trustees’ Luncheon for the First Lady and before the Conversation with Terrence Howard at the Gala.

I-r, Metro Nashville Mayor Karl Dean, President H. James Williams and Mrs. Carole Williams.

I-r, President H. James Williams, Carole Williams, Mira Howard, Terrence Howard, Willie Geist.

THE FISK RENAISSANCE: Fulfilling the Promise.
THE FISK RENAISSANCE: Fulfilling the Promise
First Lady Carole Campbell Williams addresses guests at the Trustees’ Luncheon in Honor of the First Lady held on Thursday, April 10.
THE FISK RENAISSANCE: Fulfilling the Promise
THE FISK RENAISSANCE: Fulfilling the Promise
By Van Pinnock

On April 2, 2014, Fisk students, faculty, alumni and administrators met at the Tennessee State Capitol to meet and greet lawmakers in a continuing plan to increase Fisk’s profile in the community and promote the Fisk Renaissance.

The “Day” was festive. It was opened in song by Dr. Christopher Duke and the University Choir who performed in the rotunda outside the House and Senate Chambers. President Williams was joined by Senator Thelma Harper and Representative Harold Love, who represent districts where Fisk is located, as well as by Davidson County Delegation Chair, Representative Brenda Gilmore. Former Fisk First Lady, Nancy Adkins, was also present.

Afterwards, the group headed to Legislative Plaza and was joined by a contingent of students that included the current and future Mr. & Miss Fisk Julian Williams and Audrey Tillis and Charles Mitchell and Hannah Davis, respectively, as well as student government representatives, Fisk’s legislative interns and other student leaders. Students and alumni, Hershell Warren, Faye Weaver and Freda Player visited lawmaker’s offices, delivering gift items furnished by WFSK/Jazzy 88. Our Admissions staff and Institutional Advancement staff manned our booth and distributed literature and refreshments to visitors.

Later, President Williams was accompanied by Professor Alicia Henry and several art students for presentations of original student art to Governor Bill Haslam, Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey, and Speaker Beth Harwell. Student William Kirkpatrick presented two pieces to Governor Haslam; student Andrea King delivered a piece to the Lt. Governor and Elizabeth Coleman took her art to Speaker Harwell.

Finally, our “Day” culminated on Friday, April 4th, with an on-campus lunch and tour for members of the Davidson County Delegation hosted by President Williams. The lunch was attended by Delegation Chair Brenda Gilmore, Senator Thelma Harper, Senator Ferrell Haile, Representative Harold Love and Representative Mike Stewart. It was also attended by students, faculty and staff. The President made a brief but powerful presentation about his vision for Fisk, and some of the important challenges in higher education. Afterwards, Dean Reavis Mitchell, Dean of the School of Humanities and Behavioral Social Sciences took delegation members on a fascinating and always informative campus tour.

If you missed it, please join us in 2015!
Fisk Day on Capitol Hill

Senator Thelma Harper (right) greets Fisk President H. James Williams

Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey receiving art from student Andreia King; Professor Alicia Henry, Art Discipline Coordinator and Fisk President H. James Williams

Dr. Christopher Duke directs Fisk University Choir

I-r, Fisk President H. James Williams; Professor Alicia Henry, Art Discipline Coordinator; student Elizabeth Coleman and Speaker Beth Harwell who was presented the art completed by Elizabeth, which was also the poster and cover of the program for the 2014 Spring Arts Festival.

THE FISK RENAISSANCE: Fulfilling the Promise
Dr. Phillip Autry

Fisk Professor of Music Honored by MTNA

Dr. Philip Autry, Professor of Music and Music Discipline Coordinator, was recently honored by the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) for distinguished service to the music teaching profession. He was named an MTNA Foundation Fellow at the National Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Autry’s service to MTNA has included service on the local, state, and national level, including serving as Tennessee Music Teachers National Association President for 2005–2007.

Dr. Autry is known as a piano soloist, but has moved toward piano duo and chamber music, in recent months. He now performs regularly with pianist William Coleman, and their first performance together was the Jubilee Day Concert, October 6, 2014, in the Fisk Memorial Chapel. He recently performed a recital with adjunct faculty member Stefan Petrescu, violinist, and guest artist, Dexter Brewer.

Autry is a sought-after clinician and adjudicator. His original research at Fisk, “The Chamber Music of John W. Work III,” was presented in the 2009 Piersen Lecture Series. His research in “Teaching the Piano Music of African-American Composers” was presented with his student, Kaylina Madison (now a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky), at the Tennessee Music Teachers Association Convention at Middle Tennessee State University.

Autry is known for supporting music educational experiences in the area. He has served as an adjudicator for the Nashville Piano Achievement Competition and the Federated Festival, as well as for other piano teachers groups. He is active as a member of the Board of Directors of the John Wesley Work III Memorial Foundation. In addition, he is the Governor of the largest Province of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity of America, serving ten chapters and one alumni association in Middle and West Tennessee and Western Kentucky, and is comprised of more than 400 collegiate members.

On campus, Dr. Autry is seen on stage as a collaborative pianist or in the piano studio, and in the music office as an advisor and mentor. He is the 2014–2015 Chair-Elect of the Fisk Faculty Assembly.

HistoryMakers Interview Dr. Jesse Carney Smith

The HistoryMakers, known for its important work in preserving oral histories of prominent African Americans, visited Fisk on Tuesday, April 22, to conduct and film a day-long interview with Dr. Jessie Carney Smith, Dean of the John Hope & Aurelia Franklin Library and the William and Camille Cosby Professor in the Humanities.

Founded in Chicago, by Harvard Law School graduate Dr. Julieanna L. Richardson, the HistoryMakers, since 1999, has been recording African American oral histories to provide a more inclusive record of American history and to educate and enlighten millions worldwide. By recording, preserving and sharing the life stories of thousands of African Americans, from President Barack Obama to the oldest living black cowboy, The HistoryMakers is a leader in presenting a more inclusive record of American history.

Legendary Faculty Member’s Legacy Alive Today

By Philip Autry

On the afternoon of April 12, 2014, five high school piano students competed against each other in the Second Annual John Wesley Work III Piano Competition. Each competitor played “Big Bunch of Roses” from Work’s piano suite Appalachia, as well as a piece of his/her own choice.

The competition is sponsored by the John Wesley Work III Memorial Foundation and took place in Ward Hall at Lipscomb University. The Winner’s Recital took place in Ward Auditorium on the Lipscomb Campus at 3 p.m. Judges for this year’s competition were: Dr. Hyunjungh Rachel Chung (Spelman College), Dr. Charlene Harb (Vanderbilt University), and Mr. William Coleman (Tennessee Arts Commission)

Winners included Gregory Price, third place; Ava Belew and Rikako Miko, second place tie; and Piper Rennerfeldt, Best Performance of the Required Piece.

John W. Work III (1901–1967) taught at Fisk for over 40 years and was the director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers®. His Spiritual arrangements are performed regularly by the Fisk Jubilee Singers®. As a serious composer, Work’s output in the 1940s is relative to Howard Hanson and Vincent Persichetti, but is distinguished by his unique use of folksong material. He is known for his work with Alan Lomax in the Library of Congress’ recordings of folk musicians in the Mississippi Delta.

In addition to the competition, other performances of his music this year include the Jubilee Day Concert in which two-piano duo Philip Autry and William Coleman performed Movement I and Concert Piece, the latter of which was composed for Matthew and Anne Gamble Kennedy; a faculty recital Stefan Petrescu and Philip Autry, in which they performed the Berceuse for violin and piano, and Dr. Autry performance of the complete Appalachia suite; and Antonio Hayes’ Senior Recital, in which he performed “My Heart’s in the Swampland,” which Dr. Work composed for a poem by the late Dr. L. M. Collins.
Fisk University will host its 21st Summer Pre-College Program on June 16-July 25, 2014. The goal of the six-week program is to increase the number of minority students, especially African-American males, who successfully earn undergraduate degrees. The program offers academic skills enrichment in Mathematics, Reading, Writing and Computer Literacy. A course in Learning Strategies equips participants with note-taking, testing-taking, goal setting, and time management skills.

The program includes special seminars in Business Etiquette, Financial Planning, Goal Setting and Adjusting to the College Environment. Leadership development and mentoring are other features of the program that are provided through partnerships with the Young Alumni Association, a division of the General Alumni Association of Fisk University, Inc. and community leaders. The program also includes educational outings, career preparation through shadowing opportunities, and community service projects.

Participants in the program must be either rising high school seniors or incoming college freshmen, with GPAs of 2.5 or higher. Applicants must submit their ACT or SAT scores, transcripts, letters of recommendation and the application forms by June 1, 2014 for consideration.

Academic advisement, academic support services, and peer mentoring continue throughout the freshman academic year for students who enroll at Fisk University.

More than 300 individuals have participated in the Pre-College Program since its inception and implementation in 1993. Thirty-one of those participants are currently enrolled at Fisk University, many of whom are student leaders and honor students. More than 65% of former participants have earned undergraduate degrees. Many have earned professional degrees and become physicians, dentists, educators, researchers and nurses.

This program is supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. For more information, contact Professor Patricia McCarroll, Program Director, at 615 329-8532 or at pmccarro@fisk.edu. Applications are available on the Fisk website at www.fisk.edu/admissions/pre-college-program.
Fisk University Wins 25th Anniversary Honda Campus All-Star Challenge

Completing a journey that began in the fall, Fisk University claimed its first ever national championship title at the 25th anniversary Honda Campus All-Star Challenge. For a quarter century, American Honda Motor Co., Inc. has sponsored this unique academic competition featuring the best and brightest students from America’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

A packed studio audience filled with competitors, alumni, volunteers, fans and Honda associates collectively held their breath as Fisk clinched the title over second-place finisher Oakwood University, after answering the following question correctly: What character in various world mythologies, whose name begins with A, B, or C, was the creator God eclipsed by Vishnu? Answer: Brahma

Fisk was coached by Dr. Stafford W. Cargill. Team members included: Victor Ray Bradley, team captain, junior; Matthew G. Barthwell, senior; Anthony M. Franklin, senior; and Anna M. Wilkins, junior.

“I am very proud of each student on the Fisk University team for the knowledge, spirit and discipline they displayed on the road to the national championship title,” said Dr. Stafford W. Cargill, coach, Fisk University. A beaming Fisk president, Dr. H. James Williams, said, “We are extremely proud of our team for the knowledge, teamwork and competitive spirit that they displayed to win our first HCASC championship.”

The seven remaining finalists that qualified for this year’s Elite Eight included: Oakwood University of Huntsville, AL; Tuskegee University of Tuskegee, AL; North Carolina Central University of Durham, NC; Morgan State University of Baltimore, MD; Morehouse College of Atlanta, GA; Florida A&M University of Tallahassee, FL; and Alabama State University of Montgomery, AL.

“Honda congratulates Fisk University for winning its first title, and thanks the team for truly representing the more than 10,000 exceptional students that participated in this year’s Honda Campus All-Star Challenge,” said Steve Morikawa, assistant vice president, corporate and community relations, American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

This year’s divisional all-stars included: Antoine Armand Southern representing Oakwood; Victoria Monique Jones representing North Carolina Central; Djon-Iva D. Santos representing Alabama State; Gabriel A. Smith representing Tuskegee; Brannon A. Billings representing Prairie View A&M; Victor Ray Bradley representing Fisk; Maryum Styles representing Spelman; and Eric A. Jett representing West Virginia State.

In addition to taking home the national championship trophy, Fisk University secured the top prize of $50,000 in university grants. Second place finisher Oakwood University won $25,000, while third and fourth place finishers – Tuskegee University and North Carolina Central University – earned $15,000 each. In total, more than $300,000 in institutional grants, which support academic activities, was awarded to participating HBCUs.

“Leading among the mediocre doesn’t mean much, but being a champion among giants is a dream worth striving for,” said Fisk University team captain Victor Ray Bradley. “This competition is full of immensely talented people who are vying to take your spot, but while you hold the title, the victory is sweet.”

Fisk students and staff greeted the victorious team and coach at the airport when they returned to Nashville.
May 5th Commencement Speakers Set

The May 5th Commencement speakers will be Carla Harris, Vice President and Managing Director of Morgan Stanley, and Charles Ogletree, the prominent legal theorist who has made an international reputation by taking a hard look at complex issues of law and by working to secure the rights guaranteed by the Constitution for everyone equally under the law.

Carla Harris is a Vice Chairman, Global Wealth Management, and Managing Director and Senior Client Advisor at Morgan Stanley. She is responsible for increasing client connectivity and penetration to enhance revenue generation across the firm. In August of 2013, Ms. Harris was appointed by President Barack Obama to chair the National Women’s Business Council.

For more than a decade, Ms. Harris was a senior member of the equity syndicate desk and executed such transactions as initial public offerings for UPS, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Ariba, Redback, the General Motors sub-IPO of Delphi Automotive, and the $3.2 billion common stock transaction for Immunex Corporation, one of the largest biotechnology common stock transactions in U.S. history.

She is the Chair of the Board of the Morgan Stanley Foundation and sits on the boards of the Food Bank for NYC, The Executive Leadership Council, The Toigo Foundation, Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO), A Better Chance, Inc., The Apollo Theatre Foundation, Mt. Sinai Hospital, and Xavier University. Ms. Harris is Co-Chair of the National Social Action Commission of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated.

She is the recipient of many awards including the Bert King Award from the Harvard Business School African American Alumni Association, the 2005 Women’s Professional Achievement Award from Harvard University, the Pierre Toussaint Medallion from the Office of Black Ministry of the Archdiocese of New York, the Women of Power Award given by the National Urban League, and the Women of Influence Award from The Links, Incorporated. Ms. Harris is also the author of the book, Expect to Win (Hudson Press, 2010).

Ms. Harris received her MBA, Second Year Honors, from Harvard Business School and an AB in economics from Harvard University, Magna Cum Laude. She is the recipient of Honorary Doctorates of laws, humanities and business from Marymount Manhattan College, Bloomfield College, Jacksonville University, Simmons College and the College of New Rochelle, respectively. Ms. Harris is actively involved in her community and heartily believes that “we are blessed so that we can be a blessing to someone else.”

Charles Ogletree is the Harvard Law School Jesse Climenko Professor of Law, and Founding and Executive Director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice. Professor Ogletree opened the offices of The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice in September 2005, as a tribute to the legendary civil rights lawyer and mentor and teacher of such great civil rights lawyers as Thurgood Marshall and Oliver Hill.

The Institute has engaged in a wide range of important educational, legal, and policy issues over the past 6 years.


Professor Ogletree is the recipient of many awards including the prestigious ABA Spirit of Excellence Award in recognition of his many contributions to the legal profession. He has also received honorary doctorates from Cambridge College, Wilberforce University, the University of Miami, the New England School of Law, Lincoln College, Tougaloo College, Mount Holyoke College, and Amherst College. Professor Ogletree is a native of Merced, California, where he attended public schools. Professor Ogletree earned an M.A. and B.A. (with distinction) in Political Science from Stanford University, where he was Phi Beta Kappa. He also holds a J.D. from Harvard Law School.