

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

BELLHOLD

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 2 • WINTER 2025

Lorie McCowan '96

NSU Foundation President
COO for Bright Hope Capital, LLC



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Lorie McCowan '96
NSU Foundation President
COO for Bright Hope Capital, LLC
Cover photo by Lateef Gibson



President Javaune Adams-Gaston appeared on *The Hampton Roads Show* hosted by Chris Reckling to discuss the University's Now Is Our Time campaign.



From the Desk of the President of Norfolk State University

As we look forward to our 90th anniversary at Norfolk State University in September 2025, the collective work we do NOW and in the next 11 months will have a lasting impact for this institution and for future generations of Spartans. The clock is ticking.

NOW Is Our Time: The Campaign for Norfolk State University is the most ambitious in the history of our institution. The success of this campaign—meeting and exceeding our \$90 million goal—will allow the University to transform itself in ways we’ve never seen before.

I encourage you to think about the transformative impact your donation can have on the lives of students at our beloved university. By giving to our fundraising campaign, you are not only supporting their academic journey but also nurturing their growth as future leaders and change-makers. Your generosity can help fund scholarships, research initiatives, and campus improvements that will enrich the university experience for current and future students alike.

Imagine the difference you can make through your contribution to the university’s fundraising efforts. Your involvement in our campaign has the potential to create a legacy that will reverberate throughout generations to come. It has the power to shape the future of education and innovation.

Our strategic mission as an institution requires us to evolve—to strive for and achieve a higher tier in the higher education realm. We have been developing, striving and advancing ever since we opened our doors as a two-year institution in 1935 against the backdrop of the Great Depression.

Over the last 89 years, we have produced leaders and achievers in their professions and in their communities. This issue of *Behold* Magazine highlights the enormous impact Norfolk State has had. Alumni such as Marty Miller, Dr. Melvin Stith and Bishop Kim Brown (page 10) came to the university with little—Miller only a one-way ticket to Norfolk and \$10 in his pocket. Dr. Stith hitched a ride with a relative to make it here from rural Greenville County, while Bishop Brown didn’t have the grades to be admitted. The university took a chance on each of them and today, they stand as examples of how transformative a Norfolk State University education can be. **NSU is a place for first and second chances, and many Spartans have those same success stories.**

By coming together as a collective force, we can champion the cause of higher education and empower ambitious minds to fulfill their potential. Your investment in Norfolk State’s mission is an investment in knowledge, progress, and the shaping of tomorrow’s leaders. Let us stand united in our commitment to excellence and seize this remarkable chance to make a difference.

Because Now is Our Time. Donate today.

Sincerely,

Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.

Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.
President, Norfolk State University



NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY BEHOLD

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 2 • 2025

A MAGAZINE WITH GLOBAL REACH

The word “**Behold**” is often used by those who love Norfolk State. It sums up the excellence of the University and pride felt for it. That is why when it came to naming the magazine featuring the accomplishments and progress taking place at Norfolk State, “**Behold**” easily came to mind.

Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.
University President

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Norfolk State University Kicks Off MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR Fundraising Campaign

Norfolk State University launched the public phase of its most ambitious fundraising campaign in University history Saturday, September 14, 2024. The comprehensive campaign has a goal of \$90 million and will culminate during the University's 90th anniversary in 2025. It is only Norfolk State's second major campaign. The first took place 30 years ago.

"The *Now Is Our Time* campaign is an investment in not only the future of our students but also for the future of Norfolk State to continue providing the very best educational opportunities for those who will enroll here for generations to come," NSU President Javaune Adams-Gaston said at the reception.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the *Now Is Our Time* Campaign?

Now Is Our Time: The Campaign for Norfolk State University, marks the most ambitious fundraising campaign in our institution's history. As NSU stands stronger than ever, we're poised to strengthen our impact and establish ourselves as a leader among all universities, not just HBCUs. This campaign unites our growing community of supporters, alumni, and partners in a shared vision: to invest in our people, maximize the potential of our campus, and elevate our academic and athletic pursuits. With your support, we'll rise to meet challenges, seize opportunities, and bring NSU's unique voice to the forefront of higher education. Together, we'll prove what we've always believed here at Norfolk State University: We see the future in you. Now is our time to shape the future of education and make history.

Why does Norfolk State University, a public institution, need a comprehensive campaign?

Norfolk State University's financial foundation rests on three primary resources: state funding, tuition revenue, and philanthropic support. While state funding and tuition are essential, private donations play a crucial role in elevating NSU's potential and securing our future as a leading institution. A robust fundraising campaign is necessary to propel us beyond the basics, allowing us to achieve excellence, drive innovation, and fulfill our mission of empowering the next generation of leaders.

How will NSU use my gift?

Your donation supports the college, school, program, or cause of your choice. Whether you contribute to a general fund, like NSU scholarships, or directly to a specific athletic program such as Football, Basketball, Tennis or Volleyball, scholarly programs such as DNIMAS, or co-curricular activities such as the NSU Drama and Theatre programs, the Spartan Legion Marching Band or NSU Concert Choir, every gift matters.

How can I support the *Now Is Our Time* Campaign?

By visiting www.nsu.edu/givenow, you can support the campaign quickly with a gift online. We also offer various ways you can give, including leaving NSU in your estate plans. Go to www.nsu.edu/now-is-our-time/ways-to-give for more information on ways to give.



Quick Facts

Official Kickoff Date/Event September 14, 2024, 4 p.m.

Battle of the Bay Football Game between the Norfolk State University Spartans and the Hampton University Pirates.

Campaign Ends: December 31, 2025

Overall Campaign Goal: \$90 Million

- Faculty and Staff have contributed to the campaign.
- The Board of Visitors, NSU Foundation, Inc. Board, NSU Athletics Foundation Board, NSU Alumni Association, NSU Alumni Chapters, and individual alumni have also contributed to the *Now Is Our Time* Campaign.
- Second Comprehensive Campaign in the history of Norfolk State University.

Campaign Leadership:

- Mr. Gary McCollum, Campaign Chair, Campaign Steering Committee and Ad Hoc Community Leaders Advisory Committee.

Campaign Website: www.nsu.edu/nowisourtime

For more information, contact the Office of Development at (757) 823-8323.

Campaign Goals and Priorities:

INVESTING IN PEOPLE: \$42 MILLION

Goal 1: Student Success

To establish funds aimed at providing financial aid, scholarships, and resources to increase access, retention, and minimize student debt.

Goal 2: Faculty Development

To establish endowed faculty positions and faculty development funds to attract and retain leading educators.

Goal 3: Academic Excellence Scholarship

To fund the Presidential and Provost Scholarships targeting academically gifted students, making NSU more attractive to top talent.

STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS: \$30 MILLION

Goal 1: Research Opportunities

To support research initiatives across Colleges, Schools, the Robert C. Nusbaum Honors College and the Dozoretz National Institute for Mathematics and Applied Sciences (DNIMAS) fostering academic growth and innovation.

Goal 2: Community Engagement

To enhance community and corporate partnerships (Micron and Sentara), facilitating collaborative academic programs and internships.

ELEVATING ATHLETICS: \$12 MILLION

Goal 1: Co-curricular Opportunities

To expand co-curricular opportunities for student-athletes, including leadership development, academic support, and career planning.

Goal 2: Growing Athletic Achievement

To establish funds aimed at providing scholarship and program funding so the athletics department leadership will have a greater ability to attract additional high-achieving students and retain student-athletes.

ADVANCING EXCELLENCE: \$6 MILLION

Goal 1: Areas of Greatest Need

To support areas of greatest need across the university, including technology upgrades, student services enhancements, and faculty support, ensuring NSU can deliver excellence year after year.

How Can I Get Involved?

Help Spread the Word:

Make a Gift!

Give to your favorite program, college, academic department, athletic team or fund at

www.nsu.edu/nowisourtime

Give Online: www.nsu.edu/givenow

- **Give By Phone (Text to Give):**

Text **nowisourtime** to **41444**.

- **Give by Mail:**

Make checks or money orders payable to:

Norfolk State University Foundation, Inc.

700 Park Avenue, HBW, Suite 410 | Norfolk, VA 23504

- **Double Your Gift**

Your employer may match your gift dollar for dollar. Your Human Resources office can verify if your company participates in a matching gift program.

Easy Ways to Promote the Campaign

- **Download a Zoom Background**

Use during online meetings.

Go to www.nsu.edu/nowisourtime.

- **Share!** Post with **#NowIsOurTime** and tag NSU's channels on Facebook, X, and Instagram. Share your gift and encourage others to support NSU.

- **Display!** Add the "I Gave to the Now Is Our Time Campaign" Badge on your social media or email. Create a video about why you give and inspire others to donate to meaningful programs, teams, or funds.

- **Be Creative!** Include **#NowIsOurTime** in all posts to spread the campaign message. Highlight personal connections and reasons for giving to motivate others. **B**





Above: Dr. Isiah Marshall Jr., Dean of Social Work



The School of Social Work hosted the inaugural one-day Strong Summer Camp. The camp aimed to introduce 9th-10th, and 11th-grade students to the social work field and Norfolk State's campus. Approximately 50 students and volunteers, including students and chaperones from Newport News and Hampton City Public Schools, participated in the day-long camp.

Continuing a 'Strong' Legacy

By JALEESA MANLEY

In June 2022, Dr. Isiah Marshall began his tenure as Dean and Professor of the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work.

As a native of Houston, Texas, Dr. Marshall earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology with a minor concentration in Biology in 1996 from Texas Southern University in Houston. In 1998, Dr. Marshall earned a Master of Social Work from Howard University, and subsequently, he earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology (concentration in Urban Sociology and Criminology) also from Howard University in 2008. From 2014-2016, Dr. Marshall was named a Health Leadership Fellow with the Health Foundation of Western and Central New York.

He sees the School of Social Work through the social work lens and the HBCU context as guiding frameworks. "My vision is that we take seriously the role and responsibility to equip students with knowledge; develop, implement, and produce practical community-based research; and spark innovative ideas that uplift marginalized groups," he states.

Social Work became a major at Norfolk State in 1960. The School of Social Work's namesake, Dr. Ethelyn Ratcliff Strong, played a significant role in the school's progress and success as the founding dean. This 'strong' legacy is continued with the appointment of Dr. Marshall.

"I believe our founding dean's vision was not only to create an academic hub, but rather she developed this School to be a place where students would leave as devoted professionals who would go

on to serve disenfranchised communities in cities such as Portsmouth, Norfolk, Hampton and beyond," Marshall reflects. "As dean, I have the awesome opportunity to graciously lead a diversity of students, faculty, and staff with differing levels of knowledge, personal needs, skills, and understanding."

In Fall 2024, they welcomed the first cohort of graduate students to their fully online Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) Program. Moving to an online platform has made their program competitive locally and nationally; the program's enrollment has increased by more than 100%. Also, the PhD program is now fully online, and we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the program in 2025. "Our online program offerings now allow students to practice social work in the communities in which they live; in addition, it prepares them to address unique challenges their communities present," says Marshall.

When asked how he wants to inspire his students, Marshall says, "I hope that I can inspire students to look beyond where they are today and set their sights on the future. Theologian Dr. Benjamin E. Mays stated, *"The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach."* Sometimes, our students get caught up in their current circumstances and do not allow themselves the space to dream or set goals. When our students go to the next level and work with professionals from other institutions, I want them to exude confidence and discover that they have been exceptionally trained. It all starts with setting goals for success." **B**

College of Science, Engineering and Technology faculty and students attended the 51st Conference of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE) in Orlando, Florida in October. They attended as part of the NoVEL Consortium for Research and Education in Materials Science and Photonics Engineering, a partnership led by NSU, in collaboration with VSU, ECSU and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Pictured from left to right are Curtis Jordan, Shakiya Yindui, Jaycie Jenkins, Alice Cuffee, Kavon Ragland (VSU), Dawn Harris, Ethan Agduzi-Addo, Asia Jones, Shamaar Howard, Ashleigh Wilson, Jordan Simmons and Dr. Suely Black, Chemistry and Center for Materials Research Professor. Jaycie Jenkins and Curtis Jordan earned best undergraduate poster awards in their specific sub-disciplines.



Rhonda Fitzgerald, Ph.D. and **Zenora E. Gay, Ph.D.**, graduated from the Virginia Network for Women in Higher Education of the American Council on Education’s Senior Leadership Seminar. Norfolk State University selected them to participate in the 2023 – 2024 seminarians. Participants were chosen based on a record of leadership at their home institution and their potential to contribute significantly to higher education. The purpose of this program is to bring together emerging women leaders with established leaders in higher education and focus on three core areas: higher education trends, personal development and professional development.



Dr. Akosua Acheamponmaa, director of the NSU Innovation Center (NSUIC), was recognized by Virginia Business as one of the 100 People to Meet in 2025. This recognition is a great honor and a reflection of the impactful work happening at the Innovation Center, located on Main Street in downtown Norfolk.

The NSUIC is designed and developed to support an innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem in Hampton Roads through collaboration with the city of Norfolk and other cities in Hampton Roads, the Small Business Association (SBA), and other entrepreneurial-related organizations. Partnerships and collaboration are the core of the center’s approach to supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.



Dr. Cynthia Nicholson, Associate Dean of the School of Education, was selected as a 2024–25 Fellow for the American Conference of Academic Deans (ACAD). This opportunity will allow her to hone her leadership skills and network with higher education professionals nationwide. Participation in this program gives her the opportunity to attend the ACAD Annual Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. **B**

CLIFFORD PORTER

*Vice President for
University Advancement*



Now is our Time! It's more than just a campaign theme. It's about placing Norfolk State in the best posture today to ensure our success tomorrow. The second comprehensive campaign in the history of the university is building a foundation that will yield returns to support our mission for years to come. Building people is our business and "Now is Our Time" to secure the financial tools necessary to build the next generation of global citizens.

A comprehensive campaign is unique because it is designed to address various needs of the campus community. While capital campaigns look to build and revitalize facilities, comprehensive campaigns touch several facets of the campus community and can have a larger impact on faculty, staff and students. Norfolk State is a dynamic community that becomes more sophisticated in its operations each day. Our university deserves a level of investment that solidifies the level of excellence that is the hallmark of the name Norfolk State. This campaign is about garnering the resources to help secure the right tools for the right people at the right time.

Your contribution will be used to support four distinct areas: Investing in People, Strengthening Academic Programs, Elevating Athletics and Advancing Excellence. Investing in people will allow us to expand our scholarship program to provide more direct support for tuition and fees to students. Strengthening academic programs will support the establishment of endowed faculty positions, enhanced research and scholarship by our academic professionals. Elevating athletic funding will allow our student-athletes to have better facilities and more leadership programs, like C.L.E.A.R., to support their training on and off the field. Advancing excellence is a broad category, but it will give the university the flexibility to address needs that may not be met through our state budget. Your contribution will be invested wisely, and we commit to updating you, so you know just how these donations have impacted the campus.

Nearly a decade after successfully overcoming accreditation issues, Norfolk State is on the rise. Our enrollment is up, academic programs like cybersecurity are receiving national acclaim and our students are being recognized for their work by entities like the Kennedy Center (Theater Program) and the Tournament of Roses Parade Committee (Spartan Legion). Our profile is growing and "Now is Our Time" to show our collective strength by supporting this campaign.

Together we can accomplish much in furtherance of our mission. "Many hands make light work!" If each of us can do a small part to support the campaign, this time can be our time to catapult Norfolk State to the next level. Tens of thousands benefit directly or indirectly from their connection with Norfolk State University. If those beneficiaries would make a small monthly or annual contribution, we can extend that benefit to countless others through our academic programs and economic impact.

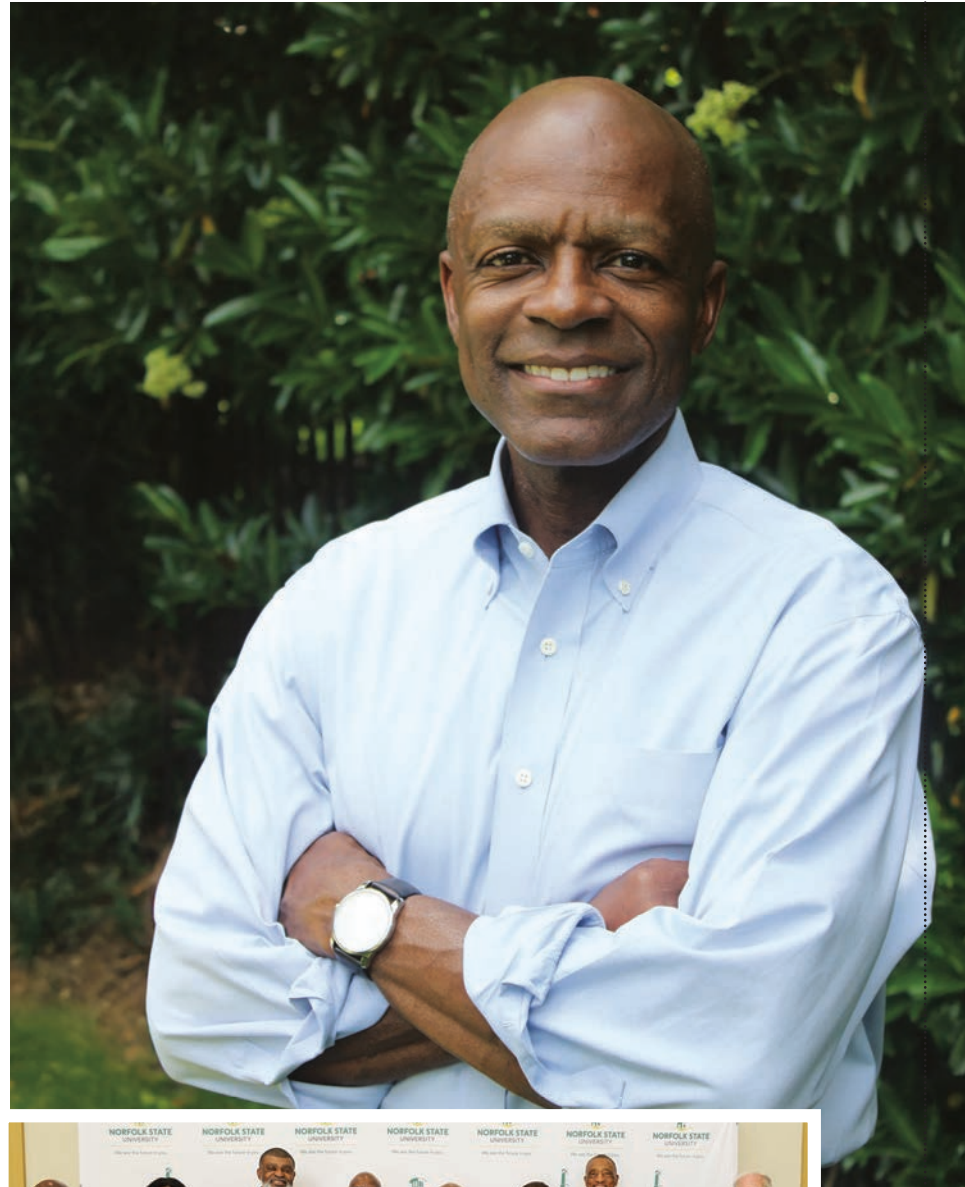
Speaking of economic impact, a 2024 UNCF report shows that Norfolk State University has an annual economic impact of \$308.9 million on the local economy. That figure equates to 3,331 jobs. The lifetime earnings of the NSU class of 2021 alumni are forecast to reach \$2.4 billion. Imagine if 10% of those earnings were given back to support the institution. That would yield \$240 million to continue the rich Norfolk State legacy. While we don't expect anyone to give all, it would be great to say that all gave some.

\$90 million is our goal and we hope that at least 9,000 of our 27,000 alumni and friends will join us as we surpass that amount. As we look to culminate the campaign during NSU's 90th anniversary, **Now is Our Time to do what we've never done before. Behold!** **B**

I am so Excited to Lead the By GARY MCCOLLUM “NOW IS OUR TIME” *Capital Campaign for Norfolk State University*

When I look at Norfolk State University, I see an institution of profound history and boundless potential. I see generations of young minds lifted by the spirit of resilience and a legacy of determination—traits woven deeply into the nearly 90-year-old story of NSU and its students. That is why I could not be prouder to serve as Chair for our *Now Is Our Time: The Campaign for Norfolk State University*, a transformative initiative to secure the future of this remarkable university. Norfolk State has always been a place of promise for those determined to succeed, often despite facing financial or social obstacles. For decades, NSU has welcomed talented students, many of whom like me, have been the first in their families to attend college. They come here with dreams and leave with degrees that empower them to make a difference in their communities and beyond. As a leader in education, the arts, and STEM fields, NSU holds a unique place in the landscape of higher education, and with that comes a profound responsibility to its students, faculty, and alumni. Today, that responsibility has led us to a pivotal moment. This campaign—“Now is Our Time”—is more than a fundraising initiative. It is our opportunity to stand on the shoulders of the trailblazers who initiated the first campaign three decades ago, individuals like Dr. Marie McDemmond, whose leadership laid the groundwork for so much of the progress we’ve seen.

Their efforts brought NSU to a new level of excellence, and today we have the privilege—and the duty—to build on that foundation. “Now is Our Time” reflects both urgency and hope. Our goal is not just to improve facilities or increase scholarships; it is to amplify the impact of Norfolk State as a center of educational innovation and excellence. In an era where the value of education is more important than ever, NSU has a distinct role to play. The investments we make today will help propel students forward and fortify a legacy that will shape our region, our state, and even the world. So, why did I say yes to this campaign? Because I believe in what NSU represents. I believe in the resilience of its students and the power of our community. Norfolk State has always been here for those who dared to dream; now it’s time for us to show up for NSU in a way that will carry it into the next century. As we continue with this campaign, we do so with the support of loyal alumni, dedicated faculty, and generous partners. We recognize the impact this campaign will have, not just on the campus itself but on every student who walks through its gates. We stand at the cusp of a new chapter, one where NSU’s legacy of excellence and empowerment will continue to flourish. Now is our time—our time to elevate Norfolk State University to new heights and secure its place as a beacon of opportunity for generations to come. **B**



Above Right: Gary McCollum
Right: The NIOT Steering Committee

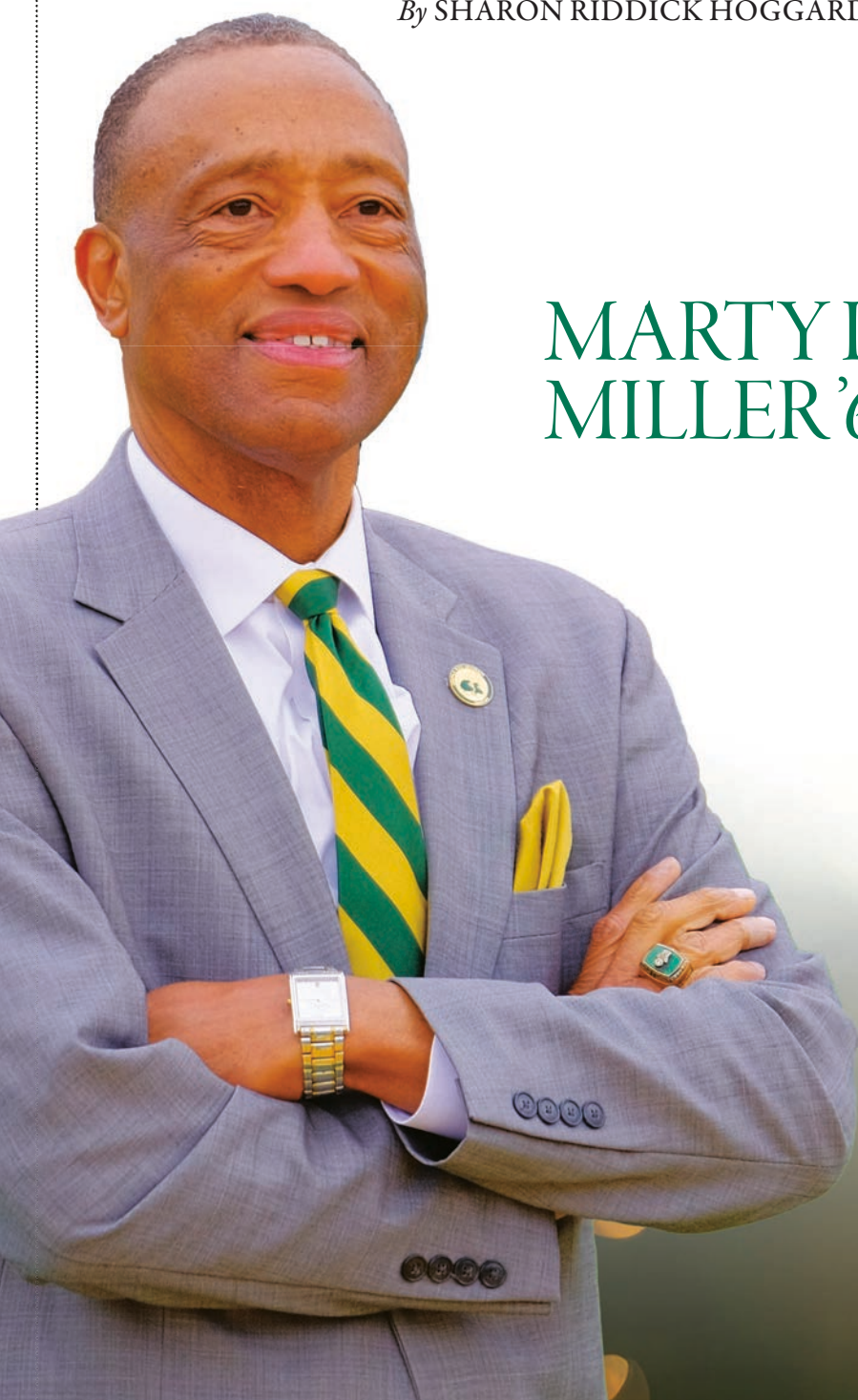
NOW IS OUR TIME:

Three Men and A Legacy

Marty L. Miller '69, Melvin T. Stith Jr. '68 and Kim Brown '84 all have different stories about how they came to Norfolk State. Yet they all have the same conclusion. If it hadn't been for NSU, they wouldn't have achieved what they have over their lifetimes. As a result, they believe it is their obligation to give back to the University because of it.

By SHARON RIDDICK HOGGARD (M.A.'04)

MARTY L. MILLER '69



Marty L. Miller, special assistant to the University President and the Office of University Advancement, is Norfolk State's winningest baseball coach and 11-time Baseball Hall of Famer. He has served his Alma Mater for nearly 50 years as coach, director of financial aid, assistant vice president for student affairs and athletics director. As Miller, a native of Danville, Virginia, tells it, he came to Norfolk State—then Norfolk State College—with little financial means—taking a Greyhound bus with \$20 in his pocket.

"The ticket was \$7 and after buying food, I had \$10 left," he laughed. "When I arrived on campus, I was asked for \$232.50, and I told the officials I didn't have any money. All I had was a little bag of clothes and my acceptance letter." Miller said he was then directed to see the college's comptroller, Ms. Esther Wilson. "To this day, I don't know what I signed, but Norfolk State made it possible for me to enroll. Norfolk State helped me to exceed all of my expectations for myself. It gave me the opportunity to go to college and graduate." Not only did he obtain a degree, but he also achieved his greatest aspiration and that was to play professional baseball. In 1971, the Minnesota Twins signed Marty Miller.

Miller officially retired from NSU in 2019, but his devotion for the institution had him un-retiring when the university president asked him to stay on another year. "I tell people that NSU is the greatest institution and that it has and continues to change lives."

Miller has been donating to Norfolk State over the decades because "I had to repay a debt. Norfolk State made it possible for me to get my expenses paid. I've always wanted to repay that debt. I think that's one of the reasons I never left. I'm still committed to paying it back. Norfolk State saw the future in me. I want to make it possible for the university to find another Marty Miller."

He and his wife, Liz, reached the Lyman Beecher Brooks Society level of giving in 2023 and have established the Marty L. Miller Endowed Scholarship. "We want to help students. Norfolk State opened her doors to me, and I want to do the same for other students," he continued. As part of the team working on the Campaign for Norfolk State University, Miller said his role is to help raise funds to achieve the targeted campaign goal of \$90 million and beyond. "Additionally, I want to reach an audience that does not know the true value of investing in Norfolk State. We have people who believe and are pleased when they see the value and significance of Norfolk State." **B**

MELVIN T. STITH JR. '68

Dr. Melvin T. Stith majored in sociology at Norfolk State College from 1964 to 1968. Although he never entered the social work or affiliated professions, he did parlay his Norfolk State academic experience into a long and celebrated career in higher education having held the position of dean of the Martin J. Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University, dean of the College of Business at Florida State University and corporate director of numerous publicly traded corporations. Stith also served as interim president of Norfolk State University. He says he chose Norfolk State because he had family in nearby Portsmouth. Stith's uncle picked him up from his family's farm in his hometown of Jarrett, Virginia, before the semester began. "I could catch the tunnel bus to Norfolk, but I paid a friend 50 cents a day for a ride to campus."

Stith was on an ROTC scholarship and went straight from Norfolk State into the military. He has memories of his time on campus that remain etched in his psyche. "There were only four or five buildings on campus then. Students were required to attend chapel every Monday with Dr. Brooks (Lyman Beecher Brooks). As we heard the booming noise of construction on campus, Dr. Brooks exclaimed it was the sound of progress and that Norfolk State would grow all the way to Brambleton Avenue. Back then, I thought what is he talking about," Stith laughed. "I was blessed to be there. The professors were amazing! Dr. Ethelyn Strong was a key influencer and David Stamps had such an impact on my life. I often called him for advice. Dr. Marian Capps, Dr. Brooks and all the professors created such a powerful professional connection between the faculty and students. The undergraduate experience set the tone for the rest of my life. Everything I accomplished in life was because of Norfolk State," he added.

Dr. Stith also has a sustained history of giving to Norfolk State. "Giving sends a signal to my fellow Spartans to support Norfolk State University. Every dollar we give shows that NSU has made a difference in our lives, and it sends a signal to current students that alumni care about them and the institution." Stith and his wife, Dr. Patricia Lynch Stith, whom he met at Norfolk State and has been married to for 54 years, are members of the Lyman Beecher Brooks Society of donors. The Stiths provided funding for the Melvin & Patricia Stith Alumni House and the Dr. Patricia Lynch Stith Student Success Center. "I want my legacy to be that I was an alum that really cared about the welfare of NSU, and I did what I could to ensure Norfolk State was seen in a positive light and being an advocate for the school. What a great time I had there!"

"The Campaign is important. It's time for everyone to rally around NSU. Give what you can. Every dollar makes a difference. The Campaign for Norfolk State University will give the university discretionary dollars that are above and beyond what the state provides." **B**

CONTINUED ON PG. 12



KIM BROWN '84

CONTINUED FROM PG. 11

Bishop Kim W. Brown is a charismatic and well-known pastor originally from Portsmouth, Virginia. Today, he serves as the leading bishop of The Mount Global Fellowship of Churches, overseeing seven locations around Hampton Roads and one in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. He completed his studies at Norfolk State in 1984 and received a bachelor's degree in industrial arts education. He holds a master of divinity degree and a doctorate from Virginia Union University. "I don't know if I chose Norfolk State or Norfolk State chose me. I had one opportunity to go to college. NSU was the girl that invited me to dance," Bishop Brown chuckled. He admits that his grades were subpar. "My grades weren't that good. I had to enroll in remedial math classes," he quipped. "Norfolk State gave me a shot. I owe her."

Bishop Brown says his mother was an old-school single mom. "I had a choice – go to college or join the military. I was not going to become a grown man lying around my mother's house doing nothing. So, I enrolled in NSU," he recollected. Norfolk State's impact on Bishop Brown is imprinted on his bones. "The university made me believe in myself. For me, the thing that the HBCU college experience does is instill pride and confidence with a humility buffer. I still remember student teaching and talking to Dr. Elaine Witty and Dr. Sidney Boose. They would never let you settle. The professors pulled it out of you. There were so many folks around you that would not let you settle," he continued. Bishop Brown believes in the mission of

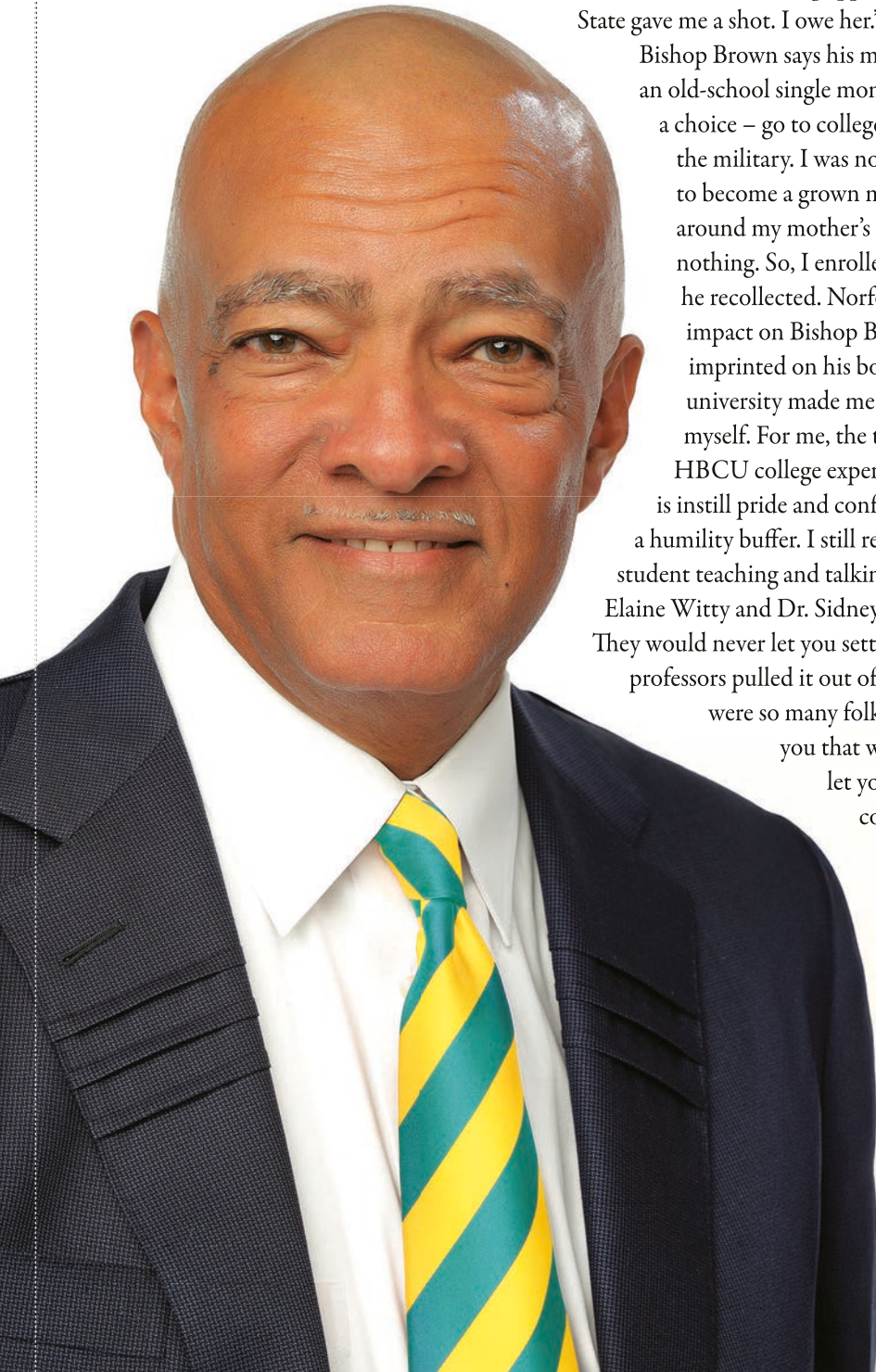
historically black colleges and universities. "HBCUs get marked for not having the same standards and expertise. These institutions prepare students for the real world and how it works and push you to understand how not to accept excuses."

Another long-time financial supporter of NSU, Bishop Brown says that he continues to assist the university because some people don't understand the giving principle. "I want to be able to give to the university so that the "Kim Brown" in 2025 can go to school. That's how I look at it! Because of my experience at NSU, I am proud that my children attended HBCUs, and they donate to their respective schools. I don't think that we've done the best job in helping people understand academic philanthropic needs. We must pay it forward." Bishop Brown's giving to NSU has earned him a place in the Lyman Beecher Brooks Society of donors.

Bishop Brown says that the Campaign for Norfolk State University, where he serves as part of the Advancement Advisory Group, will not only meet the fundraising goal but will go a long way in communicating the value of the institution's brand. "Whenever people see others giving, they recognize the value in it. I'll be the first to tell you when the fundraising team said they were going to raise \$90 million it blew my mind. But I believe when we announce that the university has raised that \$90 million it will be motivational. It will motivate others to give and put value on this institution."

"When I talk about Norfolk State University, I tell people that I believe that we can stack up against anybody in academic settings anywhere. I try to dispel the myth that we are less than because we have the brightest professors, brightest students, tremendous leadership and our senior leadership team from the provost to the president, I'd put them up against anybody," declared Bishop Brown.

Marty L. Miller, Bishop Kim W. Brown and Dr. Melvin T. Stith were all transformed by a common thread – the impact of Norfolk State University. And, in their own ways and means they have left an indelible legacy – a legacy of selflessness in their giving to NSU. Ensuring that the next generation of students will have an opportunity of obtaining a college degree. Now is our time to show up and show out for Norfolk State University and to tell others what the institution means to the Hampton Roads community, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the nation. Generations of alumni have made their own marks all around our country because of the influence of the university. Join us. Give to the Campaign for Norfolk State University. Now is our time. Visit <https://www.nsu.edu/now-is-our-time/about> for details. **B**



Emerald SOCIETY

The Emerald Society was formed in 2015. Twenty individuals were inducted in the inaugural class. In 2017, seven individuals and one foundation were inducted. In 2018, 16 individuals were inducted and in 2022, 32 individuals were inducted. This year, 39 individuals were inducted.



President Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D. & Dmitri Gaston
 Dr. Howard G. Adams (B.S. '64) &
 Dr. Eloise C. Adams (B.S. '64)
 Rev. Jeffrey D. Belfied & Kathy Pope Belfied '87
 Willie L. Brown '79
 Malcomb D. Coley
 Charles R. Cone '95 & Clementine S. Cone
 Clifton J. Crocker & Eunice R. Crocker '69
 Elizabeth C. Dooling, M.D.
 Tony A. Fisher, Jr. & Dr. Patricia H. Fisher (B.S. '71)
 Dr. Deborah S. Foreman (B.S. '76)
 Estherine J. Harding '74
 Devon M. Henry '00 & Angela Henry '00
 James H. Hunt, Jr. & Laura B. Hunt

Gerald E. Hunter, Ph.D.
 The Honorable Raymond A. Jackson '70
 COL (Ret.) Timothy E. Lamb '83
 Leatha M. Lamison-White '74
 Dr. Janet M. McKenzie (B.S. '73)
 Carolyn W. Meyers, Ph.D.
 Jeff Moore & Rosel Moore
 Donnell C. Parham '80
 Langston B. Powell, Jr. '76
 Charles T. Saunders, C.P.A.
 John E. Warren
 Walter R. Wall & Heather A. Johnson Wall
 Clyde D. Wiggins '67
 Dr. Albert J. Williams (B.S. '69) & Brenda W. Williams '68

Faculty

The commitment of faculty and staff is crucial to Norfolk State's fundraising activities and goals. Their contributions are an investment in the institution and the students they teach and interact with. Through the Now Is Our Time campaign, Norfolk State is highlighting faculty and staff who give faithfully and students who receive donor contributions. Look for their testimonies on lamp pole banners throughout campus. See a sample below. **B**



“
NSU is family,
so I am thrilled
to share my
time, talent
and treasure
with them.”
— Dr. Moncef Belhadjali



“
By supporting
our students'
dreams, we're
not just changing
individual lives
—we're shaping
the future of our
community and
creating lasting
legacies.”
— Breshell Jackson-Nevels, PhD

“

I support Norfolk State due to its transformative power and students' boundless potential.”

—Towanda R. Colquiett

Students



“

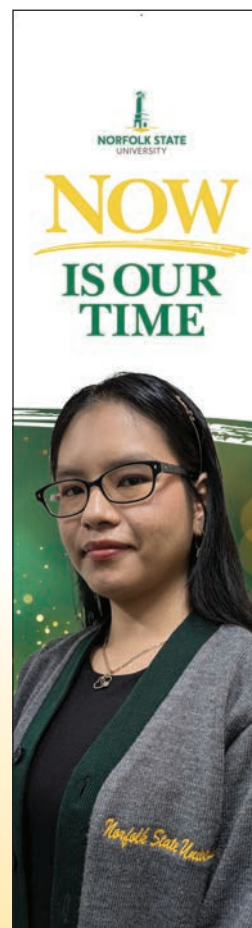
Norfolk State has really helped me to grow into the person I wanted to be.”

— Kaleb Jaman

“

NOW
IS OUR
TIME

www.nsu.edu/nowisourtime



“

I'm extremely happy with my decision to come to Norfolk State. The teachers here, the advisors, with VCAN, they will go above and beyond.”

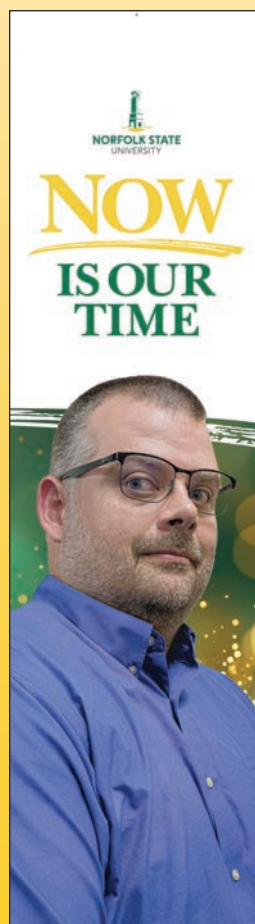
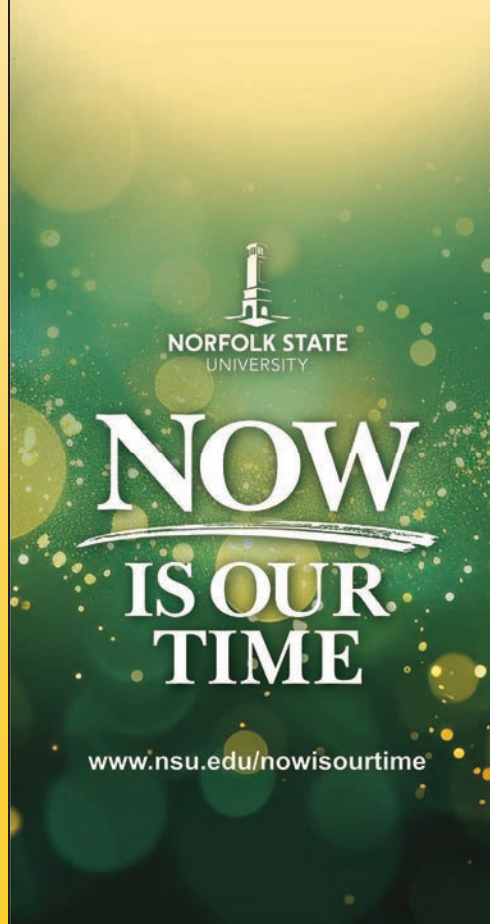
— Jasmin Cabanas-Merida

“

NOW
IS OUR
TIME

www.nsu.edu/nowisourtime

Staff



“

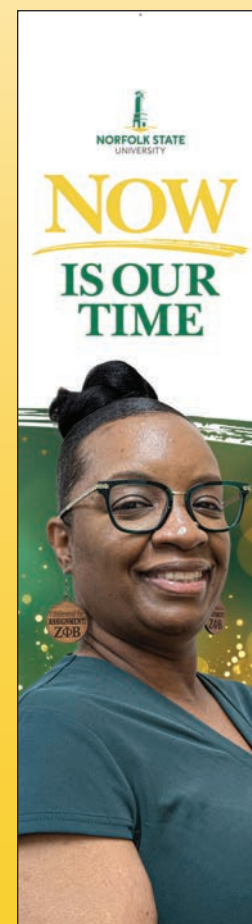
I support NSU to ensure that future generations cannot only meet but exceed their potential.”

— Peter Glanville

“

NOW
IS OUR
TIME

www.nsu.edu/nowisourtime



“

I feel it is my responsibility as a member of the community to invest in the future of our students.”

— Keshia Woodous

“

NOW
IS OUR
TIME

www.nsu.edu/nowisourtime

Norfolk State University Foundation SERVES VITAL ROLE in Campaign

By SHARON RIDDICK HOGGARD (M.A.'04)

Norfolk State University, gearing up to observe its 90th anniversary in 2025, launched the most successful fundraising campaign in the University's history. Now Is Our Time – The Campaign for Norfolk State University will be one for the fundraising chronicles. At the rudder of the drive, providing guidance, collaboration, advocacy, and stewardship is the Norfolk State University Foundation Inc. (NSUF). The NSUF is a nonprofit fundraising corporation established to support quality education, generate and manage private financial support for the academic development of the institution. The NSUF board members are actively engaged and participating in the campaign's initiatives.

In June 2024, the Foundation chose a new president. A four-year tenure under her belt, NSU alumna Lorie McCowan assumed leadership responsibilities for the Norfolk State University Foundation. McCowan earned a bachelor of science degree in accounting from Norfolk State University in 1996. "My degree equipped me with a comprehensive understanding of financial principles and best practices – a foundation that has significantly

contributed to professional success over the years." She later earned a master of science in accountancy with a specialization in taxation from Strayer University. The proud mother of a 13-year-old son, McCowan is the Chief Operating Officer for Bright Hope Capital, LLC, with oversight for its subsidiaries, R.J. Leeper Construction, LLC, and Bright Hope Hauling, LLC.

In discussing the historic fundraising effort, McCowan said, "We are fully supportive of the campaign's objectives and dedicated to its success." McCowan's business partners at Bright Hope Capital speak in glowing terms about her skills and experience. "Lorie possesses those intangible skill sets that we diligently looked for in a leader which led us to hire her in 2020 as our Chief Operating Officer and subsequently a 25 percent ownership in Bright Hope Construction," said Malcomb Coley, managing member of Bright Hope Capital. "Those skill sets were obtained because of her unmatched education from NSU and amazing professional experiences. Her commitment to education and her alma mater led the partners of Bright Hope Capital to pledge \$350,000, which includes matching dollars to the Lorie McCowan Endowed Accountancy Scholarship," Coley added.

CONTINUED ON PG. 18





Lorie McCowan
Accounting, B.S.

CONTINUED FROM PG. 16

McCowan established the endowment at Norfolk State in 2017 because of her resolute dedication to education and a passion for giving back to support future generations. “This endowment provides crucial financial assistance to deserving accounting students from single-parent households,” she stated. A longtime contributor to NSU, McCowan’s unwavering financial support stems from her deep gratitude for a full scholarship she received. “That opportunity

profoundly impacted my life, and I am committed to ensuring that future generations of students have access to similar transformative experiences. I believe strongly in the principle of paying it forward and working to alleviate the financial burden of higher education, thereby expanding access and opportunity for all deserving students. My contributions reflect this commitment.”

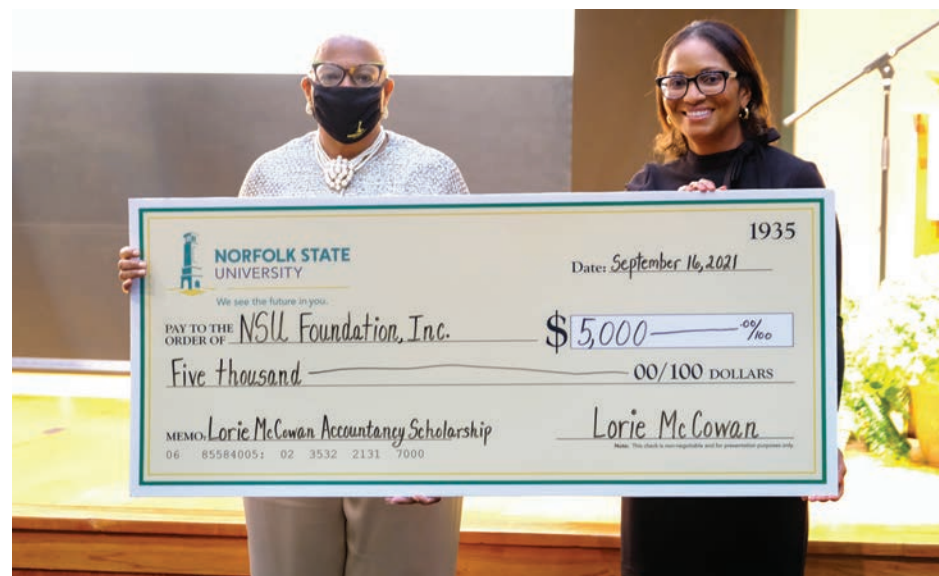
McCowan grew up in Goochland County, Virginia, in what she describes as a ‘large and close-knit family.’ “I developed a strong work ethic and a deep commitment to community engagement, values instilled by my parents. This upbringing has significantly shaped my professional and philanthropic endeavors.”

As leader of the NSUF and a committed Norfolk State alumna, McCowan’s fundraising philosophy is based on her belief that every NSU alumna has a valuable role to play in supporting the University’s continued success. “Contributions, regardless of size collectively make an impact. My belief is grounded in the understanding that giving back is a mutually beneficial act. It not only provides much needed resources for the University’s initiatives but also offers the donor a profound sense of fulfillment and connection to their institution.”

McCowan’s education, experience and work ethic bode well for not only a successful major gifts campaign but also for financial planning and strategy that will serve the university well in the future. “As president of the NSUF, I provide strategic leadership and operational oversight. My responsibilities encompass the effective execution of the foundation’s mission, staff management and the cultivation of strong relationships with donors and key stakeholders,” McCowan explained. She works in partnership with both the

Left: McCowan (first row, third from the left) attending the 2002 Homecoming game with her Alpha Kappa Alpha Inc. sorority.

Below: McCowan presented a check to the NSU Foundation in honor of the Lorie McCowan Endowed Scholarship Fund.



foundation’s Board of Directors and the university’s Board of Visitors liaison to ensure alignment on strategic priorities and informed decision-making. “This collaborative approach guarantees the foundation’s continued success in achieving its goals.”

Every donation to Norfolk State University is handled via the NSUF. McCowan further clarified, “The NSU Foundation diligently manages and invests private gifts, encompassing endowment funds, and real property. Our primary objective is to maximize the impact of these donations to bolster the university’s ability to provide scholarships and support programs for students, faculty, and staff. The foundation’s investment portfolio is overseen by Bank of America in conjunction with the Foundation’s Investment Committee and Board of Directors. We achieved a remarkable outcome in 2023 – for every dollar donated to the Foundation, 90 cents went directly back to the University in the form of scholarships and program support. This significantly surpasses the industry’s best practices for nonprofit organizations, which typically aim for an 80 percent return. This high distribution rate underscores our commitment to efficient and effective stewardship of donated funds.”

To incentivize prospective donors, the Foundation established a dollar-for-dollar cash match program up to \$250,000. “It proved highly effective by attracting many new donors and fully utilizing the allocated resources before the campaign deadline,” she continued. The Foundation also offers a range of deferred giving options including estate gifts, life insurance policies, and charitable gift annuities. “These planned giving vehicles enable donors to make substantial contributions to the Foundation, often through the strategic use of appreciated assets, while simultaneously realizing potential tax benefits. We believe these options offer a valuable opportunity for long-term philanthropic support.”

In December 2021, Norfolk State’s endowment portfolio was valued at more than \$83 million. “As of the current valuation, the University’s endowment portfolio stands at approximately \$102 million. A key initiative contributing to the endowment growth in the previous fiscal year was the successful implementation of the matching gift program,” McCowan stated. “This program, coupled with the Foundation’s established and prudent investment policy, empowers our investment managers to capitalize on favorable market conditions to maximize returns. The NSUF investment portfolio has demonstrated strong performance in 2024. Net of fees, the

year-to-date return (through the third quarter) is 11.64 percent, with one-year and two-year returns of 21.37 percent and 16.12 percent respectively. We are pleased with these results and remain committed to responsible and strategic investment management.”

McCowan believes the Campaign for Norfolk State University represents a transformative vision for the institution. “The comprehensive campaign focuses on empowering our students and strengthening our academic excellence. The initiative will significantly enhance student success by expanding scholarship opportunities. Increased financial aid, including a higher average award amount, will bridge the gap between tuition and living expenses enabling us to enroll and retain a more diverse and talented student body. We believe this multifaceted campaign will propel Norfolk State University to new heights of excellence.” **B**

“I developed a strong work ethic and a deep commitment to community engagement, values instilled by my parents. This upbringing has significantly shaped my professional and philanthropic endeavors.”



Above: Lorie is involved with the \$110 million expansion project at the Charlotte Convention Center.

Uncovering THE PAST

By JALEESA MANLEY

Uncovering the past bridges the gap between generations. This sentiment couldn't be more accurate for Norfolk State University alumnus DeMarlo Porter '06. For more than 10 years, Porter has dedicated his time and efforts to restoring the neglected gravesites of African American World War I and II, Korean, and Vietnam War veterans. For the past three years, he has been undertaking this work through his nonprofit Legacy Project Cemetery Restoration Group. From interviewing elders to viewing military records and visiting cemeteries, his passion for history has shown through.

After leaving the military, Porter earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from Norfolk State. One of his professors, Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, made a profound impact on his view of African American history. "After spending time in Europe and thinking I had mastered African history, Dr. Newby-Alexander's depth and breadth in the field of history was one of the most inspirational things for me at that time," he reflects. "I realized there was so much I didn't know and she, along with other members of the NSU staff, truly inspired me in the field." This curiosity was evident in the summer of 2017 while traveling with his grandparents in his hometown of Warrenton, Georgia. They rode past an overgrown cemetery, and Porter asked himself who was responsible for it. At that moment, he answered his question with "We are responsible" because his town's leaders, mentors, pastors, fathers and mothers were laid to rest there. From his answer, the Legacy Project Cemetery Preservation Group was born.

Extra care and a sense of dignity are used in restoring each gravestone. Rather than pressure washing, the group uses D/2 Biological Solution to gradually clean the headstones. Once the gravestone is repaired, small trees, debris and grass are removed from the plot's vicinity. To complete this work, Porter enlists the help of the surrounding communities, including the relatives of those buried in the cemeteries, where they also share the stories of the veterans and their families. "One of our main goals is to bridge the generational gaps that exist between the elders of the community and the young people," Porter states. "We want our young people to be involved and to know that even in small towns in America, we have stories that need to be told." Since navigating the journey of cemetery restoration, Legacy Project has restored over 60 veteran headstones across five rural Georgia counties: Warren, Taliaferro, Hancock, McDuffie and Jefferson. Currently, they stay within a 40-mile radius of Warrenton, Georgia, and follow records concerning veterans and American heroes. However, the organization has also traveled to the Philippines and attempted to uncover the stories of the Buffalo soldiers who served during the Philippine-American War. They found that several African American soldiers dropped their arms and fought alongside the Filipinos in their fight for freedom. The Legacy Project plans to schedule a study abroad tour to the Philippines for high school students

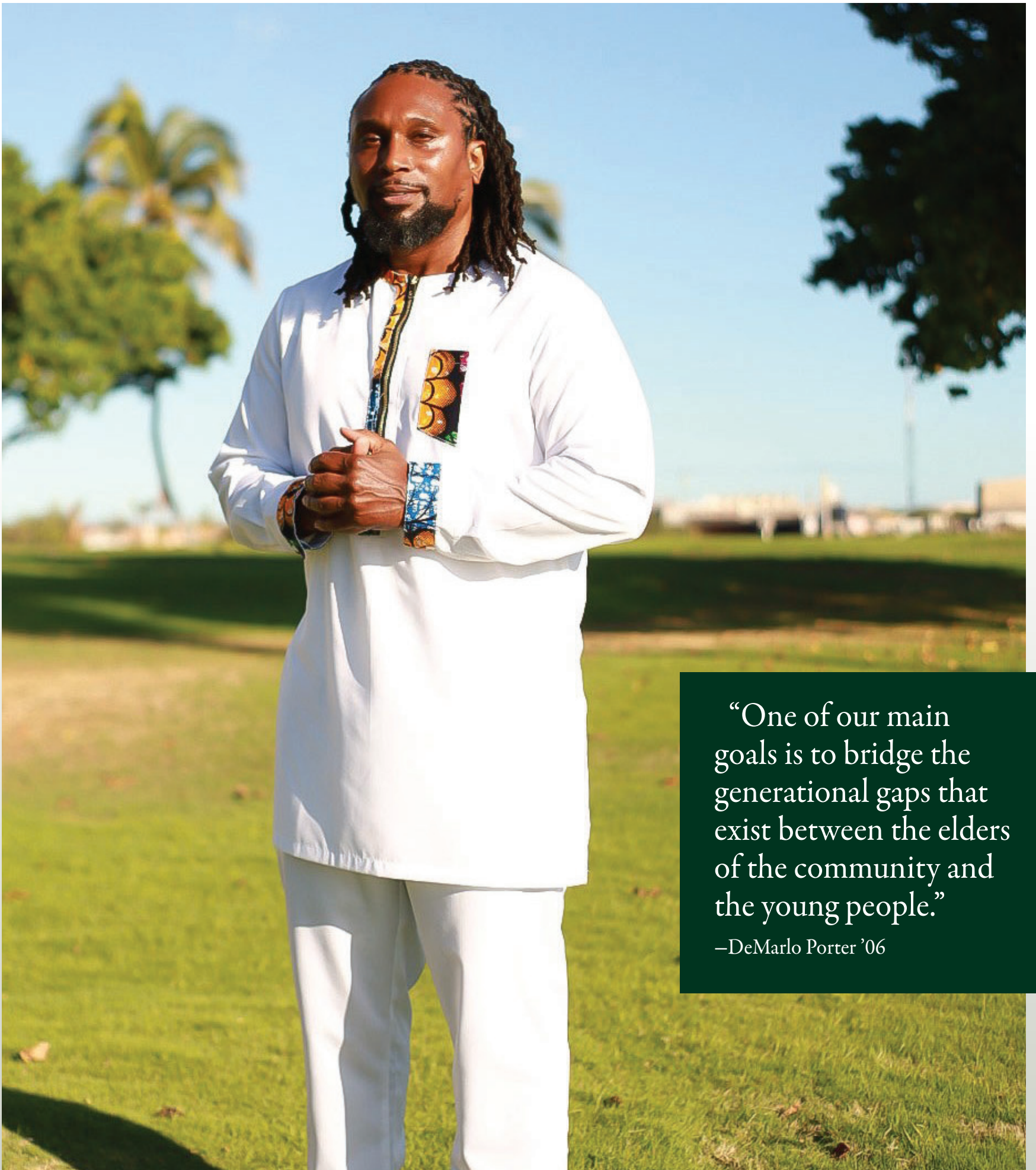


Above: Before and After Photos – Along with restoring the headstones, the surrounding area is also landscaped.

interested in African American history and its global impact. For all their efforts, they heavily rely on personal donations, support from local churches, fundraisers, and GoFundMe to support specific events. Porter understands that the veterans whose graves he restores lived in a time when they were called to fight for a freedom they did not have as citizens of the United States. "As an Army veteran, I now truly appreciate their sacrifices and the

opportunities that I had as a young man entering the Army right out of high school," he reflects. "Seeing their resting places in disarray is very emotional to me as I feel we should honor them and know the parts of their stories that we can capture. We have a very rich history and the resilience displayed by our ancestors is worth acknowledging and sharing with the next generations." **B**





“One of our main goals is to bridge the generational gaps that exist between the elders of the community and the young people.”

—DeMarlo Porter '06

EMPOWERING THE FUTURE:

Mission Fulfilled 2030 and the Tech School for Black Boys

By STEVEN E. OPFER

“Many tech programs aren’t designed with Black youth in mind,” Moore points out. “We need spaces where young Black men can excel without feeling like they have to separate from their communities or compromise their identity.”

– Gerald Moore



Norfolk State University has always been a launchpad for visionary Spartans, and Gerald Moore, a 1995 graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Electronics Technology, is a prime example. Today, he is not only a seasoned cybersecurity engineer with over 20 years of experience in the federal sector but also a dedicated mentor, entrepreneur, and the founder of Mission Fulfilled 2030—a nonprofit initiative with a bold vision to equip 100,000 young Black men with the skills and support they need to thrive in the tech industry by 2030.

Moore's journey started at Norfolk State, where he juggled academics and fatherhood with determination. Inspired by the support of faculty members, he realized the power of mentorship and perseverance.

"NSU was transformative for me," Moore said. "It's where I learned the importance of community, perseverance, and staying focused on my goals, even when the path wasn't easy."

It was through these life lessons that the seeds for Mission Fulfilled 2030 were planted. After his career in cybersecurity began, Moore quickly noticed the glaring absence of Black men in tech spaces.

"Black men make up less than 5% of the tech and STEM workforce," he said.

This stark underrepresentation deeply concerned him and fueled his passion to create pathways for young Black boys to enter the industry, offering them a future beyond sports or entertainment.

Mission Fulfilled 2030's flagship initiative, the Online Tech School for Black Boys, addresses this issue head-on. The school provides students with foundational tech skills in areas like AI, cybersecurity, and entrepreneurship. However, what sets it apart from traditional tech programs is its focus on cultivating a sense of belonging and empowerment.

"Many tech programs aren't designed with Black youth in mind," Moore points out. "We need spaces where young Black men can excel without feeling like they have to separate from their communities or compromise their identity."

The school isn't just about tech education. It's about life education. Moore emphasizes that the young men coming through his program leave not only as tech experts but as community builders, fathers, and leaders. His goal is not only to equip them with the tools to succeed professionally but also to shape them into responsible men who uplift their families and communities.

From humble beginnings, Mission Fulfilled 2030 has grown into a multifaceted organization with a clear and expansive vision. The Rochester, NY-based Tech & Innovation Center, which Moore opened in his hometown, is a testament to his commitment to the mission. This 10,000-square-foot facility offers hands-on training and support for young Black men in tech, tackling issues like literacy, mental health, and social-emotional learning alongside STEM education.

"This center is more than just a place for tech training," Moore explained. "It's a commitment to my community, to break the cycle of poverty and to provide opportunities that many young men might never have had."

The Rochester facility is just the beginning. Moore's plan is to scale this model across major cities nationwide, ensuring that the mission reaches young men in underserved communities across the U.S.

By 2030, Moore aims to impact 100,000 young Black males through Mission Fulfilled 2030, with programs like the Certified BIPOC Boys Initiative and the Youth Tech Entrepreneurs Program. He's already reached over 8,000 young men, but his vision doesn't stop there.

"2030 is a significant milestone, but our vision rolls into 2040 and beyond," Moore said. "We want to ensure that this movement becomes a legacy—one that not only transforms individuals but entire communities."

To make this vision a reality, Moore knows that collaboration and support are essential. He hopes his NSU family will help in this mission.

"Black male-led nonprofits receive less than 1% of all philanthropic dollars," Moore said. "To achieve this vision, I need the support of the Spartan community. Together, we can build something extraordinary—something that will impact generations to come."

Gerald Moore's vision is deeply rooted in the values he cultivated during his time at Norfolk State University. His mission to uplift young Black men through tech is not just about career success; it's about restoring the Black family, empowering communities, and creating lasting social and economic change.

"NSU taught me perseverance and leadership," Moore said. "And I expect many of the young men who come through Mission Fulfilled 2030 to become Spartans themselves, continuing the legacy of fighting for the advancement of Black people globally."

As Moore continues to push toward his 2030 goal, he remains laser-focused on the future—not just for the young men he serves but for their families, their communities, and generations to come. His message is clear: "We are building the future, and together, we will see this vision through."

For more information on how you can support Mission Fulfilled 2030, visit their website at <https://www.missionfulfilled2030.org>. **B**



ALUMNI EXCEED

Fundraising Goals for Endowed Scholarship



Above: The Pershing Rifles (P/R) and Pershing Angels (P/A) alumni at Norfolk State University

Below: The Pershing Rifles Crest



The Pershing Rifles (P/R) and Pershing Angels (P/A) alumni at Norfolk State University (NSU) have not only honored their storied past but also secured a brighter future for the next generation of students by the establishment of the NSU Pershing Rifles and Pershing Angels Alumni Endowed Scholarship Fund at Norfolk State University.

The Fund will exclusively provide financial assistance to degree-seeking undergraduate students who are members in good standing of the NSU Chapter of Pershing Rifles or Pershing Angels and enrolled in Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs or who demonstrate a record of leadership and initiative through campus and community involvement.

What began as a small group of dedicated alumni working towards a modest \$25,000 endowed scholarship goal has grown into a thriving effort that, as of October 2024, has raised almost \$140,000—exceeding the original target by a remarkable margin.

This effort started in 2015, when a reunion to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Pershing Rifles organization at NSU “sparked a broader vision from the Lord,” according to Rev. Dr. James Edwards, III.

Under the leadership of Colonel Harold L. Hagans, Jr., U.S. Army (Ret.), a committee was formed, including Edwards, to ensure the long-term impact of the Pershing Rifles and Pershing Angels organizations on campus. All of the members were part of the NSU Alumni Association Military Alumni Chapter Foundation, and five were in the NSU ROTC Hall of Fame.

With a desire to assist students financially, the committee decided to establish an endowed scholarship fund to benefit deserving students in line with Edwards' vision.

By March 2021, the committee had reached its initial \$25,000 goal, but the passion to give back didn't stop there. Under the guidance of Commander Lin Walton, U.S. Navy (Ret.), the committee set its sights on a much more ambitious goal: raising \$100,000.

“The Campaign Committee put in a yeoman's effort to ensure we met the minimum goal of raising \$100,000,” Walton said.

Walton's fundraising expertise, combined with the continued commitment of alumni and donors, propelled the campaign beyond all expectations. As of October 2024, they have raised \$125,000 in donations, and with stock market gains, the total has surpassed \$145,000—an impressive feat for a campaign that continues to receive ongoing support.

The alumni behind this effort view the success as a template for other university organizations.

“This is not just about what we can do for P/R and P/A activities,” Walton said. “It's about creating a model for others to follow in raising funds that will benefit NSU for generations to come.”

The scholarship fund is more than just a financial boost; it is a testament to the deep bond shared by P/R and P/A alumni and their dedication to giving back.

“We give back to NSU because we appreciate the investment made in us to enhance our success,” said Dr. Edgar I. Farmer, one of the founding members of the campaign. “The return on investment represents a small token of the interest paid on the debt we owe to our beloved Alma Mater—that's why we give.”

In addition to the fundraising, the committee also provides ongoing support to P/R and P/A members by offering mentorship, career enhancement books, and financial assistance for attending national meetings and conferences. These efforts ensure that current P/R and P/A students receive not only financial aid but also guidance and opportunities that prepare them for successful careers.

The Pershing Rifles and Pershing Angels have a rich history at NSU. Founded at NSU in 1959, the P/R unit has long played a pivotal role in fostering leadership, discipline, and military excellence. The P/A organization, formed in 1964 at NSU, has similarly made a profound impact, offering a strong network of support for women aspiring to serve in the military.

As the committee looked toward the December 31, 2024, campaign conclusion, there was no doubt that their impact would be felt for years to come. For more information on how to contribute to the scholarship fund or become involved in the efforts, please contact the NSU Foundation at (757) 823-8323 or via email at nsuf@nsu.edu. **B**



JOINT SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Seeks to Help Communities Thrive By FELECIA MEBANE

Back row: Dr. Brian Martin - JSPH Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Jamela Martin - Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Nursing and Allied Health, Dr. DoVeanna Fulton - Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Michael Kieve - Professor and Dean, College of Science Engineering and Technology, Dr. Li-Wu Chen - JSPH Professor and Dean, Dr. Brett Sierra, JSPH Assistant Professor, Dr. Stephen Nkansah-Amankra - Associate Professor and MPH Director, Dr. Felicia Mebane - Executive Director, Center for Public Health Initiatives at NSU and JSPH Associate Dean for Community Engagement and Outreach, Amy Matzke-Fawcett - JSPH Director of Strategic Communication and Outreach, Alexis Cardell - Program Coordinator - Academic Initiatives, Center for Public Health Initiatives at NSU, Inaugural cohort of MPH Program (health equity concentration) students: Faustina Osei, Janaya Nicole Belcher, Jasia-Jemay Francesca Henderson, Millicent Ayisi, Tina Harris-Dixon. Credit: Storm Calder, Program Coordinator - Communications, Center for Public Health Initiatives at NSU

The Joint School of Public Health at Old Dominion University and Norfolk State University (JSPH) embodies NSU's dedication to public health, which "promotes and protects the health of people and communities where they live, learn, work and play." With this new school, NSU enhances its capacity for providing community-engaged education, research, practice and continuing education that helps all people and communities to thrive.

The JSPH at NSU started with the NSU Public Health Collaborative (a working group of more than 30 faculty members) followed by an MPH Program focused on health equity. The Center for Public Health Initiatives at NSU was also created to support JSPH development and initiatives led by NSU faculty, staff and students. CPHI is led by Dr. Felicia Mebane who also serves as the Associate Dean for Community Engagement and Outreach for the JSPH.

In September 2024, the JSPH's approval by SCHEV, a critical step towards the Council on Education for Public Health Accreditation, was celebrated by NSU and school leaders.

"The JSPH at NSU and ODU is a unique partnership in academic public health. As the second HBCU to provide a school of public health, I am thrilled that our collaboration has reached this critical milestone," said NSU President Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D. "This is a unique partnership between our two institutions that, in time, will show how collaboration can be used to find solutions to improve health and wellness outcomes for everyone."

"... We are excited to offer students, faculty and community stakeholders expanded and enriched opportunities under the umbrella of a forward-thinking, collaborative joint school that brings together the expertise from partner institutions with a history of exceptional public health education, research and community engagement," said Li-Wu Chen, Ph.D., the founding dean of the JSPH. **B**

For more on public health initiatives at NSU, including the JSPH, follow our continued growth and contributions at nsu.edu/jsph.

The Rise of NSU Lacrosse

By ANTHONY TILLMAN, '11

“My mission is to spread the game of lacrosse to as many people as possible.”

– Richard Linyear

Norfolk State University students have enthusiastically embraced the formation of the NSU lacrosse team, an initiative that reflects the university's commitment to expanding intramural opportunities and energizing campus life.

Directed by Lloyd Carter and Richard Linyear, affectionately known as “Coach Rick,” the Spartans have developed the program into a thriving force, now featuring both men's and women's teams.

One of the key contributors to launching the team was Justin Ellis, associate director of campus recreation and student activities. When Ellis joined NSU, discussions about starting a lacrosse program were already underway. He secured agreements and partnered with the Next Collegiate League, a league comprised of many HBCUs, to provide the Spartans with the gear, resources, and transportation needed to get started.

The opening season was a grind. Only two or three players had prior experience wielding a lacrosse stick or running an offensive set. “They had to break themselves into the sport,” Linyear said.

What the team lacked in experience, they made up for in grit and determination. By the end of the first season, the excitement around Spartan lacrosse was undeniable, paving the way for the formation of a women's team.

“It was just something that was put in the atmosphere,” Linyear said. As interest in the sport grew, Linyear transitioned



to coaching the women's team, while Carter took over coaching the men's squad, reflecting their shared commitment to expanding the sport on campus.

For Linyear, this program represents more than just a team—it's his magnum opus. “My mission is to spread the game of lacrosse to as many people as possible,” he said, expressing his passion for introducing the sport to communities that have historically had limited exposure to it.

On the field, the Spartans adapted to modified rules of traditional field lacrosse: a 70-yard field, a 30-second shot clock, and four-minute quarters. “It's like basketball with sticks,” Linyear said.

Despite the challenges, the team has held

its ground and made strides. Competing against HBCU powerhouses like Howard, Hampton, Bowie State, and Morgan State, the Spartans are building rivalries and establishing themselves as a team to watch.

The foundation of NSU lacrosse is creating an inclusive environment. “You don't need to be a lacrosse expert to join in; you just need the willingness to learn,” Linyear said.

With Coach Carter leading the men's team, Coach Linyear guiding the women's team, and Ellis's instrumental support, NSU lacrosse is thriving. Membership continues to grow, surpassing expectations and fueling the program's momentum.

“Together we're strong; let's get stronger,” Linyear declared.





NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

Welcomes

**MICHAEL
VICK**

**as Head
Football Coach**

CLEO BROWN INVITES STUDENTS TO SEE CYBERSECURITY ANEW

By Kesha Williams



First impressions are crucial when a prospective student arrives on campus to determine if this is the right place to study and launch a career. Norfolk State University alumna Cleo Brown still recalls how her first impression of the university allowed her to start a new chapter in life and excel. "I was initially headed to North Carolina A&T [State University], but on the drive down from Fort Belvoir, Virginia, I decided to make a stop to visit the NSU campus, not knowing that it would be what I would call home."

At the time, Brown was enlisted in the U.S. Army. A native of Spanish

Harlem, she enlisted in the Army at age 17 eager to chart her own path beyond the home she had always known. NSU both provided Brown with a sense of family while comfortably challenging her.

Among the scholarships Brown heard were available to enlisted personnel was NSU's Green to Gold Scholarship. The scholarship allowed its recipients to pause their full-time military service and become full-time college students to earn a bachelor's degree. By signing a contract with a university ROTC program, those scholarship recipients were assured of receiving adequate training, guidance and a structured route of return to the military.

For Brown, the first impression was nearly instantaneous. "Walking the campus, meeting the professor of Military Science and feeling so welcomed, I asked if my scholarship could be moved."

Although the scholarship offer was set to be fulfilled at North Carolina A&T State University, Brown knew she need not look any further. "I just felt received. It felt homey, I was nervous about it [enrolling] because I had made a big jump joining the military so young. My Army scholarship transferred and my journey at NSU began that day." Brown appreciated the staff: student ratio which allowed professors and advisors to truly guide the students.

"The ROTC program here was small so they had time to prepare us when we competed at competitions and not be intimidated. I ran for Miss ROTC and won in 1999." Brown credits NSU for serving as a launching pad for her career in STEM. "Before cybersecurity was a thing, they helped me find my strengths. I graduated summa cum laude because I got the support I needed." Brown earned a Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Systems from NSU. She returned to the Army in 2001 as a second lieutenant and served active duty for 22 years. During that time, she witnessed an incredible growth of opportunities for people interested in the ever-evolving field of cybersecurity.

Brown holds a Master of Science in Cloud Computing Architecture from the University of Maryland (2023) and a Master of Science in Information Resource Management from Central Michigan University (2008). She is a Certified Information Systems Professional (CISSP) and a Certified Information Security Manager (CISM).

Today, she is the Senior Enterprise and Peraton Cloud Computing Architect/Engineer Advisor supporting Peraton's contract with the U.S. Army Cyber Command. She advises on all Army cloud initiatives, cloud cybersecurity service provider activities, and defensive cyber operations internal defense measures.

Brown realizes there are too few minorities involved in solving the nation's problems related to cybersecurity, so she often encourages students to consider this kind of work.

"I tell them there is nothing wrong with being challenged. There are cybersecurity competitions for college students, and internships can pivot you to places where you can learn your niche in cybersecurity," Brown said.

Although she's often the only female or minority on the job, Brown views this as a superpower rather than something to shy away from.

"It's ok to not know the answer to every question but know where to look for the information. Some of my biggest mentors don't look like me and happen to be male."

"Ask questions of your advisors. NSU was the best decision I made, and I learned here it's ok to ask more questions."

When asked how one determines whether cybersecurity is for them, Brown responded: "The cool thing about cybersecurity is that there's a level of it in everything you do. The misnomer is that you have to know programming languages and sit in front of a computer." She explained that the field has diverse opportunities. "Not every job in this field will mean you have to work indoors all day hunched over a computer in one location. If you have a passion for this type of work, you enjoy change, you have the ability to pivot, you love learning new things, and you have the ability to be uncomfortable with not finding easy answers and quick solutions, this might be for you." **B**

RENOWN BREAST CANCER SURGEON URGES PATIENTS TO BE PROACTIVE

By Kesha D. Williams

As an American College of Surgeons board-certified breast cancer surgeon with over two decades of experience treating and advising breast cancer patients, Dr. April Spencer declares there is more work ahead.

That work is not solely anchored in her role as a healthcare provider. Spencer is reserving more time on her calendar to communicate with the public. She is a co-host of UrbanMDTV, an online platform dedicated to educating urban communities on healthy, holistic living.

The completion of her new book, *Treat It, Beat It, and Move On: A Praying Surgeon's Guide to Prevention, Treatment, and Thriving Beyond Breast Cancer*, follows a lengthy series of TV news appearances where Spencer appeared as a medical expert.

For this 1999 Norfolk State University alumna, it's been an evolving career that has challenged her to function efficiently in hospital operating rooms and in broadcast news studios.

Before, during and after her surgical duties, Spencer is focused on providing healthcare that patients cannot provide for themselves. As a medical expert, she discusses how patients can help themselves. Spencer decided public information is essential when breast cancer rates are rising, especially among women who have some or even few known risk factors.

"I realized early on we need to extend our knowledge outside the operating rooms. There needs to be a conversation about prevention, the sustainability of being cancer free," Spencer said.

"I knew I had to educate women on lowering cancer rates. After treatment, some of them wondered what was next. I had the diagnosis. I followed the recommended treatment. How do I know I will be cancer-free now that the surgery and the treatments are done?"

"We should be prioritizing women after a diagnosis so they can be

empowered. Helping them to be proactive in their healthcare is the reason I wrote the book," Spencer said.

Despite the availability of health screenings and preventive health messages, some women are bypassing medical professionals' recommendations.

"Just because you stay away, doesn't mean it's going to go away. We can begin treatment once we know a woman's stage and the kind of cancer she has."

"Early diagnosis at an early stage of cancer may mean a shorter road to an operation or not needing to use aggressive therapy right after a diagnosis," Spencer said.

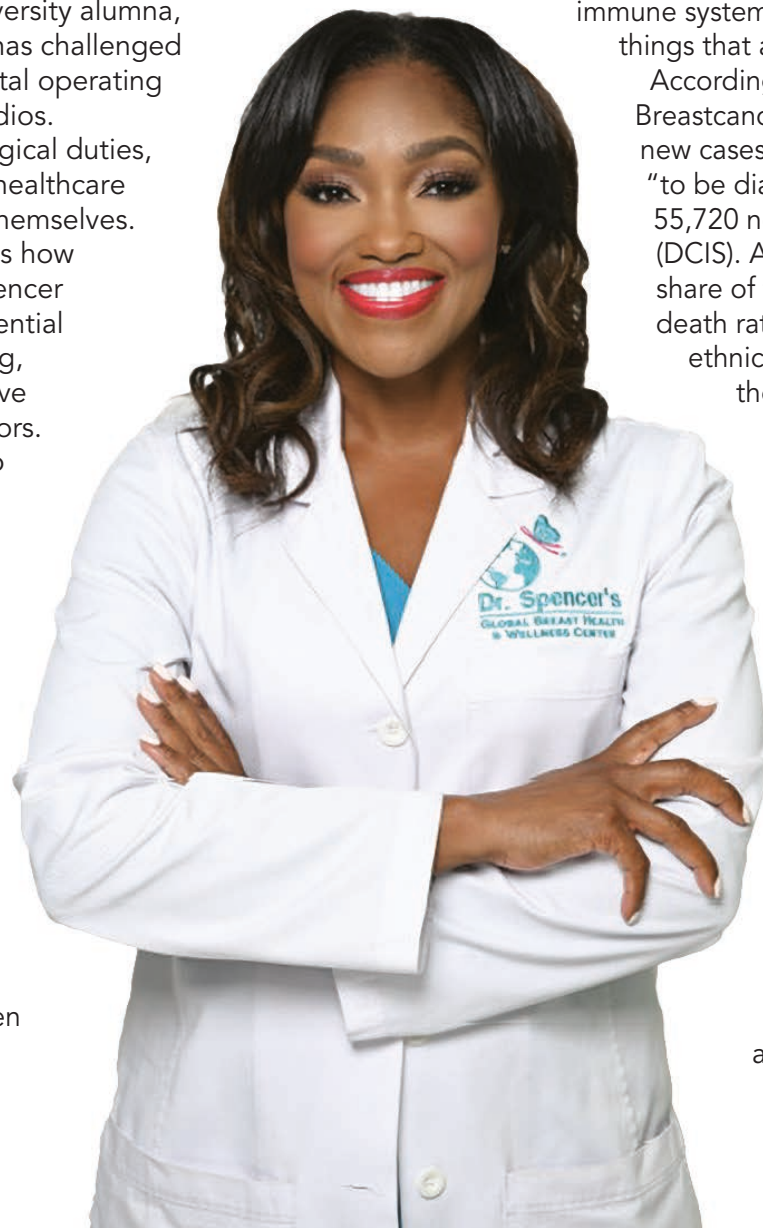
"For those who are not sick or have not been diagnosed, tap into things you can do to lower your risk. For some that may mean rest more, cutting out toxic people and situations so the immune system stays strong," Spencer said. "Cut out things that are not adding value to your life."

According to one of Spencer's preferred sources, Breastcancer.org, in 2023, an estimated 297,790 new cases of invasive breast cancer were expected "to be diagnosed in U.S. women, along with 55,720 new cases of Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS). African Americans bear a disproportionate share of the cancer burden, having the highest death rate and shortest survival of any racial or ethnic group for most cancers. The causes of these inequalities are complex."

"A lot of women chose to do herbs or 'alternative treatment' as a form of complementary medicine. It breaks my heart to think some women think 'I'm just going to do this my way, try alternative treatment' when the stage of their cancer is advancing due to lack of treatment that we know can save lives."

"Ladies, if you get a call back from a medical provider who thinks they saw something after your medical tests, follow up and follow through. Caregivers, there's also guidance for you as their supporters."

"Education is so important," said Spencer. "There is value in you being an active participant in your healthcare." **B**



NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING 2024!

Alumni activities at the Norfolk Division of Virginia State College (VSC) began on November 28, 1949, when the Norfolk Division of Virginia State College Alumni Association was formally organized. At that time, one game during football season was designated as Homecoming. This family reunion has become a celebration that has fostered a long legacy of fellowship, entertainment, and Spartan pride.





HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- The presentation of Mia Jackson, Little Miss Athletics Foundation; Kobe Elliott, Little Mister Athletics Foundation and Brenda Betts '74 as Ms. Athletics Foundation.
- The Honorable L. Louise Lucas '71 & '82, Virginia Senate President pro tempore, State Senator for Virginia's 18th District, served as the grand marshal of the annual parade.
- Members of the Washington, DC Chapter-NSUAA donated \$30,000 in honor of its 60th Anniversary and members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. donated \$25,000 in honor of the Epsilon Pi Chapter.



NSUAA HONORS

Recognizing the Achievements of Our Members



On Thursday, October 24, the NSU Alumni Association, Inc. publicly recognized and honored members, and chapters of the alumni association who have supported its mission and goals.

Langston W. Willis '98 received the NSUAA's Alumnus of the Year Award. The Chapter Service Award was awarded to a diverse group of alumni who made significant contributions of time and service to their chapter or local community.

Congratulations to

Claren D. Anderson, PG County Maryland Chapter
Sheila Bentley, Alumni Cheerleaders Chapter
Shalym Benyahu, Richmond Chapter
Demetria Brinkley, Virginia Beach Chapter
Linda Brown, Suffolk Alumni Chapter
Jerome Bynum, Portsmouth Alumni Chapter
William Bynum, Alumni Band Chapter
Michael & Dorothy Chambers, Chesapeake Chapter
Donna Dabney, Baltimore Alumni Chapter
Cherwana Harris, Greater Northern VA Chapter
Markita Heard, Norfolk Alumni Chapter
Paul Imbrigato, Washington, DC Alumni Chapter
Dameron Jones, DNIMAS Alumni Chapter
Ta-Tianna Nealy-McFadden, Charlotte Alumni Chapter
Valerie Perkins, Central Virginia Alumni Chapter
Beverly Perkins Williams, Dance Theatre Alumni Chapter
Michael Walker, Peninsula Alumni Chapter
Clifford Watkins, Pure Gold Alumni Chapter; and
Taj Worthy, Military Alumni Chapter Foundation, Inc.



The NSUAA also honored one regional group with its Chapter of the Year Award. The recipient has consistently supported the mission and goals of the alumni association and donated their time and treasure to Norfolk State University. **The Chesapeake Alumni Chapter** was this year's recipient.



The final recognition of the evening was the crowning **Gregory O. Grimes '86** as Mr. Alumni 2024-25.

NOW IS OUR TIME: **THE CAMPAIGN** for Norfolk State University

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Above: Jahnia Sinclair celebrates as she walks off campus following Fall Commencement. Photo By: Tony Wilson