

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

BEHOLD

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2 • SPRING 2026

Candi Mundon King '04
Virginia Secretary
of the Commonwealth



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Sec. Candi Mundon King '04
Virginia Secretary
of the Commonwealth

Photo by JPXXX





From the Desk of the President of Norfolk State University

One of my enduring goals as president of Norfolk State University has been both simple and resolute: to ensure that our students are Day One ready for the world of work when they cross the graduation stage. A Norfolk State education must do more than confer a degree—it must equip our graduates with the skills, confidence, adaptability and real-world experience necessary to thrive immediately and to succeed over the course of a lifetime. I am proud to share that our University continues to make meaningful, measurable progress toward that goal.



Internships and other forms of work-based learning are central to this effort. These experiences serve as a critical bridge between classroom learning and professional practice, enabling students to clarify their career pathways, build professional networks, and apply theory to authentic, real-world challenges. Through hands-on engagement, students gain insight into workplace expectations while developing competencies that are taught in tandem with classroom learning. At Norfolk State, internships are not seen as optional add-ons or peripheral opportunities. They are high-impact educational practices embedded into our academic culture—practices that directly fuel student achievement, career confidence and long-term workforce readiness.

Recently, Lena Bryan, a political science major and a Senator Yvonne B. Miller Intern, was appointed to serve in Gov. Abigail Spanberger's Administration as the Executive Assistant to Sessa Joi Moon, Chief Diversity Officer and Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, in the Office of the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. As the Yvonne B. Miller intern, Bryan served during the 2026 Virginia General Assembly session in the Office of the Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates.

Additionally, Alauna Samuels '26, a Master of Social Work graduate, was selected from a record-breaking number of applicants as a member of the 2026 cohort of the Governor's Fellows Program. The cohort is scheduled to serve from June 8 through July 31.

Our commitment to experiential learning has been affirmed through external recognition and investment. Norfolk State is among the Virginia institutions receiving a State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)—supported grant to strengthen the way we track and analyze internships and work-based learning opportunities. High-quality data will allow us to expand access, measure outcomes more effectively and ensure equity across disciplines so that every student benefits. Additionally, our selection as one of only 16 institutions nationwide—from a competitive pool of more than 200 applicants—for Lumina Foundation's From Campus to Career initiative underscores the intentional, faculty-centered strategy we are advancing to deepen career-connected learning across the curriculum.

Our philanthropic partners share and strengthen this vision. A significant grant from the Hampton Roads Community Foundation is advancing our Career Accelerator Program, reflecting broad confidence in Norfolk State University as a model HBCU for the 21st century. Additionally, SCHEV recognized Norfolk State as a 2026 Top Virginia Employer for Internship Excellence, an honor that speaks to both the quality and impact of our programs.

I am proud that this issue of Behold spotlights the newly minted Virginia Secretary of the Commonwealth Candi Mundon King '04 (pg. 16), whose tenacity and the guidance of mentors here at the University helped her along the way. Mundon King also interned in the General Assembly.

For many years, Norfolk State has worked diligently to become more eco-friendly. These efforts now incorporate electric vehicles. This year, two of our students, Nakia Copeland and Genesis Facey, became the first NSU cohorts in the national E-Mobility Fellowship Pipeline program (pg. 10).

Collectively, these efforts reaffirm what has always distinguished Norfolk State University: an unwavering commitment to preparing students not only to graduate, but to lead, contribute and succeed—starting from Day One and extending far beyond.

As always, BEHOLD...

Javaune Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

BEHOLD

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2 • 2026

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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RIDING BEYOND THE SUNSET:

*The Whitewashed History of the
Black American Cowboy*

By CATHY M. JACKSON, PH. D.

The West, a place of endless, panoramic vistas, created larger-than-life men and women who conquered the land and forged a nation. Yet the golden age of Western TV shows and movies (1950s-1960s) depicted mostly White men fighting the Injuns, wild animals and the wilderness to achieve Manifest Destiny, spreading this nation from sea to shining sea.

More recently, the country music of Beyoncé, Little Nas X, Shaboozy, and

the release of Westerns featuring more African American-themed stories, are prompting viewers and critics to analyze whether and when Black people had a place in that imagined land.

For much of the nation's history, people believed the West meant opportunity and adventure. Real and fictitious characters stock our collective consciousness: The White soldier, the savage Injun, the White gunfighter,

CONTINUED ON PG. 4



Above: The Rufus Buck gang in 1895. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons



Above: James Beckwourth

CONTINUED FROM PG. 3

the White pioneer, the White mountain man. One of the most enduring images is the White cowboy roaming vast open spaces, herding longhorn steers down dusty trails, crooning in the day's waning hours, lulling the cattle to sleep.

What's wrong with this picture? Early Western historians did not value either African Americans or their roles in the West's settlement, nor did Hollywood producers and directors, who based their movies on the discriminatory works of those researchers. The western genre was deliberately made to distort history, but, in deference to the industry's economic, marketing and production values, its 100-year-old longevity is also due to its profitability. However, the historical accuracy of westerns is a legitimate concern, one that cannot be dismissed through appeals to aesthetic or financial notions.

By 1880, more than 15,000 Black migrants had arrived in the Western lands, and one-third of the 35,000 cowboys who rode the cattle trails (1866-1895) were Black and Mexican. The absence of African American cowboys can be attributed to early historians who followed in the footsteps of Frederick Jackson Turner, the father of Old West historiography. Turner's *The Frontier in American History* argues that purebred Americans, clad in the buckskins of rugged individualism, democracy and nationalism, conquered the savage West and became the genesis of Hollywood's White cowboy.

For the last 30 years, New Western historians, working on a revisionist, multicultural history of the frontier, sought to give credit to all who settled the West. Although Blacks helped to found Los Angeles (Juan Francisco Reyes, a mulatto settler, served as elected mayor of Los Angeles in 1783), and San Francisco (William Leidesdorff, Jr., America's first Black millionaire, and the first African American diplomat, was one of California's Black founding fathers), discovered major passes through the Sierra Nevada Mountains and established trading posts (James Beckwourth), ate the dust of trail drives (Bill Pickett), broke the law (Rufus Buck Gang) and kept the law (Bass Reeves), they had few roles in the Hollywood western.

Leah Williams in *The Atlantic* wrote that Hollywood is an excellent whitewasher of Old West history. When Hollywood depicted the story of James Beckwourth in the 1951 movie *Tomahawk*, Jack Oakie, a white man, starred as the famous Black trapper. Reeves, the first Black man to serve as a Deputy U.S. Marshal patrolling the lawless Indian Territory in Oklahoma, parts of Arkansas,

and Texas, is believed to be the model for the Lone Ranger. Britt Johnson, a Black cowboy and landowner in Texas, who rescued his wife and children from the Comanche in 1865, served as a partial model for the John Wayne character in John Ford's classic film *The Searchers*, almost a century later.

Those who want to write about Blacks in the West must research to voice a mostly untold narrative. According to a 2014 article in *The New Yorker*, stories told about Black westerners must fit them into the frontier narrative despite the real history that “one in four cowboys working during the golden age of westward expansion was Black; many others were Mexican, mestizo, or Native American — a far more diverse group than Hollywood stereotypes of the cowboy would suggest.”

Yet the myth of the Hollywood cowboy, beginning with 19th-century dime novels, told the story of White men. In a *Harper's* article (1895), Owen Wister, author of the first best-selling western novel, *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains* (1902), wrote that American cowboys were descended from the Anglo-Saxon race and went West to test their courage. The white supremacist overtones of the early Western movies gave citizens and immigrants White male heroes who mirrored this country's patriotic blend of American exceptionalism.

There are other reasons for the Black cowboy's early absence from the silver screen. According to Richard Slotkin, the frontier myth, with its exclusionary tenets, romanticized the “White male adventurer as the hero of national destiny. The mythical West mostly held firm until the 1940s, when, during WWII, Black actors appeared in Hollywood westerns as comic-relief cowboys and buffoons, as slaves who accompanied their masters to the West, and in other secondary roles. The post-war 1950s did not improve the prospects of Black actors seeking roles in westerns. It wasn't until John Ford cast Woody Strode in *Sergeant Rutledge* (1960) that a Black man earned the first starring role in a Hollywood western.

In the latter part of the 20th century and the early 21st century, Hollywood attempted to do better, but sadly, it was merely a recasting of the same tropes in different stories. The West's hidebound history consistently portrayed it as a White land of opportunity. Although the region once supported all-Black towns and legions of freed slaves seeking the same right to breathe free, to establish homes, and find a life in a country where none thought they belonged, that history is still elusive, still being told, piece by piece, movie by movie. **B**



Above: Willie M. “Bill” Pickett (1870 – 1932) was a cowboy, rodeo, and Wild West show performer.

“One in four cowboys working during the golden age of westward expansion was Black; many others were Mexican, mestizo, or Native American — a far more diverse group than Hollywood stereotypes of the cowboy would suggest.”

FACULTY STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

2026 Tenure Appointments

Congratulations to the Faculty who have received tenure, promotions or both. Six faculty members received tenure and a promotion, while two received promotions.

Dr. Musbah Abdulgader

College of Science,
Engineering
and Technology
Tenure & Promotion to
Associate Professor

Dr. Andrew Franklin

College of Liberal Arts
Promotion to Professor

Dr. Cheryl Hinds

College of Science,
Engineering
and Technology
Promotion to Professor

Dr. Stephenie Howard

Ethelyn R. Strong
School of
Social Work
Tenure & Promotion to
Associate Professor

Dr. Willie Terry Marsh

College of Liberal Arts
Tenure & Promotion to
Associate Professor

Dr. Batrina Martin

College of Science,
Engineering
and Technology
Tenure & Promotion to
Associate Professor

Dr. Evelyn Thomas

College of Science,
Engineering
and Technology
Tenure & Promotion to
Associate Professor

Dr. Ronald White

School of Education
Tenure & Promotion to
Associate Professor



The Division of Academic Affairs recognized retiring, new tenure and faculty promotions. Attendees and honorees from left to right are Joyce Jones-Marsh (wife), Dr. Willie Terry Marsh, Dr. Dorothy Jones, Dr. Mariella Zapatero (wife), Dr. Enrique Zapatero and Dawn Cole.



Norfolk State Vice President and Director of Athletics **Dr. Melody Webb** has been selected as a recipient of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) Guardians of the Game Award. The Guardians of the Game Award is a distinguished recognition celebrating individuals who have made a lasting impact on the world of sports through leadership, service and commitment to excellence.



Torian Lee, J.D., Associate Vice Provost for Global Learning & International Programs, and **Mary Banks**, Director for International Student Services, have been selected to the Fulbright HBCU International Education Administrators (IEA) Program to France and Senegal for 2026-2027.



The Fulbright IEA Awards are part of the Fulbright Scholar Program. These prestigious fellowships offer higher education administrators unique professional development opportunities to foster long-term connections that enrich their campuses, careers and communities.

Passion *in* Practice

By JALEESA MANLEY-GILMORE

“
My philosophy around teaching is that it should be student-centered.
— Dr. Alicia Tetteh



Assistant Professor Dr. Alicia Tetteh, who has been a member of the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work faculty for two years, is already making a meaningful impact at Norfolk State University.

Since joining NSU, Tetteh has led numerous programs and seminars, including a study abroad trip to Ghana in 2025. She hosted the Financial Social Work Conference in January and has curated professional development and self-care workshops for departments and organizations. She also served as the keynote speaker for the Sister Circle Women's March, among many other initiatives.

Currently, Tetteh teaches Human Behavior I and III at the bachelor's level and Assessment and Diagnosis at the master's level. "My philosophy around teaching is that it should be student-centered," she said. "There should be shared power in the classroom, and it should be a brave space for students to learn not just from me, but from one another." She views the classroom as a subsystem of a larger social structure—one where collaboration and growth are essential.

Beginning in fall 2026, Tetteh will introduce a new elective course, Special Topics in Financial Social Work, further expanding learning opportunities for students.

Before joining NSU, Tetteh spent nearly a decade balancing academia and clinical practice, teaching at Winthrop University and Howard University. Since 2016, she has also led her mental health group, Building Endurance PLLC, which provides outpatient therapy, clinical supervision, and national consulting and training to organizations.

For Tetteh, social work has always been part of her life. "Growing up alongside my grandmother, we would often volunteer in our community and help connect family and friends to services," she reflected. "Social workers are vital in many aspects of our communities, and I am honored to be one and to help encourage the next generation."

That belief carries into her approach to life and work. She emphasizes that everyone deserves compassion and opportunity. "No matter our faults or our pasts, we each have the ability to live intentionally and use our privilege to uplift others," she said.

"I believe we all have the power to change," Tetteh added. "We all deserve to live as our best selves. I am grounded in my faith and strive to live authentically. Relationships are important to me because I believe humans are wired for connection. My children are my greatest creations and daily teachers in life." **B**

NSU Poised As A Rising Leader In QUANTUM RESEARCH



The coldest temperature possible in the universe is -459.67°F . Known as **absolute zero**, it is the point where atoms have almost no remaining motion.

At the new NSU Quantum MagLab, students and faculty are exploring the frontiers of quantum science using a state-of-the-art measurement system capable of cooling materials to just 0.05 degrees above absolute zero while applying magnetic fields nearly $300,000$ times stronger than the Earth's magnetic field. As NSU continues to emerge as the quantum research hub for the Hampton Roads region, the

Quantum MagLab provides students and researchers access to world-class facilities for investigating the remarkable quantum behaviors that appear under these extreme conditions. The discoveries made in the laboratory are helping advance our understanding of quantum materials and devices that will contribute to the development of future quantum technologies of unimaginable capabilities.



NSU students benefit from access to research labs early in their educational programs.



Left: Undergraduate and graduate student researchers receive professional cleanroom and lab safety training.



TWO NSU STUDENTS EARN FELLOWSHIPS

By CHRISTIAN J. BAKER

in Cutting-Edge Industry

Students Genesis Facey and Nakia Copeland garnered two of the program's 17 slots.

Two Norfolk State University students are making history as the first at the University to be selected for an E-Mobility Fellowship, a competitive pipeline program designed to expand diversity and workforce readiness in the rapidly growing electric mobility sector.

Nakia Copeland and Genesis Facey earned two of the program's 17 fellowship slots nationwide. The brand neutral initiative partners with organizations across the mobility ecosystem to promote eco-friendly transportation solutions while addressing workforce gaps in the electric mobility industry.

The fellowship is brought to Norfolk State through a partnership between the Department of Energy and Sustainability–Facilities Management and EVHybridNoire, a national organization focused on clean energy equity. In addition to student engagement, the program supports research, recruitment and career placement, and offers a hybrid learning model that allows participants to earn an industry-recognized mobility certification upon completion.

Throughout the fellowship, Copeland and Facey gained hands-on exposure to cutting-edge research, emerging technologies and real-world applications in transportation, clean energy, and advanced mobility. Fellows also received mentorship from industry professionals

who helped guide them through the rapidly evolving sector.

“From the fellowship, I gained both technical training and communication skills,” Copeland said. “We had weekly, and sometimes biweekly, meetings with professionals from different companies, which helped me build valuable connections and learn how to communicate in professional spaces.”

Copeland also emphasized how the program broadened her understanding of electric vehicle systems. “I learned about different aspects of electric vehicles, including infrastructure and charging systems, and how accessibility is being considered in mobility planning.”

As part of the fellowship requirements, the students were tasked with designing and hosting an on-campus mobility and sustainability event for students and faculty, conducting student surveys, and producing a 10-page research paper on mobility and sustainability. The program also featured workshops, expert sessions and guest speakers from leading mobility and clean energy companies.

Mentorship played a central role in the students' experience. Facey credited her mentor with helping them navigate the fellowship and connect with industry leaders.

“Mr. Martin really helped us contact different companies and guided us to participate in events like E-Mobility Day at the Capitol,” Facey

“The program definitely exceeded my expectations. It really helped with my soft skills, teamwork and communication overall.”

—Nakia Copeland

said. “I made a lot of connections and had opportunities to speak with representatives about mobility and its future in Virginia.”

Facey also noted a unique opportunity to discuss electric vehicle innovation directly with NSU President Javaune Adams-Gaston. “I had the chance to talk with the President of the University about the future of electric vehicles at Norfolk State, which was really impactful.”

Both students said the program exceeded their expectations and helped strengthen critical soft skills.

“The program definitely exceeded what I thought it would be,” Copeland said. “It helped me develop teamwork, communication and leadership skills. I also learned about smart infrastructure and vehicle to grid (V2G) technology, which directly connects to my major and could be an area I pursue in the future.”

For Facey, the fellowship connected a long standing personal interest with hands on learning.

“When I applied, I was interested because I grew up going to car shows with my dads and seeing electric vehicles,” she said. “I didn’t know much about them then, but this program gave me hands-on experience and pushed us to interact with vehicles and plan events, which helped a lot.”

Participants from institutions across the country brought diverse perspectives to the fellowship, creating a collaborative learning environment. As two of only 17 selected nationwide, Copeland and Facey represented Norfolk State University on a national level—highlighting the University’s growing role in sustainability and innovation.

“Representing Norfolk State was very impactful,” Facey said. “It put our school’s name in front of leaders who have real influence, and those connections could open doors for future opportunities.”

While the fellowship focused on electric mobility, both students said the experience shaped broader career goals.

“I still want to focus on sustainability across multiple sectors—not just electric vehicles,” Copeland said. “That includes energy use in homes and community infrastructure.” **B**



Above: A 2025 Dodge Charger electric vehicle from Banister auto dealerships, gets 308 miles per full charge. The EV was on display at NSU’s Earth Day celebration.



Above: Nakia Copeland and Genesis Facey provide E-mobility information at the NSU Energy and Sustainability booth during the Earth Day celebration.

“HBCUs didn’t just educate me,” he added. “They opened doors and created opportunities I might not have otherwise had. That experience drives my commitment to ensuring HBCUs continue to serve as engines of opportunity for others.”

—Cornelius Graves



Graves was recently admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court bar in Washington, D.C.

Cornelius Graves Is Helping to Power Norfolk State's Economic Impact

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

There's a new economic development sheriff on the Norfolk State University campus—well, sort of new. Cornelius C. Graves, Esq., has been quietly but steadily making his mark at the NSU Research and Innovation Foundation (NSURIF) since 2023. A passionate strategist with a proven record of effective leadership, Graves brings exactly the mix of vision, discipline and execution needed to advance the University's research, innovation and economic development agenda.

Named CEO and Executive Director of NSURIF in October 2023, Graves leads the University's independent 501(c)(3) affiliate founded in 2001 to promote applied research, technological innovation and revenue-generating initiatives that strengthen both Norfolk State and the surrounding region. The Foundation plays a critical role in fostering academic research while positioning the University as an economic engine for Hampton Roads.

Graves arrived at NSU with credentials well-matched to the challenge. A trained attorney, he also brings deep experience in government relations, public-private partnerships, economic development, and nonprofit management—an intersection of skills essential to growing institutional capacity in today's higher education landscape.

"I grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, where I developed a strong appreciation for education, service and community impact," Graves said. "That foundation has guided my entire career." He earned two undergraduate degrees from Howard University and a law degree from Southern University Law Center, underscoring a lifelong connection to Historically Black Colleges and Universities. "HBCUs didn't just educate me," he added. "They opened doors and created opportunities I might not have otherwise had. That experience drives my commitment to ensuring HBCUs continue to serve as engines of opportunity for others."

Before joining Norfolk State, Graves spent more than a decade at Winston-Salem State University, where he served as Director of External Relations, Secretary to the Board of Trustees, and Liaison to the UNC System Board of Governors. As a member of the Chancellor's Executive Team, he was instrumental in shaping legislative strategy, cultivating government partnerships and positioning the university as a leader in social, economic and educational equity.

His impact at WSSU was measurable. Graves helped secure more than \$78 million in new infrastructure funding in the 2021 state budget, led a successful bond campaign for a \$53 million academic building and oversaw a \$9 million

renovation of the football stadium—projects that transformed the campus and enhanced long-term institutional capacity.

At NSURIF, Graves's charge is equally ambitious. "At its core, my job is to position the NSURIF as a driver of economic mobility and institutional growth for Norfolk State University," he explained. His responsibilities include strategic planning, operations, real estate development, partnership-building and ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

Since assuming leadership of the Foundation, Graves has overseen operations for a 261,193-square-foot, 600-bed residential facility and led the acquisition of the 8,800-square-foot University Shoppes—an adjacent shopping center that expanded NSURIF's real estate portfolio, created new revenue streams and strengthened the campus retail environment. He also manages an annual budget exceeding \$6 million, oversees capital financing and works to optimize the Foundation's financial performance.

"I was drawn to NSURIF because of the opportunity to build something transformational at an HBCU," Graves said. "The Foundation provides a platform to connect assets, partnerships and resources in ways that create real, scalable impact."

While fundraising is part of the Foundation's work, Graves is quick to clarify that its approach differs from traditional philanthropy. "NSURIF focuses on revenue-generating strategies—grants, contracts and real estate—rather than donor-based fundraising," he explained. "We work collaboratively with the University's other foundations to expand resources overall, not compete for them."

As the Foundation continues to strengthen its research and technology portfolio, Graves said strategy development is ongoing. "Our focus is on building pathways that connect innovation, partnerships, and real-world application, ensuring the Foundation supports Norfolk State's long-term research growth and economic impact."

Graves's vision for NSURIF is unapologetically bold. He aims to position the Foundation as a national model for how HBCUs can leverage their physical, intellectual and financial assets to drive economic development.

"Success means real outcomes," Graves said. "Jobs. Businesses. Opportunities. Outcomes that strengthen Norfolk State University and uplift the community it serves."

For more information about the Norfolk State University Research and Innovation Foundation, visit <https://nsurif.org>. **B**

Alumnus Fights GUN VIOLENCE *Through Activism*

By STEVEN E. OPFER

For Norfolk State University alumnus Malcolm J. Yates, public service has never been just a profession—it is a calling rooted in personal experience and shaped by years of advocacy, leadership and community engagement. Yates has built a career at the intersection of policy and people, working to transform community priorities into meaningful, lasting action.

Raised in Philadelphia, Yates' path was profoundly influenced by tragedy. The loss of his younger brother, Marcus, to gun violence—in which Yates himself was also shot—became a turning point. Rather than allowing that moment to define him, he turned it into purpose.

"My efficacy growing up before NSU was talking to students from elementary to high school about how to survive gun violence and not to be a victim of their circumstance," Yates said. "As a gunshot survivor, I spoke to students about how to pivot and not let that tragedy be their defining story and to turn that tragedy into triumph."

That mission followed him to Norfolk State University, where he attended from 1999 to 2002, and studied business management. His time at NSU proved foundational in shaping both his discipline and direction.

"Norfolk State provided me with the tools to home in on my passion and understand time management," he said.

Even as a student, Yates remained deeply engaged in advocacy work.

"I was very active in gun violence advocacy while at Norfolk State," he noted, explaining that he frequently returned home to Philadelphia to continue outreach efforts. After leaving NSU, his approach to advocacy evolved.

"Advocacy after NSU allowed me to be more articulate, more passionate and understanding how to tell my message to those at a larger scale," he said, emphasizing the role his education played in refining his voice.

Over time, that voice has grown into a powerful force in both community

and political spaces.

"My goal is to have smarter gun laws to create smarter gun owners."

—Malcolm J. Yates

Yates currently serves as the principal of his own lobbying and consulting firm, EMJAE Strategies, where he works to build partnerships across government,

nonprofit organizations and community stakeholders. In addition, he serves as the lead lobbyist for CeaseFirePA, an organization focused on advancing gun violence prevention legislation across Pennsylvania.

His work reflects a strategic approach grounded in lived experience as he's coordinating policy initiatives and engaging directly with communities.

"My goal is to have smarter gun laws to create smarter gun owners," he said. "The goal is to eradicate the irresponsibility that some people have around guns, educating those who don't know guns, and to increase safety measures for responsible gun owners."

Yates' career has included a range of influential roles, from his work with the Public Health Management Corporation to his time in legislative and congressional offices. Most recently, he served as Southeastern Pennsylvania Political Director for the Harris-Walz presidential campaign during the 2024 election cycle, helping guide outreach efforts in a region critical to national politics. Across each role, he has built a reputation as a bridge-builder—someone who understands both policy mechanics and the human impact behind them.

Beyond his professional achievements, Yates remains deeply committed to civic engagement and mentorship. He has contributed to advisory boards, transition teams and grassroots initiatives, always emphasizing collaboration and accountability. His leadership philosophy is rooted in the belief that policy must reflect the voices and realities of the communities it serves.

Education has continued to play a key role in his journey. After NSU, he earned a Master's in Strategic Leadership from Neumann University and a Master of Public Administration from Widener University, further strengthening his expertise in governance and public affairs.

Despite his many accomplishments, Yates measures success not by titles, but by impact. When asked what message he hopes to leave with fellow NSU alumni and current students, his response is clear: "I want other alumni and current students to know that it's our responsibility to give back. It's our responsibility to ensure that the next generation is left with a better environment than we left. I want other alumni to understand that the measure of your success comes from those whom you empowered in your network."

From Norfolk State to the forefront of policy and advocacy, alumnus Malcolm J. Yates continues to demonstrate how resilience, purpose and service can come together to create meaningful change—one community at a time. **B**

“As a gunshot survivor,
I spoke to students about
how to pivot and not
let that tragedy be their
defining story and to turn
that tragedy into triumph.”

—Malcolm J. Yates





“My approach to this work started at Norfolk State,” “It’s a big job, but it’s a rewarding one.”

— Candi Mundon King

NSU ALUMNA APPOINTED

Virginia's Secretary of the Commonwealth

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

Candi Mundon, class of 2004, was a bold and brave Norfolk State University student who once bounced into the NSU Office of the President with a strategy for increasing revenue from the Virginia General Assembly through an upcoming bond referendum. She left with an appointment—and two dedicated mentors: Dr. Marie V. McDemmond, NSU's third President, and Karla Johnson, then-chief of staff and government liaison. Add to that list Professor Carol Pretlow, one of Mundon's political science professors.

Mundon credits those women, her grandmother and the entire NSU experience for shaping her trajectory in government, business and public service. Today, Candi Mundon King has grown into a dedicated, confident, accomplished leader who remains bold, brave and determined. Those qualities, paired with a reputation for delivering results, led to her appointment in November 2025 as Virginia's Secretary of the Commonwealth in Governor Abigail Spanberger's administration.

She spent time as an intern in the President's Office, who also helped get her involved as an intern for then-Senator Yvonne Miller and later then-Delegate Lionell Spruill. "Dr. McDemmond and Norfolk State University taught me how to show up professionally, think critically, ask questions and always challenge the status quo," Mundon King said.

As Secretary of the Commonwealth, Mundon King leads a large team with a multimillion-dollar budget. Along with being the official keeper of the Great Seal of the Commonwealth, she oversees restoration of voting rights, manages pardons, appoints thousands of board members, commissions notaries, leads constituent engagement, and serves as the Commonwealth's official representative to 11 tribal nations.

Mundon King's journey began in the historic city of Portsmouth, Virginia. She describes her childhood community — a Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority property — as “the projects.”

“I was born and raised in Portsmouth and was blessed with the privilege to attend Norfolk State University on an E.L. Hamm Scholarship created for students living in PRHA communities,” she recalled. “However, my main interest in going to NSU at the time was to be part of the Spartan Legion Marching Band,” she said lightheartedly.

A flag twirler who later became captain of the Silkettes Flag Squad, Mundon King calls her time in the band one of her most formative leadership experiences. “Honestly, that discipline, the work ethic—all of those things stayed with me.”

After graduating from NSU, her life accelerated quickly. She moved to Washington, D.C., where for



photo courtesy of Candi Mundon King

Photo by Irene Abdou Photography



Above: Candi Mundon King with daughter Candis



Above: Secretary Mundon King participated in the 313th Spotswood Treaty Tribute presentation by the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe of Southampton County Virginia. Photo Courtesy Governor Spanberger Facebook page

five years she managed advocacy, government relations, and federal affairs for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. “I got married. I went from being single and living my best life to being married with three children—all in four years,” she jokingly says about marrying Joshua King on April 1, 2011.

With family life demanding flexibility, Mundon King launched a small business before eventually receiving a call to join the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, where she worked in education policy and on the North American government relations team.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mundon King felt called to run for the Virginia House of Delegates. The decision required prayer and deep conversations with her husband and family. She began her service in January 2021 and served for five years.

“It was an amazing experience,” she said. While in the House, Mundon King emerged as a leader on Black maternal health and sickle cell advocacy—work rooted in a deeply personal loss. Her daughter, Candis, died at age 15 from complications of sickle cell disease.

“It was my Norfolk State family that held my entire family together,” Mundon King shared. “Candis was a light in our family. She did so much in her short life. We feel her loss deeply. We are grateful every day for the privilege of being her parents.”

Following Candis's passing, her family received messages from others navigating the same disease. “I kept asking, ‘Why are people still dying? Why are families still losing their babies?’” She and her husband made a conscious decision to transform their pain into purpose.

They established a scholarship at Norfolk State University in Candis's honor for students living with sickle cell disease and partnered with Governor

Spanberger on landmark legislation: the Queen Candis Act, signed April 13 and taking effect July 1.

Comprised of 10 bills, the Queen Candis Act addresses how sickle cell disease is treated, advances education and awareness, improves caregiver training and access to care, and establishes the Sickle Cell Coordinated Access Network. “Together these bills form a promise and a legacy,” Mundon King said, “a promise and a legacy that no child will be overlooked, unheard or unsupported in their fight against sickle cell disease.”

Reflecting on her rise, Mundon King points first to family. “I am a first-generation college graduate. My grandmother had a third-grade education, and by the time she was eight or nine years old, she was sharecropping. She raised me to believe that education was the key to changing my life.”

Her family now watches her work with pride. “This was never in the realm of possibilities for us—not because we weren’t capable, but because we didn’t have the opportunity,” she said. “None of this would have been possible without my husband, who is my rock.”

Mundon King is precise about the lessons that shaped her path. One professor, she recalled, once gave her an “F” on an assignment—not out of cruelty, but conviction. “‘You’re fully capable of doing the work,’ he told me. ‘If you don’t do the work, you won’t accomplish anything.’” She carried that lesson directly into public office.

After the overturning of Roe v. Wade, Speaker Don Scott appointed Mundon King to lead reproductive and maternal health policy for the House of Delegates. In that role, she convened the first-ever Black Maternal Health Legislative Conference, which gave rise to the MOMnibus.

“When I went into the legislature, I became known for doing the work,” she said. Despite being told that a mobile maternal health unit was unrealistic, Mundon King persisted. A meeting with Vice President Kamala Harris strengthened her resolve, particularly after hearing that in states banning abortion, Black mothers were two to three times more likely to die in childbirth.

“That outraged me,” Mundon King said. “I made it my mission to ensure that one—Virginia would not be a place that would criminalize women’s healthcare— and two to look beyond just reproductive health policy but also maternal health policy.”

Her research revealed stark racial disparities, fueling the MOMnibus—a bipartisan package of laws that has invested more than \$10 million into maternal health and transformed care across the Commonwealth. “The more I learned, the more my heart started to break. This was the genesis for the MOMnibus. Through my education at Norfolk State, I did the work researching how we could do it, make it impactful, and work with other people where it has been successful.”

Beyond maternal health and sickle cell advocacy, Mundon King continues to champion education policy addressing medical bias, funding for HBCUs, teacher pay raises, protections for victims of human trafficking, paid sick leave for home healthcare workers, renter safeguards, and the founding of both the Sickle Cell Caucus and the Black Maternal Health Caucus.

“My approach to this work started at Norfolk State,” Mundon King concluded. “It’s a big job, but it’s a rewarding one.” **B**



photo courtesy of Candi Mundon King

Above: Candi Mundon King graduating from Norfolk State University.

“Dr. McDemmond and Norfolk State University taught me how to show up professionally, think critically, ask questions and always challenge the status quo.”

— Mundon King



photo courtesy of Candi Mundon King



Above: Candi Mundon King standing with Senator L. Louise Lucas

Left: Candi Mundon King and her husband, Deputy Sheriff Joshua King, and their three children, Joshua, II, Candis and Joselyn King

Derrick Gay:

By ANTHONY TILLMAN '11

from the Field to the Forefront

"Norfolk State really placed me in a position to succeed."

When Derrick Gay arrived at Norfolk State University in the early 1980s, he was not entirely sure what he wanted to do with his life. What he found there set the course for everything that followed.

Today, Gay serves as President and CEO of Dominion Builders & Contracting, LLC, a Virginia-based construction firm he founded in 2010. Before the company, before the multimillion-dollar contracts, there was a young man from Norfolk who needed direction and an HBCU that provided it.

Born in Norfolk, Gay spent a significant portion of his early life in Harlem, New York, moving between both cities from the late 1960s until 1982. It was in New York where some of his earliest lessons about work and independence took shape. His first job was cleaning PS 109 one summer, and watching his sister walk away from a 25-year career at New York Telephone Company to start her own business left a lasting impression.

"She always told me I did not need to work for anyone," Gay said. "That's how Dominion Builders was inspired and created."

"I realized I needed to do something more with my life," Gay recalled of his decision to enroll at NSU after spending his first year out of high school earning \$3.35 an hour. "With a degree, you can go further."

Gay initially entered college undecided before discovering Norfolk State's construction technology program. It was a turning point. He graduated in 1989 with a degree in Construction Management, a distinction, he

quickly learned, that separated him from those working with their hands.

"I actually thought I was going to be working in the field," Gay said. "I picked construction management, and there's a big difference in that."

Beyond the degree, NSU exposed Gay to people from diverse backgrounds and opened doors he might not have found otherwise. "The degree allowed me to work for major construction companies and eventually own my own company," he said. "Norfolk State really placed me in a position to succeed."

After graduating, Gay entered the industry during a challenging stretch for construction. He started as a surveyor on highway projects in Danville and Lynchburg, then joined the Portsmouth Naval Hospital project. A pivot into project engineering in 1996 launched his management career and led to roles with several major firms over the next two decades, eventually culminating in Dominion Builders & Contracting.

Since founding the company, Gay has led several significant projects, including a \$22 million renovation with the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority covering roofing and windows, a \$1.2 million NRHA project replacing lighting and doors, and a \$2 million office building for the Virginia Department of Transportation in Cape Charles.

His commitment to the next generation runs just as deep as his project work. He regularly mentors students and young professionals in the construction field, making himself available to answer questions and offer guidance. That commitment traces back to a defining moment at Portsmouth Naval Hospital, where Gay recruited fellow Norfolk State alumni into the industry, including one who went on to build a successful company of his own.

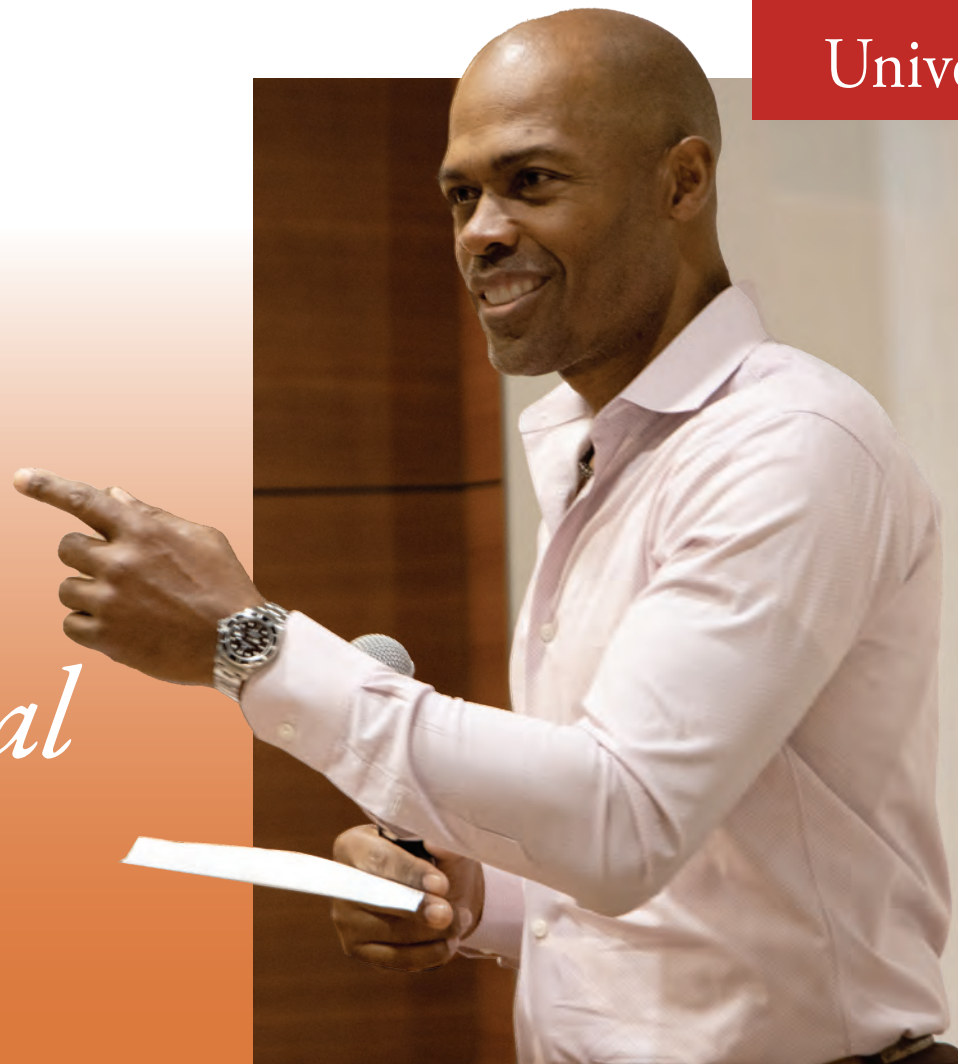
"I want to make sure they make it," Gay said.

For students eyeing a future in construction, Gay's advice is direct: "Stay focused. Surround yourself with the right circle of people, and if construction is your dream, do not be redirected because it's possible." **B**



Derrick Gay overseeing one of his recent developments.

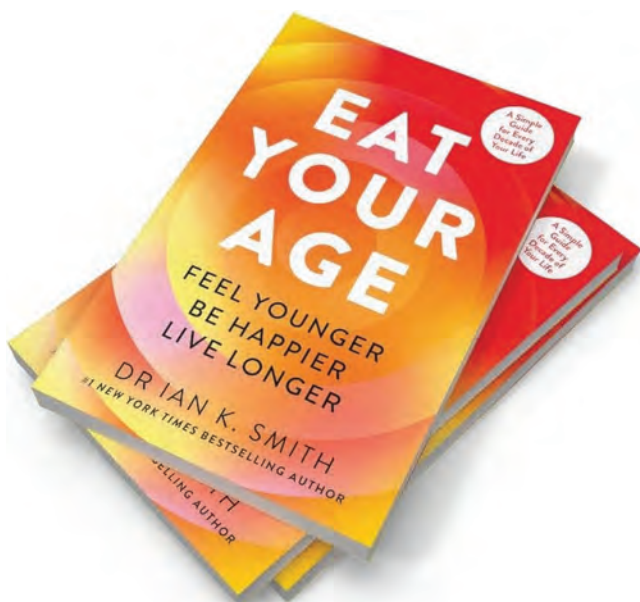
4th Annual Faculty and Staff



photos by Lateef Gibson

Above: Dr. Ian Smith providing essential information for living well to NSU's faculty and staff.

WELLNESS INSTITUTE



Most people that attended received an autographed new book *Eat Your Age*, by Dr. Ian Smith.

Dr. Ian K. Smith, best-selling author, television personality and physician, recently visited Norfolk State University where he served as the keynote speaker for the 4th Annual Faculty and Staff Wellness Institute. In his remarks, Dr. Smith encouraged attendees to "Own Your Health" by providing essential information related to areas including sleep, strength training, diabetes, physical activity, food, and more. Smith's appearance at Norfolk State was made possible by an Enhancing Campus Wellness Title III Grant, whose programming is designed to support NSU's Culture of Care to employees' health and wellbeing journeys. **B**

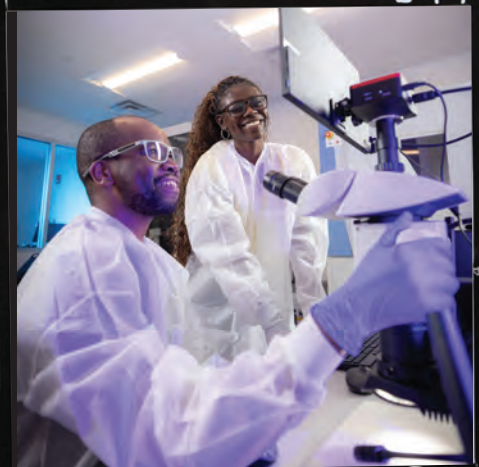


CAMPUS PHOTOSHOOT

We believe our students tell the NSU story best. That's why the Office of Communications and Marketing features NSU students as models in our campus photo shoots. Each session is designed to capture the energy, diversity and excellence that define our University—showcasing

our academic programs, campus facilities, and, most importantly, the achievements of our students.

Below is a small sample of images from our recent photo shoot, coordinated by our office and conducted by JPixx.



POOL LANE DEDICATED

TO BELOVED SWIM COACH AND THE LEGACY HE BUILT

Lane 1 of the swimming pool at Gill Gym "belonged" to Coach William "Bill" Archie Sr. It is the lane where he swam in the pool that he built. On Friday, April 3, 2026, it was dedicated and officially named in his honor as a tribute to his impact in and out of the pool. "His legacy extends far beyond the pool," said Dr. Melody Webb, NSU Vice President and Athletics Director. "Through his commitment, mentorship and dedication, he helped shape generations of Spartans and instilled in them skills and confidence that would last a lifetime."

Archie came to Norfolk State in 1960. He coached the NSU football team from 1961-1966, and from 1970-1984, Archie was Norfolk State's Athletic Director. During his tenure, NSU won two Division II men's track championships (1973 and 1974) and 26 CIAA championships in all. He was also instrumental in forming and coaching the first NSU swim team in 1968, and he pioneered the research and design of the pool that is still in use today.

Coach Archie had a passion for swimming and an advocacy for teaching others how to swim. His granddaughter, April M. Jones, recounted that he taught her, other family members, and the community how to swim.

"Not only did he create this pool, but he also created two community pools that were approved and funded by the city of Norfolk. Those pools were in Berkley and the Chesterfield Heights communities," said Jones. "Those pools were significant to the city of Norfolk because back in those times, no community pools were available for the African American Community."

"So those pools," she continued, "were significant and pivotal simply because there was a sense of community for the African American community."

Beyond the pool deck, Coach Archie's legacy was rooted in relationships. Many former athletes credit him with shaping their work ethic, leadership skills, and commitment to giving back.

John Vaughter, a Health, Physical Education and Recreation major, met Archie because it was mandatory for all Physical Education majors to take swimming courses. Vaughter already knew how to swim. He learned to swim in a creek in Crewe, Virginia, a lake at Prince Edward State Park and while attending a YMCA summer camp in Greenfield, Massachusetts. He impressed Coach Archie with his skills and became one of a handful of Norfolk State students whom Archie signed up to attend the Red Cross-National Aquatic School where he became a Water Safety Instructor (WSI).

Vaughter swam on Norfolk State's swimming team, taught swimming, and worked in the pool on campus. Archie helped him secure work throughout his college years, including lead lifeguard at the Berkley swimming pool. Meeting Coach Archie at Norfolk State was a defining moment in his life. "He monitored our academic progress and cared about us as developing young men." What he remembers most are the lessons Coach Archie taught him beyond the pool.

The dedication of the pool lane serves not only as recognition of Coach Archie's service to Norfolk State University but also as a reminder of the values he championed.

"A man's legacy is written by the days he lived and those left behind to tell his story," said Clifford Porter, NSU Vice President for University Advancement. "Coach Archie is an inspiration and one that can be used as an example of a life well-lived." **B**



Above: April M. Jones, granddaughter of Coach Archie, and Clifford Porter.

"A man's legacy is written by the days he lived and those left behind to tell his story."

—Clifford Porter



Above: Coach William "Bill" Archie Sr.



NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF WOMEN'S GOLF PROGRAM

By REGINA LIGHTFOOT

Norfolk State University has officially announced the launch of its women's golf program, marking a significant milestone in the institution's continued growth as a Division I athletics program and its commitment to expanding opportunities for student-athletes. The addition of women's golf reflects the University's strategic vision to broaden access, enhance equity in athletics and strengthen its Division I portfolio. Yet, the new program is more than an expansion of sports offerings—it represents an investment in the future of student-athletes and the cultivation of leadership, discipline and academic excellence. "It is about possibility," said Dr. Melody Webb, Vice President and Director of Athletics. "It is about young women who will now see Norfolk State University as a place where their talents are valued, where their ambitions are supported and their futures are cultivated."

A Vision Driven by Leadership

The program's launch is the result of collaborative leadership across the University, led by President Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston and the athletics department. "We are fortunate to have a president who understands Division I athletics and is deeply committed to institutional excellence," said Webb. "Her vision and leadership made this expansion possible."

Athletics leadership also received praise for maintaining a forward-looking approach focused on student success. The addition of women's golf aligns with broader efforts to ensure Norfolk State remains competitive while creating meaningful opportunities for growth.

Community and Partner Support

The launch of the program was made possible through generous support from partners and donors, including Antwyne DeLonde, who provided the Athletics Department with the performance facility and golf simulator. His investment reflects a shared belief in the transformative power of athletics.

"Programs like this exist because someone decides they should," DeLonde said. "When you build environments like this, you give students a chance to expand who they believe they can become."

Building More Than Athletes

Golf, in particular, offers unique opportunities for personal and professional development. Unlike many team sports, golf requires individual focus, mental discipline and resilience—qualities that translate directly into leadership and life skills.

"Golf is a quiet sport," said DeLonde. "There's no noise to hide behind. It's just you, your preparation and your composure. It teaches patience, it teaches emotional discipline, it teaches ownership."

University leaders echoed this sentiment, noting that the program will help shape well-rounded individuals prepared to succeed both on and off the course.

Expanding Opportunities for Women

The introduction of women's golf also represents an important step forward in advancing gender equity within Norfolk State athletics. As more institutions within the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference add women's golf programs, Norfolk State is

ensuring it remains competitive while offering expanded pathways for female student-athletes.

"As our conference continues to expand and more institutions introduce women's golf, competition will grow stronger, said President Adams-Gaston. "That means we must remain committed to providing our students with the resources, coaching and support they need to succeed."

Looking Ahead

With the inaugural team set to take shape, Norfolk State is focused on building a strong foundation for long-term success. Investments in facilities, coaching and support systems are expected to provide student-athletes with the resources they need to excel.

University leaders expressed confidence that the new program will strengthen the athletics department and enhance the overall student experience. As the program prepares to tee off, the Norfolk State community is united in celebrating a milestone that reflects both progress and promise for the future.

"With pride, purpose, and great expectation for what is ahead, I am honored to officially announce women's golf at Norfolk State University," Webb said. "Welcome to a new chapter, welcome to a new opportunity and welcome to Spartan women's golf." **B**



Top: Antwyne DeLonde sits next Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston.

Above: Antwyne DeLonde chats with former NSU Police Chief and golf enthusiast, Anthony Walker during the presentation of the golf simulator.

Left: Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston practices her putting in the simulator room.



"As our conference continues to expand and more institutions introduce women's golf, competition will grow stronger."

—Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston



Trailblazers often emerge from shared roots—guided by family, grounded in education and driven by a commitment to service. Such is the story of brothers **Dr. Morris E. Brown III (B.S. '87)** and **Dr. Morry D. Brown Sr. (B.S. '91)**, Norfolk State University alumni whose paths in medicine reflect distinct specialties but a common dedication to excellence, leadership and community impact.

Though their careers diverged into different realms of medicine, the brothers' journeys are intertwined. Morris, the elder brother, set the tone, preparing for a career grounded in comprehensive and compassionate primary care. Morry followed, expanding that foundation into national academic and clinical leadership. Together, their accomplishments speak to the power of mentorship, legacy and institutional influence — beginning at NSU.

The Browns grew up in the rural community of Carrollton, Virginia — a community where their parents, Morris E. Brown Jr. and Cathy Brown, and the community stressed the importance of an education. "My dad was one of 10 children, the oldest, so back then he had to quit school to help farm. He had a fifth-grade education. My mom didn't graduate high school but did get her GED," said Dr. Morry. "So, education was important to us within our family and then also within our church," he said. "The generation before us didn't get an education, so it was important." It is a belief that has guided him throughout his life. "I believed in it as well — I believed knowledge was power."

Setting the Tone: The Path Forged by an Older Brother

Both brothers earned degrees in Chemistry from Norfolk State University, with Morris graduating in **1987** and Morry in **1991**. At NSU, they developed not only the academic rigor required for medical careers but also an enduring sense of service and responsibility — values that would shape how each would practice medicine.

As the elder brother, Morris set the example early. His journey through Norfolk State University laid a foundation not just for his own medical career, but for his younger brother's vision of what was possible.

After graduating from Smithfield High School in Smithfield, Virginia, Morris decided to attend Norfolk State. "I selected NSU because of its reputation for excellence. All of the best teachers, coaches and band directors at my high school were NSU alumni. They all exemplified excellence and were great role models. When NSU awarded me an academic scholarship, the deal was sealed. I never looked back."

While Morris was attending NSU, Morry had the opportunity to visit the campus. When the time came to select a college, he also chose Norfolk State and enrolled in the Dozoretz National Institute for Mathematics and Applied Sciences (DNIMAS) program, a rigorous academic honors program for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) majors.

Watching his older brother navigate the path to becoming a physician was transformative. Morris' example demystified the



"NSU inspired me to serve the public. I wanted to serve a community that had the greatest need."

—Dr. Morris E. Brown III

medical journey and made the goal tangible. In this way, the brothers became trailblazers not only in their fields, but within their own family—Morris paving the road that enabled Morry to branch off into academic and clinical leadership.

Morris E. Brown III, M.D., FAFP: Community-Centered Care in Rural South Carolina

Dr. Morris E. Brown III is the Medical Director of Lake City Family Medicine, LLC, and Family Medicine Associates, LLC, in Lake City, South Carolina, where he has devoted his career to providing comprehensive and patient-centered healthcare to a medically underserved community.

A graduate of Eastern Virginia Medical School, where he earned his doctorate with distinction, Dr. Morris completed his residency training at Portsmouth Family Medicine Residency at Eastern Virginia Graduate School of Medicine. He brought this training back to rural South Carolina with a clear mission: to deliver high-quality care tailored to each patient's needs, regardless of financial circumstances.

Under his leadership, Lake City Family Medicine goes beyond traditional models of care. No patient is denied services due to the inability to pay, with a sliding fee scale based on income and family size, ensuring medical access for all. Education, prevention and trust form the cornerstone of the practice's philosophy. This approach reflects Dr. Morris' belief that access to quality healthcare is not a privilege but a responsibility.

"NSU inspired me to serve the public. I wanted to serve a community that had the greatest need; therefore, I set up my practice in a small rural medically underserved town in South Carolina," said Dr. Morris. "I have no regrets."

Helping people brings him joy and satisfaction. "I have had the opportunity to serve my community for over 32 years. I treat the entire family and have known some families for over six generations."

Dr. Morris has also been intentional about building a healthcare team that reflects the community it serves. The composition of his healthcare team is comprised primarily of highly competent Black healthcare professionals who reflect and understand the community they serve. Among them is Shafara Dozier Douglas, a physician

assistant-certified (PA-C) primary care provider and an NSU alumna whose impact has been integral to the practice's success. Douglas, who majored in Biology, is a 2004 DNIMAS graduate.

Douglas and her family were patients of Dr. Morris. "She (her family) and I adopted each other," he said. "I noticed that she was always a truly gifted individual and wanted to enter the medical profession. She 'coat-tailed' (followed) me in the office when she was in school. When it was time for her to pick a college, she told me she wanted to go to the 'best university'. And guess what, she landed at NSU (DNIMAS) and never looked back."

When it comes to community service, Dr. Morris' commitment extends well beyond the doors of his practice. "I have had the opportunity to proudly represent NSU in the state of South Carolina. I have served on local and state boards. Most recently, as Past-President and current Chair of the South Carolina Academy of Family Physicians (SCAFP-State Chapter). I served on the state board of the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), appointed by the Governor. They all know that I am a proud Spartan."

Morry D. Brown Sr., M.D., Ph.D. : Advancing Neuroradiology and Academic Medicine

Dr. Morry D. Brown is a partner with Triad Radiological Associates, PLLC, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He completed advanced medical and research training at the University of Virginia, where he earned both his M.D. and Ph.D. through the national prestigious Medical Scientist Training Program.

Dr. Morry is a board-certified Interventional Neuroradiologist and a nationally recognized scholar whose research has advanced stroke intervention and neuroimaging. He has been recognized by the University of Virginia (UVA) and the Radiological Society of North America. In addition, throughout Dr. Morry's journey, he has been honored as a resident research



photos courtesy of Dr. Morry Brown

CONTINUED FROM PG. 27

Dr. Morry realized that he could put three things together that he loved—working with his hands, solving problems and helping people.

awardee, an outstanding teaching intern in medicine, a medical scientist training participant, an American Psychological Association fellow, a Whitfield-Randolph Scholar, and a recipient of both the UVA Academic Advancement Scholarship and the National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering and Science (GEM) Fellowship. Dr. Morry is an author on several publications.

Dr. Morry has devoted his career to serving a unique patient population: those affected by stroke. He utilizes advanced imaging, such as computed tomography (CT), CT angiography (CTA), CT perfusion (CTP) and cerebral angiograms, to pinpoint the exact location and severity of the blockage/bleeding; to assess for damaged areas of the brain and areas of the brain that are at risk of being damaged. Then, he performs a procedure within the blood vessels in a specialized suite, using life-saving/altering technology. This avoids the need for traditional open brain surgery and typically results in faster recovery times and significantly reduced long-term disability for his patients.

Yet, he hadn't thought about becoming a physician until he got to Norfolk State. Then, one school break, he met Suffolk, Virginia, native Dr. L.D. Britt, a nationally renowned surgeon and current member of the NSU Board of Visitors. "On one of my spring breaks, I spent time following him around the hospital. And I said, this could be something I could do." Dr. Morry realized that he could put three things together that he loved — working with his hands, solving problems and helping people. "God gave me those gifts to do what I'm doing," Dr. Morry said.

He believes that Norfolk State gave him opportunities he would not have had otherwise. "Not only just opportunities as in educational things, but also dealing with networking, as well as in meeting people and getting your foot in the door," he explained.

His experiences at Norfolk State also provided him with lifelong friends, such as Albany State University President Dr. Robert Scott (see Behold, Spring 2025). "He was my roommate in college." Back then, the two of them would talk about their futures. "We're like, someday we're going to do great things." Now they marvel at how far they've come since those days. "I said, 'I never dreamed that I would be where I am today,'" Dr. Morry said about their recent conversation. As their conversation continued, Dr. Morry said, "We owe it all to Norfolk State."

Shafara Dozier Douglas, PA-C: Returning Home to Serve

Completing this story of impact is Shafara Dozier Douglas, a Physician Assistant at Lake City Family Medicine, who has known Dr. Morris since her childhood. A 2004 graduate of Norfolk State University with a degree in Biology, she earned her PA degree from Eastern Virginia Medical School in 2008.

A native of Kingstree, South Carolina, Douglas returned home with a deep understanding of the healthcare disparities affecting rural communities. Her approach to care emphasizes compassion, collaboration and communication, with the belief that mutual respect and trust are essential to advancing patients' health and well-being.

She explains that, while shadowing Dr. Morris in high school, he often suggested summer internships and book recommendations he thought would help her grow. "Those experiences strengthened my passion for medicine and taught me that providing quality care goes beyond clinical knowledge—it requires building meaningful, trusting relationships with patients. He showed me that medicine is both a science and an art grounded in human connection."

Dr. Morris would often talk about Norfolk State and how it was important in his and his brother's success. At first, she was apprehensive, but Dr. Brown's parents quickly became like family and were a support system for her. "Attending Norfolk State University was my first experience living in a 'big city' and being exposed to life beyond my small, rural community. That transition challenged me to grow personally by becoming more independent, adaptable and open to new perspectives."

"One of the most impactful aspects of my time at Norfolk State was being surrounded by African Americans thriving in STEM fields," said Douglas. "For the first time, I saw individuals who looked like me pursuing and succeeding in careers that I had once only imagined. This representation was both empowering and motivating, as it reinforced my belief that I, too, belonged in those spaces."

After graduating, she wanted to return home. "And guess who offered me my first job ... Dr. Morris Brown. I have been practicing with him for the past 18 years, talk about a full circle moment!"



Together, Drs. Morris and Morry Brown exemplify what it means to lead with purpose—one through community-based primary care, the other through cutting-edge specialty medicine and academic scholarship. Their legacy is not only measured in titles or publications, but in lives healed, barriers reduced and pathways made visible for those who follow. **B**

"I often say I grew up as a Spartan."

—Monique Gatling

close, I made the decision to formally launch Virginia Pathways to Justice alongside an amazing team of community leaders to deepen that impact and build something lasting for the communities we serve," Gatling states.

For Gatling, attending Norfolk State transformed her personal and professional development. However, her NSU journey started before she enrolled. Her father, Alexander Gatling '86, graduated from Norfolk State and was a member of the men's basketball team. "I often say I grew up as a Spartan," she reflects. "Being on campus, hearing the stories, and witnessing that legacy firsthand made my decision feel natural. I wanted to be part of something that already felt like home." Along with cultivating her leadership skills, Norfolk State exposed her to meaningful civic engagement opportunities, connected her with mentors who helped shape her path and instilled in her a deep sense of purpose and responsibility to serve the community.

With this appreciation, she was able to see the gaps in access to resources, civic education and policy advocacy, especially for communities of color. These injustices led her to build an organization that not only addresses immediate needs but also empowers individuals to become advocates for themselves and their communities. "Our mission is to advance social and economic justice through grassroots organizing, civic engagement, leadership development and policy advocacy," Gatling explains. "We focus on equipping individuals, especially young people and returning citizens, with the tools and knowledge needed to create meaningful change in their communities." She emphasizes that this work is not done in isolation and is deeply rooted in the community.

Gatling, who is currently pursuing a master's degree at Regent University, was recognized with a Forty Under 40 Award by *Inside Business* and *The Virginian-Pilot* in 2025. "Being named to the Forty Under 40 is incredibly humbling. It's an honor to be recognized alongside so many talented and impactful leaders," she says. "For me, this recognition is not just personal, it reflects the collective work of my team, our partners and the communities we serve every day."

When asked what her message to current students and alumni is, Gatling says to walk boldly in your purpose, as Norfolk State has already equipped you with everything you need to succeed. "As *Behold* reminds us, take time to truly see and recognize the power within yourself and your community. Your voice and your work matter more than you know." **B**

Photo courtesy of Monique Gatling

JUSTICE THROUGH COMMUNITY

By JALEESA MANLEY-GILMORE

Monique Gatling, founder and executive director of Virginia Pathways of Justice, is creating meaningful community-centered change. Founded in 2024, Virginia Pathways to Justice is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing equity, justice and democracy for communities of color throughout Virginia.

Graduating from Norfolk State University in 2018 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Gatling has spent over a decade working in political organizing and community engagement. Before starting her organization, she focused on voter outreach, civic education and building grassroots strategies to mobilize underrepresented communities. This work gave her insight into the systemic barriers many people face and the importance of sustained advocacy. "After years of doing this work and seeing both the challenges and opportunities up

NORFOLK STATE CELEBRATES THE 116TH COMMENCEMENT

Degrees were conferred to approximately 630 students on Saturday, May 9, during Norfolk State University's 116th Commencement. The ceremony, held at William "Dick" Price Stadium on the NSU campus, saw the commissioning of nine second lieutenants in the U.S. Army and one ensign into the U.S. Marine Corps.

The Commonwealth of Virginia's 49th Attorney General, Jay Jones, served as this year's keynote speaker. Jones previously served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia and a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, where he authored the "Ashanti Alert," legislation, establishing a missing persons alert for adults in the Commonwealth.

During the ceremony, Jones received the Presidential Commencement Medallion. Norfolk State University also bestowed the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree upon Delegate Luke E. Torian Virginia House of Delegates and executive and media entrepreneur, BK Fulton. **B**



AlumniNews



Graduating to Greatness

Norfolk State University honored four of its alumni at the **2026 Alumni Awards Dinner** on Friday, May 8, 2026. Each of these graduates have demonstrated exemplary leadership in their professions and in the community. They personify the mission and goals of the University.



Morry D. Brown, Sr., M.D., Ph.D., earned a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from Norfolk State University in 1991. He is a board-certified neuroradiologist and partner of Triad Radiological Associates in Winston Salem, NC. He completed advanced medical and research training at the University of Virginia, earning both his M.D. and Ph.D. through its prestigious Medical Scientist Training Program. Dr. Brown is a nationally recognized scholar whose peer-reviewed research has advanced stroke intervention and neuroimaging, earning honors from the Radiological Society of North America and the University of Virginia.



Timothy E. Lamb, DSL, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Norfolk State University in 1983. This highly decorated U.S. Army combat veteran and healthcare leader has led global medical logistics initiatives, expanded healthcare delivery, and achieved significant operational efficiencies. His career reflects 35 years of proven leadership experience across both peacetime and combat environments, having successfully led federal and civilian organizations ranging in size from 50 to more than 5,000 personnel. Dr. Lamb has earned numerous honors including the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, and Bronze Star Medal.



Lajuana M. Collins, M.D., earned a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from Norfolk State University in 1983. She is a board-certified psychiatrist who has served in diverse roles spanning private practice, inpatient psychiatry, academic medicine, emergency consultation, and correctional health care, including as medical director for specialized programs serving older adults. Dr. Collins devoted more than a decade of service to the Norfolk State University Foundation Board, including serving as vice president and president, where she helped strengthen the Foundation's infrastructure and led fundraising efforts.



Alisia D. Smith-Rucker, M.A., earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Norfolk State University in 1994. Currently, she serves as the District Field Sales Manager at Cengage USA, a global education technology company supporting learners from K-12 through higher education. In 2025, she was recognized as Cengage Manager of the Year; her team received District of the Year honors, and she was inducted into the Cengage Millionaire's Club for generating \$10.6 million in new business. In January 2026, she was appointed Vice President of Business Development for the National Sales Network (NSN) District of Columbia/ Baltimore Chapter.



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Multi-award-winning actor, director and producer Tim Reid brought his Legacy Media Institute to campus. Legacy Media Institute students produced two documentaries, *The Masked Poet* and *The Orchid*.