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Character and Effective Teaching

For the closing issue of this year, we take a leaf from our former editor, Dr. Zina McGee, and interview last year's Hamm Distinguished Teaching Award recipient, Dr. Otsebele Nare. He generously shares his insights on effective teaching and the building of character.

Describe your teaching philosophy. How do you work to develop a student-centered classroom?

My teaching philosophy is centered on the enhancement of the students' learning with an understanding of how the knowledge they are gaining relates to their daily life. Basically, can they relate what they are learning to the big picture? I approach teaching from a systemic point of view with a desire for every student to identify what they are learning as it relates to their curriculum and future career. My approach has also evolved over the years. It is true that at times, we teach based upon how we were taught or understood things; however, it has been my experience that the approach is mainly valid if the students have had a similar background. Therefore, for me, when I started teaching, I had the assumption that every student matriculating at college would have a broad sense of general education as it related to my high school experience. As an example, the first two years of my high school, I continually studied nine subjects (English, Ndebele, Mathematics, Science, Religious Education, History, Agriculture, Geography, and Commerce). The study of these subjects gave me breadth and fundamental understanding of various subjects. In order to relate to the students, I had to understand fundamentally the differences of the content delivery to relate effectively the knowledge they have with what is expected. The approach to learning the subject is different from a course-based approach. Therefore, when I teach, I continuously make connections with content knowledge from relevant courses and this often stimulates discussions. These discussions lead to students taking ownership of learning. I continually endeavor to put into context what I am teaching as well as the relevant foundational knowledge that the students have; at the same time, I limit the pre-assumptions that I may have because each class of students tends to be different. In summary, the foundational goal of my teaching philosophy is to enhance learning by connecting the relevance of the material to the students' daily life and/or the big picture of their potential career.

How do you foster creativity and innovation both within and outside of the classroom setting?

In the field of Engineering, we are having more and more dependency on fast changing technology; therefore, it is imperative that we have the necessary tools and infrastructure that allow the students to remain up to date with industry standards. Gone are the days where we only have physically fixed and expensive laboratory equipment in laboratory spaces as the basis for experimentation; we have now adapted the portable laboratory approach that allows students to do many experiments anywhere at any time as long as they have access to a computer. I also like to vary the type of projects the students work on using both hardware and software approaches and leaving some as open-ended team projects.

In what ways do you stimulate self-growth and professional development among your students?

Self-growth and professional development starts with me, by continual engagement in professional organizations and collaborations on scholarly publications that promote continual learning. In my classes, I attempt to learn what students expect to gain from my courses as well as their aspirations and then I continually promote opportunities for them to be involved in professional student organizations, research, and industry internships.

What strategies do you use to facilitate reflection, professional learning, and enhanced student accomplishment?

Apart from formal classroom evaluations, I like to assign projects that require oral demonstrations that are enabled through hands-on learning. I require written reports that conform to industry practices as a means of professional practice. I also believe in iterative processes, because that is part-and-parcel of engineering design. Therefore, I do expect corrections to be done on what the students have learned.

How does your teaching intersect the building of character central to the mission of Hampton University?

It starts with a high standard of expectation in self-respect. Each student has to put in an individual effort and learn to work with others to achieve common goals. My teaching ensures that each student takes responsibility, follows through, and upholds high integrity standards and pride in achievement.

Practice what you preach! We probably have all heard this statement for most of our lives. In teaching, I believe we have to practice what we teach. Practice what we learn. Our background and how we continually develop our skills often mold what we learn and teach.

Announcements

Hampton University is a member of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, which offers the following information and opportunities for faculty members:

November 2019

[Full Newsletter](#)

Feature: AAC&U Member Innovations

Interfaith Leadership and Cooperation in Higher Education

Three institutions participating in AAC&U and Interfaith Youth Core's Leadership in Higher Education project—University of Denver, Concordia College–Moorhead, and University of Miami—explore how they are cooperating to bridge religious differences and prepare students for lives as interfaith leaders. [Read more](#)



Weekly Liberal Education News Watch

Week of October 14–18, 2019

AAC&U is pleased to share news stories on liberal education and inclusive excellence each week, which are [archived on our website](#). Please share with colleagues and all who care about liberal education and inclusive excellence.

[Sign up for AAC&U publications and resources](#). If you have an AAC&U login, [manage your email preferences](#).

Why Skills Training Can't Replace Higher Education

Harvard Business Review

The benefits of participating in high-impact practices such as writing intensive courses, undergraduate research, community service projects, and internships are especially promising for historically underserved students who will make up a large fraction of tomorrow's workers and community leaders. [Read more >>](#)

We Must Contemporize the Liberal Arts

Inside Higher Ed

It's not enough to passively continue with the same curriculum and hope that students, their families, politicians, and the public at large re-recognize the value in what we do, argues Laura L. Behling. [Read more >>](#)

How One College Helps All Students Gain Digital Skills

[The Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

Today's traditional-age students are digital natives. But that doesn't mean they have the digital skills they'll need to thrive at work and beyond. [Read more >>](#)

Small Institutions Lead the Way in STEM Degree Attainment for Underrepresented Students

[Diverse: Issues In Higher Education](#)

Small and mid-sized institutions play a significant role in strengthening the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) pipeline among underrepresented students, according to a new report by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). "Strengthening the STEM Pipeline II: The Contributions of Small and Mid-Sized Independent Colleges in Preparing Underrepresented Students in STEM," is an extension of CIC's 2014 research which focused on the role that institutions play in students obtaining STEM degrees. [Read more >>](#)

Five Ways We're Helping Our First-Generation College Students Succeed

[eCampus News](#)

"As educators, it is our responsibility to help first-generation students tackle as many of the educational, financial, social, and personal challenges that we can. Our support is vital to their success," writes Carolyn J. Stefanco, president of The College of Saint Rose in Albany, New York. [Read more >>](#)

CMSI RESEARCH BRIEF

A Response to Racism: How HBCU Enrollment Grew in the Face of Hatred

by Janelle L. Williams, Rutgers University—New Brunswick
and Robert T. Palmer, Howard University

Executive Summary

Over the past three years, about one-third of HBCUs have experienced record increases in applications and enrollment. Anecdotal information credits racial tensions, the political climate under the Trump administration, and what HBCU President Walter M. Kimbrough calls the “Missouri Effect”—the recent surge in race-based harassment of Black students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) for the enrollment resurgence. This empirical study explores—if and how, these events may have contributed to the increase in HBCU enrollment. Specifically, using a qualitative approach, we interviewed 80 students across four HBCUs of various types (e.g., public, private, comprehensive, and research-intensive). The findings from our study provide empirical evidence pertaining to how the “Missouri Effect” influenced Black student enrollment at HBCUs. This study provides implications for HBCUs as they recruit and enroll more college-bound Black students, particularly in the current political climate. Similarly, this study also includes recommendations for higher education institutions, including PWIs as they seek to promote a more inclusive and supportive campus community for minoritized student populations.



Janelle is a proud graduate of historically Black university, Cheyney University.

Janelle L. Williams is the Associate Dean of Extended Learning at Widener University and a Visiting Scholar in the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. As a researcher and practitioner, Janelle is passionate, collaborative, and innovative. Her scholarship investigates college choice and enrollment patterns at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), contemporary approaches to address challenges facing HBCU enrollment, and the experiences of Black women in higher education through critical qualitative inquiry.



Robert T. Palmer is Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Howard University. He is also a faculty affiliate for the Center of Minority Serving Institutions (CMSI) at Rutgers University. His research examines issues of access, equity, retention, persistence, and the college experience of racial and ethnic minorities, particularly within the context of historically Black colleges and universities. Robert's work has been published in leading journals in higher education, such as *The Journal of College Student Development*, *Teachers College Record*, *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *Journal of Negro Education*, *College Student Affairs Journal*, *Journal of College Student Retention*, *The Negro Educational Review*, and *Journal of Black Studies*, among others. To date, he has authored/co-authored well over 120 academic publications. Robert earned his Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from historically Black university, Morgan State University.

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Click on the image above to download the full copy of the research brief

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