

**Founders Day Speech
Tuskegee University
Sunday, April 2, 2017
9:30 AM
By
Dr. William R. Harvey
President**

Dr. Johnson, members of the board, alumni, faculty, staff, students, friends, elected officials, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to be here with you today on the occasion of the Tuskegee University 2017 Founder's Day celebration. I bring you warm greetings from the Hampton University family. Let me thank President Johnson, Chief of Police Mandie, Chief of Staff Brown and the chef at the Kellogg Center for your outstanding hospitality. Dr. Johnson, clearly your leadership is fostering a culture of kindness.

As many of you know, I spent six very wonderful years as a Tuskegee University Vice President before assuming my current position of President of Hampton University some 39 years ago. Personally and professionally, those were wonderful years. My wife and two children and I lived in campus housing at 302 Franklin Road. Our daughter Kelly went to Russell Nursery School and then on to St. Joseph's Catholic School for the first grade. Our son Chris went to Russell Nursery School. Our daughter Leslie was not born until we got to Hampton. It is not a stretch for me to say that my days were filled with joy here at the pride of the swift growing south. I shall never forget outstanding people like my boss Dr. Luther H. Foster, whom I shall talk about later, Mrs. Dorothy Woodson, Colonel Herbert Carter, Major Upshaw Sams, neighbor Mr. John Parker, neighbor and fellow Vice President Mr. Harold Logan, my long time mentors and friends, K.B. and Mai Young, Laila Washington, Pauline Punch, across the street neighbor Mrs. Cooper, whom my

kids called Aunt Fox and a host of others too numerous to name. Let me state again, those were wonderful, wonderful year, and I am glad to be home.

As it relates to Hampton and Tuskegee, anyone who has ever been at these two fine institutions immediately notice the close relationship between the two. Actually, Hampton and Tuskegee have been inextricably bound since Booker T. Washington left Hampton and arrived at Tuskegee on June 24, 1881. Hampton is obviously proud of Dr. Washington, who is one of our most illustrious graduates. We are also pleased with the excellent relationship existing between these two great institutions that symbolize excellence in teaching, learning, and service. From the very beginning of Tuskegee, these two institutions have been intertwined in an extremely positive fashion.

In addition to your founder, other major figures have traveled on the road between Hampton and Tuskegee. Among them are former President Moton who came from Hampton to Tuskegee, former president Luther Foster who graduated from Hampton, former President Patterson who served Hampton as Trustee and who became Trustee Emeritus at both schools, and I add to that bond, my own travel from Tuskegee to Hampton, where stated earlier, I have now served as President for the last 39 years.

Having been at Tuskegee for the six years as I also mentioned, I also feel qualified to talk a little bit about the uniqueness of the place. This can be done by Hampton's President because both schools are unique in their own right and the stature of one is not diminished by the unique and positive contributions of the other. Clearly, Tuskegee University is at the forefront of the American educational enterprise. Therefore, what I propose is a personal refresher course. It is beneficial to present day Skegeens to understand the uniqueness of Tuskegee University's history and progress

and to keep this clear as you go about your daily work.

Tuskegee is a multi-impact institution of tremendous breadth. Tuskegee has solid undeniable academic strength seen in its programs, faculty and students. It is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. I know very well about this one because I chaired the SACS re-affirmation of accreditation my last year here. Additionally, Tuskegee has received professional accreditation for many of its programs including architecture, chemistry, engineering, nursing and others.

On this refresher journey, let's go back to your beginning. It was a local man's initiative that brought about the Tuskegee Institute. That heroic history-maker was a black tinsmith named Lewis Adams. As a slave artisan in Tuskegee, he had learned tinsmithing, shoemaking and harness making. Later, during the years of freedom, he built a substantial business in tin. He made kitchen utensils for the housewives of Tuskegee, roofed the business buildings, and moved into hardware and leather working. In 1881, he was probably the leading black citizen of the town as an owner of a substantial store on the court square. Adams never attended school a day in his life, but somehow had learned to read and write, perhaps through his master's indulgence during slavery. He strongly believed that education should impart not only book learning but practical skills by which black men could improve their opportunities. He was a shrewd, cool bargainer who could talk with the whites without either fear or bombast.

In the election of 1880, Colonel Wilbur F. Foster, a wounded Confederate veteran and lawyer, was the Democratic candidate for the state senate. He and his colleague, Arthur L. Brooks, candidate for a seat in the lower house, came to Lewis Adams and asked his price for swaying the black vote of the town to their side. Adams said he wanted nothing for himself but would deliver the

Black vote in return for some substantial gain for the black community. He secured the politicians' promise to sponsor and secure passage of a bill for a Negro normal school in Tuskegee. Adams delivered his part of the bargain and Arthur L. Brooks as a member of the House Committee on Education, introduced House Bill No. 165 to appropriate state funds to a black state normal school at Tuskegee. The bill to establish a normal school passed in the House by a vote of 48 to 20 and 21 to 7 in the Senate and was signed by Governor Rufus W. Cobb on February 10, 1881, with an annual appropriation of \$2,000. The projected school was placed under a board of three commissioners of which Lewis Adams was one. The trustees began their work by searching for a teacher. One of their requests went to General Armstrong, the founder of Hampton Institute. General Armstrong recommended Booker T. Washington who arrived in Tuskegee on June 24, 1881.

When Washington reached Tuskegee, his first impression of the town was a favorable one. "Dear Friend," he wrote on a postcard to General Marshall the next day, "The place has a healthy and pleasant location-high and hilly. Think I shall like it. Will open school first Monday in July."

It is not certain that Washington made as good a first impression on the town and the commissioners as they did on him. George Washington Campbell who became a commissioner at the death of Thomas B. Dryer said "he looked like he was about 18 years old and looked so young that we did not know whether we were able to take him or not but we thought with the recommendation he had that he would do." Washington's manly bearing and no-nonsense demeanor soon erased any doubt that any had of him.

On June 29, just 5 days after arriving at Tuskegee, Washington wrote General Armstrong, Hampton's founder.

"You have probably heard of my safe arrival here. I found things as represented. General, I want your advice at once on this point. I have walked all around town and examined the land. Finally, I have found a farm about half a mile from town which I think will suit above all others. Myself and one of the trustees have just seen the owner of the farm. He said that it contains 100 acres that he will sell to us for \$500—\$200 when he gives possession and the remainder to run at 8 percent till paid. In case we get it, we expect to have it deeded so that the state will have no control over the land. Then in case the state withdrew its appropriation at any time the school could still live."

Look at the wisdom of this young man of 25 years old as he began to build his school. General Armstrong advised the purchase of the 100 acres, and advised the Treasurer of his decision. In a letter, dated July 5, 1881, Mr. Washington wrote,

"My dear friend,

Your telegram was received this a.m. worded as follows: 'I advise the purchase of your representation of the farm.' I thank you for the advice that we may move our school on the farm at once. I want to ask the loan of \$200 from the school till October 1, 1881, and I will pledge my salary for its payment at that time." General Armstrong approved the loan from Hampton and the money was sent to Mr. Washington to purchase the initial 100 acres upon which the University stands. Mr. Washington repaid the original \$200 as he did all of his debts.

Washington opened the new school on July 4, 1881, in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and an adjoining shanty with 30 students. The original 100 acres owned by the Institute has now expanded exponentially. The small budget has increased into the millions, and the 30

students have multiplied into thousands. The Institute has evolved into a University that promotes learning and service and encompasses a varied educational program. It has entered the realm of international education and taken the lead in paving new avenues for African American progress.

Fully accredited, co-educational, and non-sectarian, this professional and technical institution has geared its entire curricular program to provide students with maximum overall competence. Tuskegee University boasts 8 schools and colleges and offers nearly 50 undergraduate degrees and 19 graduate degrees.

Clearly, Tuskegee is unique. It is, for example, the only black institution - not wholly state supported - that offers a strong comprehensive program in agriculture and an accredited program in engineering; the only black college - public or private - offering veterinary medicine.

Tuskegee is unique because the work-study program which began on this campus has now been copied by other institutions and is now a federal thrust in helping the disadvantaged. Cooperative education, which is so popular among colleges and universities today, can be traced to include the methods of teaching in Tuskegee's early on-the-job training programs. Special educational services for the disadvantaged, now receiving federal support, were inaugurated in the 1940's at Tuskegee through remedial programs in English and mathematics.

Tuskegee is unique because it began extension work among farm families before the organization of an official government extension program. Agricultural workers were sent to Europe and Africa decades before the establishment of federal technical assistance programs.

Tuskegee is unique because of the way it spearheaded career opportunities for blacks in the Air Force and conducted flight training for black Air Force cadets in World War II. Although closed now, the uniqueness of Tuskegee can be found in the John Andrews Hospital (Where our son

Chris was born) and HRDC, an organized center for the development of human resources designed chiefly to serve the adult population of the state in which it is located.

Tuskegee is unique and fortunate because it has had outstanding leadership from Dr. Washington to your current president, Dr. Brian Johnson. The items that I have previously mentioned were made possible because of the strong leadership of these presidents and the help of their colleagues such as those of you who are faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends who down through the years have provided unvarnished support for this institution.

I must take a moment of personal privilege at this point to single out my boss when I was here – President Luther H. Foster. I remember him as presenting the most perfect type of the mental, fiscal and professional man that it has ever been my privilege to see. His managerial style would have allowed him to provide efficient and effective leadership at any college or university in the country – black or white, large or small, north or south, east or west! During my six years as one of his Vice Presidents and afterwards, in all my work away from Tuskegee, "...I want you to know, it was my privilege to be guided, to be instructed, to be inspired by him and his words, and I have never had occasion to change the first impression which he made upon me."

Those of you that are alumni certainly can be of immeasurable help to Tuskegee. The undergirding factor to good professors, quality programs, scholarships for students, modest campus renovations, and in general, financial good health is financial room to maneuver. President Johnson and his team need your help. The prime source of this is voluntary giving. The keystone of all voluntary support is an involved, dedicated alumni group. Most corporations and foundations readily ask what are your alumni doing? Are they supporting you? The feeling, and rightfully so, is if the people who benefit most do not support, then why should corporations and foundations. On

the other side of the coin, the idea is if the people who benefit most do support, then the entity is worth supporting. The crucial margin then, the difference between mere mediocrity and excellence must spring from renewed alumni support.

I tell you the same thing that I tell alumni of Hampton University. Now and in the years ahead, much more needs to be done if Tuskegee is to maintain the stature and dynamism that it has always enjoyed. Never before, does your alma mater need more loyal alumni who support their institution and respect its vigorous role in a dynamic world. By being a part of the institutional family, you are a part of the unique living history. Your challenge then is a great one. You have to do the very best that you can to help Tuskegee maintain and sustain itself. For just as Hampton University, Tuskegee University is many things. It is service. It is a tremendous resource to the state and nation. It is programs. But most of all, it is people. You can make a difference.

As you celebrate your founder and Hampton alumnus Dr. Booker T. Washington, today and in years to come, remember that he was a man of great vision. His vision laid the foundation for the Tuskegee University that we now know. Yours is a glorious history. Whatever your association with this outstanding institution, you are obligated to do your absolute best to keep your founders' vision alive and ensure that Tuskegee not only survives, but also thrives- Now as I say to the Hampton Family – Let's Get On With It!!!