

DSU Inaugurates Dr. Harry L. Williams at 10th President

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Dr. Harry Lee Williams formally took the oath of office Friday morning as the 10th president of Delaware State University during a packed Inauguration Ceremony in the Memorial Hall Gymnasium on campus.



Dr. Harry L. Williams received the Presidential Medallion from Dr. John Land (r) and Dr. Claibourne Smith, both of the DSU Board of Trustees.

With his mother, wife, two sons, three brothers, extended family and his native North Carolina friends looking on along with the DSU family and other well-wishers, Dr. Williams received the Presidential Medallion and investiture from Dr. Claibourne D. Smith, chair of the Board of Trustees, who served as acting DSU president from September 2008 to January 2010.

“We must heed the call to be more engaged with Delaware and the nation, demonstrating our capacity to be ever more useful and relevant to a society under stress,” Dr. Williams said in his inauguration address. “We choose the path that capitalizes on our strengths, effectively addresses our shortcomings, and seizes the opportunities before us as we march into the upper echelons of the top Historically Black University’s in the nation.”

“Our students will graduate, and graduate with tools they need to thrive in this ever-shrinking world, improving the lives they touch,” the DSU president said.

Dr. Williams succeeds Dr. Allen L. Sessoms, the 9th DSU president who served from 2003-2008 before leaving to become president of the University of the District of Columbia.

Gov. Jack Markell was joined in the Inauguration Ceremony by Delaware’s entire Congressional Delegation – Gov. Jack Markell will participate in the inauguration, as well as the entire Delaware Congressional Delegation – U.S. Sen. Thomas R. Carper, U.S. Sen. Ted Kauffman and U.S. Rep. Michael N. Castle.

Gov. Markell noted that DSU has a special president. “Dr. Williams is humble, but he has the intellectual resources to know how to take the school to the next level,” the governor said.

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Rep. Castle said being a higher education president is a challenge because there are so many constituencies – students, faculty, staff, alumni, elected officials, the public, etc.; but noted that DSU’s 10th president is more than capable.

“Dr. Harry Williams has the ability to lead in ways that are rarely seen in this country,” Rep. Castle said.



The Inauguration of Dr. Harry L. Williams brought together the rare gathering of four Delaware higher education presidents. (From l-r) Dr. Patrick T. Harker of the University of Delaware, Dr. Orlando J. George Jr. of Delaware Technical & Community College, Dr. Williams, Gov. Jack Markell and Dr. William N. Johnston of Wesley College.

The Inauguration Ceremony brought together four of the five presidents of Delaware’s institutions of higher education – Dr. Patrick T. Harker, president of University of Delaware; Dr. Orlando J. George Jr., president of Delaware Technical & Community College; and Dr. William N. Johnston, president of Wesley College. Wilmington University President Jack P. Varsalona had a scheduling conflict and could not attend.

Remarks were also given by Dover Mayor Carlton Carey, Sr.; Dr. Charlie Wilson, chair DSU Faculty Senate; Irene C. Hawkins, assistant vice president of DSU Human Resources; Kathleen Charlot, president of the DSU Student Government Association; Dr. K. Bernard Chase, president of the DSU Alumni Association; as well as Dr. Harvey Durham, chancellor and provost emeritus of Appalachian State University, who Dr. Williams calls an important mentor in his higher education career.

The DSU Concert Choir performed Moses Hogan’s arrangement of “My Soul’s Been Anchored,” while the DSU Approaching Storm Band played “Variations of Amazing Grace.” The singers and musician then joined together to lead the gathering in the DSU Alma Mater.

Hired in late November 2009, Dr. Williams officially took the helm of the University on Jan. 10. Shortly after beginning his tenure as president, Dr. Williams established a Blue Ribbon Commission to craft a new vision statement and set of core value to guide the University’s future trajectory toward being among the premier HBCUs in the country.

After a little more than four months of work, the commission completed its work and Dr. Williams approved and adopted the following:

Vision Statement

As one of America’s most highly respected Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Delaware State University will be renowned for a standard of academic excellence that prepares our graduates to become the first choice of employers in a global market, and invigorates the economy and the culture of Delaware and the Mid-Atlantic Region.

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Core Values

Community, integrity, diversity, scholarship and outreach.

Dr. Williams' first six months as president has been met with great enthusiasm off-campus as well, in large part to his personal outreach to numerous segments – including community groups, alumni, the state General Assembly and Gov. Jack Markell, city and county officials, the business sector and others. The DSU president has met with John Wilson, the executive director of the White House Initiative of HBCUs, and even traveled to Washington, D.C. to hear directly from President Barack Obama concerning the education agenda of the nation's chief executive and the role that Historically Black Colleges and University should play in that vision.



Dr. Harry L. Williams' wife and two sons joined him on stage before he took the oath of office. (l-r) Austin, Dr. Robin Williams and Gavin, along with the DSU President.

In addition, Dr. Williams took a trip in the summer of 2010 to the People's Republic of China and South Africa with other DSU officials to finalize new agreements with several institutions in those countries to facilitate student/faculty exchanges and other collaborations.

Dr. Williams served as DSU's provost and vice president of Academic Affairs from July 2008 until he assumed the presidency. His 22-year career in higher education includes serving as an administrator at his alma mater Appalachian State University, North Carolina A&T, University of North Carolina General Administration, as well as a consultant with Noel-Levitz, a top national enrollment management consultation firm.

Dr. Williams has a Bachelor of Science in Communication Broadcasting and a Master of Arts in Educational Media, both from Appalachian State University. He earned an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from East Tennessee State University.

As an athlete, Dr. Williams competed as an undergraduate in track and cross country at Appalachian State University. He continues to stay in shape by running four miles at the beginning of each day.

He is married to Dr. Robin S. Williams, the DSU First Lady. Their 18-year union has produced two sons: Austin, age 14 and Gavin, age 10.

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