DSU President Names Blue Ribbon Commission

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DSU President Harry Lee Williams today named the members of a newly created Blue Ribbon Commission that will create a new vision statement for the 119-year-old institution.

Wayne Gilchrest and Dr. Dyremple Marsh, DSU Blue Ribbon Commission co-chairs, along with Sen. Brian Bushweller, Commission member, listen to the DSU president talk about their future work in crafting a vision statement for the University.

Dr. Williams announced the members during a Feb. 1 press briefing in the DSU Hardcastle-Selby Board of Trustees Conference Room. Also participating in the media event were U.S. Sen. Thomas R. Carper and Dr. John S. Wilson Jr., executive director of the White House Initiative on HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities).

Dr. Williams announced that the Blue Ribbon Commission would be led by two co-chairs – Dr. Dyremple B. Marsh, dean of the DSU College of Agriculture and Related Sciences, and Wayne Gilchrest, a retired U.S. Congressman from Maryland.

The entire Delaware Congressional delegation – U.S. Sen. Thomas R. Carper, U.S. Sen. Ted Kaufman and U.S. Rep. Michael N. Castle – have all been named as honorary co-chairs of the Commission.

The following individuals will also serve on the 14-member Commission:

- Kemal Atkins, DSU interim vice president, Student Affairs
- The Honorable Brian Bushweller, state senator, 17th District (North Dover)
- Kathleen Charlot, president, DSU Student Government Association

- Bill Collick, former DSU football coach (1985-96) and athletics director (1995-2000)
- Tamara Crump, DSU executive assistant to the president
- Carolyn Curry, DSU vice president, Institutional Advancement
- Dr. Randy Guschl, director, DuPont Center for Collaborative Research & Education
- Dr. Reba Hollingsworth, Delaware State College class of 1949
- Dr. Josette L. McCullough, principal, Fred Fifer III Middle School
- Dr. Steve Newton, DSU professor, Department of History, Political Sci. & Philosophy
- Bernice Whaley, deputy director, Delaware Economic Development Office
- Dr. Calvin Wilson, DSU Board of Trustees

The Blue Ribbon Commission will be assisted in its work by Cassandra Robinson, administrative assistant to the president.

Since assuming his role last month as the 10th president in the University's history, Dr. Williams' establishment of the Blue Ribbon Commission has been a top priority.

"The Commission is charged with crafting a completely new vision statement for the University," Dr. Williams said. "The statement must speak to DSU's journey toward becoming one of the best HBCUs in the country, thus defining the next generation of excellence for this institution."

The DSU president said that the Commission will accompany the vision statement with a recommended set of values as well as recommended ways to integrate the vision with both internal and external constituents. Dr. Williams said that people will be given the opportunity to provide input through a special website that will be established soon, as well as through focus groups.

In his capacity as the primary liaison between HBCUs and the federal government, Dr. John S. Wilson said that DSU has the same challenges that face other HBCUs.

In his positive remarks about DSU, Dr. John W. Wilson, executive director of the White House Initiative on HBCUs, noted that if President Obama is to achieve his education goals, "he cannot do it without HBCUs."

"Our real challenge is to find brand new ways to enhance HBCU capacity," Dr. Wilson said. "And we need to come at it in a new way, not only because the resource gap between HBCUs and the best in the industry has grown wider since this office was created in 1980, but also because we have no better platform on which to stand than by the one being built by the Obama administration."

Dr. Wilson praised the DSU president and the direction the University is taking to create a new vision statement for the institutions. "We are looking for progressive leaders, … and in the time I have spent with Dr. Williams this morning, I can see that Delaware State University has such a leader," Dr. Wilson said.

Sen. Kaufman, who was responsible for inviting Dr. John Wilson to DSU, believes the new vision will strengthen the University's role in helping to make the state a leader in technology and innovation.

"It is wonderful that DSU is creating a 'President's Blue Ribbon Commission' to develop a new vision statement for the University," said U.S. Sen. Kaufman. "As a former engineer, I am especially excited that DSU will increase its attention to STEM education. Science, technology, engineering and math education are keys to job growth and our nation's economic recovery."

Sen. Carper believes the initiative a new vision for DSU will inspire optimism and confidence in the institution.

"Delaware State University is rich with history and tradition," Sen. Carper said. "With the combination of hiring of Dr. Williams as president, the announcement of the President's Commission and DSU's forward vision, their future is looking brighter than ever."

Rep. Castle said he is pleased to be an honorary member of this important Commission. "Delaware State University, one of the nation's 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities, has been an educational leader in Dover and throughout Delaware for over a century," Rep. Castle said. "Under the new and energetic leadership of Dr. Harry Williams, along with the distinguished members of the president's newly formed Blue Ribbon Commission, DSU is well-prepared to become one of the country's top historically black universities to take on the challenge of preparing students for today's workforce."

Dr. Williams will meet regularly with the Commission co-chairs, as well as participate in some of the Commission meetings and constituency focus groups. The DSU president said the Blue Ribbon Commission will complete its work on or before June 1.

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By Carlos Holmes

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