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Presidential Tenure Highlights

The Presidents of Delaware State University and the Highlights of their Tenures

Institution names and abbreviations:

The State College for Colored Students (SCCS), 1891-1947
Delaware State College (DSC), 1947-1993
Delaware State University (DSU), 1993-present

Wesley P. Webb, President 1891 - 1895

- Former chair of agriculture at Delaware College (later University of Delaware), Wesley P. Webb became the first president of the then-newly created State College for Colored Students (SCCS).
- The fledging College initially offered five four-year courses of study in Agriculture, Chemistry, Classical, Engineering and Scientific.
- The Webb Administration faced the challenges of local whites? unfounded security concerns over the new college as well as black Delawareans? skepticism of the benefit of the education opportunities. Mr. Webb was also challenged by the virtually non-existent education system for blacks in Delaware, resulting in low enrollment levels during the SCCS's first three years that were predominantly out-of-state students.
- Mr. Webb and the SCCS Board of Trustees worked to improve the sentiments of both blacks and whites toward the institution by actively promoting the College in the surrounding communities.
- Enrollment began with seven students in 1892 and increased to only 28 students by 1895.

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Wesley P. Webb

William C. Jason, President 1895 - 1923

- A Methodist minister with a Bachelor of Divinity and a Master of Arts, William Jason would be the longest serving president in the institution?s history (28 years).
- In 1898, John Boykins Aikens and Howard Day Young became the first two graduates of the SCCS. The following year, Cora Aikens became the first female graduate.
- Teachers? education began with the establishment of a three-year Normal Course in 1897; it would expand in 1911 to a four-year course.
- The U.S. Commission of Education evaluated the SCCS? academic programs and pronounced them to be at the high school level.
- For the first time, the SCCS received capital project funding from the state, resulting in the 1901 completion of Lore Hall (a dorm for women).
- An additional 100 acres was purchased during his tenure, increasing the campus to 202½ acres. The physical plant expanded to seven buildings by 1918, including the construction of a chapel where the former Loockerman Plantation slave quarters and horse stable had been located. (The chapel still exists as an office building and is currently known as the Thomasson Building).
- The chapel was the result of the first documented fundraising effort by the institution, spearheaded by President Jason in conjunction with a speaking tour he did throughout Delaware to promote the SCCS.

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William C. Jason

Richard S. Grossley, President 1923 - 1942

- Richard Grossley was a graduate of Alcorn A&M College, where he earned a degree in rural education and a Master of Arts degree. He later received an honorary doctorate from South Carolina A&M.
- During his tenure, the faculty increased from 14 (with only one with a master?s degree) in 1923 to 25 (with 20 possessing master?s degrees) in 1942.
- The education philanthropy of Pierre S. DuPont resulted in the construction of a new president's residence, a practice school (that would become the only high school in Kent County until the 1950s), and extensive water, sewage and electric improvements on campus. State funding also resulted in the construction of Delaware Hall and the Conrad Hall dining facility.
- The chapel was converted into the SCCS Library, later to be named after former SCCS President William C. Jason.
- A Junior College Division was established in 1932, which at that time offered academic courses of study in Arts & Sciences, Agriculture, Education, Home Economics and Industrial Arts. In 1939, the SCCS also began offering a two-year flight training program at the Dover Municipal Airport.

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Richard S. Grossley

Dr. Howard Gregg, President 1942 - 1949

- With a Bachelor of Divinity from Yale and a doctorate, Dr. Howard Gregg was the first president to hold an earned doctorate.
- The institution received provisional accreditations by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in 1944. By an act of the state General Assembly, the school changed its name to Delaware State College (DSC) in 1947.
- The enrollment in the College Division increased from 132 in 1942 to a high of 387 in 1946, due in large part to World War II black veterans returning home and using the education provision of the G.I Bill. Controversy at the College toward the end of Dr. Gregg?s tenure caused enrollment to decrease to 387 in 1948.
- In 1943, there were 22 faculty members, four of whom possessed doctorates. By 1948 there were six faculty members with doctorates.
- A then-school-record 49 students graduated from DSC in 1948.

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Dr. Howard Gregg

Dr. Oscar J. Chapman, President 1950 - 1951

- Dr. Chapman, who earned his doctorate from Ohio State University in 1940, assumed the post of DSC president. It would be the shortest tenure in the history of the institution.
- As a member of a state task force to study the role of DSC in higher education in Delaware, Dr. Chapman was the lone member who was in favor of maintaining the College as a four-year institution and opposed the majority?s recommendation that DSC either become a junior college or be abolished altogether.
- In 1951, the College hired for the first time a physician and registered nurse and began providing minimum medical services for the students.

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Dr. Oscar J. Chapman

Dr. Maurice E. Thomasson, Acting President 1949 - 1950 and 1951 - 1953

- A DSC professor of sociology, Dr. Thomasson was appointed as acting president in the wake of Dr. Howard Gregg?s resignation in September 1949.
- After a Middle States evaluation team came in October 1949, the College?s initial accreditation was revoked one month later.
- Dr. Thomasson was once again appointed as president in the wake of the dismissal of Dr. Oscar Chapman as president.
- During both periods as acting president, Dr. Thomasson worked diligently to carry on the work of the College during trying times.
- Although Dr. Thomasson was offered the permanent president?s post, he declined and then resigned as acting president in January 1953. Dr. William A. Daniels was then tapped to serve as the administrator of the College over the next 5½ months.
- Just prior to the appointment of a new president who would begin on July 1, 1953, DSC completed construction on Tubman Hall (a women?s dorm) and an addition that served to expand the library facility.

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Dr. Maurice E. Thomasson

Dr. Jerome H. Holland, President 1953 - 1960

- Dr. Jerome Holland, who possessed BS and MS degrees in sociology from Cornell and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania, would prove to be the most pivotal president in the institution?s history.
- Dr. Holland?s comprehensive 1954 report on his study of DSC was submitted to state Gov. J. Caleb Boggs. The report made a strong case for the continuation of DSC as a four-year institution, detailed the physical plant needs of the College and the degree of financial support it needed from the state.
- During the seven-year tenure of the Holland Administration, the College received then-unprecedented major capital funding support from the state, resulting in the construction of the multipurpose Memorial Hall, Conwell Hall (a men's dorm), Kent Apartments (for faculty), an administration/classroom building (the current Grossley Hall), as well as a number of significant renovations of existing structures.
- Under Dr. Holland?s leadership, the College successfully addressed its shortcoming and won back its full accreditation from Middle States.
- After the College?s enrollment dipped to 167 students in 1953, it increased to 383 by the end of Dr. Holland?s tenure.
- Following the Holland Report recommendation, the state General Assembly changed the composition of the DSC Board of Trustees to 11 members ? six appointed by the state governor and five board-appointed.
- Dr. Holland resigned in 1960 to become the president of Hampton Institute in Virginia. He would later go on to serve as the ambassador to Sweden under the Nixon Administration, to become the first African American to serve on the board of the N.Y. Stock Exchange, sat on the board of nine major companies as well as serve as the chairman of the American Red Cross.

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Dr. Jerome H. Holland

Dr. Luna I. Mishoe, President 1960 - 1987

- Dr. Luna Mishoe -- who had a BS degree in mathematics and chemistry, a MS degree in mathematics and physics, as well as a Ph.D. in mathematics ? would serve for the second longest tenure (27 years) in the institution?s history.
- Effectively building on his predecessor?s success in improving DSC?s physical infrastructure, the Mishoe Administration completed the construction of Conwell Hall for men, Laws Hall for women, a science center, a building to house business and home economics programs (now the Price Building), an agriculture building (now the Baker Building) and Evers Hall for men.
- Dr. Mishoe?s tenure also resulted in the completion of the Education & Humanities Building, the Martin Luther King Student Center and the first phase of the William Jason Library. Also constructed were the ETV Building, the Memorial Hall Gymnasium addition, Jenkins Hall and Wynder Towers (both for women), as well as significant renovations to existing facilities.
- Consistent with the growth of the College?s infrastructure, the enrollment progressively increased from 386 students in 1960 to 2,327 in 1987.
- The College established its first master?s degree ? in Education Curriculum and Instruction ? in 1981 and would add six other graduate degree programs by 1987.
- The College's Social Work Program and Nursing Program received their initial national accreditations in 1982 and 1987, respectively.
- By the end of the Mishoe Era, 41% of the faculty possessed doctorates.
- DSC's accreditation was reaffirmed in 1962, 1972, 1982 and 1987.
- Dr. Mishoe retired as president in 1987.

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Dr. Luna I. Mishoe

Dr. William B. DeLauder, President, 1987 - 2003

- Dr. William DeLauder, who has a BS degree in chemistry and a doctorate in physical chemistry, became DSU?s eighth president. His tenure would span 16 years.
- The institution was renamed Delaware State University in 1993.
- The campus? physical plant transformation continued under the DeLauder Administration, which included the construction of the Phase II Jason Library addition, Warren Franklin men and women?s residential halls, the Mishoe Science Center expansion, the MBNA Building (named the Bank of America Building in 2008), the Administration Building and the Courtyard Apartments.
- During the DeLauder era, eight additional disciplines were added to the institution?s master degree offerings.
- The first-ever major capital campaign was launched in 1991 that would raise more than $8 million toward academic programs, faculty development and student financial aid.
- The institution's accreditation was reaffirmed in 1992 and 2002. Additionally, DSU?s teacher education program in 1998 became the first collegiate education program in Delaware to receive national accreditation. The University's Hospitality and Tourism Management Program also earned its initial national accreditation in 1998.
- The campus was transformed in the mid-1990s as the main corridor streets were replaced by a collegiate pedestrian mall.
- Dr. DeLauder retired as president on June 30, 2003.

Dr. William B. DeLauder

Dr. Allen L. Sessoms, President, July 2003 - August 2008

- Dr. Sessoms arrived at DSU after serving as a Harvard University fellow and lecturer, the president of Queens College of the City College of New York and as a U.S. State Department diplomat. He has a doctorate in physics from Yale University.
- By his second year as president, the University had established its first two doctoral programs in Educational Leadership and in Interdisciplinary Mathematics and Mathematical Physics. By the summer of 2008, the University had launched a total of five doctoral programs and added five master?s degrees.
- The University significantly increased its research projects, expanding in the areas of hydrogen storage, biotechnology, mathematics, neurobiology and others. In 2004, DSU established an Applied Mathematics Research Center, and in 2005 obtained federal funding for the establishment of a Hydrogen Storage Research Center. Federal funding also resulted in the establishment of a Center for Research and Education in Optical Sciences and Applications.
- DSU significantly expanded its connections with institutions of higher education abroad from six to 40 collaborative agreements in countries such as Nigeria, Namibia, China, Bangladesh, Egypt, Cuba, England and Serbia. The University established an Office of International Affairs to maintain existing formal collaborations and develop new ones.
- During Dr. Sessoms? tenure, the University completed the construction of a new residential hall complex (University Village), an Agriculture Annex Building, as well as a new Strength and Conditioning facility for student-athletes. In 2007, the University commenced the construction of a new Wellness Center and in 2008 it also began the construction of a new student union.
- The College of Business achieved accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International. The College of Human Ecology's Didactic Program earned its national accreditation in 2007. The College of Education, the Department of Nursing and Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, as well as the Department of Social Work, all achieved national reaffirmation of their accreditations.
- The University increased its enrollment by more than 15%, going from 3,178 students in 2003 to a school-record 3,756 in 2007.
- Dr. Sessoms resigned on Aug. 30, 2008, to take over as president of the University of the District of Columbia.

Dr. Allen L. Sessoms

Dr. Claibourne D. Smith, Acting President, Sept. 1, 2008 - Jan. 9, 2010

- The DSU Board of Trustees chairman for 15 years beginning in 1993, Dr. Smith temporarily relinquished that leadership post in the wake of Dr. Sessoms? resignation to take over as acting president of the University while a national presidential search process was implemented.
- DSU continued to increase the prominence of research at the institution during this period as it received research grant awards for projects in chemistry, biology, mathematics, computer sciences and, most notably, a $5 million research grant from NASA for the creation of a new optics center.
- The University completed the construction of its new Wellness Center in the summer of 2009.
- With the hiring of Dr. Harry Lee Williams as the 10th president of DSU, Dr. Smith returned to his post as chairman of the University?s Board of Trustees in early 2010.

Dr. Claibourne D. Smith

Dr. Harry Lee Williams, President, 2010 - present

- Dr. Harry Lee Williams became the 10th president in the history of DSU on Jan. 10, 2010, after serving as DSU's provost and vice president of Academic Affairs since July 2008.
- Under his leadership, the University established a new 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.? At the same time, the University identified its Core Values as: Community, Integrity, Diversity, Scholarship and Outreach.
- The University completed the construction of the new three-story Martin Luther King Jr. Student Center.
- DSU achieved the support of the Delaware General Assembly and Gov. Jack Markell in the passage of the historic Inspire Scholarship Program into law as a state-supported program to benefit Delaware students who want to attend DSU.

Dr. Harry Lee Williams

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