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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

December 9, 2016

Dear Southernites and Friends:

The Christmas season has officially begun, but I'm still recovering from an incredible Bayou Classic weekend. I must admit, my favorite part of the weekend was the official announcement to the Board of Supervisors by Chancellor John Pierre that the SU Law Center would be the first SU academic program to offer classes at the new Southern University downtown location beginning the first week of January, less than a month away. It's taken about a year to pull together this collaboration between Southern and the Mentorship Academy, which is located in the heart of downtown Baton Rouge. We truly have so much to be thankful for this holiday season.

The Board of Supervisors and President Belton's decision to take this bold step to bring the Southern University brand to the center of the Capitol City is one of the best Christmas gifts a person could ask for. With the help of SU Alumna and Home Chapter Past President, Kia Bickham, I had a great conversation yesterday with Davis Rhorer, the Executive Director of the Downtown Development District, about placing SU banners on the city light poles around the downtown campus. He thinks the idea of Southern having a downtown presence is fantastic. The new SU signage for the building has been selected and is expected to be installed next month, but having SU banners on city light poles in the middle of downtown Baton Rouge would be an awesome stocking stuffer.

Dr. Graysen Walles, the CEO of the Mentorship Academy, truly sees the potential for what this collaboration means for his high school students, who will now have an even stronger pipeline to attend Southern University. We are hoping to establish a mock trial team for the students to interact with downtown lawyers and law students attending classes at the new campus. This project is such a win-win for both institutions. The Mentorship Academy has even decided to upgrade its signage on the building to match Southern's new signage. If we are lucky, we may even start another academic program during the Spring semester at the Mentorship Academy. Discussions are on the way so stay tuned for updates on this possibility. In the meantime, I am grateful this holiday season for the leadership of our University. I must especially thank SU Board Member Tony Clayton, who helped Chairman Leon Tarver get this project on the Board agenda and approved a few months ago. The Alumni Federation is grateful for the confidence the Board and Administration have shown in the Alumni by allowing us to assist with the launching of this project.

Like many of you, I am having a wonderful time attending Christmas parties. I kicked off the Christmas season Wednesday night with the Home Chapter's Christmas Social. Every year it gets larger and larger. The Christmas Social finally outgrew the Donald Wade House and had to be held in the SU Event Center (the Old Women's Gym) on campus. Congratulations to Duane Jordan, who was given the Home Chapter Lifetime Achievement Award, at the Social. Duane is a past president of the chapter, former Federation officer, and all around great guy! Dignitaries such as President Belton, Dr. Robyn Merrick, and Band Director Nathan Haymer attended. There was a star-studded cast of chapter honorees that included Tamara Montgomery, Angela Gaines, and Director Haymer. The chapter also recognized special event sponsors Councilwoman Tara Wicker, Councilwoman Erika Green, Natasha James, Tia Bonds, and Kimberly Collins. Chapter President Cortny Jarrell and the Chapter's leadership team did a wonderful job organizing this event. The night was topped off with Federation Executive Director Derrick Warren announcing that the Home Chapter won the Federation's 2015-16 Chapter Challenge for having the largest membership growth of all chapters in the Alumni Federation. Congratulations, Home Chapter!! I'm looking forward to attending more alumni holiday socials over the next couple of weeks. For those that I can't personally attend, please send us lots of pictures so that we can share them with the rest of the country.

Congratulations to the Southern Lab football team for winning the state championship for the second year in a row. Coach Marcus Randall and his staff have truly brought back the glory of Kitten athletics. The school's new director, Mr. Averil Sanders, JD, has certainly had an exciting first six months on the job.

Finally, SU Alumna Dianne Andrews will be taping new episodes of her talk show, ***In Black & White,*** Thursday, December 15th. I'll be a guest on one of the new episodes. Please come and join the studio audience. More details about her show can be found here in ***News & Notes***.

Happy holidays, Jags, Knights and Kittens!

Southernly Yours,

Preston

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