

STATE OF THE COLLEGE ADDRESS

Tougaloo College

May 18, 2002

Thank you Marlana, trustees, administration, faculty and staff. Good afternoon – my fellow alumni, trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students and friends. This is indeed an “awesome” (in the vernacular of young people) moment in a life of yes, many great moments. There is nothing that can compare to this experience. It is intimidating and for those who really know me, that’s not something I either embrace or wear well. It is challenging—it tests my commitment and stamina. It is exciting—it puts me on another trail yet to be blazed. But most of all, this moment is humbling. Humbling is what fits. I never envisioned, sought, thought, or aspired to be standing on these hallowed grounds as the President of this great institution.

Following my tenure in state government, I left the College’s Board of Trustees; simply to serve the College in whatever way was needed. At that time, it was to develop the Owens Health and Wellness Center but only for two years. That was 1997. You heard my introduction. And I thought I was having an enjoyable experience—serving and making a difference at my Alma Mater. On April 6, 2002 around 1:30 or 2:00 p.m., the Board of Trustees invited me into their meeting and informed me that I was the new Interim President in charge of the College, effective that afternoon. Last evening I was informed that by the authority of the Board of Trustees, the interim was removed from the title and I am now the College’s President. Well, I am still blinking my eyes. Humble, that’s it—humble.

I am at the helm, this day, of an institution that has long been my charity of choice—an institution that has my total commitment and dedication—an institution whose mission, values and tradition are deeply rooted in the values of my heart.

I thank the Board of Trustees for this opportunity to lead and serve this College—our College—at this critical juncture in its history. I thank them for their trust and confidence in my capacity to do so. And the most important thing was said, you have our support—we are with you. For this is indeed a shared journey we must now begin and I need the support of this great alumni—I need your backing for Tougaloo College.

I am particularly mindful of the other presidents who have led this College. All males—but yes I stand on their shoulders today for each has left a mark on the Tougaloo legacy and the foundation on which I am now charged to continue to build. I recall the words of our celebrated poet Robert Frost:

***Much as I own I owe,
The passers of the past
Because their to and fro
Has cut this road to last.***

It is indeed a pleasure to be with you on this prestigious alumni and Commencement Weekend. Welcome Home to Everyone! I especially want to welcome those of you who have traveled far to celebrate your respective reunions, particularly the Golden Class and the members of 1977, who are celebrating their Silver Anniversary and who will have the chance to hear Vernon Jordan who was also their Commencement Speaker in 1972. ***History meeting the Future.***

This is Tougaloo College—our beloved Eagle Queen. We have extraordinary ties to many of the nation's extraordinary people. We are well known and well respected throughout this country because of our distinguished alumni and prestigious friends. Yes, we have our challenges—but we have many golden opportunities. We have much for which to be grateful. As we discuss the state of the College, let's remember in our thoughts and in our hearts those who have passed, on this special weekend. We know their collective spirits are with us though. Let us continue to pray for the families and ask the spirit of the Divine to guide them everyday. We must pray for our nation and we must pray for our institution.

As you know, these are difficult times for our nation. We remain at war. These are difficult times on the domestic front as we see so many troubling situations for major corporations, many right here in our front yards. These difficulties impact us as an educational institution in terms of doing business, accommodating our parents, students and graduates for jobs, our fundraising capacity and much more. We cannot, however, lose sight of the needs on our own doorsteps as we reflect on some of the remarkable strides this year. I must say to you that even I am amazed at our many accomplishments amidst looming challenges. We are challenged to make bricks often, without sufficient straw.

First and foremost we are graduating another class of bright young scholars who in the proud Tougaloo tradition, will go on to achieve great things. Listening to the remarks by the members of the Golden Class at their special dinner on Thursday evening was truly remarkable. Among this prestigious class is an aerospace engineer from many space shuttles, a medical doctor who had delivered over 7,000 babies, a psychologist who is also a published poet and talented artist, numerous retired teachers, social work pioneers, trail blazing librarians and principals, scientists, lawyers and yes distinguished domestic engineers, all of whom have gone on to produce scholars who are our second and third generation Tougalooians and other phenomenal individuals. These kinds of testimonials describe the mystique, spirit, endurance, and triumphs of the place we know as Tougaloo.

We have received noteworthy mention in National Media over the past several months, including a citation in the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education regarding our productivity in the sciences. Tougaloo continues to stand out as a top producer of students who go on to earn the Ph.D., M.D. and M.D./Ph.D. We also recently received an endorsement in the Clarion Ledger, our largest state newspaper. Our students from many disciplines are traveling to placement and learning opportunities across the U.S. at prestigious research laboratories, Ivy League and top research education institutions and research centers at several locations outside the country, including Finland, China, England, France and in several countries in Africa.

The success of our students while matriculating and after graduation is the trademark of Tougaloo's legacy of academic excellence. This College does have a long earned reputation for academic excellence. Recently, the head of the Japanese American Society came to visit me. He wanted to get Tougaloo involved with their efforts to have one of their people to teach Japanese language and culture to our students; the intent being to form alliances between the cultures and business opportunities. To make a long story short, when asked why he was so interested in forming a relationship with Tougaloo College—he said simply, your reputation for high standards in academics—academic excellence.

A Tougaloo education means something. Our challenge is to maintain and institutionalize rigorous academic standards so that our strength can continue to derive from our academic quality. Education is our business. But it is a business and we must insure that the organizational infrastructure is in place to support a high quality academic environment.

Our success will not only be measured by how smart our students are when they enter our institution or how well they perform here as students. We will measure our success also by the contributions our graduates make after they leave Tougaloo College. Like all of you in this room and throughout the nation and world, we must continue to produce graduates who can think for themselves and communicate with others, graduates who can deal constructively with ambiguity and change, graduates who appreciate the value of ethical judgment, thoughts and action and who understand their civic responsibilities, beginning with their obligations to support their alma mater.

It is no secret that Tougaloo College, like many other HBCUs and a few predominately white institutions, has challenges, primarily fiscal ones.

We know we must strengthen and develop new academic initiatives. Though, we are known for our academic quality, we are challenged to assess where we are today in terms of current day demands and we are doing this under the leadership of Dr. Corinne Anderson. We will establish an Honors Program/College. We are expanding our offerings to include an emphasis in Hotel Management. We

are instituting measures to strengthen our Social Science Division. We continue to do well in our pre-law area under the leadership of Dr. Charles Holmes. We are sending about 13 students to law school this fall. These students are accepted at three to seven different institutions of their choice. We have significantly downsized our adjunct faculty by 90%. We are stressing the importance of student advising. For the first time in many years, all faculty and staff were evaluated through performance appraisals.

As a small private college, we are enrollment driven. Tuition generates the significant portion of our budget. Under the leadership of Vice President Fred Alexander, we are increasing our recruitment efforts and strategically targeting our recruitment activities. Our goal is to bring in 300 new students this fall; however we are aiming for 400. We have 248 students who have accepted Tougaloo and another 572 with incomplete applications, as of April 30. The staff is working relentlessly to make and exceed the goal. Thanks to Congressman Bennie Thompson, he has sent personal letters to all students accepting Tougaloo's offer, as well as those who have not yet committed, encouraging them to do so. If Tougaloo College were to have 1,000 students this fall, FTE, our bottom line would significantly improve...and once we get the students here, we must be attentive to keeping them here until the completion of their education.

We know we have to do a better job and we are making progress. We recently hired a new Financial Aid Director, skilled, experienced and committed to the task. She is quite pro active. We had experienced some serious issues of lack of follow-through, record keeping, proper and timely reports, and incomplete applications for financial aid. Perhaps, more than 90% of our student population is eligible for financial aid and we must be pro active in working with them to complete their financial aid packages and get award letters out earlier which we are doing. All financial aid will be handled and awarded through the Financial Aid Office, with the support of our Commission on Admission and Financial Aid.

We applied to the Hearin Foundation for support for student scholarship and faculty development; \$775,000 for student scholarship and \$1.7 million for faculty development.

We will continue to enhance our physical plant. I am sure you have noticed our progress.

The historic Woodworth Chapel is almost complete. The rededication ceremony will be held at 2:00 p.m. today on the Chapel Lawn. Some guided tours will be allowed as some construction is still underway. We anticipate having all completions done, the pews and organ in place when the College reopens this fall. This has been a tedious process and much thanks go to Kelle Menogan, and the Physical Resources Committee, Howard Glenn, Cullen DuBose and others.

Construction on the exterior of the Wilder Mansion will get underway soon. We expect this phase to be completed by mid-fall.

We are still seeking the balance of funds needed to renovate Brownlee gymnasium into the Arts Education Center and Museum. When this is in place, construction will begin.

We have relocated the administration into Judson Cross. Newly renovated, it makes an attractive convenient location for the administrative functions. The renovation of this facility was made possible through the commitment and support of Trustee Edward Blackmon and his wife, Senator Barbara Blackmon who pledged \$1 million.

There are other plans on the horizon to fully restore, renovate and construct campus facilities. But we are going to first get our arm around our fiscal challenges before launching another project. We are challenged to manage our growth and progress with careful well defined time periods and secured funds.

But whatever we have, our directive is to keep it clean and well groomed. When guests arrive on this campus, we want them to feel and see our sense of pride and standards. From security to maintenance to students – to the President's Office, we want to be one in our commitment to demonstrate a well-run campus – filled with pride and standards of professionalism and excellence across all sectors.

We have brought on Les Range as our Executive Director of TEDI. He is charged with leading the way to explore all options to develop our valuable real estate. We will have some proposals on the table for our October Board meeting.

Dr. Herbert Johnson, alumnus, is the new director of the Owens Health and Wellness Center. He brings experience as a physician in the wellness field, know how, energy and commitment. He is reorganizing the center for maximum effectiveness in terms of utility and resource development.

Beginning on Monday, under the leadership of Dr. Larry Johnson, we will have a two day Strategic Planning Retreat to develop our five-year plan for the College. We will identify our priorities, determine the costs, and develop strategies as to how we plan to implement these strategic areas during the five-year period. Dr. Ben Bailey has agreed to assist us in this process. This is also what we must have in place for the next SACS review.

Perhaps, Tougaloo College will experience periods of fiscal uneasiness throughout its existence. But what we will not continue to experience is fiscal chaos and disorganization in the management of the

fiscal affairs. The Board of Trustees is certainly committed to addressing our fiscal woes. The Finance Committee convened a full day meeting on Thursday, a Friday morning meeting and a significant portion of the meeting of the Board of Trustees on Friday afternoon to the fiscal matters of the College. We are putting systems in place for accountability, integrity, checks and balances, internal controls and audit. Fiscal policies will be clearly defined and certain practices are no longer accepted or tolerated. The matter of the sweep account has been cleared and cleaned up. This summer we will address our technology needs, infrastructure, email and the construction of the web site.

Some tough and perhaps unpopular decisions might have to be made. But Tougaloo College must survive. Tougaloo College is rich in assets – its land, its art, and its alumni. We have 500 acres of land, of which 100 acres is designated for campus expansion – 400 acres remain for development. In the past, we have held firmly to the notion that we would not sell any portions of our land. Times change – circumstances change – conditions and the environment in which we exist change. We have to clearly consider all options to stabilize Tougaloo College fiscally and position it for prosperity. Our land is quite valuable and development is moving in all around. Options are being explored by the administration and Board of Trustees, and we must do what is in the best interest of the survival and future growth of this institution we claim we love – ***Tougaloo College.***

We must have more infusion of cash to operate. We must expect and require our students to pay their bills. We must not be lax in this process and it must not be viewed as unfair or punitive. To do less is a disservice to the College and our students. Education at Tougaloo College must also be value driven and character building.

The Office of Institutional Advancement has increased fundraising for the last three years, reaching and often exceeding the established goals. But it is not enough. We must raise more dollars and we need, you, the alumni to help us. We reviewed alumni giving and reports. The analysis showed about 94 alumni who consistently give. Our percentage for alumni giving is about 15%. We need more alumni giving. Corporations and foundations consider alumni giving when requests are presented. Our goal is to increase alumni giving to 65% within the next two years. And we can do this. Tougaloo College perhaps, has the richest alumni of any HBCU in America. We are the envy of many institutions. Yet, too many of us hold on to our blessings with excuses of why we can't support Tougaloo. "They can't keep up with anything." "They don't recognize me." "They didn't pass my child or my friend's child." "I don't like the leadership." "I didn't get a transcript, and the excuses and criticisms are infinite." Well, quite seriously we need to stop this. And I ask us to do it this day. We, Tougalooians are better than that. We must not hold our beloved Eagle Queen hostage for a human error or inadequacy, or

inefficiency. We must work together to make the situations better. Tougaloo College is bigger than any one individual. All of us are transitory. The constant is Tougaloo College.

Now is the time to show the rest of the world what it means to be a Tougalooian. We must give our support to this institution because of its legacy and its mission—its potential—is too noble to be allowed to die. It is not about me or my leadership—it is about the present and future; an institution that has withstood the challenges of time and place. It is about this spirit that gets in us as a result of our experience at this place—that makes us more responsible, more confident, hold our heads higher, distinguishes us from the rest of the crowd and makes us feel we can do anything and our place is anywhere. More than just a College, it is a spirit that cannot die or wither or be unattended. Alumni, our time is now. We have to do more than just complain. (Now you know I know some of you are just phenomenal with your support.) We must step up to the plate and take care of what is ours. Each of us is challenged to give within our capacity. I am giving to the extent of my capacity. Perhaps, if I had 10-15 million dollars, I would not be standing here today. I would write the check to stabilize this institution and the College would have another president. But for today, I can give my money supported by service at this point in time. What will you give? And how do you plan to support your College—your beloved Alma Mater. How do you respond to objects or people you say you love? Think about this across the weekend as you re-experience the Tougaloo spirit. We have the collective power and resources to stabilize this College and position it on the path to prosperity.

My vision for this College is not simply stability, survival—I see Tougaloo College thriving as a competitive, prosperous, undergraduate liberal arts institution, second to none.

This College has far too long been faced with tenuous financial support. Like the clay stratum that underlies much of this region, which supports unevenly and can heave up or drop away unexpectedly to threaten the best-laid structures, insufficient financial support threatens to undermine Tougaloo's academic quality, programs and plans. I have the confidence and determination that our challenge will be a shared one with you the alumni. And we will rise to the occasion this day to support the institution.

Shortly we will rededicate the Chapel and you will find the inscription in the dedication plaque from the Book of Haggai I states: ***“Go up into the hills, fetch timber and build a house acceptable to me, where I can be honored, says the Lord.”*** It is important to understand this inscription in the context of preceding admonitions in Haggai. “Is it a time for you to live in your own well-roofed houses while this house lies in ruin?... Consider your way of life (Haggai 1:4-6). Only later in Chapter II, verse 9 is this view bestowed. “In this place I will grant prosperity and peace. In that promise is our trust, but all of us must work vigorously to strengthen the future of this College.

Tougaloo's present is far from bleak. With the help of benefactors, loyal alumni and valued friends, Tougaloo will continue. Our resources are our people and our land. We must draw on our historical strength of educational excellence to fashion new academic alliances that will reinforce the continuing relevance of our mission. We must create resources to build an endowment that will provide increased financial assistance and support. The pace of physical enhancement and renewal, as well as technology upgrades, must quicken to remain competitive with peer institutions, and the intangible qualities that define this very distinctive College - natural setting, historic place, enduring/nurturing community, respect for every individual, cultural enrichment, support of achievement, external opportunity—must be articulated widely.

We must walk this journey together. Can we begin today? I believe firmly in my heart that together we can build on our strong legacy and systematically chart a path of progress and growth as we journey to unparalleled excellence. We need your help!

My husband, Marvin, joins me today in thanking you for your presence here on this campus—at this special weekend—a most meaningful of times in our lives. Your support is something we will never forget, forever treasure and always endeavor to justify.

In closing, let me share a note I received from a dear friend who is theologically inclined. This was received a couple of weeks ago.

"In the Book of Joshua we find one of my heroes. Young Joshua had seen it all. He has been at Moses' side throughout Exodus and the wilderness wanderings and, now, Moses, his beloved leader has died. And Joshua is called by God to lead his people. God gives the young leader very specific instructions and they have formed the core of what you have been called to do. For you too have been called to positions as a young leader and have been at the side of great mentors. Look to these words as you embrace the challenges of your new call to leadership, [as I was with Moses, so shall I be with you; I will not fail or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous]."

I will be strong and courageous. Though, I need you to be the wind at my back. Thank you and may God bless Tougaloo College and us.

Beverly W. Hogan
President