



FISK
UNIVERSITY



Greetings,

The month of May was a period of achievement. Many students completed their undergraduate and graduate careers by crossing the stage; our Silver and Golden Sons and Daughters (Class of 1994 and Class of 1969, respectively) achieved a significant milestone in their lives as alumni; and I completed my year in Leadership Nashville, an academy which acquaints Nashvillian leaders with the diversity of people, places, and cultures of metropolitan Nashville. Reunion weekend has coincided with Commencement for many years and in only my third time participating, it continues to get better each year. The end of the school year is always a whirlwind of activity with an invigorating burst of energy from all the people on campus.

In honor of the first new campus building in decades, we hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for the Roland G. Parrish Center for Career

Planning and Development on Friday, May 3 at the corner of 17th and Jackson Street, where the building will be erected. Trustee Parrish and his family, Board of Trustees members, Mayor David Briley, many alumni and community supports, as well as media were present to partake in the momentous event. Trustee Parrish and Mayor Briley did a fantastic job articulating the impact the facility will have on our students, the Fisk campus, and the city of Nashville. We are very grateful for the gift and look forward to being able to serve our students to a higher degree given the benefits this new facility will bring.



Pictured from left to right: Mayor David Briley, President Kevin D. Rome, Jewel and Roland Parrish, Chairman Frank Sims, Latrece Wells, David Cobb, and Jens Frederiksen

On Saturday, May 4 we hosted several events. The day began with the Silver Sons and Daughters luncheon in Spence Hall. There was so much joy, laughter, and camaraderie in the room. I was very pleased to be able to assist in honoring the Silver attendees with their pin and their decree of special designation. I observed many joyous tears, showcases of university pride, and exclamations of achievement. Shortly after we transitioned to the graduate hooding ceremony where we recognized the achievement of our graduate students for their diligence and scholarly research topics. It was a very intimate ceremony with family and friends in attendance. Later that evening, I attended the annual Gala Banquet at the Renaissance Hotel which honors the reunion years. The fundraising totals for the Reunion Classes of 4s and 9s were nothing less than extraordinary, eclipsing \$535,000. We had a great range of alumni representation including some attendees going as far back as the graduating class of 1957.



Members of our faculty and administration pictured at the Hooding Ceremony

It is tradition for us to host a Baccalaureate service the Sunday before Commencement. This year's keynote speaker was Reverend Winterbourne Harrison-Jones '10. On the morning of May 5, students, faculty, staff, Board of Trustees, alumni, and others processed into the Fisk Memorial Chapel for the final Chapel service for the Class of 2019. The theme of the service was "Be different. Be extraordinary." Reverend Jones gave an inspiring speech on remembering your lineage, the value of character, converting tests into testimonies, and remember God always makes a difference. It certainly was a compelling address which left us all musing about the impact we each can have. Afterwards, I went to the Golden Sons and Daughters luncheon in the Appleton Room. The room was full as we had approximately 100 Golden join us for this auspicious occasion. I tend to struggle when attempting to describe the atmosphere because it seems mere words are inadequate. The room is the epitome of longevity and lifelong impact. I am inspired by their contributions, impact, and steadfastness. The day ended with the Fisk Jubilee Singers® Commencement Concert, the final performance for that exact group of students for the 2018-2019 school year. It was a night which paid homage to the legacy of the Fisk Jubilee Singers® but also recognized the time commitment and talents of the graduating seniors. I thoroughly enjoyed the reenactment which honored the original Fisk Jubilee Singers® by giving the audience a short introduction of each member. It was a great conclusion to an incredible day.



Pictured left to right: Trustee Gina R. Davis '82, President Kevin D. Rome, and Yvonne Brinson-Harris '69

We held our 145th Commencement on Monday, May 6 at 10:00 a.m. at Mount Zion Baptist Church. It was truly an illustrious occasion as so many students accomplished a task, which I know at some points, either seemed so far in the future or elusive at times. The view of the facility was a sight to behold as the scene of numerous family and friends seemed like a sea of supporters. There were more pictures, poses, smiles, shout outs, and thank you Lords than I can count. Commencement was a celebration in every sense of the word and I was so proud of our graduates. The keynote address was delivered by Reverend Al Sharpton, and the theme was "Make Them Call Your Name." He charged our graduating class with living a life of significance and contributing to society in a meaningful way which extends beyond personal benefit. Reverend Sharpton encouraged our graduates to ensure that after their respective names were called that day, they continued to associate themselves with positive causes or actions which forced people to call their names for the rest of their lives. The valedictory address was delivered by Oumar Karaga. He did a masterful job with his farewell address by reminiscing on his four years by thanking the classmates, faculty, staff, family, and others who invested their time in grooming him for his next stage in life. Also, he challenged our student body to relish their current accomplishment, but to also maximize their life because it was just the beginning. Both addresses coupled with jubilation of all in attendance, was a great culmination of another school year. I want to thank all those who organized such a nice event, especially the Commencement committee. I want to also extend a final congratulations to the Class of 2019.



Pictured left to right: Rev. Jason Curry, Chairman Frank Sims, Trustee Rev. Marcus Cosby '95, Rev. Al Sharpton, and President Kevin D. Rome

At the conclusion of May, I completed my year in the most recent cohort of Leadership Nashville. At least one Thursday a month I dedicated an entire day to exploring the city of Nashville with my classmates to become better acclimated to the city while making connections to further integrate myself into the Nashville community. I truly enjoyed the experience, learned a significant amount about Nashville, and met some remarkable people. I will always cherish the opportunity to be among such an esteemed group.

As we approach the end of the fiscal year, I encourage you to give to Fisk to assist us in continuing to educate our stellar students to go on to be tomorrow's leaders and world changers. Your support is always appreciated and no amount is too small.

We exist for our students and our community. We always have, and forever will, cultivate scholars and leaders.

Fisk today. Fisk tomorrow. Fisk Forever!

All my best,

President Kevin D. Rome, Sr.