May 4, 2020

Special Announcement

Retirement Announcement

To the UVA Community:

It is with very mixed feelings that I write to announce the retirement of Patrice Preston Grimes, Associate Dean of African-American Affairs and Associate Dean in the Curry School of Education, on June 30th, 2020. Patrice joined the Office and the Division of Student Affairs in 2009 as the inaugural Director of the GradSTAR program in order to fine tune and to consolidate our convergent efforts to assist students to reach their academic and other career destinations upon graduation. To that end she made countless and substantive contributions. We are in a decisively different place because of her efforts. Of historical note, Patrice is special to us in another dimension: she is a descendant of one of our ancestors who built our University.

Fortunately, we were able to recruit Antoinette Thomas, also Associate Professor in the Curry School of Education to the position of Associate Dean. She begins her term as Associate Dean of African-American Affairs on July 1st, 2020. Please offer her your warm welcome.

With kindest regards and my best personal wishes for everyone’s safety,

Maurice Apprey,
Dean of African-American Affairs,
Associate Vice-President of Student Affairs.
OAAA Announcements & Services

More than this Moment: A Fond Farewell to OAAA

Like so many of you, I looked forward to this academic year with excitement. For the past ten years, being Associate Dean in the Office of African-American Affairs (OAAA) has meant a full, year-long schedule of planning, activities and engagement, in addition to my faculty role in the Curry School of Education & Human Development.

From greeting OAAA students and families for the first time at a Summer Orientation event, to straightening the stoles of graduating fourth year students walking on stage at the Donning of the Kente ceremony on Final Exercises weekend, I have been privileged to share with many of you this part of your life’s journey.

Yet, within a few short weeks surrounding spring break, our daily routines were turned upside down by a pandemic that has brought the world to its knees. Whether it’s the inconvenience of not gathering together or the impact of personal loss, our lives -- and our world -- will forever be changed.

Another change in my life is that in June I will retire from the University and return to my adopted home of Atlanta, GA to family and life-long friends. I came to Virginia fifteen years ago to pursue a traditional academic career of research and teaching; I will leave with so much more, including memories of my ‘home away from home’ filled with a community of colleagues, students, alumni, dedicated staff workers and OAAA families.

While nothing can replace the celebrations, the parting hugs with students, and the face-to-face good byes that I had envisioned in the last days of the semester, we are so much more than this moment. If only for one minute each day, let’s pause, so that the present does not dim what we did experience at the University, knowing that our time together has helped to shape who we are today, as we try to prepare for what lies ahead. I gain strength in remembering:

- My first Harambee I in 2007, when I held back tears hearing Robert Bland (Engineering ’59), the first African-American to receive an undergraduate degree from UVA, share his story of how ‘Bobby stayed’, because his dream of graduating was bigger than the obstacles he faced

- The eager, hopeful students I met each year on Move In Weekend, who I reminded until they walked the Lawn, “Don’t leave here until you get what you came for” (i.e. a degree and a new destination)

- OAAA Peer Advisors coming together every week with first year and transfer students to lend a helping hand at Raising-the-Bar, in Sunday night study sessions in Clemons 201, and more recently, weeknights in the LPJ Center

- Second and third years working together with dedicated colleagues to launch post-graduate careers in the Faculty-Student Mentoring Program

- Students going above and beyond course assignments to complete GradSTAR programs like the Personal Branding Seminar series, the annual Etiquette & Networking Dinner, and the Project Management workshops

- The daily activity in #4 Dawson’s Row, as people floated through OAAA’s main floor to eat lunch in a safe space, take a break between classes in the conference room, use the computer lab, or gather in the front office to share highlights of a busy weekend.

These are just some of the memories of our beloved community that I will recall wherever I am. And when the world starts spinning again, I look forward to running into you at an airport between flights, in an Atlanta restaurant (where so many of you want to visit), or when I return to Grounds to help the Class of 2020 celebrate in style. I am
grateful for being able to listen, learn and come to care deeply about so many of you, in this space that our ancestors built two hundred years ago, brick by brick.

Like those who have endured before us, this is our moment to be tested and to learn how to ‘make a way out of no way.’ We must all dig deep and tap into everything that has been poured into us to emerge better, not bitter. In the words of a wise person, “you never know how strong you are, until being strong is the ONLY choice you have.” As OAAA prepares to celebrate its 45th anniversary next year, I am hopeful that it will emerge stronger than ever, fulfilling its mission to support and advocate for students to succeed on Grounds and in life.

I wish you good health, peace-of-mind and the prosperity in the coming days.

Stay well – Dean Grimes

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**Student Spotlight**

**Spotlight on Dean Grimes**

![Final Exercises with Curry students – 2018](image)

![40th Anniversary cookout – 2017](image)
Final Exercises with Batten & Commerce students – 2016

Celebration of Dean Grimes photo gallery