



↻ PRESIDENTIAL ↻

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*Inauguration*  
of  
**ANTHONY L. JENKINS, PH.D.**

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On the 126<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this fine institution's founding, I approach today's installation and my service as president of West Virginia State University with a sense of both honor and humility. I stand here ready to lead this university and to help write its next chapter of excellence.

I would like to recognize the many individuals and groups whose passion for West Virginia State University and our students is second to none.

My deepest appreciation to U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito. Thank you for your continued quest to strengthen West Virginia State University and education throughout the United States of America. Her first job out of college was right here at State, helping Yellow Jackets achieve their dreams. Please join me in applauding Sen. Capito.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Brian Aluise – representing U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, and Chad Story – representing U.S. Congressman Evan Jenkins. I greatly appreciate you being here today.

I would also like to recognize Dr. William "Bill" White, director of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs – representing the Governor of the State of West Virginia, Gov. Jim Justice, and all of our state legislative leaders for your support and dedication to West Virginia State University and all institutions of higher learning throughout the Mountain State. Thank you for being here and I look forward to partnering with you.

A champion of education for the Yellow Jacket Nation and all students throughout the great state of West Virginia is the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and Chancellor



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Paul Hill. Paul, thank you and your staff for your continued leadership and dedication to higher learning.

Please join me in recognizing my bosses the West Virginia State University Board of Governors. Dr. Ann Brothers Smith, chair, and the entire West Virginia State University Board of Governors, thank you for lending your time, expertise and wise counsel to advance this fine institution for today's Yellow Jackets and those yet to come! I appreciate your dedication and faithful service.

At West Virginia State University shared governance plays is integral to our success. And I deeply appreciate the following people for helping to make us stronger:

- Dr. Richard Ford, chair, Faculty Senate;
- Elijah Roberts, president, Student Government Association;
- Robin Tabor, chair, Classified Staff;
- Members of the President's Cabinet; and
- Our academic deans.

Throughout the national landscape of higher education, independent fiscal resources generated from alumni, business and community leaders and friends remains a necessity. Please join me in applauding the President of the West Virginia State University Alumni Association – Dr. Lateef Saffore and Chair of the WVSU Foundation Board of Directors, Mr. Mark Kelley as well as the entire WVSU Foundation Board of Directors.



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I would like to thank the many academic leaders, colleagues, professors, mentors and friends for being here today - many whom have helped shape my professional and personal growth. I am humbled that you have adjusted your busy lives and schedules to once again stand with me on this momentous occasion. My standing here is in large part because of the investment, mentorship and guidance each of you poured into me over the years.

I have somehow managed to maintain the love and support, of a young woman I met, 23 years ago, during a summer internship in Washington D.C. And over the course of our 17-year marriage, she has often been put in the position of trailing spouse. She is an accomplished criminal intelligence analyst, a devoted mother and a profoundly supportive and loving wife – and she has made every day of the last 23 years nothing short of heaven. Please help me acknowledge my wife and our first lady – Toinette Jenkins, and our daughters.

To make up for all those days when she had to take off from work to sit down with the principal or have the fourth teacher-parent conference, in a week, because her son just could not get his act together, I offer a very public ‘I love you, Mom!’ And thank you for believing in your children and providing unconditional and some butt whopping love that gave my sister - Veronica, and my brothers – Earl and Christopher and me the self-confidence as well as the encouragement to succeed at whatever we put our minds too. What you did as a single mother is nothing short and extraordinary and I would not be here today without you – the world greatest mom, Naomi.



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A love of learning, a longing for discovery, and a commitment to pursue the truth are the underpinnings of a great university. I am finding each of these characteristics here at State. Every day I am energized by the passion and sense of empowerment that flows throughout the Yellow Jacket community.

During my first semester, I have spent a considerable amount of time exploring this exceptional place. Mornings and evenings as I walk to and from work – I am afforded the opportunity to talk with students, staff and faculty, and learn of their aspirations, what they are most proud of, and what they are anxious about as we move forward together. Their opinions or ideas, are always voiced with a desire to make State better.

As we work towards building an even greater WVSU, our efforts must be predicated on the notion that we are steadfast in our commitment to enhancing the quality of our education and ensuring our students are equipped with the skills to be problem solvers, critical thinkers, innovators and change agents for tomorrow's challenges. We must offer our faculty and staff a place of work where they can achieve their best and excel in their respective fields of study, and to offer alumni and friends an institution they can be proud of and willing to invest in.



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I have long been of the opinion that universities must do more than just graduate students. Rather, we have a responsibility to develop and graduate students who are sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society and who are willing to accept the responsibility of addressing those ills.

This is more crucial now than ever before...the reason why is because we live in a remarkable, but imperfect world. Racial unrest, environmental threats, intolerance and economic inequities all demand the academy's attention.

It is because of universities like State and its commitment to access and opportunity that I never give in to despair. We at WVSU will continue to do our part to partner with sister institutions, industry and state leaders to find solutions to these challenges.

If we are to maintain our prominence and expand our impact, we must be authors and co-authors of the narrative that is being created in our state, region and nation. As a public institution, we have an obligation to extend the reach of our teaching and research across the full breadth of our society and infuse our economy with talent that will drive future innovation.

As we embrace the opportunities before us it is important that our endeavors extend beyond just science, technology, math and professional training, but that it also include cultural understanding, civic engagement and artistic expression.

There is no shortage of people who question the value and worthiness of a college education. I am here to tell you it is worth it. Education is a game changer. As a first generation college



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student – it is because of my education that the kid born on the southeast side of Washington D.C. and raised by a single mother, one of four children, who went on to earn a bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate can stand here today as President of a research university....that is the value of a college education.

And that is why I want every high school student in West Virginia - who wants to go to college - to know that WVSU is an exceptional, affordable university that can help them achieve whatever they dare to dream.

I want students and their parents to know that West Virginia State University values intellectual curiosity, access and students’ scholarly potential --- not their zip code or family income. This University has long been a beacon of hope for thousands, we are not about to change now. Like so many West Virginians - I did not grow up in a wealthy family. During my last two years of college I worked the midnight to 8 a.m., shift at ‘Save-a-lot’ supermarket unloading trucks and stocking shelves to help pay for school.

Too many of our West Virginia families struggle much harder than I did to afford college, thus I operate from the perspective of how can I make things easier for them. I believe strongly that those who have the ability to take action...bear the responsibility to take action.

And therefore as president, I am committed to doing all I can to make sure that a WVSU college degree remains in reach of all West Virginians. I will never lose sight of the fact that every decision



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we make impacts our current and future students. As the Yellow Jacket Nation and one university...we together must continue to do better – be better – and want better.

As a university we will define our niche...and do it better than any university that exists...and any institution yet to be created! If we want a great university, we have to act great. We must model what we want. If we want to keep our university moving forward, we have to be forward thinkers.

Over the past several months you all have heard me talk about marketing and branding our University. Let's continue showcasing our pride in State every place we go. There is no nation like the Yellow Jacket Nation... and whether you are in Institute, Detroit, California, Japan, Italy or Mexico...I want you to wear your State gear with such a swagger – people cannot help but to notice.

As such, I am asking all of our constituents to join me and fight for State - not as it is, but rather for the way we know it should be. And let's never let anyone forget that West Virginia State is the crown jewel in the Kanawha Valley.

When I think about the possibilities that lie ahead for this amazing University, I am filled with great optimism. Optimism that is rooted in the storied history of a university that has changed lives, produced scholars, and sent forth graduates who have done incredible things. We must move towards the future with unwavering confidence and a bold vision. I have said before our trajectory



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is north and our pace is brisk. We must have a 'can do' attitude...a belief that the impossible is possible.

Listen, there is no question that the challenges ahead of us will test our resolve... but West Virginia State University is a special place – that produces special people. I believe strongly in this university, and its mission. I have no doubt that our best days are ahead. I believe this because I have great trust in our faculty and staff - and furthermore over the past few months, I have seen the hopeful faces of new students entering State with dreams of a better life and I have met alumni who have achieved the American Dream!

So today ask how can we — all of us — continue to help transform this university and ensure it takes its rightful place as one of the best universities in this country. The challenge is ours to embrace and the goal is ours to achieve.

My friends, a brighter future is ours to write. Let's begin this new chapter – together – and let's start writing it today. Thank you, God bless you and Go State!