Morris College Opens Veterans Center

Morris College held a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for its Veterans Resource Center (VRC) on Wednesday morning, August 15, 2018. Located in the Health and Wellness Center; it is designed to establish a "military friendly" education program for active duty military, veterans and their dependents.

College President Leroy Staggers said VRC is a place and space for veterans to gather and share among themselves and the college community. “This marks another historic and important moment in the ongoing development of Morris College.” Noting the respect and honor the college has for veterans, Staggers said, “The center will be a place where veterans can share with one another as a group and feel welcomed.” Services provided through VRC will help veterans and/or their dependents enrolled at the college get all of the benefits they are eligible for. “Establishing stronger ties and working relationships with veterans in our community,” Staggers continued, “will help create a veteran friendly atmosphere here at Morris College.”

Major General (Retired) Abraham J. Turner, a former commander at Fort Jackson in Columbia, SC, commended President Staggers on having the vision to make Morris College a more military friendly college and for reaching out to service members, veterans, dependents and their family members. Major General Turner, along with Colonel (Retired) Lentfort Mitchell, Sr., assisted in the efforts for the establishment of VRC to serve all students receiving GI Bill (of Rights) benefits. “It is an advantage for any college,” Turner stated, “to have this organization standing by to reach out to veterans and their dependents.” For eligible students attending any college in the United States, the GI Bill pays for tuition, a monthly housing allowance, books and supplies. “Morris College has stepped its game up in the way of supporting our service members in the local area.”

Mindful of the courageous service and acts of sacrifice of those who risk all for our freedom and our country, the Honorable Joseph T. McElveen, Jr., Mayor of the City of Sumter, expressed his appreciation to Morris College for recognizing the importance of military service. “Anytime I see something done for veterans, I am not only personally proud, but I am especially proud of my community and, in this case, Morris College.” Mayor McElveen is a veteran of the United States Air Force.

Other dignitaries included the Honorable J. David Weeks, South Carolina House of Representatives, District 51; the Honorable James T. McCain, Jr., Chairman, Sumter County Council; Mr. Chris Hardy, President, Sumter Chamber of Commerce; Ms. Valarie A. Brunson, Director, Sumter County Veterans Affairs; Mr. David Rivers, Senior Vice Commander, Veterans of Foreign War of the United States Department of South Carolina, District 2; Colonel (Retired) Lentfort Mitchell, Sr.; Mrs. Gwendolyn Wiggins, Coordinator of Veteran Resource Center, Morris College; and Ms. Gwen Cofield.

Also, members of the Morris College Board of Trustees: Dr. James Blossingame, Rev. Tommy Gibson, Dr. Marion Newton, Ms. Crystal Myers, Rev. McKinley Ravenell, Dr. Leo Richardson, and Rep. J. David Weeks.

In addition, the Shaw Air Force Base Color Guard, along with faculty and staff, alumni, and veterans representing various groups were among those attending the event. Mrs. Wiggins will coordinate the project.
Ms. Shevonne Wesley, a May 2018 Morris College graduate in Biology-Secondary Education, is an innovative and creative beginning biology teacher at Crestwood High School. She showed up recently at Dr. Ali’s office (Chairman of the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics) and inquired if she could put into use some of the microscopes no longer used in the Morris College Biology Lab.

As her mentor and major advisor, Dr. Ali set her request in motion and was elated to receive President Staggers’ speedy approval of the donation.

Ms. Wesley teaches Biology Honors and College Prep. students. She told Dr. Ali that she has eager learners in her classes.

Faced with a limited number of microscopes in her classroom and her desire to provide excellent instruction, she was exploring ways to enhance her students’ hands-on experiences with biological specimens using compound light microscopes.

One of the components of the Morris College mission is serving its alumni by “promoting a relationship that is mutually beneficial to the alumni and the institution.” Donating 12 binocular lab grade microscopes to Ms. Wesley’s classroom is just a facet of the implementation of the college’s philosophy. Since the Morris College promotes a “family atmosphere” on campus, that family relationship extends to its graduates even though they are no longer on campus.

-submitted by Dr. Radman M. Ali

VRC Ceremony Images
Butler Appointed Interim Academic Dean

Dr. Jacob E. Butler Jr., chairman and professor of Political Science in the Division of Religion, Humanities and Social Sciences at Morris College, has been appointed interim academic dean. As leader of the faculty, President Leroy Staggers, during the 2018 Fall Faculty and Staff Institute, called Butler the “gatekeeper” of the integrity of the college’s academic programs. He will supervise all academic programs, all full-time and part-time faculty members, as well as all academic support instructional programs.

Educated in both Sociology and Political Science, Butler is an accomplished political scientist. Though he does not wear his learning and keen intelligence on his sleeve, his research and writings have been featured in a variety of professional forums. A graduate of the public schools of Charleston County, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from South Carolina State University and the Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Atlanta University. Prior to becoming a Morris College faculty member in 2000, he taught political science at Alabama A&M University, Kennesaw State University and Trident Technical College in Charleston.

Butler is the author of “Political and Social Thought Within the African American Intellectual Experience” that was published in 2016. He is also a two-time recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award by the S.C. Council of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Dr. Staggers headed the Office of Academic Affairs prior to being appointed interim president and then elected as the college’s tenth president by the Morris College Board of Trustees.

Other Employees Promoted

Dr. Butler was not the only individual to be promoted in what President Staggers referred to as “institutional transitions.” Other members of the college’s faculty and staff have assumed additional responsibilities. They are:

- **Ms. Carlotta Stackhouse**
  Interim Director of Security Services

- **Mrs. Jeanette Moses Holmes**
  Bookstore Manager, Mailroom Supervisor & Property Control Clerk

- **Mr. Lorne Lee**
  Interim Chairperson, Division of General Studies

- **Mrs. Gwendolyn Wiggins**
  Veterans Resource Center Coordinator
WELCOME NEW EMPLOYEES


Campus Security Officers display new uniforms with Dr. Leroy Staggers, President and Ms. Carlotta Stackhouse, Interim Director of Security. Security Officers pictured from left to right: (back row) Mr. Calvin Miller, Mr. Harry Bennett, Mr. Thomas Harris, Mr. Joe Adger, Mr. Daniel Piram, Jr. (front row) Mr. Anthony Hayes, Ms. Elaine Robinson, Ms. Lucille Williams, and Ms. Betty Bolden.