

Inaugural Address  
Samuel Proctor Massie, Jr.  
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Challenge and Change

Doctor Paynes, Governor Sanford, Dr. Gilman, Trustee and Other Platform Guests, Delegates of Institutions and Learned Societies, State and Local Officials, Faculty, Staff, and Students, Alumni and Friends of North Carolina Central University:

I am deeply honored and warmly moved by your presence at this ceremony. As I formally assume the challenge and mantle of leadership for this institution, the memory of this day and your presence will add much strength and sustenance in the days ahead. The personal tribute you pay me is great, and were it proper, I would say I am speechless. I shall be eternally grateful for this expression of your friendship and good will.

By your presence here today, you not only honor me and my family, you honor the institution which I now lead. You honor the memory of its founder, Dr. James E. Shepard, whose family shares with us today the further evolution of his dream of a quality institution, dedicated to Truth and Service. You honor my immediate predecessor, President-Emeritus Alfonso Elder, who so graciously introduced me and who for almost forty years of his life served in the vineyard of quality education at North Carolina College.

You honor the trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni of our institution as you demonstrate your interest in our continuing efforts in pursuit of excellence in education. You honor the City of Durham with its great educational institutions and its ever-continuing forward strides in making our fair city a truly democratic laboratory in which students can best live and learn. You honor our state, whose chief executive has graced us with his presence today and who has made education and concern for others a capstone of his administration.

Finally, you honor the cause of education itself. As we unite in a ceremony as old as the twentieth century, but as new as the morning sun, as splendid as the colorful array of gowns herein

assembled and yet as simple as truth itself, once again testimony is given to the significance of education and its institutions today.

As I formally begin my service, it is proper that I should describe for you some of my goals, my dreams, my plans, yea, even my problems. I cannot offer you a blueprint to be followed at all times – such a task would require the combined wisdom of Socrates and Solomon – only to be rendered meaningless by some new advancement. Education, its objective, its means, must be ever changing to meet the challenges of a dynamic, evolving society. And yet, in change there must be guidelines; there must be signposts. Three signposts stand out in bold relief in our modern-day world.

### Three Signposts

The first of these signposts arises because of the rapid advances of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, which have occurred in the twentieth century. These advances change the nature of the physical world in which we live and, therefore, change the nature of man's relationship to this physical world. By unlocking the secrets of the atom, man has discovered a potential source of unlimited energy. The conquest of disease has lengthened the life span of man. Man travels in and out of our planet with ease, even with the reminder that a bathtub can be more dangerous than outer space. Computers and other forms of automation reduce complex mathematical problems to mere fancy. The removal of salt from sea water and the production of rain will mean unlimited supplies of fresh water and a great increase in usable land. The unraveling of the genetic code, the newer birth control pills and the increased coordination of chemistry, biology, and psychology promise great, if awesome, prospects for further modification of the relationship of man to nature.

Now man is not only a product of his environment; to some extent he may even be its creator.

Second, man's relationship to man is rapidly changing. No longer can one's ancestors or previous condition of servitude determine his place in life. No longer are men content to accept other men as their superiors without question.

The rising cries of freedom heard so loudly in Africa, Asia, South America, yes, even in our nation – North and South – proclaim loudly what our Declaration of Independence stated but never fulfilled – all men are created equal with a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The advances in travel and communication have truly made us one world. And yet, as DuBois wrote in his Souls of Black Folk in 1903: “Herein lies the tragedy of the age: Not that men are poor – all men know something of poverty. Not that men are wicked – who is good? Not that men are ignorant – what is truth? Nay, but that man knows so little of man.”

Our third signpost grows out of the first two. The physical and social changes of our age put within man's reach, for the first time, the means, the dream, and the will to eradicate ignorance and poverty. As President Johnson said in his State of the Union message to Congress, “Too many persons live on the outskirts of hope. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.”

In his announcement of the North Carolina Fund, Governor Sanford reminded us in North Carolina that “charity and relief are not the best answers to human suffering. It is not enough to have here the most powerful nation in the world and then to admit that we are powerless to find ways to give our young people training and job opportunities. We must work together to try to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage in certain neighborhoods in the community, in order that we might see what actually will be necessary to erase poverty and ignorance throughout the country.”

Yes, everywhere men are seeking education. Everywhere men are seeking to break the cycle of poverty. The quest for learning has become man's prior need. From Freetown to Cambridge, from Saigon to Paris, from Calcutta to Durham, the quickening pulse of a demand for

education is felt. Whether you be parent, teacher, statesman or the person for whom education offers the opportunity for personal fulfillment, you feel it.

The President's Science Advisory Committee's report, "Education for an Age of Science," reminds us:

Until recent years, the total intellectual capacities of our nation have never really been fully challenged. But they are being challenged today. Our intellectual resources will be adequate to meet our needs only if all of the brain power of our population is fully developed and utilized. Well trained minds are among the most critical of our present national assets, among the scarcest and most valuable of our resources.

President-Emeritus Elder, in "Study of Long Range Needs at North Carolina College at Durham" in 1960, appraised the need as follows:

The freedom to develop one's ability to a degree less than the optimum is no longer a privilege which the individual may enjoy without damage to himself and to society. Individual and group survival now demands, and will continue to demand, that the ability of every person be developed and utilized to the fullest degree. This is a new point of view for colleges. This is a new approach to education for the local community, the State, and the Nation – the realization that the group is obligated to see that ability is discovered, developed, and used.

A college concerned with preparing youth for this world must take cognizance of these three signposts. It must reckon with students teethered on television, to whom repeated textbook material is old and dull. A college must deal with youth who have suffered the hose, the dog, the jail, in their quest for justice and human dignity. It must deal with youth who, while their parents may have been poor and/or ignorant, will not and should not accept ignorance and poverty as their lot.

As a college is shaped by the times in which it serves, so are the times shaped by the colleges of the era. The world has always looked to education for its leaders – the Battle of Waterloo may have been won on the playing fields of Eton. It is neither accident nor coincidence that the great social changes of our times – here and elsewhere – have been led by college youth.

For those of us engaged in education and educational planning, these signposts raise some important questions about the nature of the education we offer. I do not propose to answer them today. In fact, I shall probably spend my entire tenure at North Carolina College learning new

questions, seeking new solutions. However, I do wish to give five guidelines which will help us in this task.

### Five Guidelines

First, I believe that a college must give to and require of its students the highest possible quality of education. Mediocrity of performance cannot be an acceptable standard, even though all may not be superior. North Carolina College must constantly seek answers to question like these:

- ◆ Do we seek the right kind of students? How do we know when we have found them?
- ◆ Can we attract them to North Carolina College? After we get them here, do we offer them attractive and proper academic programs?
- ◆ Do we offer balanced extra-curricular and social programs, remembering that school is more than books?
- ◆ Do we test and counsel them properly?
- ◆ Do we provide for the student who, through no fault of their own, has not had all the experiences required of college men and women and yet who, too, has the urge and need for a college education?
- ◆ Alternatively, what do we do for the very good student who has had an excellent high school education?
- ◆ Do we properly prepare students for the next step, whether it be graduate school, business, teaching, law, medicine, or other profitable activities? Do we help them after they graduate?

These are but some of the questions to which we must find answers. And if the answers do not please us, we must not change the questions to get more pleasing answers.

The students, too, must play a role in the quest. They must work harder, not only because we will require it but because the students themselves will demand it. They have come here to learn, then learn they must. They must engage in more independent study and more self-tutorial plans. We shall make reading and learning the most convenient activity on this campus. In the words of the poet, "A student is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be lit." And we all know that a good fire needs plenty of fresh air.

Our faculty must ever increase its development of new and ingenious methods of teaching. Perhaps the newer tools of automation and audio-visual techniques will permit them more time to

actually teach. But an institution must not only dispense information, it must also create knowledge. We expect to find our faculty participating creatively in the mainstream of academic thought. While it is not necessary, or even desirable, for every teacher to participate to the same degree in these activities, we accept as an axiom that in a good educational institution creative activity and good teaching go hand-in-hand. Research must be a vital part of our activities, especially in our graduate programs.

Our graduate and professional programs must be strengthened to meet the needs of the age. North Carolina College must produce students able to compete effectively and with dignity in a modern-day world, both nationally and internationally.

We are exploring with some of our sister institutions the possibilities of faculty and student exchange. Certainly, the broadening influence of cultural and educational exchange can have great meaning in our pursuit of excellence in education.

Now, an administration must provide its faculty and students with an atmosphere and environment in which education can most effectively take place. This involves for the faculty consideration of many things, such as adequate salaries, sufficient library and laboratory facilities, opportunity for professional travel, and the like. Good teaching must be encouraged and rewarded. I believe in responsible academic freedom with equal and great emphasis on responsibility as well as freedom.

For the students, it means pleasant and substantial living and study facilities, financial assistance, wholesome recreation; and this administration pledges itself to ever seek to provide these kinds of environment and atmosphere.

Thus, we shall find it necessary increasingly to call upon our state government, foundations, our alumni, and our friends for increased financial support. Quality education does not come cheaply nor without the labors of many.

Second, I believe that a college must critically and constantly evaluate its educational philosophies and programs to insure its ability to meet the needs and challenges of the times in which it serves. We must ever remember that yesterday's innovation is today's tradition and tomorrow's history. I recall that when I first began teaching in 1940 one fact stressed in the chemistry textbook was that uranium has no practical value whatever. How times do change!

We must constantly study all segments of our college, daring to change where needed, yet holding fast to those aspects which are good. Here at North Carolina College, we will be engaged next year in an exhaustive critical self-study, re-assessing our objectives, our philosophies, our methods, our curricula, and all other parts of our college.

Particularly is it necessary that a college like ours, serving students from a wide variety of backgrounds, continually evaluate its techniques. It is no easy task to make up for the cultural and economic deprivation of sixteen or more years and it will require all of our intellectual ingenuity, skills, and cooperative efforts.

A college ought not be static -- it may not even be comfortable, but it ought be exciting, daring, adventurous. The spirit of discovery, the excitement of learning of new ventures must be a part of the entire college fabric. We shall continuously explore newer methods of learning and teaching. While we will ever be mindful of sound educational principles, we intend that North Carolina College will be an exciting place to live, serve, teach, learn, and work.

Third, I believe in the value of liberal education and that North Carolina College's mission at this time is that of a strong liberal arts college. It was converted in 1925 into the first state-supported, liberal arts college for Negroes, and as it moves into its larger mission of providing educational opportunities for all persons, regardless of race, it is as a liberal arts institution that it can best fulfill its destiny. We live in a world in which men need to be broadly educated. Indeed, many complex technical professions, such as engineering and medicine, recognize that success in

these technical fields is often best built on a liberal education foundation. The areas of elementary and secondary education are fast moving toward a wider liberal background for those who teach.

But liberal education is not a collection of courses. It is a philosophy of learning. It is not a prescribed set of curricula, but the development of an attitude. Truly, the end product of our labors must be a commencement – the beginning of real learning.

North Carolina College must do what it does well. It must resist the temptation to be all things for all men. It must have a climate, an atmosphere, indeed, a character in which creative, challenging, and constructive thinking can best take place.

Fourth, I believed that a college must not isolate itself from the world in which it lives and serves. The ivory tower is now passé and the college must both educate people for service and be of service itself.

Our students have shown their willingness to participate in the struggle for freedom – indeed, to lead – and they may have to again and again, for the forces of bigotry and prejudice are not yet conquered. But protest alone must not be the answer of the educated man. After every revolution, there must be statesmen to take advantage of the gains. Having opened the doors of opportunity, we must now produce students, as indeed we are doing, but in much greater quantity, capable of fulfilling the role in society demanded of free men. Our students and alumni must continue to fill places of leadership where they serve. We who are educated have the obligation to serve those who are not as fortunate as we.

We must be tolerant in a world of intolerance; understanding in a world of cross purposes; honest in a world of insincerity. In the words of the late Charles S. Johnson: “Tolerance means respect for facts – including the facts of human nature – patience, forbearance, self-restraint, suspended judgment, a due humility on the value of one’s judgment and opinions in relation to those of other peoples.”

Human understanding is a must. In this day of urgent educational adjustments, at this time of challenge and change, among our many achievements, we hope there will be progressive results and gains in human understanding and togetherness and measurable gains in educational, social and economic progress for all peoples. Our concern must not be limited to our college, our state, our nation. We must be ever aware of the increasing importance of world affairs. “No man is an island,” said Donne. Well, neither is a college.

Finally, I believe that educated people ought live on a high plane of personal moral integrity.

I believed with Markham that

We are all fools until we know  
 That in the common plan,  
 Nothing is worth the building,  
 If it does not build the man.  
 Why build these temples glorious,  
 If man unbuilted goes?  
 We build the world in vain  
 Unless the building also grows.

North Carolina College must insist, as it always has, on the best possible behavior of all who serve it. Dr. Shepard, in one of his memorable speeches before the state legislature, stated that one of the best reasons for North Carolina College was “that educated men behave better than uneducated men.” North Carolina College must ever build men and women who, in the words of Holland, “live above the fog in public duty and in private thinking.”

### Our Role

This, then, is our role in a world of challenge and change. The task we face is not easy, but we do not come unprepared.

First, we have inherited a great tradition of quality education, based on the search for Truth in order than man may better serve. We live in a state greatly concerned with improvement in education. We have a wise and experienced Board of Trustees. We have a good faculty and fine students. Persons who have passed through our doors, either as faculty or students, serve well all

over the world. And we have a most valuable asset, as testified by your presence here today – the good will of friends.

And finally, we take great comfort from the words of the prophet Isaiah: “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.”

With this reassurance of divine assistance, with a rededication to Truth and Service and in the spirit of those who love learning, I formally accept the presidency of the North Carolina College at Durham with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities thereunto appertaining.