



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 4, 2024

“Hold fast to dreams for if dreams die life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly...

Hold fast to dreams for when dreams go life is a barren field frozen with snow.”

Dreams by Langston Hughes

Tonight is a magical elegant evening, we have gathered to honor, acknowledge, and celebrate. I want to thank each of you for coming out to support Coppin State University. Since 1900 Coppin State has stood as a beacon of hope, and over the past 124 years, we have distinguished ourselves as a university that is invaluable and irreplaceable.

What started in the basement of a local high school, is today a leading urban university recognized nationally for its academic programs in Business, Healthcare, Psychology, Teacher Education, Criminal Justice, Social Work, and STEM, and the demand for the Coppin experience is growing – this is why we are attracting students from 37 states, including the District of Columbia, and 31 countries.

Education remains the greatest equalizer in our nation, and this is precisely why our work at Coppin State is so important. We educate and prepare a diverse, multicultural, multi-generational student population who at the hands of our incredible faculty and staff are transformed into the thought-leaders, innovators, solution finders, and change agents that are helping to shape and lead our nation.

At Coppin, our commitment to improving the human condition and creating upward economic mobility for our students is unwavering and unmatched. As Maryland’s most affordable four-year college or university, we work to ensure cost is never a factor that exclude students from receiving a life changing quality education and they can do so without having to incur crippling debt. It is at Coppin where regardless of one’s zip code, or household income, access and opportunity are granted, lives are transformed, and nurturing fuels greatness.

As president, of this dynamic university, I am seeking strong partnerships. I need the support of everyone in this room to help ensure we can sustain that greatness, continue to foster that transformation, and most importantly expand that access and opportunity for so many more deserving students.

See, I know first-hand the power of teamwork and strong partnerships. When I arrived at Coppin State nearly four years ago, I stated that “Our past would be brisk, and our trajectory would be North.” And despite the doubters who were betting against us – as “One Coppin,” and with unwavering supporter, today we have:

- Increased enrollment;
- Achieved record high retention rates;
- Achieved record high graduation rates;
- Achieve record high research funding;
- Achieve record high fundraising;
- Achieve record high cooperate partnerships;
- We've increased our endowment by 58%;
- We've expanded our academic portfolio;
- We've opened our new College of Business and Graduate Studies Building;
- Built our new Eagle Achievement Center;
- We built the Fanny Jackson Coppin Plaza (and erected a beautiful statue in her likeness);
- Won two MEAC Conference Championships; and
- Our student-athletes lead the MEAC with the highest student-athlete graduation rate, for the third consecutive year.

Tonight, let's commit to letting those doubters know they cannot and will not stop the progress and momentum that Coppin State University, the hometown university, is making!

As long as we have the courage to keep reaching, and working, with great supporters – like you in this room - the possibilities on the horizon for Coppin State University and the students we educate are unbound.

This evening represents both dreams fulfilled, and life journeys yet defined. As I look around this room, I see what I want for my students - I see success – I see the results of hard work and the power of change that occurs when people pour into our lives. I see men and women who enjoy a better quality of life, because somebody believed in them, and somebody was willing to invest in their future.

Every one of us in this room owes a debt we cannot repay, but we can – this evening, begin by paying it forward.

Your being here is not by chance, let's be clear you could have been anywhere this evening, but you made a conscious choice - a choice that put you in the right place, at the right time, hearing precisely what you were meant to hear.

Your presence represents your belief in Coppin State, our mission, and our unwavering commitment to transforming lives. Individually and collectively, you understood the assignment, and for that I am grateful. Tonight is bigger than a good meal and looking great (and yes you look great). But tonight is about impact, legacy, and a commitment to Do More and help someone BEMORE.

What good comes from acquiring wealth and rising to profound levels of influence, if we use that wealth and influence to only enrich ourselves? I am reminded of Dr. Winky Camphor. Winky was one of Coppin's most devoted alumni. His heart, spirit, and soul bled "Blue and Gold." Winky was a retired educator – and by no means was he a rich man, yet he understood you don't have to be to make a difference.

Winky was always asking “how can I help and what can I do?” and he never asked for anything in return. His philanthropic heart was non-transactional. Winky gave with sincere authenticity. He knew his selfless acts of kindness could shift the axis of one's life; thus, he joyfully invested in this university and in generations he knew he would never meet.

I have long believed that choice, not chance, determines one's impact and legacy. This evening, the choice is yours. I challenge you to envision the impact you can have, and embrace the legacy you want to leave.

I challenge each of us – to find within ourselves - that same spirit of giving, to make a commitment to pay it forward, to ask ourselves, how can I help, and what more can I do?

The vision I have for our beloved Coppin State University, to – ***increase student achievement, attain academic excellence, become a research university, elevate Eagle athletics, and grow our endowment*** is ambitious and cannot be accomplished in isolation – it will require the help of a village.

Together we can be greater than the sum of our individual ambitions. Each of us possess the ability to put into motion a rippling effect that can change the course of this university and the lives of the students we educate.

Your support of Coppin is a strong indicator that you accept the challenge that - it is not someone's else responsible, it is our responsibility, to stand in the gap and ensure these students complete their journey.

Because of your generosity and contribution, this evening a Coppin students' hope in humanity is restored, and their dream of becoming a college graduate is closer to fruition.

Before you could be the cure for cancer. The nurse that may save yours or a loved one's life, the teacher that may be responsible for educating your child or grandchild, the next great CEO, judge, political leader, author, scientist, actor, psychologist, athlete, or military officer. Why not, don't you believe in their aspirations?

At Coppin we do, this is why we push them beyond their intellectual and creative limits – we encourage them to embrace a mindset that the “Sky is not the limit.” We challenge them to understand that earning their degree does not make them educated...but rather their education comes in the form of the evolutionary transformational journey we immerse them in. It is during this time and space that they transition from student, to scholar, to leader! This is the power of the Coppin experience.

Just like those who have helped change the trajectory of our lives, I am asking you to help change theirs. Just imagine where you could have been today, if someone had not believed in you, if someone had not encouraged you to believe in yourself, and if someone was not willing to invest in you.

Right now, is your moment, it is our moment, to make a choice to appreciate that this thing called life is richer when we enrich the lives of others. Together there is nothing we cannot accomplish, collectively we are unstoppable. Your contribution will allow us to build on the historic

accomplishments we have achieved over the last four-years. As president, I promise you that your investment in this university will always go towards lifting our students.

Please join me in a toast... "So tonight, as we are Celebrating and Inspiring the Path to BEMORE, I raise my glass to everyone here...to our honorees, sponsors, students, and to all of you who are willing to join me in making sure Coppin State University - lives out its mission of transforming lives and nurturing potential."

Thank you, God Bless you, and Go Eagles!