



FOUNDERS' DAY

146 Years of Legacy

A Commitment to Excellence. A Future of Promise.

MARCH 27, 2026

**FOUNDERS' DAY CONVOCATION AND
INVESTITURE OF CHANCELLOR JOHN K. PIERRE**

FELTON G. CLARK ACTIVITY CENTER

10:00 A.M.



Joseph S. Clark

The Board of Trustees elected Joseph Samuel Clark to serve as president of the “new” Southern University.



Octavia H. Clark

A graduate of Coleman College, Octavia Head Clark became the first registrar and the first music teacher at Southern University.



John S. Jones

John Sebastian Jones, of the Lake Charles Colored School, became director of Southern University’s Academic Department. He came to Southern with more than 20 years of teaching experience.



Emma N. Mayberry

Emma Nesbitt Mayberry, who received training at Columbia University and the University of Chicago, was the first teacher of home economics.



James B. Moore

James Blaine Moore, who received a Teacher’s Training Diploma from Tuskegee, was an industrial art instructor, primarily in blacksmithing.

Southern University History

More than 140 years ago, three delegates to the Louisiana State Constructional Convention presented a vision for an institution of higher learning that would serve anyone — particularly Black Americans — who desired to further their education. As a result, in 1880, Legislative Act 87 called for a 12-member Board of Trustees and for a faculty of “arts and letters” competent in every branch of liberal education.

That vision — presented by P.B.S. Pinchback, T. T. Allain, T. B. Stamps, and Henry Demas — became a reality when Southern University opened its doors in New Orleans that same year with a budget appropriation of \$10,000 and 12 students. It was subsequently relocated in 1912 by order of Legislative Act 118, placing the university in a rural area of Scotlandville, Louisiana, at a site known as the Kernan Plantation. Receiving a portion of a \$50, 000 national land-grant appropriation in 1914, the “new” Southern University opened in this part of Baton Rouge, the capital of the state.

Throughout the 20th Century and beyond, Southern University has made great strides, including establishing the five-campus Southern University System, the only system of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the nation. The system is comprised of Southern University and A&M College, Southern University at New Orleans, Southern University at Shreveport, Southern University Law Center, and Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center.



Southern University and A&M College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, master’s, and doctorate degrees. Questions about the accreditation of Southern University and A&M College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling 404-679-4500, or by using information available at www.sacscoc.org.



John K. Pierre

Southern University and A&M College Chancellor

John K. Pierre, who was named chancellor of Southern University and A&M College in July 2024, has devoted his career to education and being a champion of innovation. He is married to Antoinette Pierre, and they are the proud parents of two adult sons.

Pierre received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Southern in 1980, a master's degree in tax accounting from Texas Tech University in 1982, and a juris doctor degree from Southern Methodist University School of Law in 1985.

After graduating from law school, from 1986 to 1990, Pierre served his country as a Judge Advocates General Corps Officer, or JAG, for the United States Army.

In 1990, his next assignment led him to the classroom as he began serving as a faculty member at the Southern University Law Center, where he taught courses such as tax law, security devices, local government law and more. In addition, he has previous teaching experience as a visiting and adjunct professor at California State University, Southern Methodist University School of Law, Loyola University Law School, Southern University's College of Business, Saint Leo's College, Webster University, Louisiana State University, and Baton Rouge Community College. Beyond the classroom, Pierre has published numerous articles on tax law, sales and contracts, real estate and commercial law, ranging from magazine features to legal journal and law review articles.

In 2006, he transitioned to a leadership role at the Law Center, becoming the vice chancellor of institutional accountability and the evening division. He served as the Law Center's chancellor from 2016 to spring 2024. Under his tutelage, the Southern University Law Center thrived as a global legal institution and was recognized for its diversity, world-class faculty, and racial justice efforts.

As a progressive leader and visionary, Pierre advocates for technology advancements, community outreach initiatives, and strategic partnerships that ensure access and opportunity are provided to all. In 2023, the Southern University System Board of Supervisors appointed Pierre as the interim executive vice president of Southern University and A&M College.

Beyond the education field, Pierre was involved in the Baton Rouge school desegregation case as co-counsel for the Baton Rouge Branch of the NAACP in *Davis v. East Baton Rouge Parish School Board*. He was also co-counsel in the landmark case of *McWaters v. FEMA*.

Pierre fervently serves as a transformational change agent and inspiration to legal professionals and thoughts leaders around the globe. He has earned numerous awards for his leadership, innovative strategy, and tireless efforts within the legal and professional realm, including Educator of the Year from the Thurgood Marshall College Fund and Ten Most Dominant HBCU Leaders from The HBCU Campaign Fund. Hampton University, the Baton Rouge Bar Association, and the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus are just a few of the organizations that have bestowed honors upon Pierre throughout his career. Also, his alma mater, Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law, has named him a Distinguished Alumni. Pierre has served as a contributing panelist during national discussions with the Peggy Browning Fund, Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the National Pre-Law Summit, and more.

Pierre remains a member of numerous state and national organizations, including the Louisiana State Bar Association and the Texas Bar Association.

146th Founders’ Day Convocation and Chancellor Investiture

Presiding

Robyn Merrick, Ph.D.

*Vice President for External Affairs and University Affairs
Southern University System*

Prelude Southern University Symphonic Band

Processional

Invocation Father Thomas Clark

“The Star-Spangled Banner” Southern University Concert Choir

“Life Ev’ry Voice and Sing” Southern University Concert Choir

Greetings Gala Marcus
Miss Southern University and A&M College 2025–2026

Occasion Remarks Sean Inman
President
2025–2026 Student Government Association

Musical Selection Southern University Gospel Choir

Introduction of Speaker Dr. Luria A. Young
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Southern University and A&M College

Keynote Address Dr. Harry Williams
President and CEO
Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF)

Investiture Ceremony Southern University Board of Supervisors

Dr. Orlando F. McMeans

Interim President

Southern University System

Southern University System Chancellors

Dr. Kim Hunter-Reed

Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education

Acceptance and Vision Chancellor John K. Pierre

Presentations

Closing Remarks and Acknowledgments

Alma Mater “Dear Southern”

Performed by the Southern University Concert Choir

Benediction Father Thomas Clark

Recessional

Southern University Alma Mater

O Southern, Dear Southern, Thy praises we shall sing,

Until all the heavens and echoes loudly ring.

The winds and the sky as they pass us by

Will Adoration bring.

O Southern, Dear Southern, We owe our all to Thee,

In downfall or vict'ry, We'll always loyal be.

Thy Sons and Daughters as they work,

Will be inspired by Thee.

O Southern, Dear Southern, Thy name will ever be,

As mighty as the rivers that flow on to the sea,

As pure and true as the Gold and Blue,

That stand out bold for Thee.

(Original Words and Music by R. E. Brown, Jr.; Arranged by T. W. Langston)



Keynote Speaker

Dr. Harry L. Williams

President and CEO

Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF)

Dr. Harry L. Williams serves as president & CEO of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), the nation's foremost organization exclusively representing the Black college community. Leading TMCF, Dr. Williams oversees its 57 member schools, comprising America's publicly supported historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), historically Black community colleges (HBCCs) and predominantly Black institutions (PBIs), collectively educating 80% of students attending HBCUs.

Under his visionary leadership, TMCF has experienced unparalleled growth, witnessing a remarkable revenue expansion exceeding 250%. His strategic direction has elevated TMCF to not only serve as the premier representative of the HBCU community but also as a thought leader in equity, access and inclusion.

Dr. Williams has successfully forged strategic partnerships with leading Fortune 500 companies, including The Boeing Company, Medtronic, Visa, Ally Financial and Hennessy USA. His adept leadership has reimagined enduring partnerships with entities like Lowe's, the NBA and Wells Fargo, positioning TMCF as the foremost source for major employers seeking top diverse talent for competitive internships and corporate careers.

Emphasizing bipartisan collaboration, Dr. Williams has positioned TMCF to play a pivotal role in accelerating the legislative agenda for the sustainability of HBCUs. TMCF, under his guidance, has been at the forefront of significant national legislative victories, earning respect and trust from elected and appointed leaders on both sides of the aisle in Congress and the White House.

Formerly a distinguished HBCU president at Delaware State University, Dr. Williams utilized his tenure to increase student enrollment and foster groundbreaking public-private partnerships, securing multimillion-dollar investments into the campus. His commitment to institutional sustainability is evident through his efforts to enhance cooperation among TMCF member schools, creating a supportive network for HBCU leaders to share best practices and act collectively.

In a forward-thinking move in 2022, Dr. Williams expanded TMCF's impact by inviting HBCCs to join the membership, thereby supporting a diverse set of pathways to achievement.

Dr. Williams has been recognized with numerous awards and accolades for his contributions to higher education. His illustrious career includes senior positions at the University of North Carolina General Administration, Appalachian State University and North Carolina A&T State University.

He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Appalachian State University and a doctorate from East Tennessee State University. Named president emeritus of Delaware State University, he is also a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Dr. Williams is a devoted family man. Married to Dr. Robin S. Williams, they take pride in their two accomplished sons, Austin and Gavin, both Howard University graduates. Gavin, now a third-year law student at Southern University Law Center, carries on the family's legacy of academic excellence. Dr. Williams is also a doting grandfather to Porter Rae and Bloom Leigh, the daughters of Austin and his wife Reagan.

Presidents of Southern University's First Campus

A.R. Gourrier	1880-1881	The Rev. Joshua Harrison	1883-1886
George Fayerweather (Interim).....	1881	George W. Bothwell.....	1886-1887
The Rev. Charles H. Thompson	1881-1883	Henry A. Hill.....	1887-1913

Presidents/Chancellors of the Southern University

Baton Rouge Campus

(As of 1974, the campuses are headed by chancellors.)

Dr. Joseph Samuel Clark (President)	1914-1938	Dr. Marvin L. Yates.....	1991-1998
Dr. Felton Grandison Clark (President)	1938-1968	Dr. Edward R. Jackson	1998-2007
Dr. G. Leon Netterville Jr.	1968-1974	Margaret S. Ambrose (Interim).....	2007-2008
Dr. Jesse N. Stone Jr.	1974-1977	Dr. Kofi Lomotey	2008-2011
Dr. Roosevelt Steptoe	1977-1982	Dr. James Llorens.....	2011-2014
Dr. James A. Prestage	1982-1985	Mr. Flandus McClinton (Interim).....	2014-2015
Dr. Wesley C. McClure	1985-1988	Dr. Ray L. Belton	2015-2022
Dr. Dolores R. Spikes (Interim).....	1988-1991	Mr. Dennis J. Shields	2022-2025

Presidents of the Southern University System

Dr. Jesse N. Stone Jr.	1977-1985	Dr. Kassie Freeman (Interim).....	2009-2010
Dr. Joffre T. Whisenton.....	1985-1988	Dr. Ronald Mason Jr.	2010-2015
Dr. Dolores R. Spikes	1988-1997	Dr. Ray L. Belton	2015-2022
Dr. Leon R. Tarver II.....	1997-2005	Dennis J. Shields	2022-2025
Dr. Edward R. Jackson (Interim).....	2005-2006	Dr. Orlando F. McMeans (Interim).....	2026-Present
Dr. Ralph Slaughter	2006-2009		

Founders' Day Committee Members

Donovan L. Segura
2026 Founders' Day Committee Chair

Winton Anderson
Caronda Bean
Welton Bowie
Rachel Carriere
Eric Cantrelle

Corey Deal
De'Andre L. Dearinge
Marla Dickerson
Kenneth Guy
Dawn Harris
Karen Jackson
Debra Lawson
Christopher Levy

Robyn Merrick
Jameracle Rogers
Janene Tate
Desiree Honore Thomas
Johlana Turner
Charmaine Williams
Luria Young

Southern University Board of Supervisors

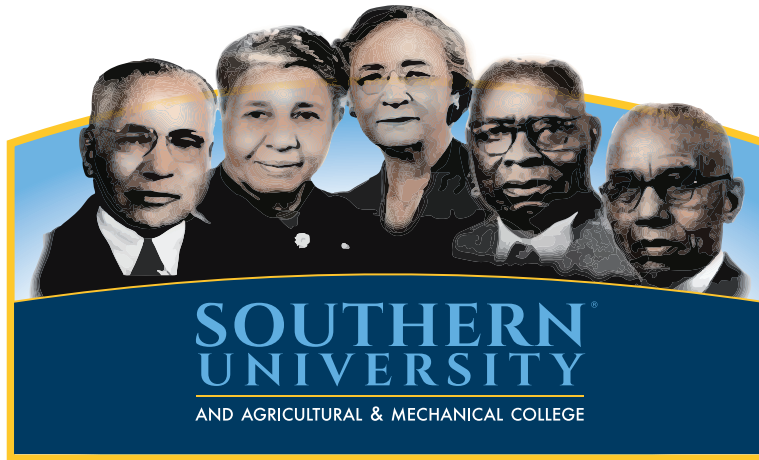
Honorable Tony Clayton
Chair

Honorable Reggie Abraham
Vice Chair

Dr. Orlando F. McMeans
*Interim President of the Southern University System
and Secretary to the Board of Supervisors*

Honorable Paul Matthews, Congressional District 1
Honorable Chris Masengill, Congressional District 1
Honorable Edwin M. Shorty Jr., Congressional District 2
Honorable Maple L. Gaines, Congressional District 2
Honorable Quincy Cawthorne, Congressional District 3
Honorable Samuel C. Tolbert Jr., Congressional District 3
Honorable Zazell V. Dudley, Congressional District 4
Honorable Henry Whitehorn, Congressional District 4

Honorable Ann A. Smith, Congressional District 5
Honorable Myron K. Lawson, Congressional District 5
Honorable Rani G. Whitfield, Congressional District 6
Honorable Donald Ray Henry, At Large
Honorable Domoine D. Rutledge, At Large
Honorable Aaron Manzy, Athens, GA
(Student Representative)



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