

SPELMAN Messenger



Spelman LEADS

Artistic Vision for a New Age

Cosby Endowed Professor in the
Fine Arts Giving Voice to History

*LEADS Co-Directors,
Kimberly B. Davis, C'81, and
Pamela G. Carlton*

SPELMAN LEADS THE WAY

to the Next Frontier of Leadership

BY DENISE MCFALL

As we move further into the 21st century, opportunities for “women of color” are expected to multiply exponentially. National census figures estimate there are now more than 37 million “women of color,” the fastest-growing segment of the workforce, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics. Given the instability of the world, economic conditions and the country’s changing demographic profile, there is no better time than now to implement a leadership agenda that will help redefine leadership in the 21st century. And, there is no better place than Spelman College to establish a leadership development initiative that will significantly impact current and future generations of African American and other women of color.

On October 9, 2003, the College launched its *Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement*, affectionately known as *LEADS*. Arising from the leadership development component of *Spelman ALIVE*, the second of the five-point institutional initiative inspired by President Beverly Daniel Tatum, the Center is designed to be a research institute, a place where the discussion of contemporary public policy issues is fostered and an environment in which students can learn from an exceptional cadre of women who have stood on the front lines of social change in both the private and public sectors. It is also a place where the financial empowerment and economic development of women of color are promoted, where the transformational power of the artist as a community leader is embraced, where opportunities for dialogue across difference abound and where Spelman’s commitment to community service and civic involvement is inspired, encouraged and enhanced.

John J. Farrell, Executive Vice President, Director of Human Resources, JPMorganChase; Pamela G. Carlton, Co-Executive Director, Spelman LEADS; Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, President, Spelman College; and Kimberly Browne Davis, C’81, Co-Executive Director, Spelman LEADS, congratulate Deborah C. Wright, President and CEO, Carver Federal Savings Bank, on her outstanding message as the inaugural guest speaker of the “Leaders on Leadership Speakers Series.”



Photo: J.D. Scott

Building on Tradition

Spelman's reputation for nurturing leadership within its community of thinkers is built on a solid foundation of providing our students with the skills they need not only to be productive members of society, but also to be agents of change – leaders, thinkers, individuals who truly make a difference. Traditionally, this has occurred through the critical thinking skills they develop as they explore new ideas in the classroom, the mentoring they receive from their professors and the leadership experiences that abound within student organizations and community service opportunities. The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement will serve to broaden the intellectual life of the College, bringing together, in a synergistic and highly visible way, the means by which we foster the leadership potential of our students.

As a strategic initiative, the Center promises to be a dynamic, multidimensional, leadership laboratory that will develop and nurture important linkages between the College's curricular, co-curricular, and interdisciplinary initiatives in five key areas of emphasis: *Leadership Development, Economic Empowerment, Advocacy through the Arts, Dialogue Across Difference, and Service Learning and Civic Engagement*. The leadership and service emphases of the Center will include new and existing course content in a wide variety of academic disciplines that link issues of global, national and local relevance to students' academic learning experiences.

To cite just one example of the impact of having a rich history of academic excellence and a long legacy of producing world-renowned leaders in the visual and performing arts, Spelman and Morehouse College recently became the recipients of a \$1 million gift from DreamWorks co-founder and entertainment executive David Geffen. DreamWorks is one of the nation's leading producers of live-action motion pictures, animated feature films and network and cable television programming. Among the distinguished Spelman alumnae who have made outstanding contributions to the industry are author, poet and playwright Pearl Cleage, C'71, cultural historian Bernice Johnson Reagon, C'70, and actress LaTanya Richardson Jackson, C'74.

The joint gift will be divided equally between the two colleges. Spelman will use \$250,000 toward endowed scholarships for students in the arts, \$225,000 to support a David Geffen Artist-In-Residence Program associated with The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement and \$25,000 to purchase equipment for a digital moving image salon. "We are very excited to use the proceeds to further enhance the work that we are doing here at Spelman through our Advocacy through the Arts initiative at

the newly launched Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement, and to support our talented students in the visual and performing arts," says President Tatum.

A National Repository

The voices of Black women are needed now more than ever. In addressing this critical need, the Center will focus on developing the qualities of leadership and responsibility that are essential to the personal and professional success of women of color and to the betterment of the communities in which they live and work. Through strategic programming, the Center's co-directors are crafting a more effective expression of the core dimensions of Spelman's mission; they are providing a structured opportunity for alumnae, corporate partners, community members and others to talk with Spelman students about issues of leadership. The activities of the Center are designed to significantly affect the civic behaviors of our students and to improve the quality of education we provide, the quality of our partnerships and the overall quality of life, locally, nationally and internationally.

Ultimately, the Center will become a resource for all who are concerned about leadership development for women of color. Each of the key emphases will contribute to the development of powerful pedagogy and fruitful research, positioning Spelman as a national repository of leadership information that specifically focuses on Black and other women of color. Program documentation and ongoing evaluation are expected to yield valuable data for use at the College and create opportunities for the "lessons learned" to be disseminated to other colleges and universities throughout the nation as well as throughout the corporate sector.

To Whom Much Is Given . . .

Individually and collectively, faculty, staff, students, alumnae, administrators and friends of the College acknowledge Spelman as a rare and precious gift. This gift, however, bears with it the weight of *history, heritage,*

"Spelman has a long-standing history of communicating a holistic understanding of leadership development that includes the mind, body and spirit – an understanding of leadership that includes academic excellence, the cultivation of wisdom and an understanding of social justice. We want our students to begin to think about the critical issues of the day – about the world in which they live and its complexities."

— DR. BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM, PRESIDENT

“Leaders are women and men who take risks to redefine our realities and move us into a new world of possibility and meaning. Above all, they embrace challenges and turn them into energy for transformation and performance.”

— KIMBERLY B. DAVIS, C’81, LEADS CO-DIRECTOR



legacy and responsibility. As a major force in American higher education, Spelman provides a unique opportunity for each of us to apply knowledge and wisdom, to pursue innovation and to live with integrity within the context of a distinctive college community. By marshalling our resources in a systematic and coordinated way, we can more fully embrace the notion of active leadership and the pursuit of civic initiatives that are of personal worth and public value. It

is in this spirit, that *Spelman LEADS* will serve to guide our actions and shape our destiny.

Innovating for Excellence

The Center’s founding co-directors, Pamela G. Carlton and Kimberly Browne Davis, C’81, share Dr. Tatum’s vision and passion for the Center. Through the generosity of JPMorganChase and its collaborative partnership with the College, Ms. Davis now serves as executive on special assignment with *Spelman LEADS*. Ms. Davis’s leadership acumen is the result of a rich and wide array of corporate assignments that include human resources development, strategic planning, product management, marketing and sales. Ms. Davis, who most recently served as the human resources executive for JPMorgan’s Latin America region, is a managing director of JPMorganChase.

“True leadership is the notion of being passionate about something and pursuing it in a focused and intentional way,” says Ms. Davis. “The Center will provide not only opportunities for the *life* of the College, but also opportunities for the *future* of the College.” Historically, Spelman’s approach to leadership has been significant and substantive. “While there were many leadership activities already in place, we saw the need to introduce the critically important concept of ‘knowledge transfer’ – to prepare Spelman students for the new millennium by developing their leadership abilities in ways that will allow them to transfer knowledge across the breadth of disciplines. In many ways, we see ourselves as building a bridge to the next frontier of leadership,” Ms. Davis adds.

Ms. Carlton, a graduate of Williams College who holds a juris doctorate and an M.B.A. from Yale University, is president and co-founder of Springboard, a highly successful

New York-based leadership empowerment initiative. A retired managing director of U.S. Equity Research at JPMorgan Securities, Ms. Carlton’s background includes 14 years as an investment banker at Morgan Stanley and the practice of law at Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton in New York. She has played an important role at both JPMorganChase and Morgan Stanley in defining their respective corporate diversity policies and was also the founder of a scholarship and mentoring/coaching program for talented students of color that was created in conjunction with the United Negro College Fund Campaign.

“Our 21st century society calls for a greater sense of urgency around the issues of ethics and morality. We need to be conscious, deliberate, organized and poignant about the need and desire to promote compassionate leadership,” emphasizes Ms. Carlton.

Ms. Davis and Ms. Carlton will co-direct The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement on an interim basis until a full-time, permanent director is appointed within the year.

Leaders on Leadership

The inaugural event of the launch festivities, *Spelman LEADS: Building on Tradition, Innovating for Excellence*, featured guest speaker Deborah C. Wright, president and CEO of Carver Federal Savings Bank based in Harlem, New York. Ms. Wright was the first of an impressive complement of notable speakers to participate as part of the *Leaders on Leadership Speakers Series*, a premier forum in which distinguished women leaders from industry, academia, government and the nonprofit sector will share their experiences, challenges and insights about what it takes to lead in an increasingly complex and competitive global marketplace.

Ms. Wright’s visit to Spelman was a homecoming of sorts, in that her father and brother are Morehouse men, her mother is a graduate of Clark College, and her two sisters, Harryeta Wright Hillman, C’76, and Schawannah Wright, C’81, are Spelman College alumnae. Ms. Wright is also the niece of Marian Wright Edelman, C’60, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund and a life trustee of the College.

Raised in Bennettsville, South Carolina, and Dallas, Texas, Ms. Wright’s original “game plan” was to become a lawyer, defending the rights of the poor. But, fate had a hand in shaping a future she could have never imagined. Hindsight and insight have convinced Ms. Wright that hers was a customized journey toward the pinnacle of success. In a meteoric career that spanned investment banking and key appointments in urban planning, development

and preservation, she rose to serve as commissioner of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development under New York's Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and, later, as president and CEO of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation where she oversaw a total capital budget of \$250 million.

Savvy, confident and exceedingly comfortable in her own skin, Ms. Wright's keen intellect is bolstered by her calling to duty and responsibility in equal measure. Captivating a full house of students, faculty, alumnae, and friends of the College gathered in the auditorium of the Olivia Hanks Cosby Academic Center, she chronicled the path that marked her rise to lead the nation's largest publicly traded African- and Caribbean-American operated bank. Her role at Carver has been an interesting mix of business and community service, sparked by her willingness to bear the 'pain quotient' that accompanied moving an institution beyond survival to becoming a high-performing, prosperous business. In her four-and-a-half-year tenure at the bank, Ms. Wright has focused on "building wealth, block by block," moving Carver stock from \$8.27 per share to its current value of \$25.40 per share and from \$4.5 million in "red ink" to assets in excess of \$3 million.

Speaking to the challenges confronting Black financial institutions, urban renewal and regentrification, communities in transition, and the development and transfer of Black wealth, Ms. Wright contends, "economic equity and economic justice is the unfinished agenda of the civil rights legacy." In recounting the financial state of Black America, she zeroes in on the glaring disparities between the "haves" and the "have nots." "Black American wealth is estimated at \$85 million, equal to the gross national product (GNP) of Mexico, yet our average income is one-third less than the national average; Black home ownership is only 50%, as compared to 75% for all Americans; and nearly 60% of African Americans have no financial assets."

Her advice to new graduates as the first step toward wealth-building and financial independence rings with a simple clarity: "Get a 401K and buy a house. But, understand, it won't be easy, as [we] are two to three times more likely not to get mortgages. While we have more millionaires and CEOs, and more of us are gaining entry into the middle class, there are also more of us struggling and being left behind. Although it's not perfect, as a people, we need to make peace with capitalism. We simply can't continue to spend our time waitin' on the porch for the deed to 40 acres and a mule! Money gives you the power to make choices and the power of where to spend it. One thing I know, if I ever get rich, my check is comin' right here!"

"What Will You Do When the Baton Gets Passed to You?"

Despite earning A.B., J.D. and M.B.A. degrees at Harvard University, Ms. Wright is quick to point out that being smart is not enough. "Passion is a must, and courage is absolutely required," she adds. Character is needed, as well as "soft skills," such as how you relate to others, your ability to garner respect and admiration and your ability to make sound judgments and rational decisions. Leaders must inspire, encourage, model and mentor. "Leadership is a calling — we need to answer the call to lead," says Ms. Wright, before posing the essential, seminal question: "What will *you* do when the baton gets passed to *you*?"

With unbridled enthusiasm, she shares what she believes to be the best preparation for stepping into a leadership role. "You've got to know that mediocrity is not an option. You've got to have some fire in your belly, some grit in your teeth, and the right values in your heart. Lead by example. Be selfless. Recognize that the entity is bigger than you. Instill pride in your race. Make the hard calls and decisions for the good of the team. Focus on flawless execution. Exude grace and exhibit humility. And put your business and your community before yourself." Then, with a sheepish grin and a playful sparkle in her eyes, she adds a final, gleeful note of "sistah-speak": "You've just got to realize, she who pays the piper calls the tune!"

DENISE MCFALL is an Atlanta-based freelance writer with an extensive background in higher education administration, program management and curriculum development. Having served in senior-level administrative positions at four Atlanta-area colleges and universities, Ms. McFall is a frequent contributor of articles and publications that focus on notable initiatives in higher education.

"We need to impress upon Spelman students and other women of color that they must not only believe in the right things, but that they must stand up for what they believe—that the role of leadership should not be left to others."

—PAMELA G. CARLTON, LEADS CO-DIRECTOR



Recommended Reading

Bossidy, Larry, et al. *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (Crown Publishing Group, 2002).

Collins, Jim. *Good to be Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* (HarperCollins, 2001).

Covey, Stephen R. *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (Free Press, 1989).

Jones, Laurie Beth. *Jesus CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership* (Hyperion, 1996).