

To: NTA Members and Friends

I write today to report highlights of our 89th Annual Conference and to thank the many individuals and organizations that helped to make the conference such a success.

More than 425 individuals attended the three-day conference, held September 20-22 on the Morgan State University Campus. The opening Plenary Session featured the Keynote Address by Dr. Christine Darden and the Charles Duke Lecture by Astronaut Leland Melvin. Dr. Darden and Astronaut Melvin are both master story-tellers who shared their own personal stories of their notable successes and the challenges they faced and ultimately overcame. Dr. Darden, of course, is one of the “Hidden Figures” who played a critical role in early NASA successes, while Leland Melvin had a long career in NASA that included two flights in space aboard the shuttle Atlantis and work on the International Space Station. In keeping with our conference theme (“Multigenerational and Interdisciplinary Approaches for STEM Success”), the audience for the Plenary Session lectures included junior high school, senior high school, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty, researchers, and others from the academy, industry, and government. The NASA physicist and the NASA astronaut held the audience spellbound, and the secondary school students lined up to ask Dr. Darden and Mr. Melvin questions at the close of their talks.



In our ongoing effort to encourage youth to pursue their own dreams of working in STEM areas, the NTA presented more than 200 students with copies of recently published books that tell how



our Plenary speakers and other pioneers working at NASA contributed to the space mission and opened doors to those still to follow (*Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians who Helped Win the Space Race*; and *Chasing Space: An Astronaut's Story of Grit, Grace, and Second Chances*).

Other conference highlights included the Student Symposium, which included oral presentations and poster sessions, and a student luncheon with keynote address by Dr. Michael G. Spencer, Morgan State University Dean of Engineering. Other events included workshops; tours of Morgan State STEM facilities; and a Panel on Climate Change and Social

Justice, featuring some of the nation's intellectual leaders in the effort to respond to the reality that our changing climate threatens to have (in fact, already is having) the most severe effect on communities composed largely of people of color. We organized this panel in recognition that our response to Climate Change must involve both scientific research, social sciences, and social justice considerations.

Our September 21 Awards Banquet featured a Keynote Address by Dr. Eugene DeLoach, the founding Dean of Morgan State University's School of Engineering, and three awards. The Samuel R. Cheevers Distinguished Service Award went to your current president (Dr. Ambrose Jearld, Jr.). The A. T. Weathers Technical Achievement Award was bestowed upon Dr. Antony Kinyua. The NTA President's Special Recognition Award was bestowed posthumously upon Roscoe Monroe, and accepted in his name by his daughter Roslyn Killgo. The awards, and Dr. DeLoach's remarks, served to remind the largely youthful banquet audience that institutions do not spring into being on their own, but that they must be built by individuals with vision, passion, and energy.

The third and final day of the conference included our Career Fair, Science Sessions, a Networking event, and our Membership Luncheon, which featured an address by Dr. Jayfus Doswell, an entrepreneur and the founder, President and CEO of Juxtopia,

The third day featured a day-long workshop titled "Maximizing Geosciences, Education, Research and Workforce Opportunities through Interdisciplinary Engagement." Keynote speaker for the Geosciences workshop was Dr. Eric Davidson, President of the sixty-thousand member American Geophysical Union. The workshop emphasized the need to connect across generations and across disciplines to build a framework for advancing geosciences and more broadly STEAM education and research within HBCUs. Workshop participants included leaders from academia, industry, and government – researchers and administrators – an eminent gathering of talent and experience that resulted in a provocative dialogue on the challenges and the current state of efforts to make the nation's STEM enterprise more inclusive and diverse. Workshop attendees left with commitments to take action, with agreements to work together on collaborations and partnerships, to generate proposals, and to identify ways to build capacity for geosciences at HBCUs. One theme that resonated with workshop participants was the importance of viewing HBCUs as more than a training ground for STEM professionals (although the HBCUs are that), but also as partners in geoscience and STEM research and development.

Among the 425 attending the conference were more than 200 high school and junior high school students. Graduate and undergraduate students presented in the Student Symposium and attended networking events and other workshops. More than 60 attendees came from academia – mostly from HBCUs, including a mix of mid-career professionals and veteran researchers and administrators.



Six NTA Past Presidents attended, an august body of wisdom and experience. The Past Presidents joined your current President and the NTA Board of Directors in discussions of the NTA and its future. Our Past Presidents pledged their help in renewing and repositioning NTA to its rightful place of leadership in minority STEM affairs. We discussed the continuing need for a professional organization dedicated to creating opportunities in education, research, engineering, science and technology for minorities, women, and youth pursuing technical careers. NTA is needed now as much as it was in 1925 when it was founded, and as much as it has been needed at any time in its 91 years of existence. Today, with the scientific and social issues facing our nation (including the current administration's policies that have negative impacts for HBCUs), more than ever we need professional organizations to support, inform, inspire, and provide opportunities for minorities who aspire to careers in STEM fields.

Believing strongly in the need for a vibrant NTA, we identified areas where we need to strengthen our organization – in particular the need to recruit mid-career professionals who can bring to NTA initiatives, energy, enthusiasm, and understanding of current issues we need to respond to the ongoing challenges minorities face today.

Other issues that must be resolved soon include the transition of NTA leadership and the identification of a site or sites for our 90th and 91st Annual conferences. In the September meeting in Baltimore, the Board did not have a viable nomination for NTA President to consider. The nomination/search process is ongoing, and I have agreed to stay on as President as long as necessary. I would like to invite and urge local chapters to consider venues for the 2018 and 2019

Annual Conference. In recent years we have held our conference in Baltimore, Washington DC, Houston, Cleveland, and Cincinnati. Local chapters interested in hosting the conference are welcome to contact me or a Board member to discuss locations for coming years.

While we have issues to resolve, our 89th conference reaffirmed that NTA resonates with and inspires youth who are seeking careers in STEM, and demonstrated that long-time, veteran NTA members remain enthusiastic about guiding the effort. Their enthusiasm of the youth and the dedication and expertise of our veteran members are reasons for optimism about the future of NTA and the possibilities for inclusion in the nation's STEM enterprise.

In the way of thanking individuals and organizations for the successful 89th conference, the list is long. Morgan State University, under the leadership of President David Wilson, was an excellent host. Morgan provided support at all levels – faculty, students and staff – in planning and facilitating the conference. The National Science Foundation provided content expertise and financial support for the Student Symposium and the Geosciences Workshop. The NTA Board of Directors was supportive in planning and oversight, and the NTA Conference Committee worked tirelessly to plan events and organize activities. Conference Co-Chairs Dr. William Lupton and Dr. Frederick Oliver provided wise guidance and oversight. The venerable NTA Journal, under Editor John Trimble, published two outstanding papers that provided context for the conference. The Journal also highlighted Conference events, speakers, and awards. Thank-you to Dr. Trimble and Ms. Hattie Carwell, the Journal's Editorial Board.

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