

Hampton U. students staged digital town hall with other HBCUs before debate

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By Jalisa Stanislaus

HAMPTON, Va. -- Thirty minutes before the first of three 2012 presidential debates began, the Hampton University Student Center Theatre Wednesday overflowed with students eager to hear the debate between President Barack Obama and form Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney.

"This is the first year that I could vote, so it's a big deal," said Evangela Mathews, a freshman biology major from Prince George's County, Md. "I want to be involved and pick the best candidate, not just because he's black and because it's what everyone else is doing, but I want to have my own reasons."

Mathews said she looked forward to hearing information about college students, health care and what both candidates can do for the country.

Over 200 Hamptonians packed into the theater and discussed their expectations during an online live chat with students from Norfolk State University and Morehouse College in Atlanta. Students from the three schools also discussed voter registration efforts on their campuses.

"I'm excited to hear both candidates and their views," said Mark Landry, a junior political science major from Upper Marlboro, Md. "I need to listen more to what Romney has to say because I need to know that if he wins, he'll do good things.

"It should be a good debate. I'm excited."

At 9 p.m., both candidates appeared on the movie screen, televised from the University of Denver. The HU crowd rose to their feet with excitement.

Hampton students then sat, swelling with anticipation to hear what would be said.

When the event ended, Landry said "After the debate, many tried to make it seem like Obama was not ready or serious about the debate. They also made it seem like Romney was superior and had better ideas. I don't think Romney did well because everything that he talked about was not backed up with details about what he thinks can happen in the future or what he could implement himself.

"I don't think there was a clear winner, because we already know what President Obama is capable of. Based on the debate, I don't think Romney is prepared for the presidency. "

What was one of the most memorable parts of the debate?

"The most memorable part of the debate was when Mitt Romney called Obama out on his presidency. He made a statement about Obama not getting

much done in the past four years. That stood out to me because everyone knows that Congress has been denying most of his proposals."

The final leg of election season had officially arrived.

*The correspondent is a senior at the **Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications**.*