

## Hampton U., NSU and EPA agree to collaborate

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*By Gabriella Barnes*

**Hampton University** and **Norfolk State University** joined forces with the EPA and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Monday.

The agreement is expected to increase the number of minorities involved in STEM fields: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. By introducing minorities to these topics, the MOU expects to also inspire students to aspire to work in careers involving environmental science, air pollution, and water pollution issues, said officials at the conference.

HU President William R. Harvey was in attendance, along with **EPA Mid-Atlantic Region** Administrator Shawn Garvin, Norfolk State University President Eddie N. Moore, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Director, David K. Paylor.

"The EPA prompted this," said Janice Bolden, an environmental scientist with the federal agency. "We're always looking at careers, and HBCUs are a good feeder group."

Hampton University is no stranger to technological advancements in the science and environmental fields. There are currently 13 students pursuing Masters and Ph.D. degrees on campus at the **Center of Atmospheric Sciences**, said Harvey. These students are among a growing number involved in environmental science fields and Hampton continues its efforts to promote clean air and environmental advances.

The MOU also includes the program called LEAP- Linking Environmental and Academic Programs, located at Hampton and Norfolk State universities. The LEAP program was started in the early 2000s, directed towards high school minorities. LEAP came to Norfolk State in 2008 and targeted high school minorities in hopes of increasing their knowledge of air pollution, water conservation and general environmental welfare. Hampton University uses the LEAP program in its graduate school as part of the effort to increase air quality.

According to Garvin of EPA, several students from both universities called and reported concerns to the EPA. Students found high levels of air pollution and air monitoring and wanted something done. These reports were right on target, because of as of 2013 there were no federal rules against carbon pollution. The drastic climate change however prompted President Obama in June 2013 to address the issue. The EPA responded by establishing carbon guidelines last June.

Progress is being made in light of all the new regulations. There has been drastic change in air pollution and environmental health in the past 50 years, said Paylor of DEQ. There are now water treatments statewide and fish kills have been reduced to about 400 a year, he said. The United States also has had the best two years for air quality for 2013 and 2014, with

nitrogen levels reducing, reduced acid rain, and increased environmental leadership.

The MOU between universities promotes innovation and discoveries in the environmental fields. While signing the MOU was not of any cost to either school, the MOU should reap economic benefits. The funds produced are to be used for job readiness, skills training, career education, exposure information and counseling.

Funds are also to be used for orientation to post-secondary education and training options, developing job opportunities, job placement, and Upward Bound for high school students in the Hampton Roads area, according to the agreement.

*Additional reporting by Diamond Sydnor. Photo by Mariah Summers. The trio are students in the **Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications**.*