

HU Continues to Expand Research Efforts

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By Kathryn Kenny

In a few years, current Hampton University freshmen should see a noticeable change in their classrooms by the time they enter their senior year. Hampton U. has begun undergoing plans of transitioning from primarily a teaching to a research university, one of the most sought-out rankings in the realm of higher education.

This transformation will lead to significant changes within the classroom such as a more research-intensive curriculum and possibly greater classroom sizes.

It's no secret that Hampton University President William R. Harvey has had his eyes set on becoming a research university for quite some time. Harvey's agenda over the past decade has been to bring research to the forefront by trying to expand the footprint of the university through a variety of research-based efforts.

The university opened the **Proton Therapy Center** in October 2010, which conducts cancer research.

"Hampton University's faculty and students are conducting cutting-edge research that addresses major health issues and global climate change," said Harvey in a statement just after the center opened. "The newly opened Hampton University Proton Institute, the largest of its kind in the world, demonstrates our dedication to research and treatment that will ease human suffering and save lives."

According to The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a research university is classified by their level of research activity, as measured by research expenditures, number of research doctorates awarded, number of research-focused faculty, and other factors. These universities are ranked as either a "very high research university" or a "high research university."

Bill Thomas, associate vice president for the Office of Governmental Relations at HU, has worked closely with the university's transition. Thomas said that Hampton is concentrating its efforts specifically in obtaining contracts based on the university's research capabilities and strengths. Thomas also said that the university identifies nursing, pharmacy, cancer research, atmospheric science, education and physics as their program strengths.

"The future of education has become research intensive," said Thomas. "If HBCUs don't take the time to transition, then they are going to become non-existent. Now, many state and private schools are reaching out to talented African American's and offering them opportunities in research that HBCU's simply cannot. HBCU's must be competitive to offer STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, Math] research to these bright students. In order

to be competitive in the 21st century, we must find research dollars and opportunities in order to achieve this status." Thomas said.

Over the past decade, Hampton has led the pack in terms of gathering research grants and funding.

According to the National Science Foundation, Hampton U. was the leading HBCU recipient for science and engineering funding for two consecutive years in a report done in 2005.

At that time Hampton ranked higher than Howard University and Jackson State University, both established research universities.

Hampton U. takes the lead in comparison to top Virginia universities in federal contract dollars as well. Hampton received more than \$111 million between 2000 and 2007 according to figures from the USAspending.gov website. Hampton U. has received over **\$140 million in climate research funding** from NASA for the Aeronomy of Ice in the Mesosphere (AIM) satellite mission, making it the first Historically Black College and University to have total mission responsibility for a NASA satellite mission. Among its regional counter parts USAspending.gov states that Hampton U. received \$11.56 million in 2007 compared to \$8.44 million at Old Dominion University, \$549,290 at Norfolk State University, and \$326,940 at Christopher Newport University.

In order to become a research university, Hampton will encourage professors to incorporate research into coursework as well.

The primary mission of private and state flagship (well-known within the state) research universities is to generate research and produce graduate students.

One of the draw backs at many research institutions is the large class sizes. Hampton University prides its self in having smaller classrooms but on the road to becoming a research university, classroom sizes might increase in order to allow professors time to conduct research according to a study done by the U.S. News and World Report.

Here is why: research universities require a number of its professors to conduct a certain amount of research outside of their course load.

It's important to note that even though professors are instructed to conduct research, they are not negligent of the university's main purpose which is to educate its students.

According to the Georgia Health Center, At most research universities, including GRU, less than 20 percent of all faculty do any significant amount of research.

Within the classroom Hampton University has already began to undergo incorporating research into its curriculum.

The Freddie T. Davy Honors College is an academic enhancement program for the undergraduate experience. The program's main initiatives are to enhance and create more research experiences for the students. The

program promotes a number of different ways for students to participate in research or gain research experience, most notable, the Stanford University Gateway to Science Careers Program

"In school you gather a wealth of technical knowledge that is a little different than real life experience. The research opportunities bridge the technical things that you learn in a classroom to real life situations. It is an advanced level of learning. Your participation in research is an application of those facts that you learn in the classroom and that process enhances your understanding of it." Said **Sabin Duncan, Ed.D.**, interim director of the Freddie T. Davy Honors College.

The Honors College has also produced several Rhodes Scholar finalists, most recently, **Josh Gopeesingh**, a senior chemical engineering major who was recognized this year.

Duncan said, "Becoming a doctoral research institution is a process, because we are in the beginning stages of that process we are not at the forefront of research just yet. As an individual, I value a 'process experience' more than I value arriving at a destination. Even if we (HU) were at the forefront of Proton Therapy research, we would still be in the process of trying to be the best.

"We haven't reached a destination just yet. We are there now and we will be there in the future in another more expanded capacity."

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