

Hampton U. seniors reflect on final year of school

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By Erin Rice

As Opening Convocation approached Sunday, many seniors rushed to pick up their caps and gowns.

Held in Ogden Hall, the 72nd annual ceremony welcomes Hampton University's class of 2015 to its last undergraduate school year. Opening Convocation gives seniors a glimpse of what will happen on their May graduation day. The ceremony intends to ignite the fire in students to finish their last stretch to undergraduate success as well as to get them to think about what happens after they leave their Home by the Sea.

Casetta Ingram, a senior psychology major from Newark, N.J., decided to name her cap and gown "Cap-ga-nesa." She went to Opening Convocation as a freshman and remembers "feeling annoyed that she was there." Now, she's "ecstatic because the people are here for us."

Ingram is graduating with her sister and she is "proud to say that she went through the college struggle with someone close to her."

She will miss her Majestic dance troupe, the excitement of Homecoming, and "the reality that she doesn't have much responsibility as an undergraduate," but she is "excited to meet this year's keynote speaker."

Sunday's keynote speaker is **Jarrett L. Carter Sr.**, founding editor of HBCUDigest.com. A graduate from Morgan State University, He launched the HBCU Digest in 2010 as an online daily news blog that covers historically black colleges and universities. Carter is also a columnist for the Huffington Post, host of the HBCU Digest Podcast Series, and the founder and executive director of the Center for HBCU Media Advocacy.

He most recently named Hampton University the **HBCU of the Year**.

Jesse Lyles of Washington, D.C. said that having Carter as the keynote speaker is "empowering because it will motivate him to achieve great success as Carter did with HBCU Digest." After college the journalism major said he will go to graduate school, or start his career at a magazine. Lyles is excited that his family will be attending the event. He said he is ready for Sunday.

Taylor Watts, an elementary education major from Hampton, "expects encouraging words" from the keynote speaker because, "he was the one who named us HBCU of the Year right?" Watts is a legacy student at Hampton University as her mother, Tracy Mann Watts, who graduated in 1985. She was also class of O Phi O 5; Taylor is O Phi O 15.

Mrs. Watts said "Taylor's self-confidence, maturity level, and decision making have continuously developed over the course of three years," which she knows will continue throughout her senior year. Taylor Watts said, "It feels great to continue the Hamptonian legacy," but added she is ready to go.

Marysa Hill, a psychology major, hadn't gotten her cap and gown yet and can't believe senior year is here. She came to Hampton because of her "love for the water" and says her family is "proud that she chose an HBCU," but she will miss it when she goes home to Ann Arbor, Mich.

"The accessibility of my friends will be gone," she said, and it will "be hard to keep it touch" now that she has met friends from all over the United States.

Whether some seniors are ready to go or are having trouble with the thought of leaving, the reality is that life doesn't stop on Hampton University's campus. Each senior will have to go out into the world and "dare to be a genius" as Brett Pulley, dean of Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications, said at the **70th convocation** ceremony in 2012.

But before they can do this, they must first get through their last year.

*The writer is a student in the **Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications**.*