



# BETHUNE-COOKMAN UNIVERSITY

## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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Founded in 1904 by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune

Lawrence M. Drake II, Ph.D. Interim President

First, let me begin by saying that I was very proud of the manner in which our students handled themselves during yesterday's student gathering. It was orderly and represented the best intentions of students sharing their voices. While social media and media outlets have seized on not continuing negotiations with NFL Hall of Fame player Ed Reed, many of our students chose to use this moment to voice their concerns. This administration takes no issue with this. In the coming days, I will meet with student leaders to ensure that we address many of the students' concerns and answer their questions as honestly as possible.

To close the chapter on Mr. Reed, he was a tremendous player. Still, as we continued to observe him, we felt that his behavior was not aligned with the traditions of our founder Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, and the university. We have over 50+ inquiries concerning our Head coaching position and are very excited about our candidate pool. Many of them possess not only knowledge of the game and the ability to assist in raising funds for the program. Still, they are disciplined leaders who have demonstrated their steadfast commitment to our Christian values. They also have the leadership skills to mold successful young men who are also student-athletes.

We've also added a football player representative to join the search committee, giving the football team a stake and a voice in choosing our next Head Football coach.

We hope to announce our selection of a new Head Football Coach in the next week to ten days.

Next, Issues and concerns: Over the last year, Bethune-Cookman University has begun a complete assessment of all its facilities for fitness, renovation, and teardown, as well as the construction of new facilities to enhance our campus. We've enlisted the assistance of CTG Construction, an Orlando-based firm with extensive HBCU campus experience, our facilities partner Sodexo, and several environmental and architectural engineering firms to continue the assessment of over 100 buildings.

Simultaneously, we have begun to prioritize necessity and cost, as financial resources are limited. For some buildings and facilities, in light of two unprecedented weather events, Hurricane Ian and Hurricane Nicole, and enrollment growth, we have begun renovation and construction immediately. As with any process, facility age, building conditions, time to remedy, weather impact, and expense are paramount. To ensure we are thorough, this phase will likely not be complete until late summer or just before the FY23-24 school year. Once school begins in the Fall, we will work around student movement and will likely require moving students around, which could be disruptive to their living and learning. Student logistics, campus housing, and instructional classroom spaces are keys to the university meeting its academic requirements.

While I believe the truth and transparency are always the best courses, some “facts” are not always friendly”! However, we have to do what is right even when it’s not popular. Our Founder Dr. Bethune once remarked,” The progress of the world will call for the best that all of us have to give.”

We will continue to move to be the best version of ourselves and truly appreciate the patience of our students and all concerned as we work to improve our community.

“Hail Wildcats”!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence M. Drake II, Ph.D." in a cursive style.

Lawrence M. Drake II, Ph.D.

***SUSTAINING A LEGACY OF FAITH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND SERVICE***

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