Bethune-Cookman University President E. LaBrent Chrite lay bare his plans for action to correct the financial issues that threatened the institution during a community “Meet and Greet” on Thursday, Oct. 30 hosted by the city of Daytona Beach.

Chrite told the estimated 200 people in attendance at the Midtown Cultural and Educational Center that B-CU has to satisfy its accreditation body that it had corrected the problems that caused it to be placed on probation or it will not survive.

“This is our final year,” he said.

“The legacy (here) is so extraordinary and powerful….The implications will be catastrophic on this community (if Bethune-Cookman went under),” he said.

A study undertaken more than 20 years ago suggested that B-CU had a local impact of $250 million yearly.

Chrite has hope, saying he is pleased with the progress, so far, and expects B-CU will get off probation.

Chrite said that at first he and his family were not sure if this place would survive, but after spending time with students and faculty, he fell in love with the university.

The seventh president of B-CU called on the community to remain “relentlessly committed and focused on the students.”

October marks Chrite’s fourth month at B-CU. He said that in these four months officials have “steadied our balance sheet.”

Chrite also talked about the need to prepare students to be competitive for the labor field.

“We must prepare and mold our students to be able to adapt easily,” he said.

Chrite ended on several notes, first addressing the past issues the university’s had with transparency, integrity, and finances.

“This is not about me or my leadership team,” Chrite said, “It’s about the students.”

Chrite, a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, was welcomed to the city by the fraternity’s local graduate chapter with gifts.

Cynthia Slater, president of the NAACP area chapter, also welcomed him and invited him to take out a membership.

Mayor Derrick Henry declared Oct. 30, as Dr. E. LaBrent Chrite Day.

The audience, meanwhile, got a chance to meet Chrite’s wife, Phyllis.

He said that neither he nor his wife had attended an HBCU but they supported them and sent two of their three children to HBCUs.

“We sent our kids to HBCUs purposefully because we believe in them,” [President Chrite] said.

By Ashlyn Denson
Editor-in-Chief
D.B. and Volusia County welcome B-CU’s 7th President

President E. LaBrent Chrite, left, speaking with Volusia County Councilmember Barbara Girtman during the reception.

Local members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Dr. Terrance Culver, left, and Dr. Chester Wilson, right, present their fraternity brother with a welcoming gift.

The affair was full of dignitaries, local officials, public servants and friends of B-CU. As expected, the food and conversation were plentiful at this meet and greet for President Chrite and his wife, Phyllis Chrite.

The food line was long at times, but worth the wait.

An alumna from Bethune-Cookman University supported the event by providing a cake.

All photos by staff photographer Elijah Morris.