



TALLADEGA COLLEGE

Talladega College National Alumni Association TCNAA Fund Raising Committee

August 1, 2019

“Erected in 1857 by the worn and scarred hands of slaves, Swayne Hall is the cornerstone of Talladega College. It’s been a long row to hoe, yet the price still being paid is immeasurable. Spiritual symbolism marks the walls of Swayne Hall. The souls of many of our ancestors’ rest there. Slavery took its toll, yet Black Americans prevailed by clinging to profound beliefs in possibilities—hope. May God bless the sacred land on which it stands, each structure that makes up its collective presence, and every student, faculty-member and executive that has and will traverse the realm of Talladega College for the purpose of higher learning. Talladega College—“The Alpha Lyrae Vega of them all.””

When I think of Talladega College, it’s hard not to envision the first of its students - freed slaves. I imagine them free for the first time when slavery was all they had previously known. I imagine some of whom were learning to read for the very first time. I imagine their courage and determination to succeed in the country they contributed to building with their free labor. I imagine the will of freed slaves to forge ahead despite the challenges connected to learning and being educated for the first time. I imagine the lawlessness in our country contributing to their constant plight. I am acutely aware of how they forged ahead despite all the headwinds. It is because of these brave souls that we are Talladegans. Our collective successes have been made possible because we continue to stand upon the shoulders of our ancestors – freed slaves - Talladegans.

My name is Ralph Harper, class of 1983.

In 1979 when I was a senior at Jackson-Olin High School in Birmingham, AL, my biology teacher, Samson Julius Bennett, 1955 approached me one day after school. He said in a fierce voice, “you wanna go to Talladega College with me this weekend?” I hesitated before I responded... “what’s Talladega College?” Without equivocating, Mr. Bennett yelled at me... “boy do you want to go to college or not!” I could feel the fear in my own voice when I responded with an unconfident tone... “yes sir.” We visited the Talladega College campus that weekend and my life was forever changed.

However, despite my successes over the years, I have fallen short of an implied commitment and accountability to my alma mater, Talladega College. I imagine there are others of us like me. But, that’s neither here nor there.

This year – to my complete surprise - I was asked to head the TCNAA Fundraising Committee.

Because of my past performance in this regard, I was shocked by the nomination and embarrassed by the way in which I have comported myself over the years - falling short in this very important accountability. However, I got over it and within a very short order, I accepted the challenge.

I have been working with Russell Holloway and other committee members to get this important initiative off to an aggressive start. In terms of my new personal commitment to Talladega College, it is my full intent to treat and support the function of supporting and sustaining my college differently. I will:

- Support Talladega College mindful of how and why it exists – the will of slaves
- Be proactive in my support – I will not reserve my support for times of urgency
- Solicit foreign support from people, companies and nonprofits within my realm
- Engender the entire Talladega College Alumni to get closer and engage unconditionally

This letter has been written to solicit your support and the support of each individual alumnus around the world. These times represent a very critical era for Talladega College. I have occasionally heard sound bites regarding the possibility our college’s “doors will be closing.” This year and for each year going forward, our mission should be to ensure we forever mitigate even the remotest of possibilities that will happen.

The table below represents a high-level plan for the TCNAA to raise \$150,000 prior to the end of the year, 2019 – this year. While this plan is aggressive, I believe we can exceed the goal. we must strive to do so. However, in order to succeed, we will need all hands-on deck. Therefore, the TCNAA Fundraising Committee has agreed to reach out to as many Talladega alumnus as possible, and to align and work with all the TCNAA chapters towards this very important common goal.

Legacy Contribution Levels	Number of Donors	Level minimum amount	Goals
Investor (Individual and/or Corporate)	1	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Champion	4	5,000	20,000
Sustainer	30	1,000	30,000
Builder	115	500	57,500
Founder	200	100	20,000
Supporter	250	50	12,500
Total	600		\$150,000

We ask that all alumnus receiving this letter please contribute a minimum of one of the above contribution level amounts. You may also decide to contribute two units of a single contribution level amount. For instance, rather than donating a single “Supporter Level” contribution of \$50, you may contribute two “Supporter Level” units or \$100. Please consider continuing your contribution annually or quarterly.

Finally, I suggest, starting this year, that we go the extra mile to initiate a plan to get more of our colleagues, Talladega Alumnus, involved in our international plan to ramp up support for Talladega College. None of us can imagine the financial power that exists at the fingertips and handshakes of some of our most successful and prominent colleagues. Many of these individuals are doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, scientist, futurists and more. A lot of them are executives in Fortune Companies – major companies with healthy corporate foundations. An unknown number of these corporations’ executives are sitting and waiting on the opportunity to save and support a Historically Black College like ours. We must be ready. We must build a very solid case for why Talladega College, our alma mater, should be considered for such attention and preserved far into the future. Then we must aggressively vet some of these companies, so they will know who we are and appreciate our needs.

Let’s Go To Work!

Ralph