

**Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice Investiture Address:**

September 11, 2014

Martin Luther King, Jr. Chapel

Morehouse College

Atlanta, Georgia

I am humbled  
by the trust and confidence  
of the Morehouse School of Medicine Board of Trustees  
for this honor.

Thank you.

I appreciate the opportunity today  
to stand under the shade of a tree  
that I did not plant.  
This honored and sacred ground  
was nurtured and cultivated by many who came before me.  
Those like former Morehouse School of Medicine presidents  
Louis W. Sullivan,  
James A. Goodman,  
James Gavin III,  
David Satcher  
and John Maupin  
who nourished this medical meadowland.

I am grateful for their contributions  
to the School of Medicine  
and their legacy of fervent leadership.

To my teachers,  
Ms. Neubold,  
Faircloth,

Ella Mae Cater  
and Mr. Charles Cook,  
just to name a few  
who brought science alive in the classroom and taught me to love the role it could play in my life  
and the lives of others.

It was their early introduction  
to the wonder of science and discovery  
that engaged and  
intrigued me as a student.

To my mother  
whose sage advice to me as a young physician  
was to value my patients  
and to make sure that my counsel  
always considers  
what is in their best interests, first.

To my family and friends  
who are here today,  
I want to thank you for your encouragement, wisdom and unwavering support.

In particular, my three sisters,  
Marsha,  
Sandra,  
and Priscilla  
and their families;  
my sister-in-law, Brenda and her family;  
my supportive husband, Melvin Jr.,  
and my two wonderful children,

Jayne and Melvin III;  
and yes happy birthday, Melvin III,  
thank you for sharing your birthday today with me.

I would like to take a moment and ask them all to please stand.

To my sorors of  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated,  
my Link Sisters,  
and my dear friends  
who have supported me through tears,  
love  
and laughter,  
I say thank you  
for adding to the richness of my life.

Thank you to the platform guests  
who have impacted my life  
in so many ways,  
shepherding me toward this day.

I want to extend a special thank you  
to Dr. Robert Franklin for presiding  
over this investiture ceremony.  
Robert and Cheryl Franklin  
have been friends of Melvin and me  
since our early days at Harvard Medical School.  
We have shared so many memories together:  
the births of our children;  
the christening of Jayne at Danforth Chapel; and many vacations  
that we now get to take with each other,

.....childless.

I can't think of any other person  
whom I would want to open this occasion  
at this historic place,  
and at this time,  
other than Robert Franklin.  
Thank you.

To the legislators,  
federal, state and local officials  
who are present

To my other AUC presidents,  
thank you for welcoming me.

To the faculty and staff at Morehouse School of Medicine who are the backbone of MSM and  
who tirelessly prepare and inspire our most important asset:  
our students.

Would our faculty and staff please stand, and MSM students  
would you also please stand?

And finally

to our alumni

who extend our reputation of excellence well beyond our physical boundaries  
to the broader community.

Will all alumni of MSM please stand?

I am also reminded as many of you are  
of the significance of September 11th  
in our country's history  
and ask that we remember those  
whose sacrifice affords us the right  
to bask in the privilege of freedom.

Today we are gathered in the Chapel  
that bears the name of a man  
who emphatically understood  
the moral obligation of equality in America. Martin Luther King Jr. once said,

**“Of all the forms of inequality,  
injustice in health care  
is the most shocking and inhumane.”**

What we now know after many years of study and documentation  
is that injustice in health care extends well beyond *access* to health care.  
The injustice is evident in  
*how* health care is delivered,  
*whom* it is delivered to,  
and *where* it is delivered.

If we are to act upon what we have learned and what we know,  
we must act differently.  
We must move our discussion  
from simply cataloging health disparities  
to one that builds upon our new knowledge and leads to health equity.

Health equity is not defined  
by giving everyone  
the same level of service or access  
but by giving a person or a community t  
he level of service and access to resources that allows a person or community to reach an  
optimum level of health.

The elimination of health disparities  
is one of the pillars

on which Morehouse School of Medicine was built.

Today

our charge is to become a leader  
in closing the health gap....

**BUT HOW?**

That is our charge.

That is our 21<sup>st</sup> Century mission.

We will become the recognized leader  
in the creation of health equity  
by focusing on four key areas.

***First,***

***how we educate our learners***

Over the past 39 years,  
we have graduated more than 2,000 physicians, public health professionals  
and biomedical scientists  
many have chosen to practice primary care medicine  
or they have advocated  
on behalf of those in underserved communities.

That is the reason the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation  
ranked MSM  
the number ONE medical school  
in the country  
in fulfilling its social mission.

America will face a physician shortage of more than 90,000 doctors in 10 years.  
By 2020

this country will face a serious shortage  
of both primary care  
and other medical specialists  
to care for an aging and growing population.

This year

we enrolled our largest class of 78 students, and we will focus on expanding to 100 medical students  
with a 20% increase in our biomedical and public health students by 2017.

Continuing to increase

the number of mission-conscious health care professionals  
will require enhanced recruiting efforts  
and innovative medical education programs. It will include training  
compassionate professionals  
who are committed  
to the holistic treatment of patients  
and not just their medical condition.

Our recruiting efforts

must include cognitive diversity  
in the selection of those  
who are admitted here.

Scott E. Page is a social scientist  
who has written extensively  
on the power of diversity in creating stronger teams.

There is empirical evidence  
that the greater the diversity  
the more productive the team.

Since 70 percent of our physicians  
come from underserved communities  
and choose to practice

in underserved communities,  
it is critical that we channel their life experience and diversity  
to maintain innovative academic programs that will broaden their  
experience and exposure to new ideas.

We must create opportunities to enhance their experience by including training  
at the Veterans Administration Hospital  
and at private hospital systems like Atlanta Medical Center  
and global health experiences  
like those with our partner,  
the Fogarty Foundation.

This strategy of identifying the most cognitively diverse learners  
is not limited to our recruitment of medical students.

It extends also to our biomedical scientists and our public health students.

For we know that our success in creating health equity is highly dependent on evidence-based  
science

that begins with research discoveries

that incubate in lab,

but only become real to the public

when they are extended

through the advocacy of public health leaders.

***Second,***

***we must continue to engage and educate the community***

One of our core community values is

the ***community has the right***

to participate as an equal partner

at every level of decision-making,

including needs assessment,

planning,

implementation,



enforcement  
and evaluation.

A person's access to quality health services has a profound effect on every aspect of her or his life,  
yet nearly 1 in 4 Americans  
do not have a primary care provider  
and people without medical insurance  
are more likely to skip routine medical care that increases their risk  
for more serious health conditions.

We can thank the Obama Administration  
for the Affordable Care Act  
that has improved access to quality care and makes health care coverage possible for many  
Americans  
in order to reduce disparities in health care.

The president has proposed  
\$14.6 billion for health care training  
in his 2015 budget plan.  
It includes more than \$5 billion  
over 10 years  
to train 13,000 doctors to serve in underserved areas.  
His budget also proposed  
nearly \$4 billion  
over six years  
for medical students to receive scholarships and loan repayment assistance  
in return for serving in communities  
with high medical needs.

In addition,

President Obama is expected to seek more than \$5 billion in increased payments to providers who serve Medicaid patients.

Increasing access to routine health services and health insurance are vital steps in improving the health of all Americans and specifically minority communities.

We understand that health status and health behaviors are determined by personal, institutional, environmental, and policy influences.

Educational and community-based programs over the next decade will continue to contribute to improving health outcomes in the United States.

We at Morehouse School of Medicine recognized years ago that education and community-based programs must reach out to people outside of traditional health care facilities.

That is why we have trained over 75 community-based physicians to participate in clinical research, and why we have one of the first mobile research vans that actually goes *into* the community.

Our community engagement must be broad, comprehensive and substantive like the Community Voices under our Satcher Health Leadership Institute that addresses Prison Health and Reentry Support Programs, Obesity and Diabetes Prevention Programs,

Mental and Behavioral Health Programs, and the Community Health Worker Health Disparities Initiative.

We are seeking to expand public-private partnerships that create win-win scenarios to improve patient outcomes, like our eHealthy Strides Initiative.

With investments and collaborations with Microsoft and the NIH, we launched a disease management system called eHealthy Strides, or EHS. EHS empowers patients to take an active role in managing their diabetes with support from real-time health care providers.

EHS is one of a suite of patented, health technologies that use real-time actionable data from individualized health risk assessments to develop a preventive, personalized and a participatory treatment plan for the patient.

Our community engagement efforts allowed EHS to be tested in approximately 300 diabetic patients, including members of Big Bethel AME Church and in primary care practices of the MSM Community Physicians Network.

The City of Atlanta human resources benefits program is providing incentives for employees with diabetes to use eHealthy Strides to achieve health and wellness goals.

It was also approved  
by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for use in the Morehouse Choice ACO  
patient engagement,  
and we are currently developing plans  
to raise funds through a technology start-up to scale the technology for online access.

Community strategies designed  
in collaboration ***with the community***  
are our best chance at creating win-win health care strategies that benefit us all.

***Third,***  
***we must integrate and partner with systems committed to health equity***

It would be impossible

for Morehouse School of Medicine  
to fulfill its social mission  
without its deep roots in partnerships.  
In order to amplify our aspirations  
we must have partners  
who are as passionate as we are  
and who recognize that investments in people,  
processes,  
and technology  
are required for our mutual success.

These partnerships may include  
health systems,  
companies,  
families,  
advocates,

other health care professionals,  
educators,  
social workers,  
volunteer organizations  
and, yes, the State of Georgia.

We don't have to look far  
to find partners who share our collective vision.  
Partners like Emory University School of Medicine  
stepped in during the early days  
of the Morehouse School of Medicine's transition to a four-year medical school.  
The bonds formed by that early partnership are even stronger now  
as we partner in research  
through our ATCSI grant  
and with my alma mater Georgia Tech.  
We also work side by side  
with Emory at what I believe  
is the best teaching hospital in the world, Grady Memorial Hospital.

For it was at Grady Memorial Hospital,  
as an Emory resident  
that I spent my formative years  
honing my skills in Obstetrics and Gynecology.  
It was through the lives  
of those courageous patients  
that I learned the real meaning of humility.  
It was there that I began to understand  
why my 7th grade teacher, Ms. Betty Davis, made me say the word "humble"  
over and over again  
as I practiced my valedictorian speech,  
until I said it

with humility.

The character of a person is tested when they find themselves vulnerable to a system or a person who can determine a particular outcome in their life.

The humility in which a physician engages with patients can either rob them of their dignity or elevate their spirit of hope.

We also value our relationships with federal agencies like our friends and colleagues at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the Atlanta VA Medical Center.

Our class expansion is predicated on continuing to identify students who are committed to primary care and those critical core specialties that impact the daily lives of the most vulnerable.

However, they must be prepared, and we believe the best way to prepare a workforce is to invest in children.

My life is a clear example of what happens when you invest in a child. The odds were not in my favor: a single-parent household; a high school educated mother

working in a paper factory;  
and siblings all less than three years apart. But the Georgia public school system was my  
lifeline.

I believe it can be that same lifeline  
for many other Georgia children  
who have a curiosity for knowledge.

That's why we want to advance our partnership with  
Georgia public school systems  
to assist in advancing STEAM:  
science, technology, engineering,  
arts, and math.

We want to partner with companies  
like Georgia Power  
and its workforce development programs. Creating the next generation of health care  
professionals  
begins with stimulating a passion  
for learning  
and a hunger for discovery  
in young children.

Some of these kids will become technicians; some will become nurses;  
some will become MSM students  
and some will work at places  
like the Georgia Kraft paper factory..... because we partnered together  
and invested together  
in a shared vision.

For those students  
who come to MSM for medical school  
or residency training,  
we will continue to show the return  
on our state operating grant investment

by the 60 percent of our graduates  
who practice in Georgia  
and the more than 65 percent  
who choose primary care  
or core need specialties.

Thank you to the Governor  
and the Georgia legislature  
for supporting our mission  
through a state operation grant  
that allows us to educate and train professionals  
who are standing and leading  
in the elimination of health care disparities.

***And last,***

***research***

Great research

makes for a great medical institution. Research programs can provide the basis for innovative  
models for teaching

and for community partnerships

that are essential to meeting

the health challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

We all understand that

resources are limited

and medical schools have to focus their research

to closely align with their mission.



Well that is good news for us  
because Morehouse School of Medicine has already seen success  
in our nationally recognized  
neuroscience and cardiovascular research programs.

In the last five years,  
we have concentrated our research  
in four key areas:

*cancer,*  
*cardiovascular disease,*  
*neurological disease*  
*and infectious diseases.*

Why?

Because we know these diseases  
have the highest rates of disparity  
and by making an impact in those areas,  
we can begin leveling health equity  
across the board.

We have to continue  
to produce groundbreaking research combined with innovative improvements  
if we are to make that research translational.

Let me give you two examples  
of the kind of translational research  
we are doing to fight health disparities.

Our National Center for Primary Care research team  
is working with the Amgen Foundation,  
and we have identified some communities that have moved from high-disparity  
to high-equity outcomes  
in breast and colorectal cancer. Specifically,  
we have evaluated breast cancer mortality trends over the past twenty years  
in all counties across the country  
with sufficient numbers  
to create stable rates.

These counties began the 20-year time period with substantial black-white disparities,  
but convergence of the mortality trend lines show outcomes are now  
“optimal and equitable.”

The research shows that disparities  
are not “inevitable,”  
and that in some high-disparity communities,  
we can even see a path  
toward health equity.

Secondly,

our National Center for Primary Care published a research paper in 2010

that really supports the way we are now articulating the balanced mission of Morehouse School of Medicine.

We documented

that most of America's success stories

in health in the last 50 years

did not come just from public health

or just medical care

or even social determinants,

but instead

came from the combined efforts of

research innovation,

public health,

and medical care –

especially primary care

but sub-specialty care as well.

The specifics of the research study are:

- Only 9 conditions with mortality rates high enough to appear on “Leading Causes of Deaths in the U.S.” lists over the past 50 years  
have achieved at least a 50% reduction in mortality

from their peak

from 1950-2000.

- 7 of the 9 conditions required all three elements of the triangulation model – research innovation,  
public health / health promotion,  
and medical care –  
to achieve that success.

The success stories

typically consisted of a research innovation –

for example

the invention of the pap smear--diffused through the dual channels of public health –

for example, promoting screenings for cervical cancer – and then medical care

– for example primary care delivering most Pap smears and specialty care doing the colpo/biopsy and Rx.

- We noted that most often  
the dual channels of public health and medical care worked in parallel,  
but not in partnership,  
which means there's a need for greater integration.
- A cautionary note – unequal diffusion of new lifesaving treatments  
often worsens the disparities between more advantaged and less advantaged  
segments of the population,

as in antiretroviral treatment of HIV, unless we pay attention to equity.

And this is why the world needs  
Morehouse School of Medicine.

**Benjamin Franklin said,**  
**“Justice will not be served**  
**until those who are unaffected**  
**are as outraged as those who are.”**

It is not unconscionable to question costs and quality of care  
in this new health care environment.

Cost is a reasonable qualifier.

But our moral challenge

is to be impassioned enough

to be outraged by the enormous equity gap between the haves  
and the have-nots.

At Morehouse School of Medicine,  
we have always known and believed  
that addressing health needs

is a moral obligation  
because health is essential  
to our existence and to our quality of life. There is no moral ambiguity  
in our responsibility to humanity.

My hope for health care equity in this country  
will not be accomplished by my vision  
and my will alone.

But this great and historic institution  
can be the catalyst that activates  
that vision and will.

Our greatest asset lies in the professionals we train  
whose care and commitment  
illuminate our highest calling.

Knowledge,

Wisdom,

Excellence

and Service

are the tenets that will propel us  
from good to great.

However,

one of the challenges we face  
in moving from good to great  
is the financial realities that exist  
in higher education.

The cost of professional and graduate medical education is high,  
and our students often carry  
extremely significant debt  
upon earning their degrees.

Our profound challenge  
is to raise money  
and increase our endowment  
to provide more scholarships  
for our students.

Granted fundraising is not easy;  
however, I am confident that in order to raise the standard of excellence in fundraising,  
we must provide current and potential investors with opportunities  
to share in our success and our pride—  
as ardent financial supporters

Simple things

such as consistently sharing the stories of our success  
and of challenges,  
and inviting partners to join us.

We have to inform them  
honestly and transparently  
about our circumstances  
and let them know when giving  
can make the difference  
between failure and success.

As you know,  
I have been extremely vocal  
about this inauguration focusing  
on raising money for scholarships  
to support our students  
thereby decreasing the debt they incur  
to attend Morehouse School of Medicine. On average,  
our students come from families  
with household incomes of \$45,000  
when the average medical student  
in this country comes from a family



whose household income is \$175,000.

So we asked hundreds of alumni and friends to join us

in raising \$1.5 million dollars

for the Presidential Scholarship Initiative. Today,

I am proud to announce

that you answered the call.

You stepped up

and we have raised a total of \$2.7 million

in gifts and pledges

to the Presidential Scholarship Initiative.

*You made the difference!*

[Applause]

Maya Angelou once said,

“I would like to be known

as an intelligent woman,

a courageous woman,

a loving woman,

a woman who teaches by being.”

You have my abiding  
and enduring allegiance  
that I am prepared for this  
and will steer this ship  
under my watch with grace.

We are partners in this exciting new venture,  
and I am honored to be at the helm  
as we journey together  
in pursuit of excellence.

THANK YOU