



**Dr. Cynthia (Taylor) Anthony '84**, the first woman to be named president of Lawson State Community College, says Talladega College provided a foundation for both her professional and personal success.

“The College engaged in a holistic approach to student development and growth by providing not only a sound academic experience, but also focusing on the moral and ethical responsibility of leadership,

engagement, and service in a global society,” Dr. Anthony stated. “The faculty and staff were committed and dedicated to student success. This success became an expectation that Talladega students took seriously and embraced as they pursued their chosen paths. The continued mentorship and support of faculty, staff, and administrators over the years has been invaluable.”

“I met my wonderful husband of 36 years, Dennis, at Talladega College. Our two amazing children, Brandon and Jasmyn, are our pride and joy. Talladega College served as the medium for bringing us together and giving us a place to learn and grow as responsible adults. The friendships we made at Talladega will be life-long.”

Dr. Anthony added that the sorors of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. will “forever be a part of who I am.”



In a field noted for its shortage of both female and African-American practitioners, **Ms. Essye B. Miller '85** blazed a vibrant trail as a member of the government’s elite Senior Executive Service and the Principal Deputy, Department of Defense Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO). Her generous contributions to Talladega College include funding a new cybersecurity center, which is now being established on campus.

**McNair Scholar Che’Isha Johnson** has been selected to participate in the National Science Foundation funded



REU (Research Experience for Undergraduates) program at the internationally known Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

“Students from across the nation apply for this program, and only a few are selected each year. This is definitely a prestigious honor, and we’re thrilled that Ms. Johnson was selected to participate,” said Assistant Biology Professor Dr. Andrew Coleman.

Che’Isha, a sophomore majoring in biology, will spend the summer researching sea life. Before applying for the research opportunity, she visited Dauphin Island with the McNair program.

“I saw how they conduct research, and I was inspired. Many people are interested in space, but don’t really think about what’s happening in the oceans. We need to think about the impact of pollution on animals and investigate how we can protect and heal sea animals,” said Che’Isha.

Che’Isha is a Provost Scholarship recipient, a member of the Pre-Med Honor Society, and vice president of the Talladega College colony of Gamma Sigma Sigma.



**Deion Sanders '20**, who earned his degree through Talladega's FastTrack program, posted a photo of himself with Talladega College President Dr. Billy C. Hawkins on Instagram after the recent Jackson State University vs. Southern game. Sanders invited Dr. Hawkins to the game, which was televised on ESPN.



Alumnus **Seddrick T. Hill Sr. '06** has been named city manager for Talladega, Alabama. The city council voted unanimously for Mr. Hill, who previously served as executive director for the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) Office of Institutional Advancement. Prior to joining AIDB, he served as vice president for institutional advancement at Talladega College.



Mass Media Studies Chair **Dr. Luis Almeida** was appointed center affiliate at the Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions. Dr. Almeida's work has been published in *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, *Educational Horizons*, *International Journal of Education Reform*, and *Praeger Handbook of Latino Education in the United States*.

### **REIGNING DURING A PANDEMIC**

Miss Talladega College 2020-2021 **Patria Gatson** decided early in her reign not to let the Covid-19 pandemic limit her impact. Patria, who also serves as Miss National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame 2020-2021, has spoken passionately about mental health, creativity, and success at countless virtual meetings and events. She has been highlighted in magazines and newspapers and interviewed on television and radio. Her inspiring messages have encouraged and motivated students at Talladega and other Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) during these uncertain times.

"People thank me for inspiring them and praise me for my effort. It's very fulfilling to know that I'm making a difference," said Patria, who graduates in May 2021.

Patria was recently inducted into Beta Beta Beta (Tri Beta) Honor Society. She was also selected for membership in Omicron Delta Kappa, a premier national leadership honor society. In addition, she is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

This hard-working biology major has excelled academically, represented impeccably, and successfully juggled a plethora of leadership responsibilities despite the pandemic.





Study.com has published its 2021 rankings, and Talladega College has been ranked #14 on its prestigious Best Bachelor of Criminal Justice Degrees listing. Criminal Justice majors are pictured above at a pre-pandemic National HBCU Pre-Law Summit.

Talladega is ranked #2 among the Best Liberal Arts Colleges in Alabama by Plexuss Global Rankings, which also ranked Talladega #3 in their Best Historically Black College or University in Alabama category. Talladega is also listed among the PR News 2021 Education A-List Top 35 institutions for advancing careers in public relations and communication, and Princeton Review's "Best Southeastern Colleges."

Talladega earned rankings in three categories of the 2021 *U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges Guide* - National Liberal Arts Colleges, Historically Black Colleges (HBCUs), and Top Performers on Social Mobility.



Talladega College senior **Brandi Hennington**, a public administration major, recently volunteered at Grace Klein Community, a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization in Hoover, Alabama. Brandi, who is pictured in her Dega Pride t-shirt, worked with other volunteers to distribute food to those in need at one of the organization's drive through sites.

Students, faculty, and staff participated in a virtual meeting with **billionaire entrepreneur Mark Cuban**. Mr. Cuban, the owner of the Dallas Mavericks, is a media proprietor and the primary investor on the ABC reality television series Shark Tank.



**MARK CUBAN**

Mr. Cuban talked about experiences that shaped his life and urged prospective entrepreneurs to select businesses that "leverage your unique skill sets." He also stated, "You've got to put in the effort. You've got to be able to prepare."

During this informative program, Mr. Cuban gave general success tips as well as specific and detailed advice for students seeking help building their businesses.

Mass Media Studies Chair Dr. Luis Almeida, who arranged the event, served as the moderator. Senior Kamari McHenry read questions from students, and Talladega College President Dr. Billy C. Hawkins talked to Mr. Cuban about Talladega's mission and history, the Amistad Murals, and the recent transformation of the institution.



**Linda Nooner**, a junior majoring in public administration, was a panelist on *The Dream Team*, a virtual event coordinated by Umoja.

Linda joined Umoja while attending a community college in California.

"It changed my life," said Linda, who now serves as an Umoja mentor. "Umoja is Swahili for unity. The program helps students with diverse needs, including supplies. Umoja also takes students on HBCU tours, and assists homeless students."

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**Dr. Kristie L. Kenney**, Talladega College's vice president for institutional advancement, has been selected to participate in the Millennium Leadership Initiative (MLI). A new class of 32 exemplary, senior-level higher education professionals will participate in the 2021 MLI, a premier leadership development program of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU).

"I commend Dr. Kenney for being one of only 32 higher education professionals in the nation selected to participate in the 2021 Millennium Leadership Initiative," said Talladega College President Dr. Billy C. Hawkins, who was a member of the 2000 MLI. "Having completed MLI, I understand and appreciate the value and lasting impact that this program can have on a participant's life."

In 2020, AASCU restructured MLI in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 institute will feature virtual programming—four meetings a month from March 17 to May 26. Additionally, it includes a tentative, in-person meeting in the fall. Protégés will also have a yearlong mentorship with an experienced president or chancellor and four months of professional coaching from a retired president or chancellor.



Employee Appreciation Day was Dega Fun! Talladega College President Dr. Billy C. Hawkins presented gifts to every employee, and long-time employees Ms. Brenda Rhoden, Ms. Brenda Seals, Ms. Debra Simmons, Ms. Jeannette Davis, and Ms. Juanita Garrett received flowers in recognition of their many years of dedicated service to Talladega. Ms. Davis, pictured above, has been with Talladega for 48 years.

Dr. Hawkins, who also received a gift, donated his to a scholarship fund in his mother's name.



The pandemic makes it difficult for prospective students to visit and compare colleges. Fortunately, Talladega's new website features six informative virtual tours. Check out tours on the [website](#) or on Facebook: [Miss Talladega College 2020-2021 Patria Gatson](#), [2020-2021 SGA President Jamal Hairston](#), [Ashton Hall](#), [Riley Hawkins](#), [Christian McKinney](#), and [International Admissions Counselor Carla Novaes-Reddick](#).

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### **FIRST FEMALE CHIEF**

Talladega College recently named **Shajuana L. Dennard** its new Chief/Director of Campus Police.

“Chief Dennard is the first female to ever hold this position at Talladega College, and she is one of only a handful of females in our nation to rise to this level,” said Talladega College President Dr. Billy C. Hawkins. “She earned this position because of her exceptional knowledge, training, experience, and skills.”

Chief Dennard worked for the Birmingham Police Department (BPD) for approximately 4 years. During her tenure with BPD, she interfaced with the Birmingham Narcotics Unit and Alabama ABC Board to reduce illegal alcohol and drug sales. She later joined a joint task force which allowed her to work with federal agents, including U.S. Marshals, ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives), and DEA (United States Drug Enforcement Administration).



### **NASA SCIENTIST**

**Dr. Alvin Smith '01**, manager of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (NASA JPL) Planetary Protection Center of Excellence and Backward Planetary Protection Lead for Mars Sample Return, credits Talladega College for providing the foundation that helped him excel in science.

“Talladega College really shaped my first understanding of the scientist, individually and collectively, that I wanted to become. The sense of family and community fostered a sense of belonging you rarely find these days, rooted in historical black excellence,” Dr. Smith stated. “It was this TC community that made the first investment, through scholarships and didactic scientific education, that truly launched my ambitions to the stars.”

Dr. Smith joined JPL after spending over 16 years in consulting as a biodefense subject matter expert (SME) and researcher in high containment labs. He holds a B.S. in biology from Talladega College and a Ph.D. in microbiology from Howard University.



### **AWARD-WINNING SCIENTIST**

Chemistry Department Chair/Assistant Professor **Dr. Pamela Brady** has been named one of the 1,000 Inspiring Black Scientists in America. This prestigious list, compiled by *Cell Mentor*, highlights the important contributions that Black scientists make to the scientific community.

Dr. Brady earned her bachelor’s in chemistry/pre-med with minors in both mathematics and Spanish at Winston-Salem State University in 2008. She completed her doctoral degree in analytical chemistry at Louisiana State University in 2015.

She also completed a National Institutes of Health funded Institutional Research and Academic Career Development Awards (IRACDA) postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Her work at UAB involved investigating the structure function relationship of coronaviral proteins using multidimensional NMR spectroscopy. She also gained valuable teaching experience and earned Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL) certifications.

The **Detroit Talladega College Club (DTCC)** sponsored a virtual Black History Month fundraiser featuring “Amistad,” the 1997 Academy Award nominated film directed by Steven Spielberg. The event was moderated by Pulitzer Prize winner Rochelle Riley and award-winning author and poet Nikky Finney ’79. Participants included: Co-Founder President/CEO of The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum Dr. Joanne Martin; High Museum of Art curator Stephanie Heydt; retired judge Houston Brown ’65; DTCC President Dr. Eugene L. Cain ’65; retired attorney J. Mason Davis ’56; Chief Curator of the National Museum of African American History and Culture Dr. Jacquelyn Serwer; performer Tammy Denease; and Talladega College senior James Yeager.

Pre and post movie discussions focused on the conditions of the African captives on the Amistad, the trial, and facts and omissions not covered in the film. In addition, the program included an artistic presentation and panel discussions regarding the renowned Amistad Murals.

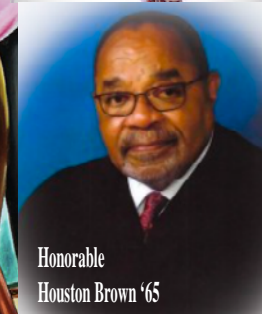
For more information, contact event co-chair, attorney Cynthia Ross, at [degadetroit@comcast.net](mailto:degadetroit@comcast.net). Make a donation to support Talladega College students from the Detroit area at <http://bit.ly/amistaddonate>.



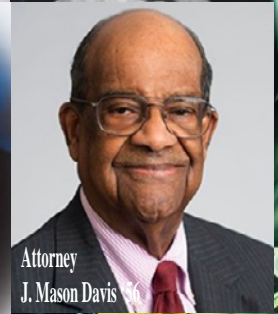
DTCC President  
Dr. Eugene Cain '65



Poet Nikky Finney '79



Honorable  
Houston Brown '65



Attorney  
J. Mason Davis '56

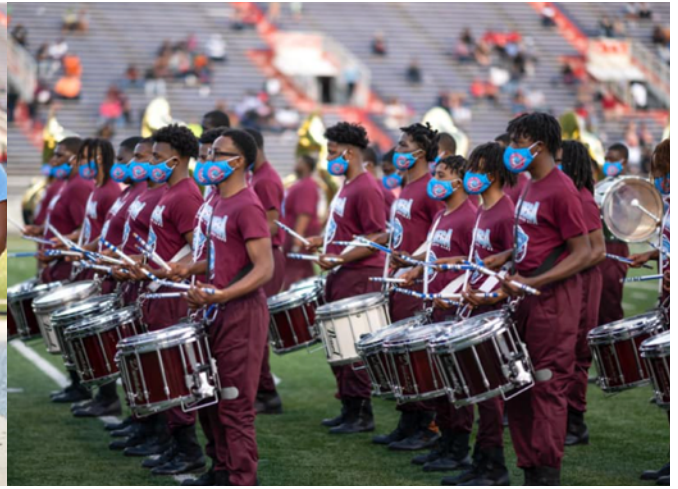


### 2021 STUDENT APPRECIATION CONCERT

Talladega College President Dr. Billy C. Hawkins and Student Government Association (SGA) President Jamal Hairston were photographed with performer Lil' Boosie at the 2021 Student Appreciation Concert.

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Talladega College's Great Tornado Band and the Dega Diamonds delivered a phenomenal halftime performance at the Gulf Coast Challenge. The acclaimed band has received shoutouts from Janet Jackson and other notable entertainers, and performed in a video with Max Schneider (MAX).



### ADVANCE YOUR CAREER

In 2020, Erica McDaniels, Vikki Curry, Tracey Elimimian, and Amber Williams made history by being the first students to complete a master's degree at Talladega College.

If you would like to advance your career in as few as 18 months, consider earning a 100% online master of science in computer information systems (MSCIS) with concentrations in cybersecurity or health informatics. The program's curriculum is convenient, flexible, and affordable. For more information, contact Ms. Debra Simmons at 256-761-6216 or the Registrar's Office at 256-761-6253.

**The Talladega College Women's Basketball team had the most wins in the Gulf Coast Athletic Conference for two consecutive years. The Men's Basketball team won the regular season championship and went undefeated in conference.**



Submit story suggestions to:  
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