Black Student Leaders

UofSC Black Honors Caucus 2020-2021 (from left to right): Naomi Kemp, Savannah Simon, Uriah Chapman (back center), Rachel Smith (front center), Darren Burton, Christal Harvin

The value that the University of South Carolina places on student leadership can be seen in the extensive selection of student organizations. Since the University's desegregation in 1963, Black students have engaged in student leadership through earning positions in existing organizations, such as student Government, and developing new student groups. The Afro-American Students Association, now known as the Association of African American Students (AAAS), was the first of these new organizations, but it certainly wasn't the last. The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs highlights numerous other Black student organizations, including the Black Honors Caucus (featured), the Black Medical Student Association, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, and the National Association of Black Journalists.

Harry Walker ('72) and Luther Battiste ('71) were some of the university's first Black student leaders and founding members of AAAS. Walker served as the president of AAAS. Battiste co-authored the proposal for the African American Studies Program in 1969. Additionally, Battiste encouraged Walker to run for student body president. Under Battiste's campaign management, Walker went on to be the first Black student body president in 1971.

Since then, there have been countless Black student leaders. Jotaka Eaddy ('01) served as the first Black female student body president. Hannah White, a current UofSC student, recently served as the student body vice president and a University Ambassador. In her time on campus, Hannah also developed the initial tour of the African American Experience at the University.

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Harry Walker

Black President chosen

By JERRY CALABRESE
Features Editor

Skeptics at USC have long said that it would be a snowy day in Carolina spring before we had a Black Student Body president.

The skeptics were almost right; only the order of events was wrong. First, South Carolina got Harry Walker, its first Black SGA president and then a snowy spring day.

Walker made his acceptance speech only hours before the sloppy white began to cover campaign picture posters of the black president-elect.

In a campaign that did not make as big an issue of race as was expected, Walker ran on a platform of SGA reform and apparently managed to pull off his campaign slogan of "Let's all get together."

Walker won in a landslide, defeating his nearest opponent Joe Usry 2,068 to 807. Walker's margin was more than twice the number of votes Usry received and Walker outpolled all other candidates combined, 2,068 to 1745.

The final breakdown of the presidential race was:

Walker - 2,068
Usry - 807
Smith, Steve - 715
Smith, Jennine - 223

A total of 3,920 students voted this year, an increase of 1790 votes over last spring.

In the vice presidential race, a run off election between Julianne Still and Oliver Washington will be held today. Still outpolled Washington 1542 to 1242, but failed to secure the needed margin for a clear cut victory.

In addition to Still and Washington, Philip Flynn received 571 votes to Mike Tkacik's 174.

In the Secretarial race, Kathy Jennings outdistanced Marsha Mottel 2,403 to 1,092. Jennings ran on a platform of free bananas and clown suits and apparently made a monkey out of her critics.

The race for treasurer ended in a run off between John Blackshire and David Yarborough. Blackshire received 1249 votes to Yarborough's 1190. Ora Smith, another of the three Black candidates for major SGA offices finished third with 954.

In a statement to the Gamecock last night Ora Smith, defeated candidate for Treasurer, endorsed David Yarborough in today's runoff election. Miss Smith trailed the other two candidates, Yarborough and John Blackshire, in Wednesday's voting.

Miss Smith also thanked all of her supporters and workers for their help in the campaign.

President elect Harry Walker

Spears calls election 'novel'

Mike Spears, outgoing president of student government, said yesterday that Harry Walker may be "one of the best president student government ever had."

"It's novel to be succeeded by a black," Spears said. "I know that Harry is a strong, individual person, and he's going to need every bit of that strength in the upcoming year.

"He is terribly inexperienced as far as student government goes, but he has the determination to stick it out."

Spears said that Walker's ability, knowledge and poise "will be the things people notice—not the fact that he is black.

"He must prove that he is president of all the students, not just the black students' candidate. People are going to be watching him."

Spears also said that he thinks that the Board of Trustees would be "tremendously fair" in working with Walker.

"They never impressed me as being terribly racist," he added.

Runoffs: V.P. and Treasurer

Two major offices decided today

Julianne Still, candidate for the vice presidency of the Student Government, said yesterday that "The only thing that Harry Walker lacks is experience," and that "my strong point is experience and knowledge of the University structure."

The treasurer of the student body said that the students knew that Walker was a strong candidate and that she said that there would be little "white backlash."

Miss Still said that the student body was very apathetic about the elections.

Oliver Washington said yesterday that he thought he was more qualified to serve as vice-president because he can "work with Harry and get things done."

Washington said Walker's election made a new approach to campaigning for the run-off elections today.

"We must look into the viewpoint of experience. I have worked with the student senate and I can help Harry work with the student senate better. This is not from the standpoint of race; rather, from the standpoint of workability. It is essential that he have someone to work between him and the administration. We have to get all systems working together."

Washington said that his experience with student senate, the presidential cabinet and the South Carolina State Student Legislature would qualify him "to work as a liasion between Harry and the student government."

"This is the beginning of new politics—new awareness in Carolina politics. It will affect the students and the state and create student involvement."

David Yarborough is running 59 votes behind John Blackshire in the race for student body treasurer.

"I want to continue the work I've done in the senate to give students more control of all aspects of their life at the University," he said.

"I have concrete ideas about how to solve Student Government's financial problems. There was not a good working relationship between Student Governemtn and Student Affairs. The system which forced the budget problems has been alleviated by legislation which I helped draft and which was passed by the Student Senate last night.

"If this new plan is implemented, it should solve Student Government's budget problems. It gives students complete control of student activity fees."

Yarborough said that accurate and up to date books had "never been kept well in the past. I will make sure that Student Government spending will be done according to the budget. The student body will be kept informed about Student Government spending.

"I will make sure that the students' money which is spent by Student Government will be spent for the student's benefit."

John Blackshire, in the run-off election for treasurer, said yesterday that his job, if elected, would be to "keep student senate straight inside."

Blackshire said that students government is "in the hole by $3000" and that it might be necessary to make up the deficit by taking that amount out of next year's activity fees.

He said that he would establish books for student government if elected in order to handle the $32,000 which SGA receives.

"I would also like to work on the student discounts—to standardize them. I am working on something else which I will push even if I am not elected—insurance for personal property in dorm rooms."

Blackshire said that the set price would be $8.70 per year and would cover damages to personal property up to $1500.

Jennings elected SGA secretary

Kathy Jennings, newly elected secretary of the student government, said yesterday that she hopes she can work "extremely well" with Harry Walker.

Miss Jennings said that she planned to print a column in the Gamecock explaining committees, actions and policies of the student senate.

"The appointment of a senate clerk will take many burdens off the secretary," she said. "The secretary's job is not just a clerical position. I can work well with administrators because I know a lot of them."

She said that one of the improvement she hopes to make will be a notebook of bills, calendar, constitution and other information to aid in the more efficient working of the senate."

What I really want to do is prevent all this waste of time in student senate work," she said.

Miss Jennings commented on Harry Walker's electing by saying student government and Walker really have to work together."

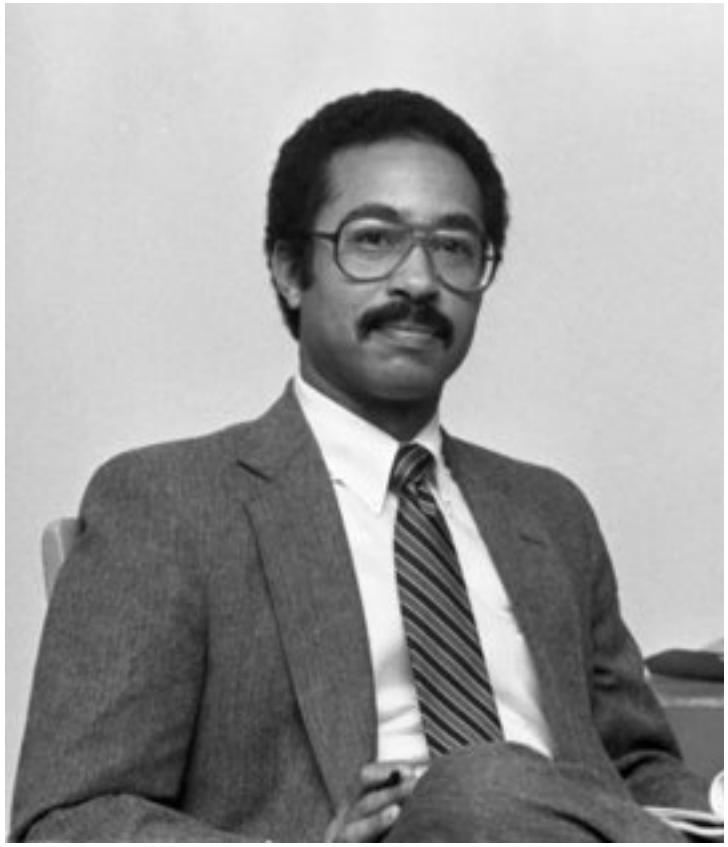
The people of the state will be looking to us. It's a radical change."

She expressed her gratitude to all her "friends" who helped in her campaign.

Walker acknowledges win

The March 26, 1971, issue of *The Gamecock* explains the triumph Walker and his campaign managed in the student body presidential election.

Hannah White served as the first African American female student body vice president in 15 years on the first all-female ticket elected in UofSC history.



Luther Battiste is a founding shareholder of Johnson, Toal, and Battiste PA and one of the first African Americans on Columbia City Council since Reconstruction.

Jotaka Eaddy ('01) is the founder and CEO of Full Circle Strategies, a social impact consulting firm. *Fortune* even dubbed her the "Olivia Pope of Silicon Valley."

Sources & Additional Information

Sources

- Photo 1 - Black Honors Caucus
- Photo 2 - Photo credit: Hannah White
- Photo 3 - Jotaka Eaddy
- Photo 4 - The Gamecock, March 26, 1971
- Photo 5 - Luther Battiste (Copyright © The State Media Company. All rights reserved. For more information, contact the Walker Local and Family History Center at Richland Library, Columbia, S.C. 29201. Permission not sought/received).

Additional Information

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