

Transcript for the interview, 2018-09-27, between J. L. Carter Sr. and Dr. Andrew Hugine, President of Alabama A&M University

J. L. Carter Sr.: HBCU digest radio, I am your host Jerry Carter. We are privileged to be joined today for our presidential series by Dr. Andrew Hugine; he is the president of Alabama A&M University. Um.. and has a unique role...um in today's HBCU sector, not only as a land grant institution, not only as one of um... as Alabama's great public institutions, but as something that we can now call the million-dollar-man, a recent extension for Dr. Hugine. First, can you talk about um...having that kind of support um...from your board of ... your board of regions or trustees and talk about what it means to you to have that () power to be honored for your work this way.

Dr. Andrew Hugine: Well certainly, thank you so very much, Mr. Carter, for the opportunity. I am very very fortunate here that I have a board, and it's important at the end of the day that the board and the administration and the president have a common agenda and a common vision, and to work toward that common goal and common vision. And so I've been fortunate to have such a board here at Alabama A&M University. We've had changes on our board, changes in the sense that we've had members now, I think, only one of them or perhaps none of them were actually on the board when I was first selected for this position. But, as they've come on each of them have bought into that, and worked collectively to advance the institution. I'm fortunate I'm on my third extension, um.. and so...um I think we have developed the kind of working relationship and partnership that will continue to move this university forward. And if you look at what we've been able to accomplish..um i think it has been...it has been very very significant, and so the board wanted to send a clear message that..um... they appreciate...um... the leadership. They appreciate the work that we've done here, and they thought one way of sending that to the world would be to add a clause, which is unique. I don't think that the clause exist exist in any other HBCU president's contract, but the clause just indicates that () institution is () of my services...um... then they would need to pay a million dollars to Alabama A&M University in order to have that... have me relinquished from the contract. So, the intent was to send a message that we're pleased that of the direction that we are going. We have confidence in the leadership, and so that, of course, is very important. But, the other thing that is important, is that the president has to have a team, and the team of individuals that is committed to moving in the same direction with the same vision. And, I've been fortunate to have such a team. And, so not only does it send a signal to everyone else, but to the team to say 'we have confidence in

your president, and we want him to stay around a little longer', and so it signals to them that they too have an opportunity to continue to be a part of, what I consider to be, the most dynamic team that you will find any place in HBCU higher education.

JC: I was going to say, most HBCUs would love to have a million dollars up front. Obviously, this is not one way that Alabama A&M wants to get it, by seeing you go. And, there is a good reason for that because you guys have set records with fundraising, enrollment is on the increase, you've done exceptional things out of the School of Engineering in particular, agriculture, talk about some of those gains that you guys have made in recent years. And what's been the approach to be able to have those successes across the academic the () and even the program development spectrum of the university.

AH: Let me begin with enrollment because, and the end of the day, that's what drives everything that we do. We've been fairly successful, we've had six consecutive years of enrollment increases. This year, we've have been shy of two percent of our one point seven percent increase in enrollment, but we welcomed our second largest freshman class in the history of the institution. We have made the matter of recruitment of students an institution wide commitment, so that it does not just rest with the admissions office. One of the successful ventures that we have is that we do what's called the 'Presidential Engagement and Scholarship Recognition Tour', for short we call it the 'Presidential Bus Tour". We began at the lower end of our state, in Mobile, and we work our way back to Huntsville. We are on the bus for a week, think of campaigning if you would. And, so we start in Mobile and we hit three or four schools there. We have schools that come together, they cluster, so when it's all said and done we have touched about fifty high schools. And we go into those schools and we share a message to the young people there about Alabama A&M University. A message about the need for education, and then we recognize those students that have gained scholarships to attend the university and present those scholarships to them in that forum. It has made a tremendous difference, we think, in driving this enrollment number. So, we get on the bus and we do that enrollment piece, and we carry with us, obviously, your best recruiters of students. And, so we have our SGA leadership, we have our queen, we have our ambassadors, we have faculty, we have Deans, and of course the First Lady joins us. And we spend a week on the bus going through Alabama, spreading the message about Alabama A&M University. So, there are other tours, but I'm not sure that they are...if they are structured in this way, and if they are as intense as this one. So, we think that has... that has put a lot of focus on it. In addition to that we have done a lot of

marketing of the university. Our tagline is 'Start Here Go Anywhere', and so throughout the state we have these billboards, and we try to personalize the billboard for the area. So, we use our students on the billboard, and if we have a billboard, for example, in Mobile, we'll have students on that billboard from Mobile. So, we have identified the strategic of unities that we want to focus on to recruit additional students. And then we have ads that we run, as well, and, so we think the combination of getting everyone involved with recruitment, the 'Presidential Engagement and Scholarship Recognition Tour', the billboards that we do, the marketing that we do helps. And then we have excellent programs at the university. You mentioned our STEM area. We received and we are so appreciative for the recognition we received from HBCU digest as having the best STEM programs. Little known fact is that it was in the state of Alabama...we enroll and graduate the highest number of minority STEM majors in the state. And that says a lot when you think about the fact that we only have six thousand sixty one hundred students, and there are other institutions that have four and five times the number that we have, but we are able to be the largest producer of minority STEM majors in the state. So, that's a strong discipline for us. But, we also probably call it STEAM, where you add in agriculture, because that's our focus there as an eighteen ninety land grant institution. We have some very unique programs there, programs, for example, in food science, and packaging and etc., that um...or cutting edge degree programs..um that focus on agriculture. So, those are some of the programs, for us, that we have. Our Deans and our faculty continue to excel in those areas and produce quality students that employers are certainly looking for. So, with the efforts...the recruitment efforts, plus the degree programs, and the marketing, I think it's done a lot to focus on the enrollment piece. Now, tied into that, as the institution has continued to grow, there's been a need to do more in the fundraising area. So, we initiated our first capital campaign, we started with a modest goal of sixteen million dollars; and we've never done one before, so we didn't want to come out with a number that would be impossible to reach. But, it was so successful, and again you have to look at the people that we have in good marketing advancement areas, and they did wonderful job in advancing this. And we...at the end we were not at sixteen million, but we were at twenty seven million, so we changed the goal twice and decided that we would end it at twenty seven million. So, that was a wonderful goal and a wonderful accomplishment for the first ever capital campaign in the history of the institution. So, that piece was a plus, so we had good enrollment increases; we've had great fundraising. Relative to our budget, we have all of the indicatives that show that we've got a good budgeting process. One of the things that they look at is your...your debt ratio to see whether or not you are...have adequate resources to do that and there is a norm that is recommended, and we

have exceeded that norm each year. And so, () we are very strong in that regard. Faculty and others continue to do great work with research...um...I think it's been two or three years ago we were recognized by APLU for significant research...um...scholarships and expenditures as well. And so, it's an () place. The other is our new residence hall that we're just excited about. It's got all the latest bells and whistles; it houses five hundred eighty students, and we actually involved the students in much of the planning of that residence hall, and so we took full occupancy of that in the fall of the year. And so, that's a little recap of the enrollment, the fundraising, the research as we see it now.

JC: And in the last question (and I don't want to sound offensive when I say this, and I hope you don't take it that way) one of the things about you personally and professionally (and I think Alabama A&M has kind've reflected this) is you're not...you're not the brother that's gonna go to HBCU weekend, and start yelling at...yelling at people in the meetings. Um...you're not gonna go to APLU or farm bill meetings, and all that, and do the same. You've kind've had quiet success. Is that intentional? Would you say that's your personality? Or would you say that...that is kind've the...kind've the...the way that the institution and you just happen to () and do your work and do it well?

AH: I think it's the latter. Um...It's the way the institution functions, and it's a bit of my personality as well. Um...and I think the people around me have kind've taken on that same philosophy. I believe that you do your work, you do your job; I don't think you...you have to constantly do things to bring attention to what you're doing. Your work speaks for itself. Um...the accomplishments we've had at the university speaks for itself. The...the one thing that I always want to commit to try to do is to be sure that whenever that time comes that I leave this university... that this university is in a better condition than it was when I came here. That's my ultimate goal that when I leave Alabama A&M University... it will be a better place providing greater opportunities for young people. But at the end of the day we all understand the importance of education, and how education has been transformational for us. And so, we just want to be sure that...that's what we're about, and let the work speak for itself. And so, we like to be that quiet storm that individuals may not realize it's there, but one day you look up and 'hmm...ok so, that's what's going on there at Alabama A&M'.