



## **Brandon Bellamy, North Carolina A & T State University- c/o 2008, Liberal Studies**



**Name :** Brandon Bellamy

**Your HBCU :** North Carolina A & T State University

**Graduation Year :** 2008

**Major :** Liberal Studies

### **1. Where are you from? Who introduced you to HBCUs?\***

I am originally from Greensboro, North Carolina and grew up literally on A&T's campus while my mother and father worked on post-graduate education opportunities. I completed high school and now call home in the Washington, DC metropolitan region. My first experience with an HBCU was North Carolina A&T. My mother was completing graduate coursework when I was born and I have been part of the Aggie family ever since. Additionally, my paternal grandparents both attended Johnson C. Smith University, numerous aunts, uncles and other family members attending HBCUs including Winston Salem State, North Carolina Central, Howard University, etc. My worldview was shaped by the fact that my family were very involved with their alma maters and supported nearly all HBCUs when they had an opportunity.



Mr. Bellamy (far right) attending a function in Washington, DC - Photo Credit: Brandon Bellamy

### **2. Why did you choose an HBCU over a pwi?\***

I went to high school in Fairfax County, Virginia and in many cases I was the only African American male in many of my honors and AP classes. Knowing that all of my family had attended HBCUs I knew to consider them, but I had to be realistic about some of my other opportunities. My choice to attend an HBCU over a PWI was made purely on personal preference, I was ready to go "home." I decided to go with my first choice, North Carolina A&T simply because I was ready to go home. I had applied to North Carolina A&T, Norfolk State University, Virginia State and Hampton University. I was accepted at all three institutions, and I received very generous scholarship offers from Norfolk State and Virginia State. However, those institutions did not connect with me, or rather; I did not want those institutions to connect with me. Having spent time away from A&T, I felt it was time for me to go back and blaze my own trail in Aggieland.

### **3. What is the story of your "experience" at Your HBCU given its heralded status as a stellar and prestigious institution?\***

I walked on campus knowing that there were many people who would tell me that "I knew you before you knew yourself." Those figures were great to have when things got tough, but at the same time caused some internal conflict about my own journey. Nevertheless, the old adage that your college experience is what you make of it rings true. This question could have me going on

for a long time, but I want to center on two things – hard work and respecting our legacy. I came on campus and blazed my own trail getting involved in my original major in the School of Technology with the National Association for Industrial Technology (NAIT) and became an intern with the Student Government Association. In my freshman year, I traveled to my first national conference, worked closely with executive board members and even became a member of an advisory committee for the Dean of Students. My goal was to get involved in areas that I felt comfortable with such as student leadership and work hard. That hard work opened various doors for me such as becoming a McNair Scholar, sitting on numerous university committees and now as an alumnus cultivating relationships that allow me to continue to support our institution internationally. We talk significantly about our civil rights legacy at A&T, I grew up knowing many of the unsung heroes of the movement whether through family connections or even my home church, Saint James Presbyterian. We were taught that we are standing on the shoulders of giants and that the work that we do will affect those who come after us. While involved in student government it became important to look at the longer-term picture, advocating on behalf of students to join the Higher Education Area Transit authority, to supporting efforts to help students displaced by Katrina adjust to AggieLand, I believed that hard work and a lot of fun would go a long way.

#### **4. "First time" experiences at your HBCU?\***

N/A

#### **5. Who are the professors that have impacted your life in and out of the classroom? How did they do that?\***

It is hard to single out a few professors who left very large impressions upon me because each of them did in their own special way, even faculty who I never completed coursework with. However, Dr. Terrolyn Carter, Dr. Samuel Moseley and Dr. Peter Myers all played varying roles in how I view my time at A&T and how I view the world today. My coursework with these three professors worked to strengthen me as a critical thinker, pushing past my own capabilities to become a person. I thoroughly enjoyed that these faculty members made sure that their classrooms were inclusive learning environments where we are able to challenge our existing assumptions and pursue concepts that we were interested in as it related to the coursework and our academic interests.



2006-2007 SGA Executive Board (Moody Administration - 11 Backs Against the Wall) - Photo Credit: Brandon Bellamy

#### **6. What sports and/or extra curricular activities did you do in High School? And why?**

No sports, just band. In fact, there is a varsity letter for my tenure in the marching band at Falls Church High School where I was drum major in 2003-04. Additionally, I was involved in Student Government, the county-wide Student Advisory Council, Legacy club, yearbook and a number of other groups.

### **7. Best restaurants on/near campus? Best dishes?**

Being from Greensboro, I would enjoy to get off campus and visit places such as Libby Hill, Stameys BBQ and Yum Yums Hot Dogs and Ice Cream. My friends would always look at me strange when I would suggest odd places to go eat, especially in Northwest Greensboro where I grew up at. However, Minj Grille before they relocated back to Durham was my favorite spot near campus (2005-2008). Great specials, the majority of the staff were Aggies and we always had a blast when we went to Minj... especially during the summer of 2007.

### **8. College crush?**

That is between me and her. However, I did enjoy my time at A&T and met some very incredible people, many of which I am still in contact with.

### **9. Ghost stories involving buildings or spots on campus?**

None that I know if, but we can get one started...

### **10. What is your major? and Why did you choose it?**

I graduated summa cum laude in Liberal Studies, concentration in culture change and social development. I chose the major because my heart was not in my original major, Electronics & Computer Technology. I knew Dean Elazer Barnette from years ago and he encouraged me to consider exploring my technical side. I enjoyed computers and was knowledgeable, but the major never fit me. Liberal Studies gave me a great opportunity to choose an interdisciplinary major, prepare me for graduate school and even conduct some award winning research. Additionally, Liberal Studies gave me an opportunity to graduate on time and even use credits earned from my research experiences at the University of Illinois.

### **11. What to date has been your proudest moment @ Your HBCU?**

The obvious answer is graduating with highest honors and walking across the stage having a personal relationship built with nearly every senior level administrator, many of the trustees and faculty on the dias. As I go through the different highlights, one strange one stands out as a shining star. Losing my electing for SGA President is my proudest moment while at A&T. Contrary to popular belief, the loss of the election allowed me to tackle issues that I would have been hindered from attempting while in office, along with focusing on graduate school preparation. During my senior year, instead of being SGA President, I was able to work on a senior research project that opened my eyes to the implications of state-level policies on the perceptions of our institution by our alumni. I also was able to take a few 500-level advanced undergraduate - graduate courses that gave me exposure and preparation for my graduate program.

### **12. Where are the spots to go to if you wanted to cuddle with your boy or girlfriend?**

I will defer this question to some of my other Aggie Alumni to answer. Just be clear, there are definite spots to enjoy the company of your significant other.

### **13. What are the chants heard most often at the sporting events?**

There is never an inappropriate time to say Aggie Pride...ever. Just make sure you choose the correct tone and inflection. However, I have grown fond of one of the newer chants "A-G-G-I-E (what?) P-R-I-D-E (what?) Gimme' dat, Gimme' dat!" (Video below uploaded by Thomas L. Jones, Jr.)

### **14. How are you positively active on campus? (e.g. clubs, SGA, etc.)**

Student Government played a key role in my time on campus from 2004 to 2008. I first started off as an intern in the Williams Administration in 2004-05. I chaired the Finance Committee of the 38th Legislative Assembly during the Ramey Administration during 2005-06. During 2006-07, I had the pleasure of serving as the Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer for the Student Government Association during the Moody Administration. Our president Arnita Floyd Moody (now Morris), gave me significant leeway in crafting the association's budget, working with the senior administrators to secure additional funding and shaping my work ethic as a details oriented technocrat. One of my additional assignments was to serve as the liaison to the freshman class executive board. In addition to student government, I was involved with the honors program and nearly all of its affiliated honor societies holding elected office in Alpha Lambda Delta (Editor) during 2005-06 and Phi Kappa Phi (Student Vice President) in 2007-08. Additionally, I was a Campus Life Mentor, Ronald E. McNair scholar and served on a number of prominent committees including A&T Register Advisory, Food Service Advisory, University Tuition and Fees and the Student Activity Fee Allocation Committees. My activities on campus have directly impacted my activities post-graduation. For example while in graduate school, I found myself involved with Phi Kappa Phi at Iowa State University in addition to groups such as the Graduate and Professional Student Senate and the Black Graduate Student Association. Furthermore, since returning to the DC Metro area, I have gotten involved with the Washington, DC chapter of the A&T Alumni Association and also the Young Alumni Council (Twitter) where we are keenly aware that the association has to prepare for the needs of a millennial alumnus.

### **15. Where is the "yard" located?**

Generally speaking it was just the whole campus. If I was on the yard and not in class, people knew to find me either in the Student Union or over near Murphy Hall.

### **16. What and where are the historical places on campus?**

Campus itself is a historical monument into itself dating back to the city of Greensboro's bid to have the then A&M College for the Negro race located in Greensboro in the mid-1890s. However, I specifically think about old Scott Hall where in 1969 where the National Guard was called to squash a rebellion stemming from a disputed student government election at nearby Dudley High School. Scott Hall was also where the start of the sit-in movement began and was the home to start of many other social and civil moments on campus and throughout the country.

### **17. What to date has been your saddest moment at your HBCU?**

Personally, getting the letter from Dr. Meyers saying that I had earned an "Honors Vacation" for my gpa going below a 3.5 for two consecutive semesters. In high school, I was never part of the National Honors Society. I was a great student, well-rounded but I just never made the cut for them. When I was invited to join Honors, that upped the game for me and made me work even harder. Getting an honors vacation started a nearly year and a half journey to get back into the program that ultimately succeeded. However, after I graduated what struck me very close to home was the loss of Dennis Hayle. I had seen Dennis before I left for Iowa State and we talked about his future plans. I had even sent back to him information about graduate programs in communications and even some dual degree programs. When I received the text and the call telling me what happened, it just felt too close to home. I am very happy that his fraternity has set up and is very close to having the Dennis Hayle endowed scholarship fund almost fully funded. I would strongly encourage Aggies and HBCU friends to contribute to the scholarship. [www.ncat.edu/giving/give-now](http://www.ncat.edu/giving/give-now) and select the Dennis Hayle Scholarship as a choice for your donation.

**18. How many "firsts" have you had at college? What are they? (e.g. first road trip, first job interview, first love, first "F or A", etc.)**

Just be certain, A&T opened up the doors to a lot of different opportunities. I met some great people and have used A&T as the launching pad for some very interesting experiences from our first undergraduate away-game tail gate to my first national research conference. However, today those firsts in college have developed into firsts as a member of the A&T Alumni Association. In 2013, I will celebrate my first major college reunion (5-years), be the first member of my class to win the Velma Speight Young Alumnus Award and also become the youngest member of the new Alumni Board of Directors.

**19. What situation in your life made you feel like you had arrived into woman/manhood?**

I believe making the choice to come to A&T and understanding the financial implications of my own decision. I had some scholarship money and support from my family; however, I was conscious that I did take out some federal and private loans to make my educational experience a reality in Aggieland. Those aren't easy decisions to make and as I advise students today, they have to be realistic about what they are getting themselves into with their finances from an early age.

**20. How do you deal with racism when you encounter it?**

It all depends on the time and place where the situation occurs. However, I am very much aware that race plays a key role in our society and the scholarship of authors such as Derrick Bell, Gloria Ladson-Billings and Lori Patton-Davis on critical race theory put into the literature some of the lived experiences that I am very much aware of. I believe that some issues with race may have more to do with class than race, which in graduate school confused many of my colleagues who misinterpreted that class just as much as race can change the playing field for many people. Handling situations dealing with race now requires more finesse and understanding of what we made it to the point of tension more than brawn.

**21. When and how did you discover your passion in life?**

By being on the Dean of Students Advisory Council (2004-05), I discovered that there was a whole profession working in higher education. As I grew, I honed in on certain areas of interest and have continued to work towards striving for equity in education and strengthening alumni leadership. I had known for a long time that education was key passion, but it was not until getting into college that I had a wider view of what I could do.

**22. What's your take on life (in the philosophical sense)?**

That unfortunately, our society is inherently racist and that we must overcome those situations through developing coping mechanisms that will allow us to succeed even if the playing field is not equal. My HBCU experience has taught me that I must come into any situation confident and never unwilling to take on a challenge. The things we take for granted today were fought and died for by people who just wanted a sliver of the advances that we have now. Understanding all of that, we must not be thieves of these experiences, but play an active role in giving back and making sure that those who come behind us have the same if not more opportunities for growth and development.

**23. How did you overcome your nervousness about going to college?**

Nervousness??? I was more apprehensive about adjusting to Greensboro more or less as an adult more than actually the academic parts of being in school. However, I had a great support system of friends in Aggie Suites F, along with family and friends who kept me grounded. I am still eternally grateful to Dr. Vallie Guthrie who was a member of my church and professor of chemistry for always having an open door to give advice and just let me vent.

**24. If you could only speak two sentences to the youth coming after you what would you say?**

Take the ACT instead of the SAT and only apply to HBCUs. Take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way.

**25. Are you a member of a fraternity?**

The decision not to join a black greek letter organization was personal, it was not the time or place for me. There may be another time when membership will play a key role in my personal and professional development, but instead my work in Alpha Lambda Delta, Alpha Chi, Alpha Kappa Mu and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies was more than enough greek-life for me. However, this year I did make a giving pledge to A&T that I will be fulfilling during Alumni weekend.

**26. If you could speak to those family members that have risen but that live forever through you, what words would you speak?**

Oddly worded question. However, I would want to share with my ancestors that I have tried to live by the mantra that all that we are required to do in life is to love, have mercy, believe in justice and to walk humbly with our God. As long as I do those things, I will believe that they will be

proud of their legacy.

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