



THE 76TH ANNUAL
**FOUNDER'S
CONVOCATION**

ROOTED IN LEGACY, RISING IN SERVICE AND EXCELLENCE

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026 | 3 P.M.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

DR. EVERETT H. THOMAS

WALTER ROBERTS AUDITORIUM
H.G. CARPENTER BUILDING

DR. JERRYL BRIGGS, SR.
PRESIDENT





MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

ITTA BENA, MISSISSIPPI
DR. JERRYL BRIGGS, SR., PRESIDENT

Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) is the youngest of eight state-supported institutions. The University is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, which is composed of 12 members. Funds for the operation of the University come from general appropriations of the Legislature and tuition.

The Institution's development as Mississippi Vocational College (MVC) began with its creation by the Mississippi Legislature's enactment in 1946 of House Bill 700, which called for a college to be located in the Mississippi Delta.

As founding president, Dr. James Herbert White was determined to bring an institution "up from a cotton patch," the title phrase of his memoir, and develop it into the future. Accordingly, campus facilities rose while Dr. White recruited faculty, students, and financial supporters and developed the university's curriculum. To serve more students before the campus could accommodate a growing enrollment, he initiated a program of bus transportation and satellite instructional locations. From early small classes, the residential student body grew to more than two thousand. Dr. White secured funds for faculty housing and for an innovative program of providing leave and travel expenses for faculty members working on advanced degrees. As a prolific fundraiser, Dr. White developed innovative and groundbreaking fundraising techniques namely the historic campaign entitled "The College of a Million Friends" where he solicited all constituencies of the school, developing new supporters both locally and nationally.

Dr. Ernest A. Boykins began his tenure as the University's second president in 1971. On March 15, 1974, Mississippi Valley State College was officially renamed Mississippi Valley State University. During President Boykins' tenure, MVSU grew in enrollment, expanded its curriculum and upgraded its faculty and staff. The University offered its first master's degree in 1976. The University now offers the masters degrees in Business Administration, Bioinformatics, Social Work, Environmental Health, Elementary Education, Criminal Justice, Special Education, Teaching, and Rural Public Policy and Planning. Dr. Boykins retired in 1981.

Dr. Joe L. Boyer was appointed as the third president in 1981 and officially took office in January 1982. During his presidency, accreditation of several academic programs was achieved. Dr. Boyer ended his tenure in 1988.

Dr. William W. Sutton began his duties as the fourth president of MVSU on July 1, 1988. Highlights of his career included the elimination of operation and financial aid deficits, upgrading of the physical plant and construction of a new administration building. Also, MVSU opened its first off-campus location in Greenwood. Dr. Sutton retired on June 30, 1998.

Dr. Lester C. Newman served as the fifth president from July 1, 1998 to July 15, 2007. Under Dr. Newman's leadership, the University completed construction of the Business Education Building. Construction for the new Science and Technology Center and two

new dormitories began in 2007. Both residence halls are occupied. The Science & Technology Center is home to the AIT undergraduate program and the Bioinformatics master's program.

Dr. Donna H. Oliver served as the sixth president and first woman to lead Mississippi Valley State University from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2012. During her tenure, the institution initiated several campus renovation projects including the renovation and expansion of the James H. White Library, securing \$11 million towards the renovation and expansion of the R.W. Harrison Sports Complex, renovation of the Social Science Auditorium, the repair and renovation of the Rice-Totten Stadium, the addition of a campus lake, and the GoGreen Valley Project. In December 2012, under Dr. Oliver's leadership the University's accreditation was reaffirmed by SACSCCOC through the year 2022.

Dr. William B. Bynum, Jr., began his presidency as the seventh president on November 6, 2013 and served until June 30, 2017. Dr. Bynum's vision for the University uplifted six powerful words that are deeply rooted in The Valley culture: ONE GOAL. ONE TEAM. ONE VALLEY. Under Bynum's leadership, the University adopted student-centered operational models, which resulted in a student enrollment increase by 11.4 percent. His achievements also include improving the University's cash position by 47 percent, increasing annual giving, and securing nearly \$2 million in grants. Bynum improved the University's Physical Plant and campus aesthetics with numerous renovations and additions.

Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr., an experienced higher education professional, was unanimously selected as the 8th president on October 19, 2017. Prior to being selected president, Dr. Briggs served as Acting President and Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer at the University. During his time at MVSU, Dr. Briggs helped to re-establish the University College model, which led to successfully improving the University's retention rate by 10 percent for fall 2014 and 12 percent for fall 2015. In addition, he worked collectively with MVSU staff to increase overall university enrollment that resulted in a more than 200 percent increase in dual enrollment students for fall 2016 and an overall 11.4% increase over the past three years. Briggs also managed a \$17 million capital improvement project for the University's athletic complex, with additional planning underway for renovations to residence halls and other campus buildings.

With enrollment success a high-priority, Dr. Briggs is committed to securing the perpetuity of the University by ensuring that Valley is producing capable students who are exceptionally prepared to make meaningful contributions in a global society.

Building upon the foundation laid by his predecessors, Dr. Briggs has enhanced the mantra ONE GOAL. ONE TEAM. ONE VALLEY with the addition of the phrase "...IN MOTION", which exemplifies the University's commitment to putting into practice its values as it continues moving onward to obtain preeminence as a premier institute of higher learning.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER EVERETT H. THOMAS, PH.D.



Everett H. “EV” Thomas retired as the Vice President of National Security Space Strategic Integration, National Space Security, Lockheed Martin, Space Company. In this position, EV assisted the Vice President/General Manager in strategically linking and synchronizing approximately 60 programs in defense and space security.

Previously EV was Vice President, Mission Solutions Defense & Space Security leading approximately 2,800 employees, at Lockheed Martin Corporation located in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. EV was the program manager of a portfolio of approximately \$983 million. Mission Solutions developed, deployed, and operated critical space software and technologies at every stage of the mission so customers had the right information at the right time. The critical end-to-end space capabilities made Mission Solutions the partner of choice for space mission and intelligence systems. EV led personnel across the globe – Australia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, and the USA.

Prior to Mission Solutions EV was Director, Advanced Strategic Programs and ICBM & Strategic Systems at Lockheed Martin where he led an organization of approximately 600 employees in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, and Hill Air Force Base, Utah, who supported the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) program (Minuteman III), and Advanced Concept development (hypervelocity projectiles).

EV served in the Air Force for more than 30 years and was responsible for overseeing ICBM development activities, operations, and sustainment. His assignments included vice commander, Air Force Global Strike Command, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, and commander, Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico. EV also served as the vice commander of the United States Warfare Center, Nellis Air Force Base, NV.

EV completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Organization Development and Change from Cabrini University, Radnor, PA. He was inducted into Delta Epsilon Sigma, a national scholastic honor society for his outstanding academic accomplishment, dedication to intellectual activity, and acceptance for service to others. He holds master's degrees in national security strategy from the U.S. Naval War College and in industrial safety and business management from Central Missouri University, as well as a bachelor's in environmental health from Mississippi Valley State University. EV has attended the National Security Management Course, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, N.Y., and the Executive Course on National and International Security, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.



PROGRAMME
ROOTED IN LEGACY, RISING IN SERVICE AND EXCELLENCE

DR. KALANYA MILLER MOORE, C'98
Director, Office of Field Experiences & Clinical Practice-Department of Education
Presiding

Prelude Kinetic Dances University Symphonic Band
arr. by Randall Standridge (b. 1976)
Conducted By: Dr. Kerry Anne Simon, C'95, *Assistant Professor of Music*

Processional.....

In Memorial Dr. Theresa Dumas
Acting Chair, Education & HPER Department

Greetings Miss Jouri Thornton
President, MVSU Student Government Association, Inc., 2025-2026
Senior, Accounting & Business Administration major, Jackson, MS

Mr. Raynaldo Gillus
President, MVSU Staff Council

Ms. LaTonzia Evans
President, MVSU Faculty Senate

The Honorable Dr. Mary Tyes-Williams
Mayor, City of Itta Bena, MS

The Honorable Kendrick Cox
Mayor, City of Greenwood, MS

Mrs. LaShunna McInnis C'93
President, MVSU National Alumni Association, Inc.

Mrs. Angela Curry-Gordon, '07
President, MVSU James Herbert White Foundation, Inc.

Dr. Rita Gordon, C'89
President, MVSU V-Club

Musical Selection Great Is Thy Faithfulness University Choir
arr. by: Nathan Carter
Conducted by: Dr. Brandon T. Cash, *Director, Choral Activities/Assistant Professor of Music*

Keynote Address Dr. Everett H. Thomas, C'80
(Ret) United States Air Force, (Ret), Vice President, Lockheed Martin

Musical Selection Better Is One Day University Choir
arr. by: Trey McLaughlin

Special Presentation Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr.
8th President, Mississippi Valley State University

Closing Remarks Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr.

Alma Mater University Choir

Recessional March of the Majestics University Symphonic Band
arr. by Robert Sheldon (b. 1954)

Postlude University Symphonic Band



ALMA MATER

Hail to thee our Alma Mater
Colors Green and White
MVSU our sons and daughters
Always stand for right.

When the days of joy and laughter
Fade upon our sight,
We will love our Alma Mater
Dear old Green and White.

We will love and cherish thee
Through all our lives
Green and White we will honor
Keeping standards high.

Chorus

Grateful, loyal, true and faithful
We will be true;
May thy name be everlasting
Dear old MVSU.



MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE CABINET

Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr., *President*
Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden, *Provost / Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs*
Ms. Joyce Dixon, *Vice President of Business and Finance / Chief Financial Officer*
Dr. Jacqueline Gibson, *Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs*
Mrs. Auguster Wallace, *Chief of Staff / Chief Operating Officer*
Dr. Ernie T. Hughes, *Vice President for University Advancement, Governmental Affairs and External Relations*
Dr. Alecia Shields-Gadson, *Director of Athletics*
Mr. Michael Switzer, *Vice President, Facilities Management and Capital Projects*
Mr. Dameon A. Shaw, *Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer*

FOUNDER'S DAY CONVOCATION COMMITTEE

Mrs. Auguster Wallace-Chairperson	Mrs. Cheryl Featherstone
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Ms. Glenda Ransom-Co-Chair	Dr. Jocelyn Haley
Dr. Ro'Shaun Bailey	Mr. Donnell Maxie
Mrs. Deneen Banks	Mr. John McCall
Mr. Derrick Beck	Mrs. Lashanda McChristian
Dr. Brandon T. Cash	Mr. Jerome Petty
Mr. Vanderbilt Dixon	Ms. Diana Robie

SPECIAL THANKS

Office of the President
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Dr. Lemondra Hamilton

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Dr. Abigail S. Newsome

FACULTY MARSHAL

Ms. LaTonzia Evans

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Dr. Lemondra Hamilton

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