

WILLIAM B. BYNUM, JR., Ph.D.
Personal Biography

When I am asked to tell people about myself, I speak of 3 foundational principles that have governed my personal and professional lives. Those 3 foundational principles I refer to as the 3 F's: Faith, Family and the Future.

Faith

The first and foremost thing I want you to know is that I am a God loving and God fearing man. I love the Lord with all of my heart and soul and each day I awaken, I seek to uplift Him personally and professionally. I refuse to check God at the gate. For, "this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine, let it shine, let it shine." I truly know that it is because of His grace and His mercy that I get to pen this tribute as the 7th president of Mississippi Valley State University. God is good, all the time; and all the time, God is good!

Family

I was born and raised in Rocky Mount, N.C. to Christine Smith Bynum and William Burnett Bynum, Sr. Unfortunately my parents separated when I was in kindergarten and from that point forward my mother Christine, or Ma Chris as she prefers to be called, raised 5 girls (Annette, Gayle, Debbie, Sharon & Lisa) and 3 boys (Al, Jr. & Carl) by herself in the Weeks-Armstrong housing project. My mother was a great role model and example and showed us the way by first being "born again" and then by pursuing and earning 2 associate degrees at Edgecombe Community College. She taught us early on that it wasn't about the material things we had in life that was important, but rather how we loved, supported and challenged each other.

Today, my wife Deborah, a 34 year AT&T manager, and I are raising 6 children of our own. Our oldest Tyrone is a student at Georgia State University. Our second oldest is Tyler, a recent student-athlete graduate of Truett-McConnell College, a Baptist affiliated college in northern Georgia. Our oldest girl is Chelsea, a senior at Clark Atlanta University, an Army Reservist and a recent graduate of Army basic and specialty training at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. Next in line is Zack, a junior at Morehouse College, who we affectionately dub "Mr. Morehouse." The youngest boy is Jordan, a senior in high school and aspiring music artist and engineer. And the youngest girl is Jazz, a junior in high school who desires to be a career woman like her mother.

Because of the great home town I grew up in and will never forget, the large family that I was raised in and the large family I co-lead, you will consistently hear me talking about Family, Team, Community and Togetherness. There is no more powerful force than a Team working in unison toward one common goal. As the 2 popular adages go, "Team work makes the Dream work" and "There is no 'I' in Team."

The Future

There is no other single, stronger social institution that does more for the fortunes of an individual, family and/or community than Education, the Future. Personally, I earned all of my degrees in sociology, bachelors from Davidson College and master's and doctoral degrees from Duke University. I am a career higher education professional who knows that my "calling," my purpose in life is to work

with young students and their families who are desirous of a higher education. My 2 favorite days of the year are Commencement and the first day of New Student Orientation. Commencement because, we as a people, “come deep” for graduation, and it is at this time that the importance of my calling is reinforced and solidified as it becomes clear that the degree that this individual student has earned is not just for him or her, but rather also for his/her parents, siblings, relatives, and friends whose aspirations are increased as they see their loved one walk across the stage. My second favorite is the first day of New Student Orientation because I get to look into the eyes of our new students and their parents and see the hopes, dreams, fears and aspirations that they have for themselves and their children and how proud they are to be in college, a lifelong dream, and in many cases the first in their family to do so.

A Tribute to the Elders: It Takes a Village

Throughout my life, I have had the blessing of outstanding people to lead, guide and advise me. Like most people, I would not have accomplished half of what I have had it not been for role models and mentors who paved the way and “poured into” my growth and development, personally and professionally. To my mother, I say thank you for demonstrating true love and the power of God daily. To my family and friends, I say thank you for keeping me grounded, watching my back and living life with a sense of humor and purpose. To my teachers, coaches and principals in the Rocky Mount City School System, I say thank you for providing me with a strong academic foundation and for encouraging me to pursue my dreams. To the faculty and staff of Davidson College and Duke University, I say thank you for instilling in me academic rigor and for pushing me to be a critical thinker and problem-solver. To the students, faculty and staff of Davidson, Duke, Georgia Tech, Clark Atlanta University, The Lincoln University, Morehouse College, and now The Valley, I say thank you for allowing me to fulfill my God-given purpose in life and showing me the beauty of higher education and all the promise it has for aspiring students.

And finally, but more importantly professionally, I say thank you to 4 giants of higher education who mentored and made this day and opportunity possible: Dr. Doris Walker Weathers, Dr. Ivory Vance Nelson, Dr. Robert Michael Franklin and Dr. Arthur E. Thomas. Dr. Weathers showed and demonstrated for me true professionalism, strategic planning and assessment, and how you don’t have to check God at the gate. Dr. Nelson showed and continues to show me the business of higher education and what it takes to be a successful college president. He should know since the last 27 years of his career was spent as one. Dr. Franklin showed me class, sophistication and how to genuinely connect with all types and kinds of people...for he is the ultimate Renaissance Man. Dr. Thomas always has and always will “keep it real” and has given me sage, wise advice and support that is unwavering...when I need it straight and frank, I call Art.

Given these 3 F’s and the lessons of my mentors, my vision for MVSU is captured in just 6 powerful words. Please join me in praying for and envisioning **ONE GOAL. ONE TEAM. ONE VALLEY.** The **ONE GOAL** is Student Success. The **ONE TEAM** is University and Community working Together. And the **ONE VALLEY** is students, faculty, staff and alumni actively demonstrating school pride and spirituality second to none!