

University of the District of Columbia

Office of Communications and University Spokesperson
4200 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Telephone: (202) 274-5685

Fax: (202) 274-5384

www.udc.edu



*"...a new day,
a new opportunity"*

January 12, 2006

Ser 006-001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mike Andrews
(202) 274-5685

Dr. Portia Holmes Shields to be Keynote Speaker for University of the District of Columbia's Founders' Day Convocation February 15th

Washington, D.C. — Dr. Portia Holmes Shields, former president of Albany State University in Albany, Georgia, has agreed to deliver the keynote address for the University of the District of Columbia's Founder's Day Convocation on Wednesday, February 15, 2006. The Convocation, which will be in the University's Auditorium, is scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m. Dr. Shields is a graduate from D.C. Teachers College, one of the predecessor institutions of the University of the District of Columbia.

Dr. Shields became the first female president of Albany State University when she assumed that post in July, 1996. She served in that capacity for eight years, retiring in June, 2005. As the seventh president of the 101-year-old university, Dr. Shields inherited a campus recovering from the destructive flood waters of the Flint River, which had consumed nearly two-thirds of the 204-acre campus in 1994. Dr. Shields' leadership was critical to the university's comeback, as she spearheaded a \$153 million rebuilding program that revitalized the institution.

Operating from her personal mission statement of "Students First," Dr. Shields led Albany State to achieve the third-highest retention rate among the University System of Georgia's 34 colleges and universities, which at 83 percent follows behind only Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia. Since the fall of 1996, the average SAT scores of incoming freshmen also jumped by more than 120 points.

Perhaps the president's most notable achievement of Dr. Shields' presidency, however, was her success in raising funds and external support for the University. She was instrumental in securing an unprecedented \$3-million donation from Georgia-born performing artist Ray Charles in 2002, and procured more than \$25 million in external grant funds in the following academic year.

Dr. Shields received her primary, secondary and college education in her native home, Washington, D.C. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from the District of Columbia Teachers College, one of three institutions later merged to form the University of the District of Columbia. She earned a Master of Arts degree in Education from George Washington University, Washington, D.C., and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education from the University of Maryland at College Park. Dr. Shields' work experiences included serving as dean of the School of Education (1993 - 1996) and director of Medical and Biomedical Communications, College of Medicine (1989 - 1993) at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

The seeds for higher education that grew into the University of the District of Columbia were first planted in 1851, when Myrtilla Miner founded Miner Normal School, a "school for colored girls." In 1955, Miner - by then known as Miner Teachers College - united with Wilson Teachers College to become District of Columbia Teachers College. D.C. Teachers College merged with Washington Technical Institute and Federal City College in 1977 to form the new institution, the University of the District of Columbia.

Mayor Anthony A. Williams, D.C. City Council Chairwoman Linda Cropp, and other members of the District Council, as well as Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, have all been invited to share in the University's commemoration.

The University of the District of Columbia is the fully-accredited sole public source for accessible, inclusive, affordable, and comprehensive public higher education in the District of Columbia and provides additional life-long learning opportunities. The University delivers quality instruction and uses student-centered approaches to empower and benefit both individuals and its local communities. The University, an urban land grant institution, is a very diverse community, a gateway to the world, and a significant investment engine for the District of Columbia. The University is located at 4200 Connecticut Ave, NW Washington, and is conveniently located at the Van Ness/UDC stop on the Red Line of Metro. For more information on other University activities, contact Mike Andrews, Senior Director for Communications and University Spokesperson at (202) 274-5685 or visit the University's web site at www.udc.edu.

NOTICE TO MEDIA: Media are welcome to observe and report on the pomp and circumstance of this ceremony. They are asked, however, to arrive not later than 9:45 to avoid disrupting the ceremonial parade at the beginning of the convocation. Parking for media may be arranged by prior notification of Mike Andrews, Senior Director for Communications at (202) 274-5685.

###