

Ray L. Belton, Ph.D.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dr. Ray L. Belton serves as the 10th president of the Southern University System, the nation's only historically Black university system. Prior to this appointment, he served as chancellor of Southern University at Shreveport, a leadership role that expanded over 14 years. To date, Belton brings more than 30 years of experience in higher education and administration.

During Belton's tenure at Southern University Shreveport, the university enjoyed unprecedented growth, resulting in an enrollment increase of more than 156 percent. With Belton at the helm, the university acquired more than \$34 million to support capital improvements, including academic structures, student centers, and the first-time development of student apartments (one of only two at community colleges in Louisiana) at the institution.

Belton's success as an effective and dedicated higher education leader continues as he currently serves as president of the Southern University System and chancellor of Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Under Belton's leadership in this dual role, several new programs and strategic initiatives have been implemented System-wide to increase efficiency, boost enrollment, strengthen teaching and learning, enhance technology, improve student success, expand fundraising and philanthropic efforts, and increase alumni engagement.

Most recently, under Belton's leadership of the System, Southern became one of two institutions in the state of Louisiana to be awarded a license to grow medical marijuana. The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center, along with vendor Ilera Holistic Health Care, has produced both THC and CBD medical marijuana products, making Southern the first historically Black university in the nation to do so.

Over the course of the last four years at Southern University Baton Rouge, both retention and graduation rates have increased, the enrollment of first-time freshmen has increased by an average of 15 percent, and resources to support campus enhancements have grown by 220 percent. In addition, the university has achieved several historic milestones, as noted by the remarkable turnaround of the athletic department ascending from a period when only three collegiate teams were eligible for postseason competition to all 15 teams being eligible for the first time in the history of the institution. Further, Southern University Baton Rouge currently enjoys its highest rate of alumni giving since the university's inception in 1880.

Also, under Belton's leadership, the university has experienced unprecedented infrastructural improvements consisting of the establishment of the Southern University Innovation Center, Jaguar Plaza sports complex, and upgrades to athletic facilities. The university was also awarded more than \$6 million to support classroom and laboratory improvements, along with curriculum and faculty professional development for the Baton Rouge campus.

Belton has held several national leadership positions, including serving on the Board of Trustees of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, as a Commissioner on Diversity and Inclusion for the American Association of Community Colleges, the Executive Board of the Louisiana Campus Compact, and the National Advisory Board of

Community Renewal International. His statewide affiliations include serving in senior leadership roles with the Consortium for Education, Research and Technology (CERT), Biomedical Research Foundation, Alliance for Education, Coordinating and Development Corporation of Northwest Louisiana, and as a member of the local Chambers and Committee of 100s.

Early in his career, Belton served on active duty in the United States Army for eight years on assignments stateside and abroad, and was recognized as one of the top non-commissioned officers of his brigade.

Belton has received numerous professional and civic awards. These include: The Leader of the New Century from the Shreveport Times and the Distinguished Achievement Award from Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. He is also the recipient of the Thurgood Marshall Community Service Award sponsored by the Black Lawyers Association and was recognized as the “2001 Distinguished Graduate” at the University of Texas at Austin. Further, in acknowledging his scholarly work, Belton was the recipient of: W.K. Kellogg Graduate Fellowship 1996, 1997, 1998; League for Innovation Graduate Scholarship 1996, 1997; C. C. Colvert Scholarship 1997, 1998; John and Suzanne Roueche Scholar 1997, 1998; and Community College Leadership Program Fellowship 1996, 1997.

Belton graduated from Southern University Shreveport and continued his studies at Southern University A&M College, where he graduated first in his class. He earned a Master of Arts in Counseling from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration from the University of Texas at Austin.