

Voorhees College prepares for 125th anniversary and achieving the Next Level of Excellence in 2021

Voorhees College has been on the path to the “Next Level of Excellence” in 2021. Dr. Ronnie Hopkins was named 10th president of the college and he named a new provost, Dr. Damara Hightower Mitchell. He also named academic deans: Dr. Katherine Whitaker, dean of the School of Business and Entrepreneurship; Dr. Tywana Hemby, dean of the School of Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences; and Dr. Zhabiz Golkar, dean of School of Science, Technology, Health, and Human Services.

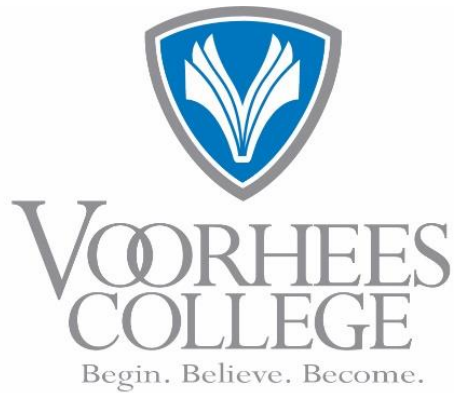
In accordance with the mission of Voorhees, the new president’s goal and mantra is “Next Level of Excellence,” which is to be demonstrated in every aspect of the college’s operations. One example of that excellence was college’s development of its Quality Enhancement Plan (Strengthening Guided Career Pathways: The Next Level of Excellence) and hosting a successful SACSCOC On-site Peer Review Decennial Reaffirmation visit in October.

Our students were honored in 2021 by the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Joshua Gayle, SGA president and business administration major, and Quatasia Donaldson, a psychology major, were named 2021 HBCU scholars. Gayle is the first student selected to serve as a cadet battalion commander in the South Carolina State University ROTC program in more than 20 years. The program is a collaboration between SCSU, Voorhees and Claflin. Student Donald Lauer, IV, was the first member of the Phi Beta Fraternity, Inc. in the State of South Carolina to win the Alan Leroy Locke Academic Achievement Award.

The Voorhees Tigers won the 2021 Association of Independent Institutions men’s basketball title in March. It was the second title in three years for the team.

Once again, the college was ranked among the best Regional Colleges in the South in the U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges Rankings for 2022. Voorhees improved its overall standing by six points over the previous year, tying for 48 with the University of Arkansas, Fort Smith. The institution ranked 4th in top performers on Social Mobility, which measures how well schools’ graduate students who receive the federal Pell Grant.

Voorhees had more than \$81 million in grant funding with \$19.4 million actually acquired in 2021. This funding is being used to support enhanced teaching, improve academic performance and critical thinking, provide educational leadership training and support, and prepare students at the middle school level for college.



The institution's fundraising totaled more than \$5,973,000. Much of the funding supported the institution through challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only did the college see a stellar fundraising year, it also retired debt on some of its facilities. All of its facilities are now debt free, which will allow the institution to focus on much-needed deferred maintenance issues.

In an effort to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic on campus, in the fall of 2021, Voorhees implemented a mandatory testing program for students, faculty and staff. Weekly testing was required. Students, faculty and staff also were required to wear masks inside buildings, social distance and wash hands frequently. The institution initiated a program to award gift cards monthly for employees and student who were able to show they were fully vaccinated. A monthly drawing was also held where one student and one employee could win a \$500 gift card. More than 86 percent of employees were vaccinated in 2021 and nearly 50 percent of students were vaccinated.

Voorhees was excited to host the Right Reverend Ruth Woodliff-Stanley on campus in October. During her tour and visit, which included meeting with students, the bishop agreed to serve as an advocate for the institution and discussed other ways she could support Voorhees.

The Voorhees Board of Trustees approved a name change for the institution from college to university. The name change will be official in April 2022.