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the LU Gazette

THE VOICE OF LANGSTON UNIVERSITY

VOL. 74, NO. 1

OCTOBER 12, 2011



Album Cover

Jennifer Holliday scheduled as the featured performer at the 6th Annual President's Gala Homecoming, pages 4-5

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Interim president has strong plans for Langston

By Andrea Perry
Staff Writer

Dr. Henry Ponder became interim president Sept. 11, after the formal resignation of Dr. JoAnn W. Haysbert.

Some may be hearing his name for the first time, but Ponder is no stranger to Langston. Last year, he served as Major Gifts Officer, helping to improve the relationship between LU and its alumni, and to generate more funding and development for the University.

His roots with LU go back further. In regard to his feelings for being selected as interim president, Ponder was in good spirit.

"To come to my alma mater and get a chance to serve as president is sort of the highlight of my professional career," Ponder said. "It's sort of like saying you're ending up where you started."

During his time as acting president, Ponder has several goals he plans to accomplish. Some of these goals include making LU more student friendly and employee friendly, and helping the University to continue growing in all areas, even in the programs that are excelling.

But there is one goal that stood out among the others.

"The No. 1 priority that I have is to make the state of Oklahoma, its elected officials and the citizens of

Oklahoma become proud of having a historically black college in the state," Ponder said.

LU is the only Historically Black College and University in the state of Oklahoma. Some states do not have even one HBCU.

Ponder said he hopes to administer a spirit of excellence on LU's campus, not only in Langston but also in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Some students have felt inspired by Ponder in the short time he has been interim president.

Robert Thomas, football player and senior finance major, said, "One thing I do like is he has school spirit. He travelled to Alabama and talked to the football team before playing Tuskegee. Hopefully, our school will follow and get that same school spirit he has."

Ponder touched another student in a different way.

"My impression of Dr. Ponder was that he was a man strong in his beliefs," said Shaquille Anderson, Mr. Orange and Blue and freshman chemistry major.

"He had a lot of history. He's a much older, experienced type of president, and I feel that he'll do a good job in his position and that he's dedicated to it," Anderson said.

Ponder said he wishes for LU to be among the top choices for prospective college students, faculty



Courtesy Photo

Dr. Henry Ponder is the interim president of Langston University. He was officially given the title in September.

and staff all across the country.

One of the ways to carry out this goal would be to expel students who are engaging in illegal activity, violence and are not here to

learn, Ponder said.

Another way would be for fac-

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the LU Gazette

The LU Gazette is produced within the Department of Communication at Langston University. It serves as a teaching tool and public relations vehicle. The newspaper is published bi-monthly and is dispersed across campus every other Thursday, except during examinations, holidays and extended school breaks.

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Friendly reminder: Disobeying traffic laws can be a costly offense

After adding more officers to the police force and purchasing several new vehicles, the Langston Police Department has noticeably increased patrol of Highway 33 within the city limits.

Public safety and police protection has improved throughout the past several years and Langston police officers have been issuing more tickets to motorists who fail to obey traffic laws.



Drivers can be pulled over and issued a ticket for offenses like speeding, no insurance, running a stop sign, mechanical violations and reckless driving.

Even if you're just going five miles over the speed limit, you can receive a fine of

\$183.50 plus a \$30 court fee.

Driving with no insurance is a \$206.50 fine.

Refusing to obey the traffic

laws can be costly.

Besides fines and points on your license, you could possibly face increased insurance rates or revocation of your license.

Homecoming is the most festive time of the year here at Langston University.

So let this be a reminder for all to drive safely, have fun and make it memorable.

Tuere Murray is a Clerk with LU Libraries

“Even if you're just going five miles over the speed limit, you can receive a fine of \$183.50 plus a \$30 court fee.”

— Tuere Murray,
clerk, LU libraries

Letter from LU Gazette adviser/manager

Greetings to all faculty, staff and students of Langston University.

I am pleased to be writing to you today as the new adviser/manager of the LU Gazette newspaper.

I am personally excited about the opportunity to be a part of Langston, and to work with LU students to produce this publication on a bimonthly basis.

Through newswriting courses and other related classes, broadcast journalism majors are able to publish their articles in this newspaper throughout the fall and spring semesters.

However, on the front page of this newspaper it says the LU Gazette is “The Voice of Langston University,” and that is exactly what I want to accomplish.

My mission is to report all types of news that pertains to the campus as a whole as well as individ-

uals that make up this campus.

Therefore, if you have any story ideas, or an advertisement you would like to see in the newspaper, please submit them by email to nkturner@lunet.edu, or call me at 405-466-3245.

I would love to hear from you and get to know you so that I may better serve the purpose and mission I have set for the LU Gazette.

I will do my best to make sure that all newsworthy information is covered.

Also, as a faculty member, I realize how busy we become, and how hectic our schedules can get, especially toward the middle and end of the semesters.

But I know my students may be calling you to set up interviews.



It is with my most sincere and greatest intentions that I ask you to please work with these students and make time to speak with them so they can successfully write their stories.

This semester there will be four issues of the newspaper, including this one.

The remaining issues will be published every other Thursday, on Oct. 27, Nov. 10 and Dec. 1. We will resume publication next spring.

I look forward to the rest of the semester and to hearing from others at Langston University.

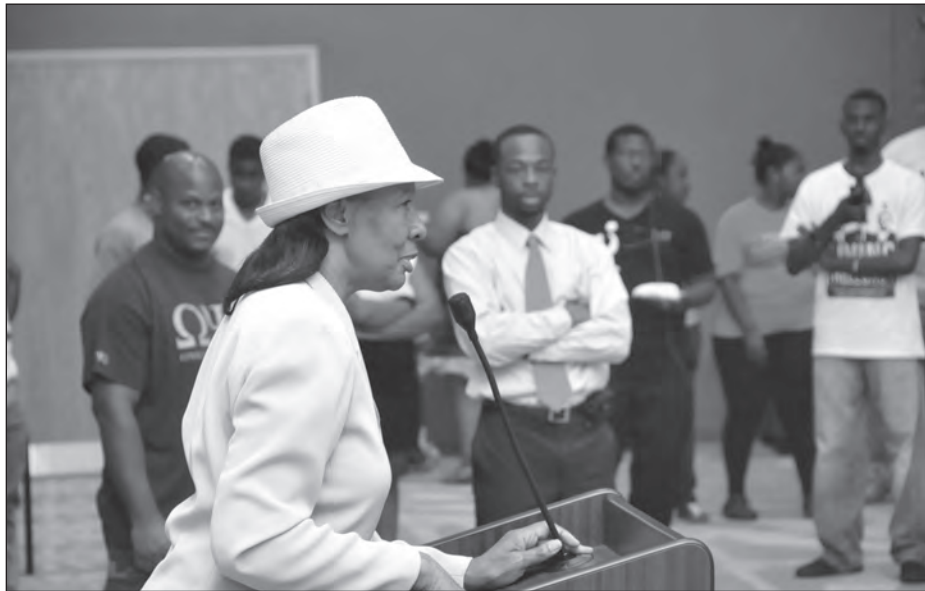
Best Regards,

Nicole Turner
The LU Gazette Adviser/Manager

**Your
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could go
HERE.**

**Call
405-466-3245
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information.**

Q & A: Dr. JoAnn W. Haysbert reflects on time at Langston



Courtesy Photo

Former LU President Dr. JoAnn W. Haysbert addresses a group of students, faculty and staff at a Farewell Reception in August.

By Darrell Strong
Contributing Writer

Dr. JoAnn W. Haysbert, former president of Langston University, announced her resignation at the beginning of this fall semester, as she has accepted a position at Hampton University.

Darrell Strong, sophomore broadcast journalism major, had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. Haysbert to reflect on her legacy and time spent at Langston.

Strong: Do you feel you're leaving Dear Langston prematurely and will this move put a dark cloud over your presidency?

Haysbert: I don't know if any time is the best time [to leave] but this is the time, and I'm comfortable with that.

Strong: What will the next chapter at Hampton bring you?

Haysbert: I don't know. You

never know everything that's ahead. I wish I could read the future like that or sometimes I wish I could, and sometimes I'm glad I can't, because I suspect everything you conceived you know you had to do it anyway and you might say, 'whoa, not me!'

Strong: Can Langston continue on its path to greatness?

Haysbert: Langston is poised for greatness. There is no reason why Langston should not be successful. People come and go, but an institution must stand firm, and Langston is positioned for that. I've been in the business over 35 years, I don't see anything that prohibits Langston from moving forward.

Strong: Being an Ambassador, a program that you implemented, we were taught that failure is NOT an option. Therefore, do you believe that not finishing what you set out to do is fail-

ure, or simply a matter, in your case, of high expectations met with meager results?

Haysbert: Oh no, no, I don't think that at all. Much of what we planned to do in 10 years we actually accomplished in five years. If you look seriously at [the fifth year report], those are the things that in many cases we didn't anticipate having completed at this time. The most difficult one for me was the growing of the college town; this is the first time we've had sidewalks in the city of Langston, and that's not what I did alone, but it was certainly part of my vision.

Strong: Do you have any advice for the next president of Langston University?

Haysbert: I have a philosophy on life that has taken me where I am today, and that simply is, 'as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.'

INTERIM

from page 1

ulty members to put more time into their study plans and helping students. This will give LU students an environment that is conducive for learning and also give the rest of the country a great impression of LU.

Among Ponder's goals, he said his ultimate goal lies within the student body and staff of LU.

"I want everyone to be able to say 'he tried his best to improve the place,'" Ponder said.

Ponder said he is the proud father of two daughters and the husband and son of two strong women.

Ponder serves as keynote speaker for 2011 University Convocation

By Ajia Harris
Contributing Writer

"Langston University is going to become the best University on planet earth," said Dr. Henry Ponder, interim president of Langston University, in his speech to students, faculty and staff at the 2011 Convocation Sept. 15.

Ponder was the keynote speaker at this year's convocation, where he discussed his goals and visions he has in store for Langston.

However, he spoke particularly to students, as he wants them to uphold the core values of dear Langston.

Ponder was involved in the Korean War, where he said he helped fight for Americans' right for freedom.

"Langston University is going to become the best University on planet earth."

— Dr. Henry Ponder,
interim president
of Langston University

"But with those freedoms comes the responsibility to know what you ought to do," Ponder said.

He also explained to students that if they do not want to obtain their work while attending LU, then the students need to reconsider their

reason for attending college.

"Forever, you cannot erase what happened to you here at Langston University," Ponder said. "If we don't get things straight here, it affects you wherever you are."

Bonita Franklin, professor of music

and acting chair of the department of music, said she enjoyed many of the things Ponder addressed at the convocation. She liked his manner and how he was open with the faculty, staff and students.

"He presented (the speech) real simply; I was so delighted to see so many students at the program," Franklin said.

Lindsay Davis, freshman chemistry major, said she thought Ponder's speech was effective, and that she thinks it made the school look forward to working with him during his presidency.

"His goals are pretty realistic; he basically wants to give Langston a good name," Davis said. "Progress actually starts with respect."

6th Annual President's Scholarship Gala to feature many renowned, distinguished guests of honor

Special from PR

Tony Award and Grammy Award-winning performer Jennifer Holliday will be the featured performer at the Langston University Night of Stars and the 6th Annual President's Scholarship Gala on Friday in Oklahoma City at the Cox Convention Center.

Holliday won a Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical and a Grammy Award for Best R&B Female Vocalist, both from her portrayal of Effie "Melody" White in "Dreamgirls."

Holliday has also won a Grammy for her work as a recording artist, and made numerous television appearances on shows such as "Ally McBeal," "Touched By An Angel," "The Love Boat" and "Ellen."

Local television anchor Anita Blanton will serve as the guest emcee for the President's Scholarship Gala.

Blanton brought an extensive background working as a television journalist before coming to Oklahoma, where she is now an anchor on KOCO-TV Oklahoma City, an ABC affiliate.

Five-time Grammy Award-winning singer Dionne Warwick and iconic actress Pam Grier also will appear at Langston University's largest event of the year to receive honorary doctorates.

The President's Scholarship Gala began in 2006 as part of the University's commitment to raise more money for student scholarships.

"We expect this to be an incredible night for Langston University heightened by the appearances of such big names," said James Dunavant, assistant vice president of institutional advancement.

"As much as we are proud to be able to provide such a star-studded lineup for the 6th Annual President's Scholarship Gala,

this night is for the students at Langston and we believe they will greatly benefit from this event," Dunavant said.

Warwick is an established international music icon and concert act who has earned more than 60 charted hit songs and sold more than 100 million records.

Her hits include "Walk on By," "I'll Never Love This Way Again," "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?" and "That's What Friends Are For."

Despite continuing to sell out concerts worldwide, Warwick has also recently written a best-selling children's book, "Say A Little Prayer," and her first autobiography, "My Life As I See It."

Grier built her reputation with roles in popular '70s films such as "Foxy Brown" and "Coffy," and was nominated for a Satellite Award for her performance in "Jackie Brown."

She has recently appeared in a recurring role in the series "Smallville," joined the cast of "The L Word," and has also appeared in "Just Wright," "Larry Crown" and "On the Seventh Day."

Named as one of *Ebony Magazine's* "100 Most Fascinating Women of the 20th Century," Grier also received an Emmy Award nomination for her work in the animated program "Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales for Every Child."

Grier also authored the *New York Times* best-selling memoir, "Foxy: My Life in Three Acts."



Langston will present Grier and Warwick each an Honorary Doctorate Degree during the Gala, after approval from the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges last month.

The doctorates will be presented to the two entertainers for their distinction of excellence in their professional disciplines as well as their recognized involvement in community and worldwide education and humanitarian efforts, particularly in the areas of urban and community agriculture, world hunger and health disparities.

All of these are considered substantial issues addressed by the

rural and urban land-grant mission of LU.

The night will also include the presentation of the 2011 President's Distinguished Service Awards to Dr. Deary Vaughn, Dr. N. Joy Flasch, Ms. Thelma Parks and Ms. Avalon Reece.

Vaughn has helped provide on-going scholarships to Langston students who demonstrate academic excellence, and Flasch taught at Langston University for 33 years.

Parks and Reece established the Thelma R. Parks-Avalon Reece Teacher Education Scholarship to support Langston education majors in their transition to positions as teachers in Oklahoma.

Langston alumni to get their 'Sock Hop' on at annual Orange and Blue social event

This year, members of the National Alumni Association fundraising committee decided to try something new. They have organized the Orange and Blue Forever "Sock Hop."

At the event alumni can participate in dominoes and spades tournaments along with music, dancing, food and other games.

"It's some of the old activities that past alumni used to do when they were students here at Langston," said Vonnie Roberts, director of Alumni Affairs.

Admission to enter the game tournaments is \$15 per person.

The Sock Hop will be at the LU tennis courts immediately after the football game on Saturday.

Roberts said having the "Sock Hop" will keep alumni on campus after the game.

"You can leave the stadium dressed as you are and you can come on over to the "Sock Hop" event," Roberts said. "We are trying to get back to a happy Homecoming here on campus instead of moving to the city or other areas to celebrate Homecoming."

See the Homecoming Week of Events for admission prices and information.

Homecoming Week of Events

Wednesday, Oct. 12

- Comedy Show 7:30 p.m. - I.W. Young Auditorium Admission: Alumni-\$10 with Alumni ID, LU Students-\$5 with ID

- Comedy Show After Party 10 p.m.-1 a.m. - John Montgomery Building Admission: Alumni-\$10 with Alumni ID, LU Students-\$3 with ID. No children under the age of 18

Thursday, Oct. 13

- Alumni Registration 9 a.m.-4 p.m. - Page Hall, Room 318. Pick up event and game tickets

- LU National Alumni Board Meeting 7 p.m. - Conference Room, Page Hall, Room 315

- Mr. & Miss Langston University Coronation 7:30 p.m. - I.W. Young Auditorium Attire: Semi-formal

- Black & White (Dress) Party 10 p.m.-2 a.m. - John Montgomery Building Admission: Alumni-\$10 with Alumni ID, LU Students-\$5 with ID, Without Black or White attire-\$10

Friday, Oct. 14

- Alumni Registration 9 a.m.-1 p.m. - Page Hall, Room 318. Pick up event and game tickets

- The Orange & Blue Booster Club Annual Golf Tournament 10 a.m. - Cedar Valley Golf Club, Guthrie, Okla. Shotgun Start and Four Man Scramble Entry: \$75 per person Contact Winford Willie at 405-466-3086

- LU National Alumni Association Senate Meeting 5:30 p.m. - LU/OKC Campus Auditorium

- 6th Annual President's Scholarship Gala 5:30 p.m. - Pre Gala Reception 7 p.m. - Dinner & Dancing Reserved Seating: \$100 per person Reserved Table: \$1,000 and higher Attire: Black Tie

- Greek Step Show 7:30 p.m. - I.W. Young Auditorium Admission: Alumni-\$15 with Alumni ID, LU Students-\$10 with ID General Admission: \$20, children 12 & under-\$5 (Students may purchase and advance package for \$15 for both Show & Dance)

- Pan-Hellenic Dance 10:30 p.m.-2 a.m. - John Montgomery Multipurpose Building Admission: Alumni-\$10 with Alumni ID, LU Students-\$10 with ID General Admission: \$20

Saturday, Oct. 15

- President's Homecoming Breakfast 8 a.m. - C.F. Gayles Field House-Atrium Donation: \$20

- Alumni Registration 9 a.m. - tent south side of Sanford Hall Game & Event tickets

- Parade 9 a.m. - Parade Line up, downtown Langston 10 a.m. - Parade in Langston

- Battle of the Bands Immediately following the parade - Anderson Stadium, game ticket for admission

- LU National Alumni Association, Inc. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. - National Conference Hale's Student Success Seminar Room, 1st Floor

- FOOTBALL GAME** 2 p.m. - Lions vs. Southwest Assemblies of God Admission: Adults-\$20, Non-LU Students 7-17 years old-\$15, Children (under 6) Free LU Student Ticket: Free with valid LU Student ID

- LU National Alumni Association, Inc. Events Orange & Blue Forever "Sock Hop" - LU Tennis Court Immediately following Homecoming game Admission: \$15 in advance (alumni tent), \$20 at the gate Alumni ID-\$10, Children 12 and under-\$5

HOME COMING T-SHIRTS

One-Day SALE, For Students ONLY

Thursday, Oct. 13

11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Contact Alumni Affairs For More Information

405-466-2999

Professor Linnie Skeen receives 'Teacher of the Year' award



Courtesy Photo

Dr. Henry Ponder, interim president of Langston University, presents Ms. Linnie Skeen, assistant professor in the School of Nursing and Health Professions, the award for "Teacher of the Year."

By Jamie Reed
Staff Writer

Ms. Linnie Skeen's eyes are wide, there's a smile on her face and a cheery disposition about her. Her words are hearty and pleasant as she embraces the title, "Teacher of the Year."

Skeen was surprised to receive the award and also was surprised to be nominated for it. She thinks that the teacher of the year is a person who cares about students, goes above and beyond for them and is a part of their problem solving.

As a teacher here at dear Langston for the past 11 years, Skeen has always encouraged students to do their best.

"I give out turtles to signify that the race is not given to the swift, or to the strong, but to the one who endures to the end," Skeen said.

The most rewarding part of teaching, Skeen said, is seeing students "get it."

The University's purpose is to give them a chance of an education. However, the part Skeen doesn't like so much is validating for students with the wrong degree.

Junior nursing major Ebony Fortier, said Skeen would be a 9 on a scale from 1 to 10 because she is a good teacher, takes opinions into consideration and is a friend as well as a teacher.

"She wants to make sure we know the material and get it into our being," Fortier said. "I think it's awesome that she got the award."

According to junior nursing major Emilee Rowell, Skeen can't be summed up in one word.

"She's a pusher because she

pushes us to do our best, and an encourager because she's always encouraging us," Rowell said.

Skeen said her students are dedicated and are not just observant. She has graduates come back and participate with the current students.

Skeen also said college is great, but professional school is different.

"When you get into your major, you're no longer on the 'yard,' you're at a professional school," Skeen said.

As far as the nursing department being affected by Ms. Skeen receiving the award, Dr. Carolyn Kornegay, Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Professions, said that it is encouragement for everyone and it also is empowering.

She said she is proud of Skeen for coming a long way from 11 years ago.

"She had a cultural enriching experience," Kornegay said.

Kornegay also said she thinks it's great that Skeen was honored in this way, because she never looks for any recognition.

"If you have to have immediate gratification, teaching might not

be your thing," Kornegay said.

Aside from the serious teacher that Skeen is, there are things about Skeen that some might not know.

Her students have been able to see other, more fun, sides of her.

"She is unorganized, as far as her office," Fortier said, laughing.

Skeen also does her part to show support of her students on campus, even outside of the classroom.

"When she first came she attended a few step shows," Kornegay said.

Skeen said she is proud and privileged to work at Langston University.

Throughout this school year, to uphold her title, she plans to make the classroom more unique and innovative, because believe it or not, she doesn't like to lecture.

Skeen is currently working on a dissertation for her doctorate degree from Oklahoma State University, which she will complete in December.

This year we have a teacher that exemplifies what it means to not only be teacher of the year, but a well-deserved, respectful, approachable and professional teacher of the year.

**Want to get into the
HOMECOMING SPIRIT?**

**Join KALU every day this week,
broadcasting on the yard.**

Monday-Saturday

11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Langston employee gets back to artistic 'roots'

By Nicole Turner
Adviser/Manager

Victor Driver has loved producing art and everything about it since he was in kindergarten.

He remembers sitting in front of the TV on Saturday mornings, charmed by the animated cartoons and eagerly awaiting the Sunday morning newspaper so he could see the "big, colorful cartoon strips."

"It fascinates me. I'm drawn to it," Driver said.

Driver, webmaster at Langston University, produces many different forms of art including drawings that he sketches with graphite, color pencils and pen and ink; he paints with watercolors and he takes various photographs.

Though he has been working on his art as a hobby since his youth, Driver never focused on it as much as he wanted to – until now. More than 30 years later, he is embracing his life-long passion and has been locally and nationally recognized for

his distinct artistic abilities.

"I decided to get back to my roots, where I started," he said.

Soon after his decision, Driver said he prayed for an opportunity that would help open new doors for his artwork, specifically for ones that would further his experience in book illustrations.

Only two weeks after he said that prayer, one of Driver's former college professors from the University of Central Oklahoma, Dr. Hall Duncan, called him about producing the artwork for a Christian-based children's book, "Noah's Ark and Other Bible Poems" by Virginia Hoppes.

Driver has a long portfolio of other art projects including a coloring book he drew for the Oklahoma City Police Department, which was passed out to elementary children in the Oklahoma City metro for more than 10 years.

However, he said, his artwork for the children's book has been one of the most exciting and career-en-

hancing opportunities he's had.

"The most exciting thing about accepting the opportunity to illustrate the children's book was the fact that Dr. Duncan offered the project to me," Driver said.

"Dr. Duncan is an accomplished man who I look to as an example of great personhood. His character, work ethic, kindness, humility, strength, intelligence and talents together exemplify what a Godly person who pursues excellence should be."

Driver said the fact that Duncan offered this project to him, empowers him in many ways that he will understand better in the near future.

The children's book also led Driver to an even bigger opportunity. His artwork was selected and featured on an episode of "Gallery," a television program on Oklahoma's Public Broadcasting Service-OETA. The episode presented different Christian artifacts, arts and culture in Oklahoma. Driver's portion was titled, "The Purpose Driven Art of Victor Driver."

The feature aired three times during the month of September but it can now be viewed online at www.oeta.tv/video/category/gallery.html.

"What really thrills me is that Victor, in his career, has began even to flower more in expressing himself," Duncan, Driver's former professor, said in the episode that aired on OETA. "It makes me feel good as a teacher because it tells me that I've done a lot of things right. And here he is, effervescing on what I've prayed for all these years."

In all of his art, Driver enjoys storytelling and focusing on people. He said people are generally the theme of his work because they are what inspire him.

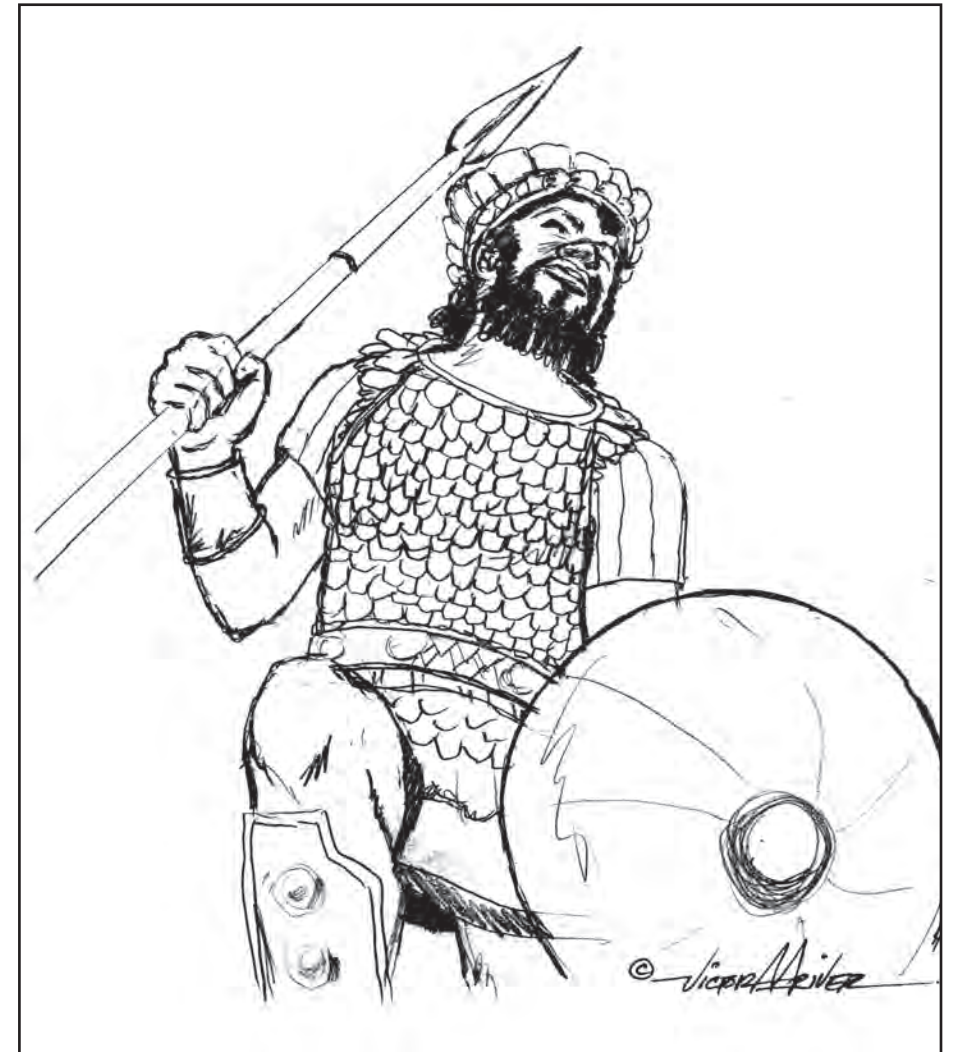


Photo by Victor Driver

This sketch includes Goliath from the Bible story of David and Goliath. Victor Driver drew the art and images for the book, "Noah's Ark and Other Bible Poems," by Virginia Hoppes.

"The message behind the art is the most important thing," he said, "whether it's clearly defined or it stimulates someone to think."

Driver said he wants to work on incorporating more of his art at Langston University. Last spring, he showcased some of his pieces at an exhibit in G. Lamar Harrison Library. He plans on having another

exhibit in November that will not only feature his own work, but also pieces from others on campus.

"We're trying to bring art back to Langston, and back to the community," Driver said.

He said he wants to try and influence the University to develop an art program that is offered to Langston students.



Photo by Victor Driver

This piece, "College Girls," is a sample of Victor Driver's pen and ink art from his clip art collection.

LU football team has winning spirit Lions ready for Homecoming game

By Charles Alexander
Staff Writer

The 2011 football season is officially underway and the Langston football team is currently holding a 2-2 record with its recent loss to Emporia State University, dropping the team to .500 in winning percentage.

This football season may seem to be even keel with an equal number of wins and losses for the Lions, but the players think there is still much season left to play.

Lions quarterback, Darrion Lewis, believes they have what it takes to go all the way.

"We have the chance to do something really special," Lewis said. "As a team we have a lot of leadership."

Some think the LU Lions have plenty of talent on this year's team, but what really helps spark the team is the philosophy of the coaches.

"Our team has a lot of talent but we spend a lot of time learning," Lewis said.

One thing most people believe about football is that you can have the most talented team in the world, but it's up to the coaches to determine how to use that talent.

Head Coach Mickey Joseph thinks that talent is great, but the work the players put in is a factor on how far they will go.

"This team can go as far as the coaches and players take it," Coach Joseph said. "I don't know how far this team will go, but we work hard."

The LU Lions seem to have a winning spirit, especially after re-



Photo by De'Shawn Saffold

Quarterback Darrion Lewis looks to throw the football to an open teammate in the game against University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff on Sept. 3.

covering from a two-game losing streak.

"Before the season started, everybody thought we would go 0-4," Lewis said.

The Lions heard the talk, but did not let it get to them.

Although the Lions have been

on a downhill slope, it shouldn't be too late to get back on a roll and try to have yet another successful season.

The Lions played their first home game of the season Saturday against Panhandle State University.

Men's basketball team prepares for new season

By Charles Tucker
Staff Writer

Is there any hope left for the Langston University men's basketball team after suffering a record of 2-25 last year?

Just ask the new head coach, Nigel Thomas, and he will tell you, "when there is a will there is a way."

"I am very blessed to have an opportunity to do what I have always envisioned myself doing," Thomas said.

Thomas was previously the assistant coach but was announced as head coach on June 22. He decided to bring on his long-time friend and teammate, Jarriel Vicks, as his assistant coach.

Thomas and Vicks are both alumni of Langston as well as former LU basketball players.

"It's a tremendous transition from being an assistant and making suggestions to now being a head coach and making decisions," Thomas said.

This year is a battle spiritually, physically and mentally.

There are only six returners coming from last year's 13-depth chart roster but they have a solid recruiting class.

The mind set of the team is that the players are on the eve of their sixth week of conditioning and just completed their first official practice.

"These young men have been working extremely hard to condition their mind, body and souls; now it's time to put in our Xs and Os," Thomas said.

The players may work on all levels, but they enjoy what they get out of it.

"I'm pretty excited about this year and really been working harder than ever," said Paul Campbell, a returner from last year.

There are many goals the players have individually, but as a coach, Thomas said he wants his players to be well-prepared to go to war against higher caliber competition.

"We all should be on one accord when we step out on the floor together," Campbell said. "The beat of a lion heart in one is what the crowd will witness and hear."

Therefore, separating the team from last year and this year, they have a motto each individual lives by.

Thomas said, "It has been my motto that proper preparation piss poor performances."

The coach thinks with hard work, dedication and commitment from everyone, the wins and losses will take care of themselves.

"I have high standards for this group because they have high standards for themselves and I expect great things from them and the rest shall be history," Thomas said. "I'm just preparing them for the ride to the championship."

The team just had its first official practice Oct. 3, and students, faculty and staff had an opportunity to meet the players for the first time during Midnight Madness Oct. 10. The first scrimmage was Oct. 12 against Northern Oklahoma College.

A complete schedule of all LU sporting events is available at www.langstonsports.com for the 2011-2012 season.