To Be Young, Digital and Black

UNCF Digital Media and Learning in Multicultural Contexts
Public Forum Series

Leadership Center Auditorium
Morehouse College, Atlanta

Thursday, February 4, 2010
6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

A Project of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Digital Media and Learning Initiative
Dear friends,

Welcome to the inaugural event of the UNCF Digital Media and Learning in Multicultural Contexts Public Forum Series. The theme of this first forum is “To Be Young, Digital and Black.” This important gathering is the first of three in which we will come together to gain a greater understanding of how youth, especially youth of color, use new digital media and social networking tools. In today’s digital age, with the rapid expansion and explosion of new technologies, it is imperative that we, as educators, scholars, mentors and education stakeholders, apply the latest research and innovative applications to advance teaching and learning to benefit our students and the broader community, inside and outside the walls of the academy.

Thanks to the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, UNCF has a remarkable opportunity to work with historically black colleges and universities and other minority serving institutions to increase the number of faculty, students and other people of color who can access, utilize and lead innovations in digital media, not only to advance education but to leverage the technologies that are vital to our nation and its ability to compete more effectively in the digital age.

I am excited about the potential that this forum series presents, and I am encouraged by the enthusiasm and level of interest that this first forum has generated. All too often there are few opportunities to bring together such a diverse group of individuals: teachers, faculty, students, after-school program directors, administrators and members of technology organizations. We are delighted to lead this important effort.

On behalf of UNCF, we extend our thanks and appreciation to our forum’s host institution, Morehouse College, and to the presenters and participants who have joined us for this ground-breaking event. Thank you for committing the time and resources for this important enterprise.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Lomax
President and CEO

February 4, 2010

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first of UNCF Institute for Capacity Building’s Digital Media and Learning in Multicultural Contexts public forums. We are delighted to convene this event and begin an important dialogue around developing ways to increase innovative uses of new media technologies, especially among students and faculty at historically black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions. The research that will be generated as a result of this collaboration with the MacArthur Foundation, the Digital Media and Learning Research Hub, and you will advance a critical need within our communities: understanding how today’s youth incorporate digital media into their lives and learning. Moreover, it can initiate new efforts to help us—a community of educators and advocates—produce and enhance programs and opportunities that will help ensure that students and faculty of color have the skills and tools they need to make use of the rich capabilities that the Internet and other digital media tools offer.

During this inaugural forum, you will hear from S. Craig Watkins, African-American Scholar and author of the acclaimed book The Young and the Digital: What the Migration to Social Network Sites, Games, and Anytime, Anywhere Media Means for Our Future. Like the title of this book and this forum indicates, this gathering is an opportunity for us to gain a better understanding of what it means “To Be Young, Digital and Black.” It is my hope that you will take full advantage of this extraordinary gathering of teachers, faculty, students, technology experts and community stakeholders to begin thinking about how you can take the information presented at this forum to build the access and utilization capabilities within your own communities—inside and outside of the classroom.

Thank you for taking the time to be here with us and for sharing your thoughts and ideas for how we, as a community of minority-serving institutions, can lead an effort to help students, faculty and all people of color compete more effectively in the digital age.

I also want to thank the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for sponsoring this important initiative and Morehouse College for providing this wonderful space for us to convene.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Elfred Anthony Pinkard, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Institute for Capacity Building

February 4, 2010
Dear symposium participants,

Morehouse College is pleased to participate in the inaugural forum of the UNCF Digital Media and Learning in Multicultural Contexts Public Forum Series.

With abundant thanks to UNCF and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the college and guests have the opportunity to engage in an important conversation focused on the implications of digital media and learning in minority communities. Your presence for the first part in this on-going series is especially important as we seek to advance the research agenda and support scholars—particularly those at historically black college and universities (HBCUs)—who are interested in digital media and learning.

It is my hope that you will engage fully in this dialogue, as your active input has the potential to give way to additional minority student interest in the discipline, as well as to an increased research agenda and wider collaborations among HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions.

We welcome you to Morehouse and hope that this forum will serve as the beginning of one of the most critical emerging discussions of the digital age.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Franklin
President

February 4, 2010

Context for the
UNCF Digital Media and Learning
Public Forum Series

Clarissa Myrick-Harris, Ph.D.
Director, UNCF Institute for Capacity Building
Curriculum and Faculty Enhancement Program

“To Be Young, Digital and Black,” the first event in the UNCF Digital Media and Learning in Multicultural Contexts Public Forum Series, marks the beginning of UNCF’s participation in the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s digital media and learning initiative, a five-year, multi-million dollar project launched in 2006 to help determine how digital technologies are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize and participate in civic life.

Since starting the initiative, the MacArthur Foundation has sponsored public forums around the country and supported the research of scores of scholars, including the groundbreaking work of the Digital Media and Learning Research Hub led by Dr. Mimi Ito at the University of California Irvine.

The MacArthur Foundation also has supported the thought-provoking research of our featured speaker, Dr. S. Craig Watkins of the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Watkins shares important findings from his newest work, The Young and the Digital: What the Migration to Social Network Sites, Games, and Anytime, Anywhere Media Means for Our Future. In this book, he explores the influence of social sites like MySpace and Facebook, discusses how technology is transforming America’s classrooms and examines how on-line “digital gates” reinforce race and class divisions.

In his presentation, Dr. Watkins will provide an overview of the landscape and culture of the broad community of “digital natives” and offer some specific insights into how African American youth and other youth of color interact within the digital culture—noting the challenges as well as opportunities they often find.

Our panelists will share the ways in which they use new media inside and outside the classroom. Their comments will frame a larger discussion about the problem of the “participation gap”—the chasm between those who are able to use the rich capabilities of the Internet and other digital tools and those who are more limited or passive in their on-line experiences. A major objective of this forum series is to open the door for on-going discussion and research about how students and faculty of African, Hispanic and Native American descent in particular can surmount perceived barriers to reach a higher level of innovative participation within the digital culture.

Our dialogues about digital media and learning with researchers, faculty, students and community stakeholders will continue during two additional public forums at UNCF-member institutions. The second forum will be convened at Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, TX, on March 25, 2010. That forum will focus on emergent lessons from MacArthur Foundation-funded projects to build new networked learning environments. The third forum will occur on April 8, 2010, at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, NC, and will focus on the applications and policy implications of digital media and learning.

We invite you to participate in those forums as well. All three of these events will be available via the Internet synchronously through streaming video and asynchronously through video webcasts. They will be accessible from the UNCF Web site at www.UNCF.org.

As the largest provider of scholarships and fellowships to African American students and a key player in efforts to build the capacity of historically black colleges...
and universities, UNCF is ideally situated to help disseminate the findings of digital media and learning research efforts and recruit a diverse pool of talented young scholars to pursue careers in the emerging field. Developing and recruiting minority scholars—in both the fields central to digital media and learning and for the academy more broadly—are urgent priorities for our organization.

Through this public forum series, we hope to spur a critical mass of students and faculty at UNCF-member institutions as well as other HBCUs and minority-serving institutions to investigate current and future opportunities for research, careers and civic engagement that are informed by innovative uses of digital media. In addition, we will launch the UNCF Digital Media in Multicultural Contexts Virtual Community to provide an arena for continuous communication about these opportunities among our stakeholders within historically black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions and to facilitate their participation in the larger Digital Media and Learning Research Hub.

For more information about the MacArthur Foundation’s digital media and learning initiative, please visit www.digitallearning.macfound.org. See also the following works, which have been supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation:


Mimi Ito and Sonia Baumer, et.al., Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media (MIT Press, 2009).


7 p.m – 8 p.m
Panel Discussion

S. Craig Watkins, Ph.D.
University of Texas at Austin

Tarshia L. Stanley, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English
Spelman College

Michael Hodge, Ph.D.
Chair and Associate Professor of Sociology
Morehouse College

Craig Wacker, M.A.
MacArthur Foundation

Deven Sanders
2009 Spelman College Graduate

Xavier Stephen Brandon
Morehouse College Student

8 p.m – 8:25 p.m
Audience Interaction

8:25 p.m - 8:30 p.m
Closing

FEATURED SPEAKER
S. Craig Watkins, Ph.D.

Dr. S. Craig Watkins is an internationally-recognized thought leader in the emerging field of youth and digital media. His newest work, The Young and the Digital: What the Migration to Social Network Sites, Games, and Anytime, Anywhere Media Means for Our Future (Beacon Press 2009), is based on survey research, in-depth interviews and fieldwork with teens, young 20-somethings, teachers, parents and technology advocates. The Young and the Digital explores young people’s dynamic engagement with social media, on-line games, mobile phones and communities like Facebook and MySpace.

Dr. Watkins is an associate professor in the departments of Radio-Television-Film and Sociology and the Center for African and African American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He was selected to join the MacArthur Foundation Series on “Youth, Digital Media and Learning,” a collection of scholars, visionaries and practitioners from across the world to explore the intersection of digital media, everyday life and learning. His work on this groundbreaking project focuses on race, learning and the growing culture of gaming.

His previous books include Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement (Beacon Press 2005) and Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema (University of Chicago Press 1998). Currently, Dr. Watkins is launching a new digital media research initiative that focuses on the use and evolution of social media platforms.

Dr. Watkins earned his doctoral degree from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.

PANELISTS

Craig Wacker, M.A.
Program Officer, MacArthur Foundation

Craig Wacker is a program officer in the MacArthur Foundation’s Digital Media and Learning Initiative, a strategy of the foundation’s Program on Human and Community Development. Before joining the foundation, he worked as an analyst in the Office of Management and Budget in Washington, DC, focusing on K-12 education policy. Wacker also has served as a Congressional Fellow on Sen. Edward Kennedy’s staff, as a research associate at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and on assignment at the World Bank Institute of the World Bank Group. He has a bachelor’s degree in history from Grinnell College and a master’s degree in public affairs from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

Michael Hodge, Ph.D.

Dr. Michael Hodge is associate professor and chair of the Department of Sociology at Morehouse College. A major focus of his work explores the innovative applications of technology in the development of undergraduate courses across the curriculum. A “high-end” user of technology for instructional delivery, he has developed innovative methods for collecting research data using classroom management systems. Dr. Hodge’s use of on-line and digital technologies has facilitated his research on at-risk sexual behaviors among African Americans. His most recent publication, Voices from Beneath the Veil: Analysis of the Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs of Middle Class African Americans (University Press of America 2009), focuses on the abilities of African American middle class individuals to demonstrate great success against many odds. Dr. Hodge earned his doctoral degree from the University of Florida.
Dr. Tarshia L. Stanley is an associate professor in the department of English at Spelman College. She regularly teaches courses in film studies that explore images of women. Dr. Stanley uses digital media as a learning tool in her classes and encourages students to use new media to create projects in and outside the classroom. Currently she is producing a documentary on black women in technology. She has authored several articles that examine the images of black women in African American, African and Caribbean cinema as well as articles on black female iconography in American popular culture. She edited The Encyclopedia of Hip Hop Literature (Greenwood Press, 2009) and is at work on a manuscript entitled Mothering Our Daughters: Mediating the Messages, which stems from her work on a conference by the same name that she has hosted at Spelman College since 2002. Dr. Stanley received her undergraduate degree from Duke University and her master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Florida, where she was a McKnight Doctoral Fellow.

Xavier Stephen Brandon

Xavier Stephen Brandon is a graduating senior majoring in computer science at Morehouse College. He is co-director of college clubs for the Summerbridge Breakthrough Alumni Network. In this capacity, he assists in the development of intervention strategies for decreasing high school dropout rates, increasing enrollment and interest in higher education, providing college and career readiness resources and supporting teacher recruitment and retention efforts. Xavier also serves as the senior intern for the Bonner/Adams Scholarship Program at Morehouse and as campus lead for Morehouse student leaders in the outlet college ministry of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church.

Devan Sanders

Devin Sanders, a native of Richmond, CA, graduated from Spelman College in 2009 with a bachelor’s degree in comparative women’s studies and a concentration in film and media. Her passionate interest in women in media and film has given her the opportunity to serve on a panel for the “Oprah Winfrey Show” and to co-create her first documentary film, “From Root to STEM: Spelman Women and Their Journeys Through the Sciences.” The documentary focuses on African American scientists in wide-ranging professions who have graduated from Spelman College within the past seven years. Sanders currently resides in Atlanta and has aspirations to own her own television network and to produce films that portray multi-dimensional images of all people.