

She Helps Make Winners

BY WALLACE TERRY

MOVIE STAR GLENN CLOSE received a thunderous ovation when she was awarded an honorary degree last June from the College of William and Mary. Not surprisingly, she is a hero at her alma mater, where she earned a bachelor of arts degree and a Phi Beta Kappa key in 1974.

There was an equally stunning moment at those commencement exercises, but it hardly drew a ripple of notice. Anson Christian, president of the graduating class, passed the chain of office to Lisa Stewart, president of the new senior class. Both Anson and Lisa are black.

In times when racial conflict has beset many of our finest colleges and universities, William and Mary has been relatively free of racial trouble. This is more than a little surprising, because William and Mary is a school of the Old South. Just a 45-minute drive down the road from the Confederate capital of Richmond, Va., the school remained lily-white until 1963.

How could such a Southern school become a trendsetter in race relations and minority progress in the toughest of academic environments? To find out, I traveled to the William and Mary campus, in historic Williamsburg. There, I discovered the answer in Dr. Carroll Hardy—a remarkable black woman who is associate dean of student affairs for minorities and the



Dr. Carroll Hardy, 46, dean at The College of William and Mary: "I won't let students have an excuse for failure."

disabled. "I believe that the upward mobility of black Americans depends on education," she said. "I will not let students have an excuse for failure." The students who know her—black and white—respect her, fear her and love her. They will tell you, "A mighty fortress is our dean."

Hardy—a woman of authoritative stature, voice and diction—took me on a short stroll along the brick pathways of this beautiful campus. "Everything you see here, including Williamsburg, was built with the hands of black people," she said. "Black people fought Virginia's wars, nursed her babies, built her buildings and worked her fields. We have every right to the wealth of this community."

By today's standards, Hardy grew up disadvantaged in Staunton, Va. But she never thought of herself that way, because there was plenty of food, plenty of love and loads of direction and discipline. Although her parents were 10th-grade dropouts, they introduced her to poetry before she started school.

From her mother, she inherited compassion. "She said you do things, the extra things for people, because you care, not to get paid," Hardy recalled. "Never expect pay. The reward lies in the act itself." From her grandmother, Hardy learned determination. And that helped her overcome a stutter.

A school like William and Mary was out of the question when she started college; it wouldn't enroll

its first black undergraduate until a year later. So Hardy attended Livingstone College and worked her way through three degrees in medieval and European history on her way to a doctorate in education.

In 1979, Hardy became director of the Upward Bound program at Mary Baldwin College in her hometown. The next year she took the minority affairs position at William and Mary. Here was a true challenge. "When I interviewed for the job, I saw no black faculty or administrators," Hardy said.

Many whites at the school questioned the presence of blacks, chose to ignore them or displayed racist attitudes. In her first few weeks on campus, Hardy read a debate in the school newspaper suggesting that there were enough blacks on campus. She was called "Sapphire" by white homecoming celebrants, and she saw Confederate flags flying in fraternity house windows.

"I did not call it my college," she said. "For a long time, it was alien to me." However, it is largely through Hardy's efforts—fighting the discrimination she found and working with minority students—that so much has changed.

When I walked with Hardy to her office, I found it in James Blair Hall, along with those of other administrators, instead of set aside in a black cultural center. William and Mary has resisted creating academic departments, centers or dormitories that are designated for blacks. "That just cuts in the wrong direction," said Paul Verkuil, the college president. "I am skeptical about things that tend to isolate a campus by race." Better to incorporate the study of black history or culture in the total curriculum, Hardy agreed.

"Why do you need an all-black dorm?" she asked. "That doesn't make sense here. If you need that support, I suggest going to a predominantly black school. Children from black communities with little outside exposure could feel uncomfortable at William and Mary. But the times they are a-changin', and a black child may want to forgo comfort for the chance of connecting to the old-boy network. And William and Mary's network has been operating since 1693."

Her argument has convinced many. Despite competition with Harvard and Yale, Princeton and Brown, the number of black freshmen has risen from 44 just 10 years ago to 114 this past fall. The total black student population has more than doubled, from 2.6 to 6.8 percent. "We are trying to achieve an integrated society," said Verkuil, "so we've got to have people coming together at critical moments in their lives."

Leroy Stewart said he sent his daughter, Lisa, to William and Mary because Hardy promised she would graduate, get involved in student life and not be isolated. Tonya Parker, a black graduate student, said she could have gone to a black college to avoid racial slurs and feel more

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comfortable. "But this place is preparing me for reality. And no one helps you deal with life better than Dean Hardy."

William and Mary works hard, long before their arrival, to help black students succeed. Hardy developed a 10-point program to prepare and support these students with an understanding that many of them may be the first in their families to go to college, or may lack the background for college study. Nobody wants them to feel defeated, humiliated or hurt before they have a chance to flourish. The effort has paid off. In the '89 class, 89 percent of the black students graduated on time—a few percentage points better than the white rate.

Hardy has been known to answer her phone at midnight to give advice. She will gently console someone who gets an F, letting him or her know that there have been others who managed to graduate despite such misfortune. She has been known to dig into her own pocket to help a student pay for parking, get a haircut or pay the rent.

"But I am not looking to be a pal," she said. "I do not party with students. They are not in my peer group. I do not look to mother, either. I am interested in graduation. I believe they can learn, will learn and do learn. I cajole. I pray. I'm dependable. And they know nothing is too awful that they cannot tell me." But she cannot abide dishonesty or self-deception. "I've heard all the stories," said Hardy, "and I know all the lies."

"When I look at black students, I see me—before the polish," Hardy added, "and I realize how much was done for me. When I have done good for black students here, they must return my good work by doing good for someone else one day."

I wondered how Hardy could do all that and help the disabled too. "Carroll is a miracle," explained W. Samuel Sadler, vice president for student affairs. In her office, I met Karin Robins, a student assistant. When Robins' application for admission was turned down, Hardy sent her to the Affirmative Action office. Robins, who is legally blind, was accepted. "Dean Hardy told me I had rights and to stand up for them," Robins recalled. "She will do everything humanly possible to see that you succeed."

Hardy is justly proud, too, of the success of Curtis Pride and George DeShazo Jr. Pride has been the starting point guard on the varsity basketball team, although he is deaf. Like Robins, he uses special equipment arranged for by Hardy.

DeShazo is now studying at Oxford, the first Rhodes scholar in William and Mary's history. He entered with a learning disability; he is dyslexic. But his life turned around when Hardy found a donor to contribute a computer to correct his work. "I went from a 3.0 student to a 4.0," DeShazo recalled. "I wouldn't have gotten through without her." DeShazo

and Robins are both white.

I asked Hardy if she had any more miracles planned. She smiled, then looked me squarely in the eye. "Of course I hope to live long enough to see DeShazo and all my children go as far as they can," she said. "But I do want to see a black woman on the Supreme Court. I have four of my graduates in training right now. One is at Michigan Law. One is at Tulane. And two are at Virginia."

As I started to leave, Derika Wells, a junior from Louisville, arrived for an appointment. Although she is white, black students sent her to Hardy for help in finding an internship. "When I saw the sign saying Minority Affairs, I thought she probably wouldn't help me," Wells recalled. "But she didn't say, 'What are you doing here?' She was wonderful. She's trying to help me get an internship at GE. She even told me to come back when I pledged to tell her how it was. She knew it would be tough."

Wells thought for a moment. Then a grin swept across her face. "If you know Dean Hardy, you can't be lost." ■

A Winning Plan

Here is the 10-point formula Hardy and the college devised, which has helped black students succeed:

- **Junior student transition program.** A two-week summer program for junior high school students with college potential.
- **Summer transition and enrichment program.** High school juniors get a preview of college life, including coaching for taking the SATs.
- **Virginia student transition program.** Freshmen gain confidence by taking one course for credit during the summer before college begins.
- **Mentors.** Each black freshman is assigned a black upperclassman as a guide.
- **The black community.** Hardy made alliances between students and the local black church, between the college and the black community, between administrators and black employees.
- **Black cultural events.** Campus speakers have included the actress/author Maya Angelou, activist Randall Robinson and Gen. Colin Powell.
- **Black student leadership development conference.** Each January, 500 students from across the nation receive leadership training.
- **Student activities.** Minority students are consciously encouraged to get involved in the broader life of the college to gain confidence.
- **Black faculty and administrators.** "We always need more, particularly as mentors," Hardy said.
- **Counseling.** Hardy will suggest avoiding courses that might lead to academic disaster, or recommend getting a tutor.