Dr. Ronald Carter (STH 1974, M.Th.; GRS 1985, Ph.D.)

Dr. Ronald L. Carter began his work as the 13th president of Johnson C. Smith University (Charlotte, N.C.) on July 1, 2008. Since taking the helm, Carter has expanded the mission of JCSU in seven key areas: increased mutually beneficial partnerships with local and national businesses and organizations; enhanced financial footing; used metrics and measurements to drive performance; recruited a stronger faculty and staff; implemented a more thoughtful approach to technology; elevated student performance, retention and achievements; and improved the athletic program.

Building on JCSU’s 150 years of undeniable progress, Carter and his team of leaders have transformed the institution into an independent new urban university with intellectually rigorous programs that support new generations of change agents. Besides academics, a JCSU education now includes a global perspective, heightened social activism and a vibrant culture of community that extends beyond campus gates.

Much of Carter’s success at JCSU can be attributed to his commitment to team leadership. With the aid of a carefully assembled, robust group of high-impact performers, Carter has increased the University’s majors from 22 to 25, debuted JCSU’s first graduate degree that has grown by 49 percent in two years, and expanded academic offerings to two fully online, digital degree programs. He and the Board of Trustees increased the university’s endowment from $47.4M to $64.4M and with the help of Trustee Monroe Miller championed the establishment of the President’s Gap Scholarship Fund. To date, $5.6 million has been raised to bridge students’ financial aid shortfalls. He empowered the development office to launch Tomorrow Is What WE Make It, the largest comprehensive campaign in the University’s history. The $150M goal goes toward campus and capital projects, scholarships, academic resources and the Annual Fund—providing access to a high-quality education for every deserving student and the financial means to support their journey.

Carter’s leadership in Charlotte’s Northwest Corridor has led to a revitalization of the formerly blighted area. His significant investments in the community include a state-of-the-art $45 million 62,000-square-foot STEM research facility on campus and the construction of Mosaic Village, a $25 million, 124,000-square-foot mixed-use housing and retail space that provides employment and entertainment to students and local residents. The Arts Factory, JCSU’s main performance for the new major, opened its doors in 2010 and has since become a cornerstone of the creative boom in the area, with a ground-breaking partnership that resulted in On Q Productions, one of Charlotte’s most celebrated theatrical companies, being housed there. And the University played a vital role in the development and construction of the CityLYNX Gold Line streetcar, which will link JCSU to Uptown and will stimulate economic development along Beatties Ford Road.

New student populations have been identified and nurtured through innovative programs such as the Foster Village Network Center, which provides academic and social support to students who have aged out of foster care; English as a Second Language certification program Caminos Hacia el Exito; and increased recruitment in Caribbean, Latin American and African countries. As further preparation for the demographic shifts and challenges facing higher education, Carter established Metropolitan College for adult learners; University College, a comprehensive student support educational program based on metacognitive research; and he has addressed deferred maintenance challenges on campus.

Carter graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Morehouse College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology and philosophy, then earned a Master of Theology degree and a Ph.D. in philosophy of
religion from Boston University. He began his career at Boston University and advanced to become the school’s youngest dean of students. In the 1980s, his interaction with Nelson Mandela’s relatives compelled him to work in South Africa. His tenure in South Africa began at University of the North, before becoming dean of students and one of the first black senior administrators at the traditionally white institution of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He returned to the United States in 1997 as the provost and dean of faculty at Coker College in Hartsville, S.C.

Dr. Carter serves on many boards, including Charlotte Center City Partners, Charlotte Executive Leadership Council, Opera Carolina, Mint Museum, Fifth Third Bank Affiliate Board, Association of Governing Boards and the United Negro College Fund. He currently serves as chairman of the CIAA Board of Directors. He received the 2011 Charlotte Catalyst Humanitarian Award for his efforts in diversity and philanthropy. In 2013, he received the Creative Thinkers Award for his leadership in building Mosaic Village as part of Charlotte’s Northwest Corridor revitalization. He also received the Latin American Excelente Award in 2013 for supporting the Latino community. In 2014, The Charlotte Post presented Dr. Carter with its Luminary Award. He has two children: Tumelo Rosalind Carter and Cory Demetrius Carter. He has also been the foster parent of four children.