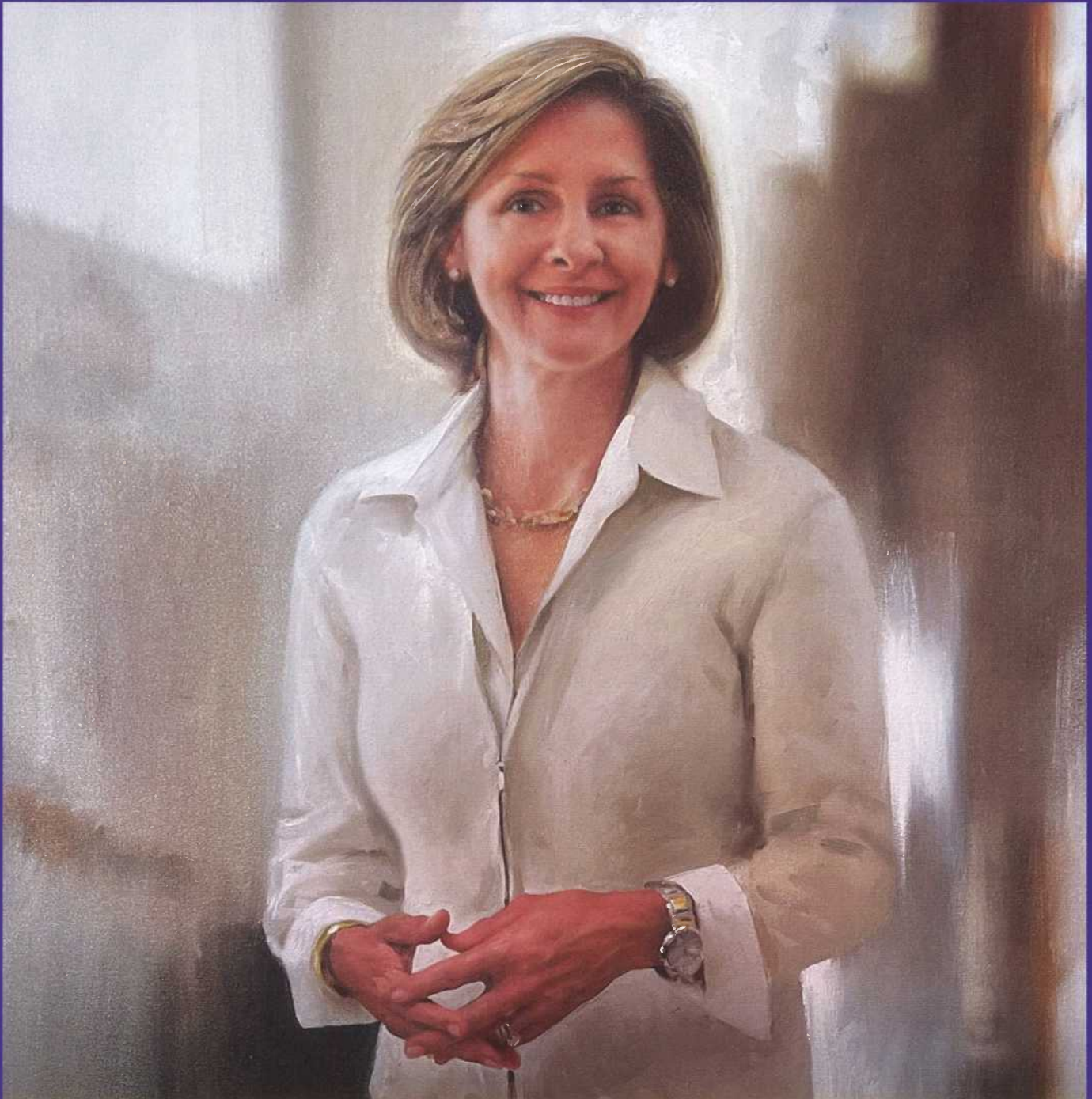


# AGNES SCOTT

## COLLEGE



### **A Legacy of Leadership**

*Celebrating Elizabeth "Beth" Daniel Holder '82*

# After 13 years of service on the Board of Trustees, Elizabeth Daniel Holder '82 leaves a mark of greatness. —BY SARA BAXTER

## ***“At least go see it.”***

Those five words may have ended up having a huge impact on Agnes Scott College.

They were spoken by an Agnes Scott alumna, whose son happened to be dating Beth Daniel (now Holder). In 1978, Holder was a senior at Marietta High School, planning to attend Auburn University, where her parents had gone, when her boyfriend's mother encouraged her to visit her alma mater. So “as a favor,” Holder came down to Decatur to attend Prospective Students' Weekend at Agnes Scott. That was all it took.

“It really is a testament to the college that once you get on campus and spend time with students and experience campus life and all that Agnes Scott has to offer, you're likely to go,” says Holder. “And it was a turning point for me.”

It's a good thing for the entire Agnes Scott community that Beth Daniel Holder chose to spend her college years here. Later in life, she would be asked to return to her alma mater in a new role – as a trustee.

Holder served 13 years on the Board of Trustees, five of them as chair, before stepping down last June. It was a remarkable era in Agnes Scott's history, marked by a

transformational curricular change, a monumental fundraising campaign and a successful presidential search.

Not that she would take any credit for these achievements. Holder will be the first to tell you it was all a team effort, with many people sharing ideas and executing plans for the good of the college. But others say her role and impact are unmistakable. By maintaining strategic focus and applying a tireless energy, Holder led by example and became a motivating force. And, she leaves the college in a good place.

“Beth has been amazing,” says Agnes Scott President Leocadia I. Zak. “She is a great connector, whether it's connecting people to the college by bringing in new trustees or donors or connecting us to the latest ideas through her vision for the college.”

“The college is enjoying great success,” says Harriet M. King '64, trustee emerita and former board chair. “It has financial stability, new leadership and an impressive profile through SUMMIT. Beth has been remarkably successful.”

## **RECONNECTING WITH AGNES SCOTT**

As a student, Holder majored in economics and loved the small class

sizes, which allowed students to achieve success and really get to know their professors.

“You didn't fall through the cracks,” Holder says. “It allowed everyone to flourish and feel supported.”

Some of her favorite memories of her time at Agnes Scott include showing up to finals in her pajamas, piling on a single bed with her friends and watching “Days of Our Lives” and working in the admissions office where she gave tours to prospective students. After graduation, she went into the banking industry and married her husband, Thomas M. Holder. She left Agnes Scott behind, until she got a phone call – 24 years later.

Elizabeth Kiss, president of the college from 2006 to 2018, set up a meeting with Holder to explore her interest in joining the Board of Trustees. Holder had some experience; she had served as chair for the Atlanta Ballet, and the Holders were well known for their philanthropy. What Kiss learned in the meeting was that it was important to Holder to not just be a trustee, but to be able to make a real contribution to the board and to the college. So when the two met, it was a mutual vetting process.

“It was just a wonderful recruitment conversation,” recalls Kiss, who now



*Pictured above, from left: former Trustee Elizabeth "Libby" R. Jones '73, former Board Chair Clyde Tuggle, Beth Holder '82, Agnes Scott President Leocadia I. Zak, Amira Dougherty '19, Trustee Ann Glendinning '68, Vice President for Enrollment and Dean of Admission and Financial Aid Alexa W. Gaeta '98 and former Vice President for Advancement Robiaum Charles.*

serves as warden of Rhodes House and the chief executive officer of the Rhodes Trust. "I remember immediately seeing incredible strategic intelligence and focus. It was very clear from the beginning that this was a woman who once she committed, was all in. She cared deeply for Agnes Scott and wanted to make sure she could make a difference as a trustee. I was so impressed."

Apparently Kiss made a good case.

"It's hard to say 'no' to Elizabeth Kiss," Holder says. "She's a very persuasive person. I liked her and I wanted to be a part of what she was leading, and it happened to be my alma mater. What she was doing and the impact the college was having made me want to get more involved. I also thought that learning about higher education and the academic community would be very interesting and fulfilling."

Holder joined the board on July 1, 2008. Not even a year into her tenure, Holder – along with fellow Trustee Elizabeth R. Jones '73 and then board chair Clyde Tuggle – was asked to co-chair "The Greatness Before Us" campaign. With a lofty goal of \$100 million, it was Agnes Scott College's largest comprehensive campaign to

date. The trio worked tirelessly for six years and not only met the goal, but blew past it by raising an unprecedented \$115.9 million.

"Beth was instrumental in helping us reach that goal," says Jones. "She is a natural when it comes to fundraising. She was willing to contact and or meet with anyone she thought might respond positively to our campaign. She was a perfect ambassador for Agnes Scott as she is informed and passionate about the college."

"The best part about Beth is that she creates excitement about doing good work for the college," adds Trustee Loucy Hay '87. "She has the ability to communicate effectively about Agnes Scott's mission in a way that inspires people to want to be a part of it. She's looking out for the best interest of Agnes Scott in connecting people and building relationships that benefit the college."

### **TAKING AGNES SCOTT TO THE SUMMIT**

In 2012, it became apparent to Kiss and to the board that in order for Agnes Scott to be strong and sustainable in the future, they needed to raise the college's profile to applicants and increase enrollment.

That called for what Kiss calls "a big idea." After months of planning and conversations, the administration, board and faculty created SUMMIT, an initiative that transformed the curriculum to focus on global learning and leadership development.

The board endorsed SUMMIT, and approved the funding it would take to implement and sustain it, and launched it in fall 2015.

"Beth was an integral part of the architecture of SUMMIT," says Tuggle. "We went through tricky times getting there, but she was right in the middle of it, serving as the bridge between the board, the president and the faculty. She had street credibility because she was a graduate and she was a woman. I give her a tremendous amount of credit for getting us through the journey to SUMMIT. It was not an easy journey."

The implementation of SUMMIT had the positive effect that it intended. Enrollment grew the first year it was in place and has continued to grow each year. It also led to Agnes Scott being ranked #1 Most Innovative College by U.S. News for four consecutive years.



Beth Holder '82 leads 2019 commencement speakers Mallika Balakrishnan '19 and Jordan Casteel '11.



The Holder family with Oprah Winfrey, Agnes Scott's 2017 commencement speaker.

*“The best part about Beth is that she creates excitement about doing good work for the college.” —Loucy T. Hay '87*

### LEADING A TRANSITION

In 2016, when Holder replaced Tuggle as board chair, she knew that she was going to have to lead the effort to find the ninth president of Agnes Scott as Elizabeth Kiss made plans to move on. In her innate ability to consider every detail, Holder made sure the board was educated on the process, appointed a search committee and two trustees to lead it and helped vet a search firm.

“She has really excellent judgement,” says Trustee Portia O. Morrison '66, who served as vice chair of the board from 2012 to 2020. “She has the ability to see the big picture. She can spot important issues – now and in the future. But at the same time, she has incredible attention to detail. She spots the little things that make a big difference. The presidential search was an example of that.”

Kiss, who watched from the sidelines as the college picked her successor, agrees.

“She was incredibly consultative, and worked to make sure the search committee was diverse,” says Kiss. “I saw how completely focused she was on which candidates would be best suited to take SUMMIT and Agnes Scott to the next level. She put so

much effort and thought into that search and went beyond the elements of a typical search.”

In January 2018, Zak was chosen to lead Agnes Scott. But Holder’s job did not stop there. Once the new president was in place, Holder took it upon herself to introduce her to important and influential leaders in the community who would support her and benefit the college. After all, Zak was new to the South, having moved from Washington, D.C., and new to the world of academia.

“She was phenomenal,” Zak says. “I was a new college president, and Beth took the time to personally introduce me to many people around Atlanta. Those introductions were tremendous in helping me get to know the city and many of its leaders in the earliest days of my administration.”

### SAYING GOODBYE

It’s ironic to think that Beth Holder didn’t even plan to attend Agnes Scott, and if she hadn’t come to Prospective Students’ Weekend that fall in 1978, the college may never have benefitted from all she has to offer. Those who know her use many accolades to describe her, but she personifies one: humility. And that is

reflected in what she thinks her impact has been on the college.

“We accomplished a lot over 13 years and I’m proud of all we did,” Holder says. “The students we serve and the success they are having as leaders in our global society is what I’m most proud of. I was a cog in a wheel of great leadership and a lot of talented people on the board.”

Her friend Libby Jones says it a little more strongly.

“I absolutely believe that at the end of Beth’s time on the board, she left the college in a much improved place,” Jones says. “So much happened during her tenure and from the very beginning, she had an impact.”

“Beth is very analytical,” adds Elizabeth H. Noe '86, who served as vice chair under Holder and became chair in July. “She is able to see all sides of an issue, listens to the varying points of view and instills confidence in all involved that she has a thorough understanding of, and has considered, the impact of any decision she makes. She always puts the good of the college first while thinking ahead to what’s down the road. These are all characteristics of a great leader, which is what Beth has been for the college.”

# the GREATNESS before us

the campaign for  
AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE

A woman with short brown hair, wearing glasses and a purple sleeveless dress, is speaking at a podium. She has a name tag that reads "Beth". The background features large blue text for a campaign.

*“She is a great connector, whether it’s connecting people to the college by bringing in new trustees or donors or connecting us to the latest ideas through her vision for the college.”*

—President Leocadia I. Zak



# THANK YOU, Beth Holder

We are grateful for your 13 years of service to the Agnes Scott community and for your vision, energy, commitment, impact, determination and gift of connecting people. You have established **a legacy of leadership** that will always be remembered.

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