

Different Paths Lead Alumni Back to Claflin

A mere eight years ago, Nathaniel Frederick (top right) and Leonard Pressley (bottom right) completed their academic journeys at Claflin University. Now both men have returned to their alma mater as professors armed with doctoral degrees and a thirst to mentor future visionaries.

In separate conversations, the two said they felt a calling to return to Claflin.

"I always said I was going to give back to Claflin because the institution gave me a chance. It has a special place in my heart," said Frederick, a newly minted assistant professor of mass communications.

Originally from Kingstree, Pressley was a practicing physical therapist prior to coming back to the University as an assistant professor of biology. He cited a similar connection to the institution.

"To put it mildly, Claflin was a life changing experience. Before then, I did just enough to get by," Pressley said. "The University taught me to look inside myself and challenge myself. It taught me to expect success."

Success is something Frederick and Pressley have experienced in droves ever since their 2002 graduation.

Frederick, a former member of the Alice Carson Tisdale Honors College, received his doctorate in mass communications from Pennsylvania State University before the age of 30. Before returning to his alma mater, Frederick was a Frederick Douglass Post-Doctoral Scholar at California University of Pennsylvania's Communications Department. He refers to himself as a "teacher scholar." Frederick feels his work as a scholar enhances his ability to instruct and apply subject matter to students.

His primary research concentration has been how African-Americans used different forms of media to address issues of social justice during the Civil Rights Movement. As a professor at Claflin, Frederick aspires to teach his students that mass communications goes beyond journalism and public relations. He cites his role as a media critic and scholar as an example.

"It's not enough to know what you're doing. It's important to know why you're doing it and the impact it has on other people," the Orangeburg native said.

Meanwhile, Pressley received his medical doctorate in physical therapy from the University of South Carolina. The former Panthers pitcher worked in outpatient therapy at an Atlanta hospital and later was the senior therapist at Carolina Rehabilitation Hospital in Florence.

He wants to bring his expertise in that field to the University. Pressley said he would love to establish a pre-allied health program at Claflin to prepare students for careers in physical therapy, in addition to developing an in-house rehabilitation program for University athletes.

He is also interested in pursuing clinical research on the likelihood of muscle injuries occurring and the healing process associated with them.

But most of all he wants to have an impact on Claflin's students the same way his professors had an impact on him not too long ago.

"I wanted to be a more integral part of the culture that is Claflin. It's one of kind. I want to pass this legacy along to a new group of students," Pressley said.

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