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## **Wanda Sykes and Brian Culbertson's Cap Memorable Hampton University's 150<sup>th</sup> Kick Off Celebration**



“Everyone was here to celebrate and that’s what it felt like. The energy – you could really feel it.

Before we went on stage, I said ‘Ah, it’s gonna be tonight!’” said Culbertson. Hampton University continues its celebration of President Dr. William R. Harvey’s 40th anniversary and the 150th anniversary of Hampton University with the kick-off celebration concert with Brian Culbertson. The concert took place at 8 p.m. on October 20, 2017 at Hampton University’s Convocation Center where Alumna Wanda Sykes captivated the audience with her signature style of comedy as the mistress of ceremonies for this historic moment in Hampton’s 150-year story.

The concert started with Dr. William R. Harvey delivering a heartfelt speech, which recapped the life and legacy of Hampton’s founder General Samuel Chapman Armstrong. Armstrong turned the former Little Scotland Planation into a beacon of education in the south which is now known as Hampton University. Next, former Hampton University Vice President for Administrative

Services, Dr. Rodney Smith, paid tribute to 40 years of the presidency of Hampton University.

Dr. Smith pointed out Dr. Harvey's accomplishments which have solidified Hampton University's outstanding position among the nation's colleges and universities. Some of Harvey's innovations are the following: 29 new structures, four active missions aboard satellites in space, 76 new academic programs, the largest free-standing proton therapy cancer treatment center in the world, an endowment which has gone from \$29 million to more than \$260 million. A video tribute was displayed on the Convocation Center's video screen which recognized 40 years of accelerated growth under Dr. Harvey and Hampton University's 150 years of excellence in higher education.

Brian Culbertson is an award-winning multi-instrumentalist, writer and producer who crosses genres between contemporary jazz, R&B, and funk and is from the musically rich city of Chicago, Illinois. He has self-produced 17 solo albums, most of which have topped the Billboard Contemporary Jazz charts, including 28 No. 1 smooth jazz radio hits. Culbertson capped off this magical evening with electrifying sounds that brought the Hampton University Convocation crowd to its feet with an arousing standing ovation, and leaving them wanting more. Culbertson wowed the audience by playing the piano backwards and playing a plethora of instruments. "He was mesmerizing at the 50th Hampton Jazz Festival," said President Harvey. "There's no doubt he will rock the house launching our Anniversaries' Kick-Off Celebration, the same way he left people buzzing in June." Dr. Harvey claimed that Culbertson was one of his favorite artists and he was the perfect fit to make this homecoming legendary. "It was truly special." said Culbertson once he was finished performing for the night.

Overall, the night had a magical essence which was a great way to conclude Hampton University's 2017 Homecoming Week. The concert had an amazing turn out. Not only did the faculty, staff, and students enjoy the show, but Hampton alumni and locals came out as well. In honor of the Hampton University's 2017 Homecoming theme, many believed that this year was truly legendary.