



Dr. James A. Hefner
President
1991-2005

James A. Hefner was president of Tennessee State University from 1991 to 2005.^[1] Before serving as the president of Tennessee State University he served as president of Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi. Earlier positions include provost of Tuskegee Institute, and professor of economics at Morehouse College. Born in Brevard, North Carolina, Hefner's family was too poor to own books. Recognized as exceptionally intelligent by his elementary school principal, Hefner was invited to visit her home and read her encyclopedias, an opportunity which he availed himself of every day after school for nearly eight years.^[2] Graduating as valedictorian of his elementary class and salutatorian of his high school, he matriculated to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he was a class mate of Jesse Jackson. Here, too, Hefner was singled out as an exceptionally able student, by Dr. Janieta Tate, Professor of Economics, who invited him to come to her house frequently to discuss economics.^[3] Graduating with a B.S. in Economics in 1961, Hefner then earned a master's degree in economics from Atlanta University

in 1962, where he taught for several years. In 1971, he earned his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Colorado. Hefner views his own role as carrying on the tradition of his teachers, encouraging young African-Americans to achieve their full potential.[4] During Hefner's 14-year tenure as president of Tennessee State University, he oversaw the implementation of a \$112 million capital improvement plan, secured as part of the Geier agreement that attempted to end race-based disparity in higher education spending in Tennessee. Several new buildings were built, including a campus center, an administration building, and a performing arts center. Enrollment reached an all-time high of 9,100 students.[1]