One lesson I learned at an early age was that successful people don’t sit on the bench and wait to get called into the game. Winners want to sprint out on the field and distinguish themselves with their take-charge attitude. They step up to the plate and swing away at the next challenge.

Gregory Washington ’89, ’91 MSE, ’94 PhD is one who stepped up and took charge. Leaders at NC State saw that when he excelled in science at Enloe High School in Raleigh. Physics and textiles faculty recruited him, but mechanical engineering won out. The education Gregory received here has allowed him to address the challenges of an evolving technological world. At NC State he had the courage to address problems on campus, stepping up to confront racial inequality. One of the results is the Nubian Message, which provides the campus’ African-American community a voice to this day.

Gregory’s a testament to NC State’s mission of confronting tough problems and providing answers that transform lives. He joins other alumni and faculty who research everything from how to eradicate bedbugs to ways to combat heart disease. Students are stepping up to take the lead, as well. In the spring, the university held its 22nd annual Undergraduate Research Symposium, where issues such as slowing the spread of dengue fever were front and center.

Chancellor Woodson supports the vision of addressing society’s grand challenges, and he emphasized it throughout the university’s strategic plan. NC State faculty and staff have been all-stars in finding creative ways to reshape education, enhance interdisciplinary scholarship and strengthen engagement through partnerships.

We support those goals at the Alumni Association. In the spring, we honored 21 professors with the 2013 Faculty Awards for excellence in the classroom, laboratory and field. And we look for solutions ourselves. We provide programs and seminars to our young alumni to help make their transition out of college to the “real” world a seamless one.

Benny Suggs ’69 Alumni Association Executive Director

In each issue of NC State, we ask members of our Wolfpack family what makes them Red & White for Life. We want to hear your stories, too. Send us an e-mail at ncstate_editor@ncsu.edu and tell us how your NC State experiences and relationships have influenced your life, in ways large and small.