Retiring SU administrator captured the elusive ‘Dream’

A framed watercolor entitled “Dreams” hangs on James Hunt’s office wall.

In the painting, a black child lies asleep on a bare mattress. The child’s room is void of playthings except for a football at the edge of his bed.

“I saw that thing and said, ‘Boy, this man has captured me years ago,”’ says Hunt pointing to the painting.

For Hunt, who is now 67, the dreams have almost surpassed reality. As director of facilities and planning at Southern University, Hunt has supervised the construction or renovation of more than 100 buildings on the three Southern University campuses.

But those responsibilities will soon be turned over to someone else. Hunt is retiring in June.

“Very few people have been able to say that they have been involved in that much planning in one lifetime,” Hunt says.

For Hunt, who taught industrial education at Southern before getting into administration, the road to success hasn’t been easy.

He was born on a plantation in Somerville, Tenn., and had to leave with his family because his father refused to sharecrop like everyone else.

One day the plantation owner was in the store and noticed Hunt’s father paying for his groceries with cash instead of credit.

“My daddy was one of those hard-headed people who baled his cotton and saved it until he could get a good price,” Hunt says.

Another strike against Hunt’s father came when he added a living room with glass windows to the old house in which the family lived. This was unheard of in 20s for a family who were supposed to be sharecroppers, Hunt says. So, the family moved to St. Louis.

Years later, Hunt decided to take a job at Southern University here. By then, the family had moved to Michigan, and his upset father asked

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