Dillard University is proud to announce that Dr. John Ruffin, '65, will be the keynote speaker at Founders' Day on Nov. 14, 2010. In June, Dr. Ruffin helped award Dillard University and the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center a $6.5 million grant to develop a Minority Health Disparities Research Center on Dillard's campus.

Dr. John Ruffin is the Director of the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD). He oversees the NCMHD budget of approximately $210 million. In addition, he provides leadership for the minority health and health disparities research activities of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which constitutes an annual budget of approximately $2.8 billion.

He is a well-respected leader and visionary in the field of minority health and health disparities. As an academician and a scientist, he has devoted his professional career to improving the health status of racial and ethnic minorities and other medically underserved populations in the United States. He has an impressive track record of developing and supporting programs to increase the cadre of minority scientists, physicians, and other health professionals, as well as attract a diverse group of researchers to the health disparities field.

His success has been due in large part to his ability to motivate others and gain the support of key individuals and organizations, as well as to his expertise in strategic planning, administration, and the development of numerous collaborative partnerships. For almost 20 years, he has led the transformation of the NIH minority health and health disparities research agenda from a programmatic concept to an institutional reality. He has served as the Associate Director for Minority Programs, Office of Minority Programs; and the Associate Director for Research on Minority Health, Office of Research on Minority Health.

As the NIH federal official for minority health disparities research, through multifaceted collaborations, he has planned and brought to fruition the largest biomedical research program in the nation to promote minority health and other health disparities research and training. In his quest to eliminate health disparities, the hallmark of his approach is to foster and expand

strategic partnerships in alliance with the NIH Institutes and Centers, various Federal and state agencies, community organizations, academic institutions, private sector leaders, and international governments and non-governmental organizations. Under his leadership, the NIH convened its first summit on health disparities, “The NIH Science of Eliminating Health Disparities Summit,” in December 2008. The summit showcased the work, progress, and challenges of the NIH Institutes and Centers and many of their federal and non-federal government partners involved in minority health and health disparities research around the theme of Integrating Science, Practice, and Policy. The summit attracted more than 4000 individuals from around the world representing various disciplines and sectors.

Dr. Ruffin is committed to conceptualizing, developing and implementing innovative programs that create new learning opportunities and exposure for individuals, communities, and academic institutions interested in eliminating health disparities. His efforts have impacted local, regional, national and international communities. He has established and continues to expand a growing portfolio of research, training, and capacity building programs to train health professionals and scientists from health disparity populations; conduct cutting-edge health disparities research; and build the capacity at academic institutions and within the community to support a promising health disparities research enterprise.

His lifelong commitment to academic excellence, improving minority health and promoting training and health disparities research, has earned him distinguished national awards. Dr. Ruffin has received an honorary doctor of science degree from Spelman College, Tuskegee University, the University of Massachusetts in Boston, North Carolina State University, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Meharry Medical College. He has been recognized by various professional, non-profit, and advocacy organizations including: the National Medical Association, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science; the Association of American Indian Physicians, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities; the Society of Black Academic Surgeons; and the National Science Foundation. The John Ruffin Scholarship Program is an honor symbolic of his legacy for academic excellence bestowed by the Duke University Talent Identification Program. He has also received the Martin Luther King Jr., Legacy Award for National Service, the Samuel L. Kountz Award for his significant contribution to increasing minority access to organ and tissue transplantation; the NIH Director’s Award; the National Hispanic Leadership Award; Beta Beta Beta Biological Honor Society Award; the Department of Health and Human Services’ Special Recognition Award; and the U.S. Presidential Merit Award.

Dr. Ruffin received a B.S. in Biology from Dillard University, an M.S. in Biology from Atlanta University, a Ph.D. in Systematic and Developmental Biology from Kansas State University, and completed post-doctoral studies in biology at Harvard University.

He is married to Dr. Angela Ruffin, and together they have three children and five grandchildren.