With the echo of “We are Grady” ringing in the air, the house lights came on an audience full of passion and pride for Grady College, as the centennial gala ended with an energized crowd of nearly 400 alumni, faculty and students at The Classic Center April 18, 2015.

“I am overwhelmed with joy and satisfaction,” said Charles Davis, dean of Grady College about the four-day celebration. “What a celebration it was, and what pride and joy reflected in the faces of so many of our own at the Classic Center Saturday night. It was one for the ages.”

The evening began with a welcome from UGA President Jere W. Morehead during which time he talked about Grady’s leadership in education.

“Grady is positioned where it has always been: at the forefront of education in journalism and mass communication, continuing to employ the most innovative methods and charting the course for the most innovative future,” Morehead said.

He praised Grady Dean Charles Davis for leading the college to new heights of excellence.

The gathering also received a welcome from Governor Nathan Deal, who spoke about the impact Grady alumni have on the state of Georgia.

“I think all of us know that our fellow Georgians, whether they know it or not, are often and almost daily touched by people who have come through the Grady College and they provide the kind of knowledge and input and information that our people of this state depend on,” Deal said.
At the conclusion of his remarks, Deal declared April 19, 2015, “UGA Grady Day in the state of Georgia.”

One alumna praised by Deal in his remarks was Charlayne Hunter-Gault (ABJ ’63), who spoke at the event.

“There is no better symbol of progress in our state than she,” Deal said. “She didn’t just experience change and progress; she demanded it. Her courage left the University of Georgia and our great state a better place and it’s an honor to be with her this evening.”

The program included personal stories from four invited speakers and Hunter-Gault led the profiles recalling her years at Grady from 1961 until 1963. Grady’s faculty and students provided a home for her and taught her skills. While she couldn’t use those skills in Athens during college due to the continued racial tensions, she used them in Atlanta on the weekends at the Atlanta Enquirer.
“I put to use my Grady lessons on the ground to tell their stories,” Hunter-Gault said. “Once I graduated from here, I took with me the lessons I learned here all over the world using every medium in print and broadcasting, and those lessons served me well when I was covering wars and when I was covering peace, and especially working hard at portraying people in ways that were recognizable to themselves, and giving voice to the voiceless.”

Grady profiles were also presented by Neil Hirsch (ABJ ’00), Meredith Dean (ABJ ’14) and current Grady student Kevin Schatell, who spoke of his love for Grady and respect for his education.

“Grady empowers its students and instills in us the skills and the courage to go forth and inspire others to share their voices,” Schatell said.

He concluded with a rousing refrain of “I am Grady. You are Grady, and we are Grady.”

The gala provided a forum to recognize the college’s alumni award winners and to induct new members into the Grady Fellowship and the Sanford Circle. Two new awards were also presented by Davis: the Distinguished Alumni Educator Award presented to Helen Lanier Strickland (ABJ ’58, MA ’60) and the Distinguished Learning Partner Award given to Jeff Gregor and Turner Entertainment Networks.

Another highlight of the evening was the screening of a short historical video montage packed with archived pictures and priceless memories of Grady’s past. The video was produced by Grady alumnus, Jody Danneman (ABJ ’88), and Atlanta Image Arts. They also produced the closing montage of representative alumni expressing their love for Grady and proclaiming, “We are Grady.”
The gala was near the conclusion of four days of events, which included a student showcase, the inaugural Don E. Carter Conversation, a reception for retired faculty, a preview of the Peyton Anderson Forum, a panel of Pulitzer Prize winners co-sponsored by The Red & Black, the Birthday Field Party at Smithonia Farm, a hospitality suite hosted by The Red & Black, the Grady Centennial Gala and a brunch at Grady College.

Pictures of all the events can be found on the UGAGrady Flickr account.