



PRE-DRILL CAMP 2026 · LEADERSHIP SEMINARS · DAY 2

Communication and Ambassadors

"Up, Down, and Out."

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All Leaders · Sunday, August 2, 2026

The Hampton University Marching Force
HAMPTON'S HEARTBEAT

Icebreaker

Ernie Davis was the first Black player to win the Heisman. In this scene a young Floyd Little meets him and says he wants to be "the best Negro running back"—and Ernie corrects him: no label, just the best there is. Little went on to Syracuse and wore Ernie's number. One conversation, one example. That is what an ambassador does.



The Express — Ernie Davis Meets Floyd Little

youtu.be/sWEI9ou-2lg

WATCH · 2:59

— THE PREMISE

Almost everything a leader does is communication. You pass along a time change, you correct a rank, you answer a parent in the parking lot, you post a video at one in the morning. Every one of those is the band talking. Information has to move **up** the chain and **down** the chain without getting lost or twisted, and everything that goes **out** carries Hampton's name on it. You do not get to step out of the uniform when the whistle stops.

— YOU ARE ALWAYS SPEAKING FOR THE FORCE.

01

The Chain of Command

Know exactly where you sit, and exactly who you go to. You start at the bottom rung and work up.

- 7 Director of University Bands
- 6 Assistant Directors of University Bands
- 5 Coaches and Coordinators
- 4 Drum Majors
- 3 Captains
- 2 Section Leaders
- 1 Line Leaders

OUTSIDE THE CHAIN

The **Student Director** (if assigned) and the **Graduate Assistant** do not sit on this ladder. They serve as **liaisons to the Director of University Bands**.

A chain of command is a structure where **authority and responsibility flow from the top down**, so that communication and accountability stay clear. Learn the rung above you and the rung below you. That is your lane.

Communicating Up

Take it to the next rung—early, and with the facts.

- ◆ **Go to your next level first.** Skipping rungs makes the person you skipped look uninformed and slows the answer down.
- ◆ **Bring the facts, not the rumor**—who, what, when, and what you already tried. Report it straight, even when it makes you look bad.
- ◆ **Escalate early.** Small problems reported today beat big problems discovered on gameday.
- ◆ Some things go **straight to the director**, no matter the chain: hazing, safety, and anything that puts a member at risk.

Lead up: discipline escalates the same way—a first-degree verbal warning, a second-degree verbal and written, then third- and fourth-degree write-ups with consequences.

Communicating Down

Your line only knows what you tell them.

- ◆ **Pass it on completely and quickly.** Time, place, uniform, and what to bring. A detail you forget becomes a member standing in the wrong place in the wrong clothes.
- ◆ **Confirm it landed.** Posting it is not the same as knowing they got it. Get eyes, get a reply, take a count.
- ◆ **Do not editorialize.** Deliver the message as it was given, and take your disagreement back up the chain, not down it.
- ◆ **Close the loop.** Tell the person above you that your line has it, and report back what they said.

Teach Them How to Communicate

Correcting behavior is not the same as building a skill.

- ◆ Rather than telling members to **stop talking**, teach them **how and when** to talk—that is the difference between managing a section and developing one.
- ◆ Show them what "right" sounds like: when to speak up in a rehearsal, when to hold it, and who to bring it to.
- ◆ Teaching communication is teaching **discipline**. A section that knows the protocol polices itself.
- ◆ Model it constantly. Your line will communicate the way they watch you communicate.

Source: Jay Jones, *Leadership 101*—teach members to be good communicators while you teach discipline.

Core Communication Skills

Four habits that carry every message you send.

1 Listen First

Hear the whole thing before you answer. Most miscommunication is a listening failure, not a talking failure.

3 Mind the Tone

How you say it decides whether it gets heard. Text has no tone—so give it one on purpose.

2 Be Clear

Short, specific, and unmistakable. If it can be misread, it will be.

4 Pick the Moment

Public praise, private correction. Timing changes the message.

For the hard ones: see *Difficult Conversations*—Radical Candor, and naming the issue with Situation, Behavior, and Impact.

You Are an Ambassador

Off the field, you are the band to whoever is watching.

- ◆ In the airport, the hotel, the restaurant, and the stands, people do not see a student. They see **Hampton**.
- ◆ Prospective members, parents, alumni, and donors form their whole opinion of this program from **one interaction with one of us**.
- ◆ Speak to people. Say good morning, hold the door, thank the staff and the bus driver. That costs nothing and it is remembered.
- ◆ Recruiting is not only what the staff does. **You are the pitch**—the way Ernie Davis was for Floyd Little.

Social Media Is the Public Record

The internet does not forget, and it does not add context.

- ◆ Anything you post in Force gear, at a Force event, or about a Force member is **the program speaking**, whether you meant it that way or not.
- ◆ **Never air band business online.** Conflicts, corrections, and complaints go up the chain—never on a timeline.
- ◆ Assume a future employer, an admissions officer, and a recruit's mother all see it. Post like that is true, because it is.
- ◆ Used right, your platform is a **recruiting tool**. Post the clean reps, the wins, and the culture we actually want people to join.

The Core of This Program

Every message you send should carry all four.

Spirit

The energy you bring shows up in how you speak to your line and to the public.

Unity

One message, one direction. Leaders do not contradict each other in front of the band.

Discipline

Right message, right person, right channel, right time—every time.

Attitude

Tone travels further than content. People remember how you made them feel.

Source: Jay Jones, *Leadership 101*—spirit, unity, discipline, and attitude as the core of a band program and its leadership.

The Communication Playbook

Four moves, every day.

1 Know the Chain

Learn the rung above you and below you, and use them. Safety and hazing go straight to the director.

3 Move It Down

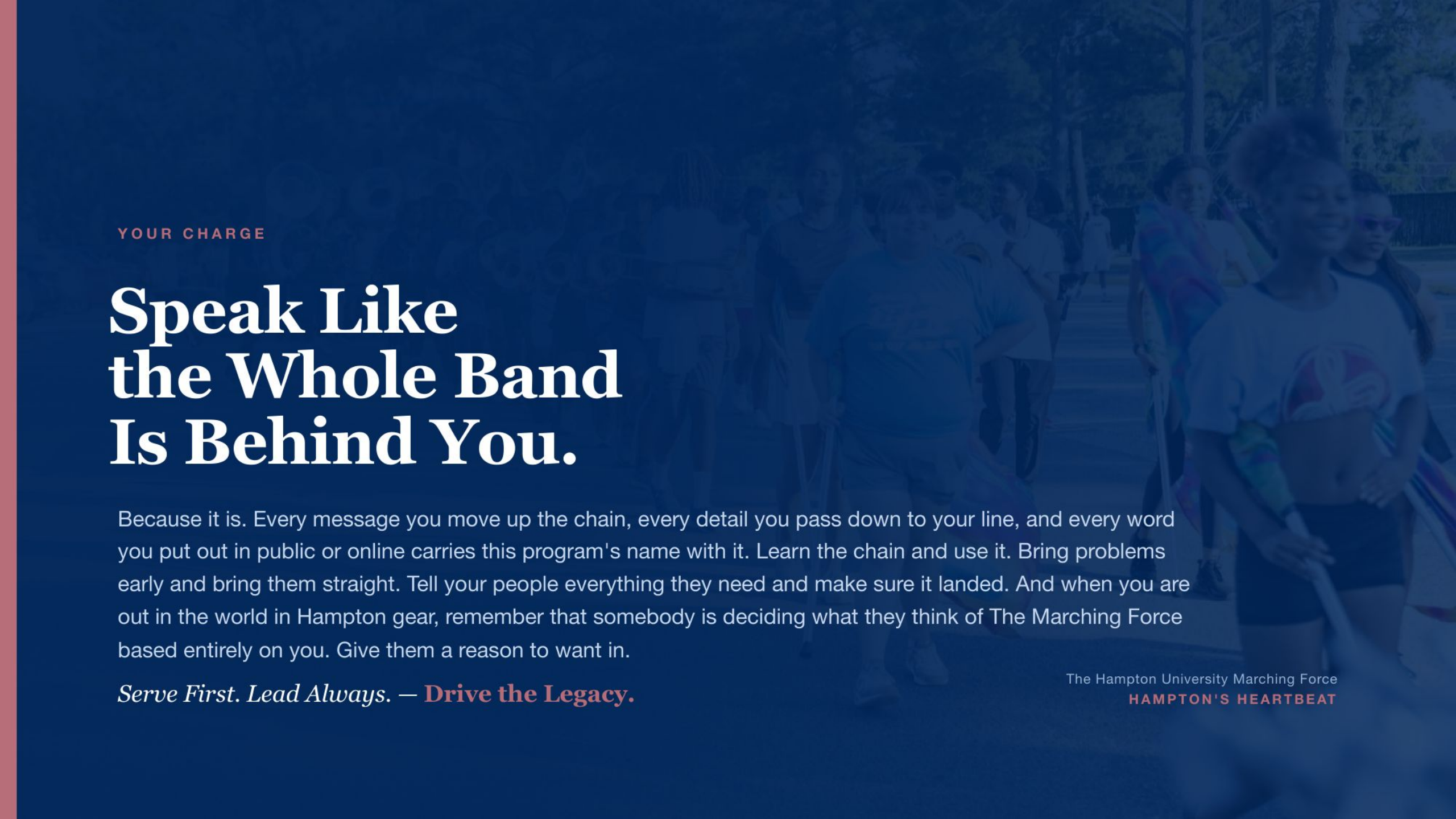
Complete, fast, and confirmed. Deliver the message as given and close the loop.

2 Move It Up

Facts early, no rumor, and report it straight even when it does not flatter you.

4 Represent Out

In public and online you are Hampton. Speak, carry yourself, and post like it.



YOUR CHARGE

Speak Like the Whole Band Is Behind You.

Because it is. Every message you move up the chain, every detail you pass down to your line, and every word you put out in public or online carries this program's name with it. Learn the chain and use it. Bring problems early and bring them straight. Tell your people everything they need and make sure it landed. And when you are out in the world in Hampton gear, remember that somebody is deciding what they think of The Marching Force based entirely on you. Give them a reason to want in.

Serve First. Lead Always. — **Drive the Legacy.**

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