Thompson Tells HI Alumni Of New Era Of Technology

The director of the Langley Research Center told about 100 Hampton Institute alumni Saturday night that a new era of rapidly changing technology will require soundly educated college graduates who are sufficiently adaptable to change and complexity.

Dr. Floyd L. Thompson, speaking at the first of a series of $100-a-plate dinners for college alumni to be held across the country, said graduates are facing an era "that will be characterized by rapid obsolescence and increasing complexity of skills."

Noting the impact of changing technologies that had generated much concern among governmental, educational and industrial leaders, Dr. Thompson said, "... there are many efforts in America, at all levels of education, to make changes which will prepare graduates to better cope with the new era."

Consistently stressing adaptability expected of today's scientists, engineers and technicians, Dr. Thompson pointed out that such adaptability should be "fostered by an educational process that attempts to be broader than the development of the skills required of the immediate present."

"This requirement for adaptability is a general one for our modern society," he said. "Well-educated individuals whose skills are broadly developed at all levels of activity from conception to actual construction are a necessary ingredient if a laboratory or a modern industry is to be able to change with the increasing complexity of technical knowledge."

To illustrate the requirement for adaptability among scientists, Dr. Thompson traced the development of the Langley Research Center and "its efforts to be ever sensitive and responsive to new and expanding technical objectives."

Dr. Thompson, noting that the center was a laboratory concerned not only with the creation of new knowledge but also with the disposition and impact of the knowledge it created, said its programs always attempted to follow the directive contained in its charter — "to study the problems of flight with a view to their practical solution."

He cited specific projects of the center, beginning with its inception under NACA in 1917 and its development to date under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The laboratory, he said, provided a mechanism that established continuity from the inception of ideas to their incorporation into actual hardware.

Dr. Thompson commended Hampton Institute alumni for their fund-raising efforts. He called it "a necessary step if Hampton Institute is to develop the human resources that will provide the community and the nation with the skills required in today's technological society."

The director's address preceded the presentation of a $10,000 check to the college's president, Dr. Jerome Holland. Presented by Charles H. Williams, a college trustee and chairman of the Saturday event, the check will be used to strengthen the college's curriculum in scientific and technological areas.

Four area alumni chapters participated in the kick-off event. They were the Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk and Portsmouth chapters. Other dinners are planned for alumni groups located throughout the United States.