

Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas.

Other historically black colleges have a nickname for their band, but TC's band did not have one until Herbert arrived. "I nicknamed this band 'the quietest kept secret' because if you don't know about us now, you will. You will see us playing in an NFL game (halftime show). You will see us in Mardi Gras parades," Herbert predicted.

About 45 young people recruited by Herbert came out of New Orleans on a bus TC sent for them because the Greyhound bus station still was not operating in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"Their parents did not have cars, they were living in trailers and they were down. It was very touching to pick up those kids," Herbert said.

When pre-drill camp opened before the 2006-07 academic year last August, 102 students showed up trying out for the TC marching band.

The last few days of the camp, the director called each student into his office for a personal interview.

"What I teach is not only the music, but also the pounding ... the marching up and down the field," Herbert said. "That pounding is very physical in the Texas heat. Some kids don't tell you if they have an illness and that's one way to find out if they have sickle cell anemia or asthma. It would show up once they pound up and down the field."

Pre-drill camp started early in the morning and ran until late at night for two weeks.

Some did not make the band but stayed to attend TC, and some had to return home for financial reasons, although the college gave some partial band scholarships. The marching band ended up with about 80-90 members for the 2006-07 academic year and six "golden girls" - dancers who perform in front of the band.

TC purchased some new instruments for the growing band - drums, trombones, trumpets, baritones, French horns, clarinets, piccolos and saxophones. The band also had used instruments local schools gave the college when the schools got new instruments, and the band director repaired about 60 instruments in need of serious help.

Herbert also designed a uniform for the band. "It's sharp, real sharp. We are in the process of getting uniforms. Hopefully everything will work out. Hopefully in August you will see us in band uniforms performing at Rose Stadium," Herbert said.

The band performed this academic year in wind suits and practiced in shorts, T-shirts, white socks and white tennis shoes. Band members traveled to out-of-town games in black suits, black shoes, black socks, black ties and white shirts.

"When you come to hear the TC band, we are like a human record store," Herbert said. "When I say a human record store, we play a variety of music (like a record store having) different categories you could select from. We try to please everybody from the smallest kid to the oldest person in the audience. We play rhythm and blues, we play the blues, we play jazz, rock, the Beatles, down-home blues, Gospel, rap, marches and the Star Spangled Banner."

The marching band stays intact after football season for the spring semester, although downsized to fit in the college gymnasium for basketball games and for concert season.

"In the spring, we have the concert band going, the jazz band going and also the pep band to perform at basketball games. The spring season is more concert season than anything," Herbert said.

The band director hopes to get organized campus chapters of Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity and Tau Beta Sigma National Honorary Band Sorority for college and university bands.

Herbert, who had never conducted a band with fewer than 100 members until he came to TC, plans another all-out recruitment effort for band members, and his goal is for the TC band to number 200 musicians in the near future, possibly next fall. In the next recruiting round, he intends to focus on local high schools in surrounding counties, Longview, Beaumont, Houston and Dallas.

"Kids are excited they cannot only get an education, but they can be a part of something that's new, that people are catching on to, that one day will lead into big things for the TC marching band," Herbert said.