Civil rights leader speaks to Meharry Medical College students

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - On Monday, local medical students were treated to words of wisdom from an iconic civil rights leader and former ambassador to the United Nations.

Andrew Young shared his experiences fighting health care disparities in Congress and around the world at the 138th convocation at the historic Meharry Medical College.

He summarized the challenge of President Obama's Affordable Health Care Act.

"Our first responsibility is not to get people well, but to keep them from getting sick, and we can do that and make it more affordable, when those of us who can't find ways to stay well, you'll be able to help us get well," said Young.

The former Georgia congressman, former Mayor of Atlanta and UN ambassador told aspiring physicians they need more than medical knowledge; that they must also be mindful of politics and economics.

"Those are things that will put you in boxes that will make it very difficult to practice the medicine you've learned here, so you have got to be politically astute," said Young.

As a part of the ceremony, Young was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters.

The college also unveiled a portrait of Dr. Henry Foster for his leadership at Meharry.

Dr. Foster was acting president at Meharry in the early 1990s. He helped secure staffing and clinical training for Meharry students at Metro General Hospital.