

# The Bulletin

A Magazine From Johnson C. Smith University | 2023 – 2024

**IGNITING  
A NEW ERA  
OF EXCELLENCE**

**VALERIE KINLOCH, PH.D.**

15TH PRESIDENT | 1996 ALUMNA









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## The Bulletin

A magazine from Johnson C. Smith University

2023 - 2024

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**Opposite page:** JCSU President Valerie Kinloch enjoys time on the sidelines with Lisa Jones Matthews of Winston-Salem State University.

# President's Message

## Igniting a New Era of Excellence



Here at Johnson C. Smith University, we are igniting change and inspiring dreams. We cultivate students to be the best of who they want to be/become and, in turn, to contribute to improving the world for the better. We support faculty and staff by encouraging them to be curriculum innovators, critical researchers, engaged learners, caring leaders, and advocates for

students. We inspire our alumni and community supporters to return to 100 Beatties Ford Road—the location of our illustrious University—to invest their time, their talents, and their treasures in this New Era of Excellence, an era marked by transformation, equity, innovation, engagement, and economic empowerment. I could not be more excited for the present and future of our “Dear Ol’ JCSU.”

When I decided to return to JCSU in the fall of 2023, I knew that I was returning home. It was at JCSU where I met lifelong friends, mentors, activists, and educators who poured into me and made me rightfully believe that I could do anything I set my mind to doing. *If only* I was given a fair chance. *If only* I could learn to dream boldly. *If only* opportunities were presented to me and I trusted myself enough to pursue them. *If only* I believed in myself, even when others in the world did not believe in me. *If only* I would stop doubting my abilities. *If only* I would lean on the strength of my ancestors and others who sacrificed for me (and you) to be here today. *If only*...

And the *if only* has now become: *What next* for our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners? *What next* for our University, founded in 1867 by formerly enslaved Black people? What next for our rich history and legacy? How might this *what next* produce a New Era of Excellence grounded in justice, educational equity, and love? Truly, *what next*?

As we enter into the second year of my presidential tenure at JCSU, I hope that our collective *what next* involves ongoing conversations about our institutional identity,

purpose, role, and function in society and *for* and *with* students, families, communities, and ourselves. As I shared during my first year, these conversations are important, especially as we place increased attention on fulfilling and expanding on the goals of our strategic plan, *Gold(en) Blueprint: Constructing Revolutionary Change* (see: <https://www.jcsu.edu/who-we-are/golden-blueprint>). Our goals include an intentional focus on academic innovation, strong professional outcomes, seamless pathways for students, and a cohesive retention and graduation strategy. To accomplish our goals, we must create new (and enhance existing) space for collaborative engagements involving students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, families, and friends of our University.

Throughout the year, I will share more information regarding transformations that are underway on and off campus. These will include a renewed, bold, and aggressive emphasis on academics, accreditation, athletics, enrollment, retention, graduation, facilities, finances, fundraising, and, among others, alumni relations. As a culturally rich, historically significant HBCU, we will also spend time recalling and returning into practice some of our lost traditions that make us who we are and that distinguish us from others. These include knowing and upholding the values of our Loyalty Song, engaging in experiential learning and community service experiences, providing more internship opportunities, having poetry festivals and arts-based cultural celebrations, and hosting teaching conferences.

Indeed, we will have another year of heightened engagement as we truly take up our mission and move toward a New Era of Excellence. In so doing, we will “change the world...in small and large ways,” as Marian Wright Edelman tells us.

Hold high the Gold and Blue, always, for our “dear ol’ JCSU,”

*Valerie Kinloch*

**Valerie Kinloch, Ph.D.**

15th President | 1996 Alumna





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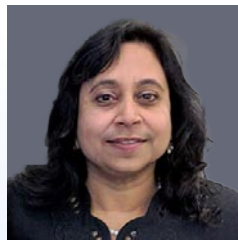


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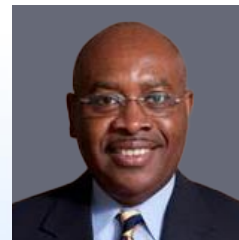
This graphic reflects the 2023-2024 Executive Cabinet. Dr. Davida Haywood stepped down from her position December 2024. We thank her for her years of service.



**Dr. Anita  
Bledsoe-Gardner**  
Dean of Liberal Arts



**Dr. Vijaya Gompa**  
Dean of Science, Technology,  
Engineering, & Mathematics



**Dr. Alphonso Obguehi**  
Dean of Business  
& Professional Studies



2023/2024



# Johnson C. Smith University Executive Cabinet







Kinloch speaks to faculty, staff, students, and community members during the inaugural Lyceum Engagement Series in 2023.

## Kinloch Emphasizes Community at Inaugural Lyceum Engagement Series

By Gabrielle Isaac Allison

The pews were packed in the Jane M. Smith Memorial Church August 25, 2023 as Johnson C. Smith University kicked off its inaugural Lyceum Engagement Series with a public address from Dr. Valerie Kinloch '96, the 15th president of JCSU. Kinloch shared her strategic vision for the University with the crowd, which was comprised of faculty, staff, alumni, community members and student groups, including the entire International Institution of Sound Marching Band and the Golden Bulls Football team.

"When I came to Johnson C. Smith University, I came here knowing I could be whatever I wanted to be," she said. "To see you all here as I return to my undergraduate alma mater, I'm so excited to be your 15th president."

Kinloch reflected on the ways in which she worked toward positive transformation as an educator, dean and researcher in her previous roles and how she hopes to remap those achievements to benefit JCSU and the Charlotte community. **B**



# Inaugural Florida Beach Bowl

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

**President Valerie Kinloch** was on site in the Sunshine State as the Johnson C. Smith University Golden Bulls took on the Fort Valley State University Wildcats in the inaugural Florida Beach Bowl, Dec. 13, 2023 at the DRV PNK Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Drones of Golden Bulls fans packed the stands for the second matchup between the two teams. Ultimately, The Johnson C. Smith University Golden

Bulls fell to Fort Valley State 23-10, in the Inaugural Florida Beach Bowl. Still, Dr. Kinloch, Coach Maurice Flowers and the JCSU football players sparked an atmosphere of excitement that was palpable. Prior to the game, JCSU alumnus Chris Smith and his family welcomed the entire Smith delegation into his Fort Lauderdale restaurant, Smitty's for an evening of delicious food, music, and fun! **B**







## President Kinloch moderates CLT Forward: A Walk Together

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

In May 2024, President Valerie Kinloch served as moderator of CLT Forward: A Walk Together, an annual panel discussion hosted by the Charlotte Business Journal at First Baptist Church West. The event was organized by T.J. McCullough, Market President and Publisher of the Charlotte Business Journal. Panelists included David “Dae-Lee” Arrington, Founder & Principal Consultant, Bridge Builder Consulting; Joel Dancy, Vice President & Community Impact Manager, Fifth Third Bank; Natalie Williams, COO, Urban League of Central Carolinas; and

Monica Roach, HR & Talent Acquisition Manager, McFarland Construction. The transformative breakfast discussion, allowed panelists and participants to explore the intersection of diversity, equity, and inclusion within workforce development in a thriving economy. Among other topics, Dr. Kinloch asked the panelists to consider how DEI initiatives can be integrated into professional development programs to foster an inclusive culture.<sup>13</sup>



## Dr. Valerie Kinloch officially inaugurated as JCSU's 15th President

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

Johnson C. Smith University faculty, staff, students and special guests packed the Crown Ballroom at the Charlotte Convention Center on Friday, April 5, 2024, to witness the official installation of Dr. Valerie Kinloch '96, as the University's 15th president.

After she took the official oath to uphold the constitution of Johnson C. Smith University, Kinloch received her presidential medallion, which dons the names of all of the past presidents of the institution.

Before delivering her inaugural address, Kinloch took the time to thank everyone who had supported her up to this moment. She dedicated her inauguration to her late father, Louis, as well as her mother Virginia, and her husband, Tom.

Dr. Kinloch then took to the podium to deliver a rousing speech on the state of diversity, equity and inclusion and her plans to catapult JCSU into a "New Era of Excellence."

"When I matriculated at Johnson C. Smith University, I took pride in learning about the legacy of JCSU," she said. "In 2024, I take pride in determining concrete ways of building on that legacy. This 'New Era of Excellence' will be marked by those ways."

Kinloch highlighted the areas she plans to focus on, including rigorous academic engagement, an open dialogue

about the identity and future of JCSU and the strategies that will move JCSU from ordinary to extraordinary.

These include continuing the legacy of building valuable partnerships throughout the city of Charlotte and beyond that will provide students with experiential learning opportunities and serve as a pipeline to careers around the world.

**"Education is freedom, y'all.  
Education is freedom and we are free  
here at Johnson C. Smith University."**

— Dr. Valerie Kinloch

Kinloch quoted Marian Wright Edelman's theory of education, which states that "education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than what you found it." "Education is freedom, y'all," enthused Kinloch, a Charleston native. "Education is freedom and we are free here at Johnson C. Smith University."

Kinloch made three special announcements during her inaugural address. The first was the unveiling of the Presidential



Ambassador Program. This program will initially engage 15 alumni of JCSU who are interested in assisting the University in enrollment and retention efforts.

The second announcement included the live signing of a memorandum of understanding with Chabot College, a community college in Hayward, Calif. The college's president, Dr. Jamal A. Cooks, was in attendance and came to the stage to sign the agreement.

This agreement is set to create a pipeline between the two institutions, bringing Chabot College graduates to JCSU to complete their four-year degrees. There are no HBCUs in California, so this historical agreement is poised to bring many students from the West coast to the hallowed halls of JCSU.

According to Kinloch, "the new partnership with JCSU and Chabot College in California will allow transfer students a pathway into JCSU from the two-year college there to our University in Charlotte." Kinloch is focused on growth. In her words, "this is important because it is one indication of how we can expand our reach. We can think about what people are doing in states like California, how we can actually have a mark in the state of California."

Finally, Kinloch announced the 2024 Commencement speaker, Georgia Sen. Rev. Raphael G. Warnock. Warnock is a Morehouse College graduate who serves as the senior pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, the former pulpit of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was elected to office in 2021, becoming the first Black senator from the state of Georgia, and the first Black Democrat elected to the Senate from a Southern state. You can read more about the Commencement speaker announcement online.

Kinloch ended her address with a number of hopes for the future, including positively contributing to Black communities, engaging in national and global discussion around Liberal Arts, enhancing academic offerings, increasing the endowment and leading trends in higher education, among others.



"We belong in every space we enter," said Kinloch. "We have been cultivated at JCSU to know that our value and our brilliance matter." The ceremony included special greetings from a number of elected officials, including Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles, Councilman Malcolm Graham '85 and Rep. Alma Adams.

"Today, we celebrate the remarkable legacy and boundless future of JCSU under the leadership of Dr. Kinloch," said Lyles. "On behalf of the city of Charlotte, I extend my congratulations."

"I'm biased," added Adams, "but its always nice to see a woman in charge."

Tantamount to the ceremony was Charles C. Lucas III, the chair of the board at The Duke Endowment, which has a strong historical relationship with JCSU, having assisted in funding many of the foundational facilities and programs on campus.

"Mr. Duke believed higher education and religion were drivers for civilization," said Lucas. "He was a builder. I believe that he would be so proud of what JCSU has built. We at the Duke Endowment support Dr. Kinloch's passion for changing lives, and we are very glad she decided to return to JCSU."

The inauguration also featured a special ancestral prayer from Dr. Dywanna E. Smith, assistant professor in the School of Education at Claflin University, and performances by the JCSU Concert Choir under the direction of Dr. Shawn-Allyce White.

The student body also presented Kinloch with a check for more than \$2,000 to go toward the President's Gap Scholarship. As JCSU embarks on its "New Era of Excellence," the words of JCSU alumna Sharika Comfort '12 in her inaugural poem set an attitude of expectancy for great things for the future of Charlotte's only HBCU.

"We are fortunate to see history unfolding," she mused, "and of course, it will be golden." **15**





# Carolina Panthers Quarterback Holds Pro Camp at JCSU

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

**Carolina Panthers Quarterback Bryce Young** hosted the first Bryce Young Football Pro Camp on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University June 1, 2024. Young's non-profit, the Bryce Young Foundation, sponsored the camp to raise awareness about mental health in athletics and to offer top-notch football training to young athletes in the Carolinas.

JCSU President Dr. Valerie Kinloch greeted Young, his parents Craig and Julie Young and Nicole Tepper to campus during the event held at the Eddie C. McGirt Football Stadium. The free camp brought to the JCSU campus approximately 200 boys and girls, ages 6 to 13. A pinnacle moment of the event was the jersey exchange between Young and Kinloch. Kinloch received a personalized #15 Panthers Jersey and Young received a #9 JCSU jersey. Several Carolina Panthers players were on campus to volunteer during the event. [18](#)







## Kinloch Inspires the Burke High School Graduating Class of 2024

By Josh Nypaver

**On June 8, 2024**, Johnson C. Smith University President Dr. Valerie Kinloch '96 enjoyed a rousing welcome home to Burke High School in Charleston, South Carolina. The accomplished alumna was invited back to her alma mater as the commencement speaker for the graduating class of 2024.

"What a joy it is to be back home. What a joy it is to be back at the high school that loved me and nurtured me, Burke High School, and my hometown of Charleston, South Carolina," Kinloch told an enthusiastic audience as she began her speech.

Kinloch connected with her audience by sharing an authentic story of personal growth and transformation that began in the classrooms and hallways of Burke. The Burke High School experience is one Kinloch shares with a cadre of family members including her brothers, her mother, and an aunt. In her speech, Kinloch expressed deep love and appreciation for Burke and its teachers. It's a place that molded the first-generation college student and future college president into becoming a published author and leader in Higher Education. Burke High School set Kinloch on a path toward Johnson C. Smith University. **B**





## The Big Read: Mapping the Literary Mind with President Valerie Kinloch and “Homegoing” Author Yaa Gyasi

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

It was a meditation on the power of words, the impact of the Middle Passage on psyche, and the reverberations of the lived African diasporic experience.

Thursday, June 27, 2024 was a special night in the Queen City. Throngs of fans came out for the culminating event of The Big Read featuring “Homegoing” Author Yaa Gyasi and moderator, Valerie Kinloch, the 15th President of Johnson C. Smith University. The Big Read event was organized in collaboration with the Harvey B. Gantt Center as part of the Gantt’s 50th Anniversary Celebration. More than 500 people, mostly women, registered for this event. They arrived ready to meet the president and to engage the young literary star.

Kinloch and Gyasi had a winding conversation about Yaa Gyasi’s book, “Homegoing”. It was Gyasi’s first novel, an epic tale that captures the story of two half-sisters and their progeny, a split narrative that takes us to the shores of Ghana for one sister and through the Middle Passage and smack dab into the New World of slavery for the other. The book answers the question that echoes through the African diaspora: what if? As the novel ushers us from one generation of descendants to the next, we



discover the true price of slavery on the mind, body and souls of a people.

Kinloch, a respected literary scholar in her own right with 9 books under her belt, was eager and poised for a deep dive into





the award-winning narrative. The decorated scholar and JCSU president morphed into an effervescent literary student and lover-of-books on stage. She wanted to explore the interplay of symbols like fire and ice in the book, delve into the power of the pendant and devour the exploration of slavery in the award-winning text.

Many left the conversation between Kinloch and Gyasi with the idea that we can be many things: African and American, fractured and whole, marginalized and central to it all. **B**





# Kinloch Receives Black Business Ink's 2024 Power 100 Honors

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

**Congratulations to Dr. Valerie Kinloch**, 15th President of Johnson C. Smith University, a 2024 Power 100 Honoree! Black Business Ink, led by publisher Richard Williams, honored a diverse cross-section of influential leaders in the state of North Carolina on the evening of June 28, 2024, inside the Tanger Center for the Performing Arts in Greensboro, NC. Dr. Kinloch accepted the award alongside other leaders in the field of education, including Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Board Chair, Stephanie Sneed. The Power 100 honorees were individuals and organizations emanating out of several sectors, including education, business, medicine, entertainment, the arts, media, and the law. **B**







## Dr. Kinloch helped bring in over \$300,000 to support record enrollment

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

**Johnson C. Smith University**, under the leadership of President Valerie Kinloch, raised more than \$300,000 for the Back to Beatties Ford Road Emergency Aid Fund in August 2024. The funds will support the JCSU General Scholarship Fund. The Knight Foundation made a significant donation of \$100,000. The Duke Endowment offered a generous gift of \$75,000, and a host of alumni, community members, faculty/staff and friends of the University donated a combined amount of over \$125,000 during the Emergency Zoom Call held on August 26, 2024.

The Emergency Fund was established to help a growing number of Johnson C. Smith University students financially

clear at the start of the new year. This year, Johnson C. Smith University's enrollment reached record numbers with nearly 1,306 students enrolled, including 400 freshmen in the incoming class, alone. The efforts of the office of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management are notable. Their work helped them reach an ambitious enrollment goalset by President Valerie Kinloch, Ph.D. '96 during the Spring 2024 term. We are thankful for a community of faithful donors. JCSU is grateful to a growing number of new donors, as well, who contributed a combined amount of approximately \$45,000 to the cause. **B**





## Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainability Focuses on Community Education and Outreach

By Gabrielle Isaac Allison

Johnson C. Smith University's Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainability (CRES) is unique in that it aims to teach both JCSU students and the wider Historic West End about the importance of agriculture and sustainability in urban areas like Charlotte.

"We're literally growing the produce, but we're also growing our students, former students and we're growing in the community," said Dr. Mark Dugo, director of CRES.

The Historic West End of Charlotte used to be a food desert, a phenomenon that occurs in urban areas where it is difficult to find affordable, fresh food. While statistics show that the community local to JCSU is no longer in a food desert, Dugo says that economic instability is still an issue in many areas of Charlotte.

According to Fifth Third Bank, which has funded an initiative called Empowering Black Futures Neighborhood Program, only 25 percent of residents in Historic West End Charlotte live within a half-mile of a full-service grocery store. Income and education levels are also lower in Historic West End, which has led to a gap in opportunity for residents surrounding JCSU.



But Dugo and the Kinloch Administration are adamant about getting out into the community, forming partnerships, engaging in critical conversation and making sustainable changes to benefit the lives of its community members.

CRES and Sustainability Village, the University's sustainability program and urban farm, have partnered with the community on several projects, including



providing fresh produce to the Rosa Parks Farmer's Market and local churches.

Dugo says that students, faculty and staff volunteer at the farmer's market to sell produce at a more affordable price to the residents of Historic West End. Last year was the first time the JCSU team returned to the market after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the market is still growing back to its original size.

According to Dugo, the farmer's market is more than just a location. It's a community.

"The residents there, they just like to see the movement, the people, the exchange and the interaction. You know, doing what people do in a good community," he said. "We're building a village, and Rosa Parks Farmer's Market is also very village-oriented. It's a place where we can exchange ideas and continue to find ways to collaborate."

Partnerships have also been made with local churches, who have traded fresh produce for in-kind services. Pastor Wilbur Hood and his congregation at Will of God Outreach Ministries was the first church to partner with Sustainability Village.

Dugo and CRES students helped the church by germinating seeds into small plants, planting them in a garden and teaching parishioners how to cultivate the land to generate crops. Hood said the partnership has been beneficial to the financial and physical health of his congregation.

"Over here on the west side, there's not a lot of organic products that are readily available, and when you do find them, they're so expensive," said Hood. "When Dugo explained to me what [JCSU is doing] it made my heart leap because it's so important that we try and look out for people in this area that really can't afford to go out and buy this type of food."

In exchange for JCSU's assistance, Hood's masonry and hauling company built a walkway in Sustainability Village to make the space ADA-compliant.

"With that partnership, we wanted to focus on the concept of teaching how to do something versus providing it for them," said Dugo. "It's that 'teach a man to fish and he will never go hungry' mentality. We're looking to expand this with churches that are interested in the general daily practice of tending a garden. We would love to get young children involved. If you get them interested in this as young and as early as possible, they will take an interest in it."

In the coming years, Dugo hopes to further partner with Mecklenburg County, Fifth Third Bank Foundation, For the Struggle and other organizational and environmental agencies to apply for grants to further CRES's community outreach. He also hopes to participate in a farm-to-fork program with the University's food vendor to provide fresh produce to students, faculty, staff and visitors who stop to grab a bite in Millennium Dining Hall.

He also hopes to continue educating the campus and the community about the importance of sustainable practices, like water conservation and recycling.

Dugo said that a key part of his sustainability curriculum includes stakeholder identification and engagement.

"It is important that people understand their individual connection to the environment," said Dugo. "If you don't know your connection to the environment individually, you become subject to being exploited by those who are exploiting the resources that you depend on. You don't have to only rely on your governmental entities and special-interest groups. It's time to get engaged!"<sup>13</sup>







## Students, Faculty Expand Research on Reparations for JCSU

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy and Gabrielle Isaac Allison

Is JCSU owed reparations? It's a question a group on campus is posing in the form of an oral presentation and white paper, 109 pages long: "The HBCU Choice Bill: White Paper & Reparations Toolkit for JCSU Leadership."

On Monday, May 6, 2024, Dr. Laurie Porter, Dr. Sabina Otienoburu and JCSU students Ashley Hall '24 and Taylor Dobson '24 spoke before a small group of JCSU administrators and staff. Each member of the group shared evidence in support of institutional reparations for the University.

Reparations can be defined as the making of amends through financial or other contributions to those who have been wronged. In the case of American history, reparations often refers to financial restitution owed to Black Americans whose ancestors worked the land without compensation. Full reparations, according to the JCSU group "is an international law term that 'indicates the degree in which reparations must redress crimes against humanity.' Under international law, reparations must 'wipe out all consequences' of a crime or harm."

Reparations has been a topic of conversation since General Sherman's special Field Order No. 15, issued January 16, 1865. The agreement would have allotted 400,000 acres of land to former slaves, a coastal plot stretching from South Carolina to Florida. The bill was overturned by President Andrew Jackson. Another bill introduced in the U.S. Senate in 1894 would have granted each ex-slave \$500 in reparations plus a monthly

pension of \$4 - \$15. According to the NAACP, the bill died in congressional committee.

The group of JCSU students and faculty have been intrigued by the topic of reparations since Spring 2023. Their interest was piqued by the viewing of the documentary, "The Big Payback," co-produced by actress Erika Alexander and award-winning documentarian Whitney Dow. The film traces the mission of a young alderwoman in Illinois to pass the first tax-funded reparations for Black Americans in her town of Evanston.

**"We are taking a stand on a crime against humanity."**

On this journey, JCSU students began to think about the history of Johnson C. Smith University, a history that dates back to 1867, a school built by the formerly enslaved. Prodded by the film, students began to ponder the inequities of the era, including education policies and segregation, North Carolina state tax code history and the calculus of dollars spent/services rendered vs. services received and dollars owed: reparations.

The film, even in Dow's eyes, was a conversation starter: "We like to think our film is a sort of activator." The filmmaker hoped to instigate a re-interpretation of reparations through the lens of modern times.



Most Americans look at reparations or even the idea of healing the rift between Black and white Americans as something that's so big it's almost impossible.

Alexander seemed committed to making the impossible, possible. She focused on community engagement as a brand of problem-solving: "Conversation is a natural thing, and it's also how people can get to a solution." For Alexander, the benefits of talking are even more far-reaching. "It's also how people get educated."

In March of 2023, Alexander and Dow held a reparations debate tour, passing through North Carolina's 10 HBCUs, including JCSU. Porter's team of students argued a case for JCSU, presenting research in support of the HBCU Choice Bill.

"The systematic denial of Black taxpayers to public education through the University of North Carolina education system created dramatic wealth and mobility gaps," said Porter, Associate Professor of Communications.

This led to the creation of private HBCUs like Johnson C. Smith University, where Black students were welcomed. While partnerships with the Presbyterian Church and later the James B. Duke Endowment and the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) helped to pay for students' education in JCSU's early years, the cost of a private education began to steeply rise in comparison to state-funded institutions.

"Private HBCUs are the least funded institutions across the board," said Porter. Now Porter, Otienoburu, Hall and Dobson are on a mission to fill the void.

During the May 6 session, Porter shared the group's financial assessment. In 2023, for example, the average cost for attending a private HBCU was between \$26,000 and \$30,000 a year, while UNC Charlotte's tuition costs hovered just over \$7,000 on average, per year. Further, several HBCUs have noticed that predominately White institutions (PWIs) have duplicated programs previously unique to HBCUs.

The affordability of public education has created a disruption in historical models of educational supply and demand. As a result, a number of students who were interested in a private HBCU experience have turned to the public education system for their post-secondary degrees. Nationwide, HBCU enrollment has dropped 16 percent per, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

In order to rectify the issue, Porter, along with Otienoburu, Hall and Dobson propose the creation of an Urban Institute, created and run by JCSU, with existing and potential corporate and non-profit partners.

Hall and Dobson said they polled a number of students and alumni about reparations, and they were surprised to learn that their poll participants had little to no knowledge on what reparations were.

"Many older alumni we interviewed are against reparations because they feel the ship has sailed on that opportunity," Hall said. "While our current students had little knowledge of reparations and the institution's history, they have an immense pride for JCSU."

After hearing their presentation, Kinloch showed her support for seeking reparations as an institution.

"Reparations are important," she said. "We are owed so much. How do we get what we deserve without being placed under a system that never extended their hand to help in the first place?"

Kinloch discussed several other solutions, such as continuing conversations with existing and potential partners as well as forming relationships with other local universities to expand academic programming and services.

"Your presentation needs to be heard by others," said Kinloch.

Porter, Otienoburu and JCSU students plan to continue to build on their research and present new findings to Kinloch and the JCSU Board of Trustees in the near future. [17](#)





## Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of Brown v. Board & Briggs v. Elliott at JCSU

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

If you walked onto the campus of Johnson C. Smith University on May 10, 2024, you would have stumbled across a school bus parked in front of the James B. Duke Memorial Library. Posted in front of the bus was a sign plastered with a black and white Civil Rights era photo and a message: 70th Anniversary of Briggs v. Elliott. The sign marked a brutal breakthrough moment in American history: the crush of battles that gave birth to integration.

It was, in fact, history in motion on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University that day in May. JCSU faculty, staff, students and community members gathered to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education & Briggs v. Elliott inside the James B. Duke Memorial Library. President Valerie

Kinloch, Dorothy Counts Scoggins, Joseph A. DeLaine, Melvin Mitchell, Marguerite DeLaine, David Belton, Provost Thierno Thiam, Vice President of Institutional Advancement Joy Paige Springs, Director of Library Services Brandon Lunsford and others were all in attendance, sitting on the edge of history.

Briggs v. Elliott was the seminal Civil Rights case that triggered the avalanche of cases that culminated in Brown v. Board of Education. That juggernaut ended the policy of separate but equal in the United States. It all began in the Carolinas, with friends and affiliates of Johnson C. Smith University.

On May 10, community leader, David Belton, brought an idea to life. Belton, with familial ties to the historic case and to the historic McCrorey Heights neighborhood near JCSU, organized the JCSU-centered community event with the support of the



library and Office of Institutional Advancement staff. Belton is the nephew of the man whose voice broke the silence of segregation, all those years ago in Clarendon County South Carolina Rev. Joseph A. DeLaine. According to the National Park Service website, this was the problem.


"By the 1940's, the average South Carolina school district was spending \$221 per white student and only \$45 per Black student in its schools. Clarendon County, the site of the Briggs v. Elliott case, spent \$179 per white student and only \$42 per Black student" (National Park Service).

Clarendon County provided new books, sound buildings, running water and transportation for white schools. Black students had to walk miles to attend inferior schools - dilapidated structures filled with old books. Transportation to school was not provided. Rev. DeLaine took a stand and a community of parents followed. They demanded a first step: a school bus. This led to threats of violence and an actual

bombing of the DeLaine family home. In 1948, DeLaine, Levi Pearson and Harry Briggs filed a law suit in federal court. The rest is history.

On that day in May 2024 in the James B. Duke Memorial Library, these historical figures were honored and history was remembered.

Rev. DeLaine's son, J.A. DeLaine and his cousin Marguerite DeLaine spoke from the podium during the 70th Anniversary event. They will never forget the sacrifice and the gift.

The event concluded with a tour of the Courage Exhibit where the past takes the form of life-size pictures and encased artifacts. The self-guided experience takes you back in time to Clarendon County, S.C. in the late 1940s and 1950s. Guests are asked to witness the beauty of the fight, to remember the sacrifice of the epic battle and to celebrate the victory. 







**Alexandra Harrison, a young fighter, came back to see her team take home the trophy.**





# JCSU Student Alex Harrison Returns, Family Stands Strong at Red Tails

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

**B**arry and Cabrina Harrison had two things on their minds as they traveled to Johnson C. Smith University from New Orleans for the Red Tails Classic featuring JCSU Golden Bulls vs. Tuskegee Golden Tigers! The couple wanted their daughter Alex to be at the game, in person, alongside her Johnson C. Smith University classmates to witness the team's victory at the Cramton Bowl. Second, the Harrisons wanted to present a gift to the University in their daughter's name.

Alex was a devoted JCSU student who began her matriculation at the University during the 2014-2015 academic year. The college freshman majored in sport medicine with a love for football. She told Coach Steven, head football coach at the time, she wanted to be the team's kicker. She joined the training staff, instead! Alex was living her best life.

On May 8, 2015, everything changed. The JCSU freshman was running down the sidelines when something snapped. Alex fell to the ground. It was a tumble that would signal a turning point in her life. Doctor's determined Alex tore her meniscus. Surgery was the next step.

Alex's mother, Cabrina, flew to Charlotte for the simple outpatient surgery to be by her daughter's side. The simple surgery did not go as planned. The courts say there was a primary problem rooted in the administering of anesthesia and more.

At the time, doctors said Alex was having mini strokes. The strokes were affecting her brain activity. Then the exclamation Cabrina recalls as a haunting reverberation even today.

"They can't revive her."

The medical staff ushered Alex's mom out of the room and into the waiting room. Cabrina could hear the urgent clamor of medical crisis, sounds of distress darting from the room as the medical staff worked to avert the crisis. They called an ambulance.

Asked to ride separately, Alex's mom arrived at the Emergency Room where a chaplain greeted her.

"When a chaplain meets you at the door of the ER you think the worst," she said. My mind was racing."

Cabrina thought the worst initially, but Alex was still Alive.

Barry and Cabrina Harrison held vigil 24 hours a day by their daughter's side. They say JCSU Dean Cathy Jones

visited Alex in the hospital, also. The family relied on an army of family and friends for support. JCSU offered the family housing in Mosaic Village, but the Harrisons wanted to be close to the Uptown hospital where Alex resided, poised to meet their daughter's needs on the double.

As time passed, the Harrisons sought to find a rehab facility close to their Louisiana home. They settled on a rehab hospital in Houston for specialized care. Things were looking up.

According to Alex's dad, "Alex was making good progress. She could lift the spoon to her mouth."

Barry Harrison says the family returned to Louisiana, but there were setbacks. In 2016, Alex contracted MRSA, a serious bacterial infection, while in the hospital. Her lungs collapsed. She was diagnosed with a condition called Anoxic Brain Injury, which occurs when an individual does not receive enough oxygen to the brain. Side effects include impairment to motor function, tremors or spasticity.

Alex's dad Barry said "her general health is good." Yet Alex suffers from paralysis and other side effects of traumatic brain injury. Throughout the topsy-turvy medical journey, the Harrisons have celebrated moments of victory. The family has won two legal settlements: one filed against the anesthesiologist, the other against the hospital. The family has placed the bulk of the funds won in the settlements in a trust. The family has been able to use some funds to purchase an RV with a lift for Alex. Plus, the family has assembled a therapy room and a hyperbaric chamber at home.

On Sept. 1, 2024 Barry, Cabrina and Alex Harrison arrived to the Red Tails Classic flanked by a delegation of 40 - a mix of family and friends. The family also came with a check for \$10,000 presented to Dr. Valerie Kinloch, 15th president of JCSU and Steven Boyd, chairman of the Board of Trustees. The check: a donation to Johnson C. Smith University, was designated to go toward the endowed scholarship the family previously established in Alex's name.

The Golden Bulls pulled out a win against the Tuskegee Golden Tigers: 21-13. It was a game held in honor of a group of American heroes, the Tuskegee Airmen. The 2024 Red Tails Classic honored the winning JCSU football team and another unsung hero, Alexandra Harrison, a young fighter who came back to see her team take home the trophy. **B**

A photograph of Valerie Kinloch, the 15th President of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in academic regalia. She is wearing a black mortarboard cap and a white stole over a black gown. She is holding a large, ornate mace with a gold and blue top featuring the university's seal and the year 1867. The background is a solid dark blue.

# INAUGURATION, GALA & FOUNDERS WEEK 2024

**The 157th anniversary** of our founding was not just a celebration of our University, but it also served as an opportunity to officially welcome and Inaugurate our 15th President, Valerie Kinloch Ph.D. '96.





**TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024**

## Portrait of a Queen

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

**Concert Featuring the JCSU Concert Choir,  
JCSU Drumline and the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra**

**T**he week of events kicked off with a joint concert titled "Portrait of a Queen," featuring the JCSU Concert Choir, JCSU Drumline and the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra. This year was the second consecutive year of this partnership. More than 400 tickets were issued for this event, held inside the Jack S. Brayboy Gymnasium, April 2, 2024.

The concert emerged after Dr. Valerie Kinloch received a special appointment within the orchestra's leadership.

"I just got elected to the Symphony's board, and so to have them on campus at JCSU performing with the Johnson C. Smith University Concert Choir, that's beautiful," said Kinloch.

The Johnson C. Smith Concert Choir performed under the direction of Dr. Shawn-Allyce White, Professor of Music and director of choral Activities with piano accompaniment provided by Frank Williams '71. The Charlotte Symphony Orchestra performed under the direction of Christopher James Lees, resident conductor.



**Dr. White reflected on the experience:**

**"Performing with the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra was an exhilarating experience for the JCSU Concert and Alumni Choir members and me."**

The Symphony and the Choir to performed in combined and alternating patterns. The Charlotte Symphony commenced the evening with "Overture to La forza del Destino" by Giuseppe Verdi. The JCSU Concert Choir joined in with a rendition of "Walk Together, Children" by William H. Smith.

The concert featured nine selections, including the Black National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and the JCSU Loyalty Song. The title performance, "Portrait of a Queen," was performed with great gusto by White. The evening was punctuated by a thunderous performance delivered by the JCSU Drumline. **IB**



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2024

## Day of Community Service

By Gabrielle Isaac Allison

**G**olden Bulls from across campus participated in a day of community service during inauguration week. Students as well as faculty and staff members were asked to give just an hour of their time to participate in one of four community service projects.

The first project was a shopping trip to Harris Teeter to restock the Golden Bulls General Market, a food pantry on campus that supplies food, personal care items and cleaning products to students across campus. A second wave of volunteers helped stock the newly purchased items.

The Gamma Lambda chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., as well as the UNCF Pre-Alumni Council at JCSU both held supply drives for My Brother's House and My Sister's House, respectively. Each organization empowers Charlotteans by offering care training, independent living skills, counseling services, and resources to men and women in need. The supply drives collected items like feminine hygiene products, pillows, and cleaning products.

Trees Charlotte offered the final service project, inviting volunteers to wrap seedlings. This process ensures that the seedlings have constant moisture, allowing the tree to grow before it is planted. Trees Charlotte is an organization that partners with neighborhoods, schools, houses of faith and other non-profits to distribute trees that will help grow Charlotte's tree canopy. **B**









THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024

# Scholarship Luncheon Featuring A Philanthropy Conversation With Cathy Bessant

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

Johnson C. Smith University returned to a long-kept tradition for the first time after COVID-19: The Scholarship Luncheon. This luncheon brings annual and endowed scholarship donors to campus to meet with students who are the direct beneficiaries of their contributions.

The event featured a conversation on philanthropy with Cathy Bessant, the president and CEO of Foundation for the Carolinas.

Bessant began her philanthropic discussion, moderated by Kinloch, by thanking the donors who were in the room.

"I grew up in a tiny, tiny, town," said Bessant. "I would have never been able to go to college without a scholarship. When you are a scholarship donor, you change lives."

During the conversation, Bessant discussed her role at Foundation for the Carolinas, an organization that catalyzes philanthropic activity by assisting donors in distributing their charitable assets across the 13-county region the foundation serves.

Kinloch questioned Bessant on topics like empathy, job hunting and, most importantly, diversity. ■









THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024

# Inaugural Panel Discussion to “Black Educational and Economic Empowerment”

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

In the afternoon of April 4, 2024, Johnson C. Smith University held the Inaugural Panel Discussion, “Black Educational and Economic Empowerment,” a discussion with thought leaders to discuss important topics.

The panel discussion was moderated by WBTV Executive Producer Dedrick Russell. It was facilitated by Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy, director of University Communications and Marketing, and organized by Ms. Joy Paige-Springs, vice president for Institutional Advancement and External Affairs and Dr. Melvin Herring, associate professor of Social Work. The panel featured intellectual heavy-weights: Herring; Dr. James E. Ford, executive director of CREED; Robyn Hamilton, CEO of Urban League of the Carolinas; and Aaron Rudolph, executive director of Carolina Youth Coalition. **B**









**SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 2024**

## Arch of Triumph Awards and Inaugural Ball

A celebration is demanded after a ceremony like an inauguration. On Saturday, April 6, 2024, donors, friends of the University, faculty, staff and students gathered again in the Crown Ballroom of the Charlotte Convention Center for the Arch of Triumph Awards and Inaugural Ball.

The evening was hosted by two dynamic JCSU alumni: Jessica N. Williams '04 and Stephen Graddick IV '16. The two on-air media personalities effortlessly blended comedy and professionalism as they moved through the program. You may know Williams by her voice and clever quips on the radio. She is known professionally as "Miss Jessica" on Charlotte's Power 98. Graddick ushers in the mornings as news anchor on Washington, D.C.'s Fox 5.

Three Arch of Triumph awards were given during the Gala.

Dr. Phyllis Worthy Dawkins '75, was one of the awardees. Dawkins is a nationally recognized higher education expert who has worked at six HBCUs including JCSU, South Carolina State, Dillard University, Cheyney University, Clark Atlanta University and Bennett College, where she served as the 18th president.

Harvey B. Gantt, the first Black mayor of Charlotte and co-founder of Gantt Huberman Architects, was another awardee. Gantt is known as a trailblazer in the world of politics, architecture, activism and education. As a native of Charleston, S.C., he made national news when he became the first Black student to attend Clemson University in 1963. In the Harvey B. Gantt tribute video presented during the Gala, the audience learned of the pioneer's many architectural contributions to the Johnson C. Smith University landscape, from the Biddle Hall restoration project to the New Science Center.

The final recipient of the Arch of Triumph awards was Bernard Smith, Jr. '17, a young alumnus who serves as a Cloud Solutions Architect at Microsoft. The 28-year-old investor and philanthropist now serves as the president of Blacks at Microsoft and was instrumental in the founding of the JCSU Esports and Gaming Program.

The night ended with an electrifying throw-back performance from Doug E. Fresh, an American rapper and record producer. **B**





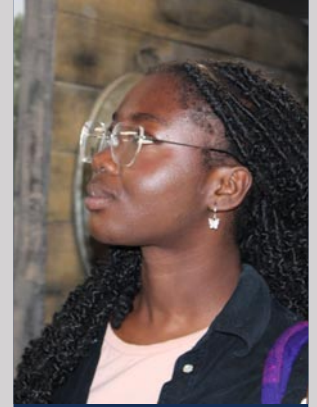




# 2023-24 BULLETPOINTS

## THROUGH VISITING EYES

British students from the United Kingdom's Kingston University visited JCSU in June 2023 to learn about anti-racism and climate change. During the visit, which was hosted by UNC Charlotte and Dr. Terza Lima-Neves, the students heard from a number of JCSU students and alumni about their HBCU experience, as the U.K. doesn't have any historically Black colleges or universities. During the visit, the students walked through the COURAGE Exhibit in the Duke Memorial Library. The exhibit, donated in 2012 by the Levine Museum of the New South, focuses on the history of racism in the Carolinas, specifically the experience of the Delaine family in South Carolina. **B**



## MEET THE ROYALS

On Oct. 12, 2023, Johnson C. Smith University celebrated the coronation of the 97th Miss Johnson C. Smith University, **Aliyah Thompson '24**, and the 13th Mister Johnson C. Smith University, **Kofi Asafu-Adjaye '24**. The coronation featured performances by the JCSU Concert Choir, recognition of SGA and student organizational representatives, a presentation of the 2023-24 Royal Court Class Queens and Kings and a royal introduction of the 2023-24 Miss and Mister JCSU. **B**

### SENIOR

Miss Chayil Bullock-Mariscal | Mr. Enasj Jones

### JUNIOR

Miss Jessica McDonald | Mr. Kameron Sanders

### SOPHOMORE

Miss Jaiden Isome | Mr. Cameron Curtis

### FRESHMAN

Miss Jaivyn Beauford | Mr. Jaylin Jones

### MASTER AND LITTLE MISS

Miss Samyri Jolie Boyd | Master Kye Karter Dials





## CELEBRATING THE SUCCESS OF MREI

On Nov. 2, 2023, JCSU celebrated the second anniversary of its Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative Partnership with the City of Charlotte. During the event, JCSU discussed the ways it was using funds to act on the Gold(en) Blueprint, the University's five-year strategic plan. Highlights included a focus on student retention through the use of Student Success Coaches and the

BullsNav coordinated student care platform. Notable guests included **Dr. Valerie Kinloch '96**, Board of Trustees Chairman **Steven L. Boyd '79**, **Charlotte Major Vi Lyles** and MREI co-chairs, **Michael Lamach**, **Dr. Angela White** and **Malcomb Coley**. **B**



## GANTT HELPS JCSU REMEMBER MLK

In celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Harvey Gantt, a local Civil Rights activist who was the first Black student admitted to Clemson, encouraged students to continue the work of freedom fighters during the annual MLK Breakfast on Jan. 19, 2024.

"It is important that the youth of today understand how much of a role they can

play in moving us forward," said Gantt. "I can't believe that where one political party wants to take the country is the antithesis of what we've fought for. I want young people today to know that they don't want to live in a society that tries to divide us." **B**

## JCSU CELEBRATES 228 GRADUATES

During its annual commencement ceremony, Johnson C. Smith University conferred 228 degrees to 207 undergraduate students and 21 graduate students. The ceremony took place at Bojangles Coliseum on May 19, 2024, and featured a commencement address from Sen. Raphael Warnock of Georgia.

"I know it's dark now," added Warnock, "But that's when the stars show up – when it's dark. All of you are stars. Some stars may shine brighter than others, but a star is still a star. Don't underestimate what you can do as a young person right now."

Saeed Dupree '24 was the class valedictorian, and John Josiah '24 was the salutatorian. Each was honored during the ceremony. The Class of 1999 also celebrated its Gold anniversary (50 years) and the Class of 1974/34 celebrated its Silver anniversary (25 years). **B**





## Provost's Message

### Reflections: 2024-2025 Vision



**T**he Office of the Provost is dedicated to working across campus to ensure student, faculty, and staff success. We do so by cultivating a climate of engagement, excellence, collegiality and opportunity. In alignment with this New Era of Excellence, my office will continue to play a key role in telling the story of academic excellence, student and faculty success. [B](#)

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The first year of this New Era of Excellence has been one with all hands-on deck and one that has yielded significant results. Working with our four colleges as well as every division across JCSU, we have been available to make strides.

#### Please see select accomplishments below:

- Increased student, faculty, and staff engagement and visibility
- Improved policies and processes
- Increased faculty development opportunities
- Improved student retention
- Developed a multi-year academic calendar
- Scaled key University signature programs including Honors Convocation, commencement, and the Opening of School Conference
- Developed and re-imagined new initiatives including the Provost Forum and Lyceum Engagement Series
- Reconceptualized our Honors Program and Center for Global Education and Engagement
- Initiated domestic and international partnerships





## The 6th Annual Black Mental Health Matters Symposium

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

It is a subject often discussed in hushed tones: Black mental health. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 20 percent of U.S. adults live with mental illness, more than 50 million people. For people of color, the rates are similar but mental health problems may last longer. This may be due to the absence of treatment. In a survey, POC (people of color) indicated a failure to seek treatment due to lack of insurance or access to mental health facilities. According to Dr. Melvin Herring, director of the Master of Social Work program at Johnson C. Smith University, race may be a serious factor.

"Black individuals often face unique challenges and stressors, such as systemic racism, discrimination and socioeconomic inequalities, which can have a significant impact on mental health. Bringing attention to these issues can help address the mental health disparities experienced by the Black community," Herring explains.

In March 2024 scores of students, social workers and mental health professionals gathered inside Grimes Lounge in the Mary Joyce Taylor Crisp Student Union on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University for the "6th Annual Black Mental Health Matters Symposium." The objective of the event was to increase awareness around Black mental health issues and to reduce stigma surrounding the topic.

Herring reveals, "there is often a strong stigma associated with mental health issues within the Black community, which can prevent individuals from seeking help. Increasing awareness can help reduce this stigma and encourage more people to seek the support they need."

Removing the stigma surrounding treatment is a big step in the right direction, according to Tammie T. Elliott, LCSW-A, LCAS, a founder of the Black Mental Health Forum. She says, "In the Black community, we have a set of cultural, historical and social factors that contribute to mental health stigma. We have been taught to be strong, to endure and to keep our struggles to ourselves. This can make it difficult to reach out for help when we need it."

Replacing silence with voice, she says, begins with exposure. The more people know the more they grow.

Herring concurs: "By raising awareness, there can be a greater push for mental health services and resources that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific needs of the Black community. This can improve the quality and effectiveness of mental health care."

During the Mental Health Forum at JCSU, panelists and organizers offered a plan of action. In addition to Elliott, panelists included Dr. James Freeman, Capronia Mitchell, Devin Cokley and Richard Mills.

The experts say depression and anxiety are common concerns for POC and the general population. Symptoms of depression include lack of sleep, suicidal ideation and drug use. If a friend displays some of these characteristics seek research, attempt to identify the severity of the problem and seek help. When it comes to anxiety, mindfulness can help. Experts say planning is important. Write the plan down. Get help. Therapists, licensed clinicians, medical doctors, psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists can be great resources for those seeking care.

When it comes to care, Herring says the time to act is now.

"Bringing attention to Black mental health issues can empower individuals and communities to prioritize their mental well-being, support one another and advocate for necessary resources and policy changes." ■





## Criminology Perspectives

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

Criminal justice conversations in the United States often pivot on race. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who spoke on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University in 1966, ventured to frame the conversation away from the us vs them binary toward a more complex conversation about cause and effect, the interdependence of action - just and unjust action, criminal and law abiding. At JCSU, King warned against "the silence and indifference of the good people." He addressed the theory of the American Dream and took the action to make it so.

For decades, the scholars in the Johnson C. Smith University Criminology program have aimed to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Drs. Davis Bivens, Bledsoe-Gardner and Quick have set out to fuse traditional research methods with service and experiential learning methodologies. Bivens says the hands-on approach to learning breeds confidence in JCSU students.

"We have taken pride in the impact our learners have had on the community over the years through that service while they have also gained invaluable knowledge, skills, and abilities."

In March 2024, the Johnson C. Smith Criminology program recognized National Criminal Justice Month by hosting Crime, Justice, and Law Week on campus. It has been an annual event since 2008. This year, the Mecklenburg County Alcohol Beverage Commission (ABC) was the primary community partner. Sessions focused on alcohol awareness and traffic safety events on The Block. Public safety experts engaged with students about the ill effects of underage drinking and the devastating effects of drinking and driving. The culminating event was a career panel, featuring local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, the courts and correctional organizations. Bivens calls the event a success.

"This year, we had more agencies with recruiters, who were available to provide conditional employment opportunities on the spot and some organizations, such as the Division of Adult Correction, are struggling to recruit and retain staff."

According to The Hill, The George Floyd tragedy and correlative social justice movement shifted public perceptions of policing and public safety protocols in the U.S. Some things have changed. In some districts no-knock police arrest methods have been eradicated. In other jurisdictions, neck restraint methods of arrest have been outlawed. According to Bivens, that's not all.

**"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."**

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Some police agencies have responded in providing training on de-escalation," said Bivens. "In addition, there have been calls to bail reform, but the system has been extremely slow to respond to those demands."

There are also new standards of police accountability. Finally, according to a recent Gallup poll, the demand for violence intervention programs is up. The JCSU Criminology program's focus on intervention and prevention is on the growing edge of the national trend.

"We continue that type of high impact pedagogy to help our students have skills essential for the 21st century criminal justice system. Our focus now is to tie in virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and other technology applications being used by criminal justice and public safety organizations."

The JCSU Criminology program is planning for the future, with forward-thinking technologies soon-to-be at their fingertips. How will AI shift the national conversation on fair policing, race and justice? Will King's garment of mutuality disappear? **B**



# JCSU Business Students Tour Bank of America Headquarters

By Special Contributor

Gratitude extends to Bank of America, which allowed students in the College of Business and Professional Studies (CBPS) to tour the bank's headquarters in Charlotte on March 5.

The tour was the result of a collaboration with the North Carolina Banker's Association (NCBA) and was facilitated by John Sullivan, the senior representative of NCBA. Thanks to the unwavering support of the CBPS leadership team, including Dr. Maureen Leary and Dr. Alphonso O. Ogbuehi, as well as the dedicated efforts of Dr. Mohammad Hassan and Dr. Abdullah-Al Masum, an online accreditation course titled "MGT-437 - Credit Essentials" by NCBA, has been seamlessly integrated into JCSU's curriculum beginning in Spring 2024.

Sullivan serves as the course coordinator, and Hassan is the distinguished teaching faculty. Notably, this course has also been extended to other institutions, such as Livingstone College, with generous funding from NCBA. The course's impact is underscored by the exceptional performance of JCSU students. All four enrolled students demonstrated outstanding achievement, scoring above the 99th percentile in the recently concluded, strictly proctored online mid-term exams. Such stellar results position JCSU Accounting and Finance students for promising employment opportunities with more than 82 banks across the state of North Carolina, adding significant value to their academic journey.

As a testament to the collaborative efforts between Hassan and Sullivan, the Bank of America HR team and senior managers extended a warm invitation to JCSU students for an

interaction and networking event on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, held at the Bank of America Headquarters in Charlotte, N.C. The event featured a comprehensive program, including a tour of the bank's heritage center. A total of 12 students and five faculty members, including Hassan, Abdullah, Leary, Dr. Nayyer Naseem and Dr. Bryan Patterson, participated in this enriching experience. Sullivan played a pivotal role in coordinating the activities and providing valuable guidance throughout the event. The engagement included insightful presentations from a BOA senior manager, HR executives, rotational program interns and other senior employees who shared their experiences and success stories. They also shed light on potential internship and employment opportunities for JCSU students. Gathered in the Founders Hall at the headquarters, students, adorned in professional attire, exhibited grace and professionalism in their interactions with the Bank of America staff, posing thoughtful questions that left a lasting impression.

Following the engaging session, participants embarked on a captivating tour of the bank's Heritage Center, where a 23-year Bank of America banking veteran provided an illuminating overview of the bank's history. The Heritage Center showcased artifacts, including old banking equipment, currency notes, weights and measures, receipt printers and copper printing templates. The tour offered a fascinating glimpse into the bank's evolution from its humble beginnings in the early 1920s to its exponential growth in the second half of the 20th century. Each participant received a backpack and coffee tumbler, courtesy of Sullivan. The event concluded with a group photo, capturing the memorable moments of this enlightening experience. **B**





# JCSU Esports & Gaming Competes in Global Competition

By Special Contributor

Johnson C. Smith University Esports and Gaming competed on the world stage during the summer of 2024! A group of six students and Esports faculty member Dr. BerNadette Lawson Williams, Founder and Coordinator of JCSU's Esports and Gaming Trifecta, traveled to Las Vegas, Nevada July 19-21, 2024, for Evo, the largest Esports tournament in history.

JCSU gamer-scholars represent all three academic colleges on campus: College of STEM, College of Professional Studies, and the College of Liberal Studies. The JCSU students competed alongside more than 10,000 other Esports athletes from 63 different countries from around the world. Competitions included such games as Street Fighter, Project Justice, Wonderful World, Mortal Combat, The King of Fighters and more.

JCSU students in attendance included Jayden McKinney, Marquis Hampton, Shaun Moore, Reginald White, Servario Regulus and Anthony Moore.

Collectively, these students competed in five out of eight Esports title tournaments held at Evo, including Tekken 8, Street Fighter 6, Mortal Kombat 1, Grand Blue Fantasy Rising Verses, Guilty Gear Strive, Under Night In-Birth II Sys: Celes, Street Fighter III: Third Strike and the King of Fighters XV.

Lawson-Williams says it was an extraordinary experience for the JCSU delegation of gamer-scholars:

"I was immensely impressed and proud to observe our gamer-scholars in their competitive element, engaged in matches against some of the world's best amateur and professional Esports athletes. They not only represented JCSU and our Esports and Gaming Trifecta, the first at an HBCU, in a stellar manner at the largest esports tournament in the world, but presumably were the only HBCU or college/university esports teams in attendance, while outperforming some of the world's best gamers. They held high the Gold and Blue, while showcasing their gaming prowess."

Several Johnson C. Smith University students finished within the top 25 to 50 percent of the Evo tournament, with one outranking 578 other gamers in Under Night, ranked 193rd out of 771 competitors. Another student ranked in the top 5,000 in Tekken, top 500 in Street Fighter and top 200 in Mortal Kombat 1.

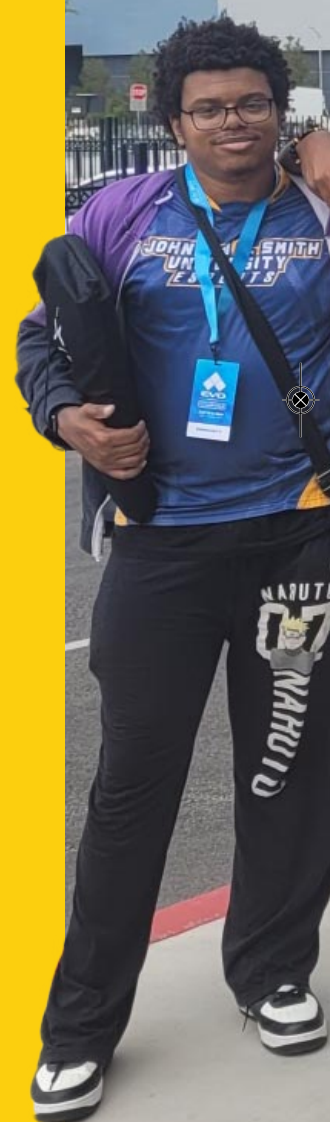
The experiential learning opportunity gave JCSU students exposure to various esports and gaming career pathways. It also enhanced their understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of the esports and gaming discipline, specifically how it intersects with STEM, Liberal Arts, Management, Marketing and Business. The Esports Trifecta's educational, community and experiential learning programming has exponentially increased over the past year thanks to a Title III grant from the Department of Education. Lawson-Williams says it is exceptional to have a group of African American college students competing at this level.

"Currently, only 2 to 4 percent of esports and gaming industry professionals identify as African American. Therefore, we are thankful for these experiences, which have been made possible by a Title III grant from the Department of Education and hope that they will position our students to secure more success within the esports and gaming landscape, including ascertaining potential career opportunities that will bridge this racial divide.

This is the impetus for JCSU's Esports and Gaming Management minor, which prepares future students to acquire the skills necessary to not only organize and execute esports tournaments, but to also gain employment within the esports and gaming industries" added Lawson-Williams.

Next up for JCSU's Esports Club is transitioning into a varsity program, which will solely engage in competitive events against some of the nation's most competitive programs. Since its inception in 2020, JCSU's Esports Club has established a formidable reputation in like collegiate landscape as evidenced by victories against club and varsity esports programs at well-known Power 5 institutions: Duke University, LSU, Michigan State University, Virginia Tech and UNCC, among many others. JCSU's Trifecta is also widely recognized as the blueprint for HBCU Esports.

Future plans for JCSU's Esports and Gaming Trifecta include continuing to serve as a viable recruitment and retention vehicle for JCSU, hosting or co-producing a mega Esports tournament and re-launching its certificate program to include innovative certification areas such as Artificial Intelligence, Game Development and more. **B**





**"They held high the Gold and Blue,  
showcasing their gaming prowess."**

— Dr. BerNadette Lawson-Williams







## Lima-Neves Explores Cape Verdean Identity in Second Book

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

Johnson C. Smith University professor, Dr. Terza Lima-Neves, wanted to write a book that would highlight the people of her beloved Cape Verde. She wanted to move beyond rudimentary academic treatment to a discussion that would honor the musicality of authentic Cape Verdean voices. She wanted to write a book, her second, that would honor the depth of history and cultural expression of her people. She achieved that goal in her new book, "Cabo Verdeans in the United States: 21st Century Critical Perspectives."

On Sept. 24, 2024, Dr. Lima-Neves shared her latest treatise with an enclave of Johnson C. Smith University students, faculty and staff gathered on the first floor of the James B. Duke Memorial Library. It was a public conversation with intimate themes of race, culture, family and community. Johnson C. Smith University professor, Jasleen Kohli, led the conversation focused on Lima Neves' book, which has captured readers' imaginations around the world. In fact, the book takes readers half-way around the globe to explore the people, places and things of Lima-Neves' birth country. She allows her readers to see the world through the eyes of herself, compatriots

and contributors. Collectively, they tackle topics of migration, racial and sexual identity, and the psychological impact of cultural communion and dislocation.

One theme, in the dynamic discussion that grabbed the attention of the audience on site, was a theme of duality of identity. One chapter of Lima-Neves' book focuses on a Cape

**"I felt like a person suspended in the Atlantic Ocean, not quite here, not quite there."**

— Dr. Terza Lima-Neves

Verdean- American who must confront sexual identity and negotiate, at times, conflicting identities. In a moment of self-reflection, Lima-Neves confessed to juggling "the duality of being born in the U.S. but of a Cape Verdean heritage. I felt like a person suspended in the Atlantic Ocean, not quite here, not quite there."




Still, there is stability in belonging, and Lima-Neves' book captures the power of belonging within a clearly defined cultural community. The calling cards to community-belonging can be rooted in food, she explains – like the succulent Cape Verdean chicken, savory beans and rice served in the reception just before the book event. Lima-Neves explained how community can be rooted in language, whether a standardized language or a hybrid crioulo, Afro-Portuguese mix. Identity also can encompass space and place, Dr. Kholi revealed. Lima-Neves concurred, explaining how immigrant people offer a complex choreography when traveling home. "We are a people of movement, a people of heart." In her youth, Lima-Neves moved from Cape Verde to Rhode Island with her family. With an estimated 500,000 Cape Verdeans living in the United States, with the majority residing in New England, Lima-Neves learned to create an American home away from home.

"My husband says, 'home is where you and the kids are.'

Home is where I feel joy, in my classroom. Home is at noon and 1:30. Home is at our home in Charlotte, the house we have built. Home is in my grandmother's lap putting my hands through her hair. With her I feel free."

Movement, at immigrant cultures, can be cyclical. Lima-Neves says her parents recently moved from the United States back to Cape Verde in retirement. They missed the climate and the community. For now, Lima-Neves, her husband and children will live in the lush land in-between worlds:

"I do dream in creole. I do dream in English: multiple languages, multiple physical places. For me the professional is the personal and the personal is the professional.... It is about doing the self-work to recognize the privileges, to know when to hold the space and be quiet and when to become a co-conspirator." 





# JCSU Stem Awareness Workshop Aims To Drive Up Diversity

By Gabrielle Isaac Allison

Johnson C. Smith University's College of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) took strides in early February to educate students about STEM education during its first STEM Awareness Workshop.

The workshop gathered speakers from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Stanly Community College, North Carolina State University and JCSU, who discussed the importance of building a diverse future for the field of STEM. This commitment was first sparked in August 2023 after JCSU had learned it was the recipient of a prestigious \$1 million grant from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

"We would like to thank our friends at DHS for designating JCSU as a Center of Excellence for the Department of Homeland Security," said Dr. Patrick Martin, dean of the College of STEM at JCSU. "We are grateful to have our partners at Stanly Community College here for this event. One of the biggest things we're looking for as we seek a 'New Era of Excellence' is how we can build partnerships, and this is a great example of just that."

The DHS grant was the result of an application submitted by Dr. Suryadip Chakraborty, associate professor of Computer Science, and fellow professor Dr. Awatif Amin. It has made history as one of the largest government-funded academic grants in the institution's history and is aimed at building the next generation of STEM professionals who have a comprehensive education in dealing with natural disasters. Chakraborty's STEM Awareness Workshop brought more than 150 students and professors from JCSU and partner institutions to the Innovation Center in the New Science Center.

There, the students had the opportunity to hear from scholars from UNC Charlotte, Stanly Community College and JCSU who spoke about the benefits of a STEM education, how to get grant funding that can fully pay for research or educational opportunities and advice that will help students pursuing their degree in a STEM field.

One such professional is Dr. Helen Chen, who currently serves as the senior vice provost for Instructional Programs at North Carolina State University. Chen worked at JCSU previously and was excited to connect with the students virtually during the workshop.

"I'm so struck to be able to talk about something very close to my heart," she said. "We are looking for more representation and equity in the STEM field, but I think we have unique opportunities to drive the change and lead with purpose."

Chen described the skills needed to be effective in STEM, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, collaboration and, most importantly, leadership.

"In STEM, you will be the next generation of leaders," she said. "Your ability to communicate effectively is as crucial as your technical skills. Your voice needs to be heard clearly and confidently. You have to build a strong foundation for your leadership skills. I urge you to first think about actively seeking an internship. Look for opportunities where your voice can contribute to meaningful change."

Dr. Mark Dugo, assistant professor of Ecology and Biology and director of the Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainability, discussed some of the groundbreaking research he and his students have conducted, including eDNA





(environmental DNA) sampling in water, water and land quality surveys, bird banding studies and identifying endangered species.

"The Southeastern United States has the greatest biodiversity in the country for a variety of groups of organisms," he said.

Dr. Alexa von Dohlen, a professor of Biology at JCSU, also talked about her research which specializes in the identification of zoonotic parasites in wildlife.

She and a team of students use polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests typically used for humans on wild animals, including bears and bobcats. She said the team processes the PCR tests and compares them to results from traditional tests to see if PCR testing, which is typically cheaper and faster to analyze, can be used to identify and treat parasitic diseases in wildlife.

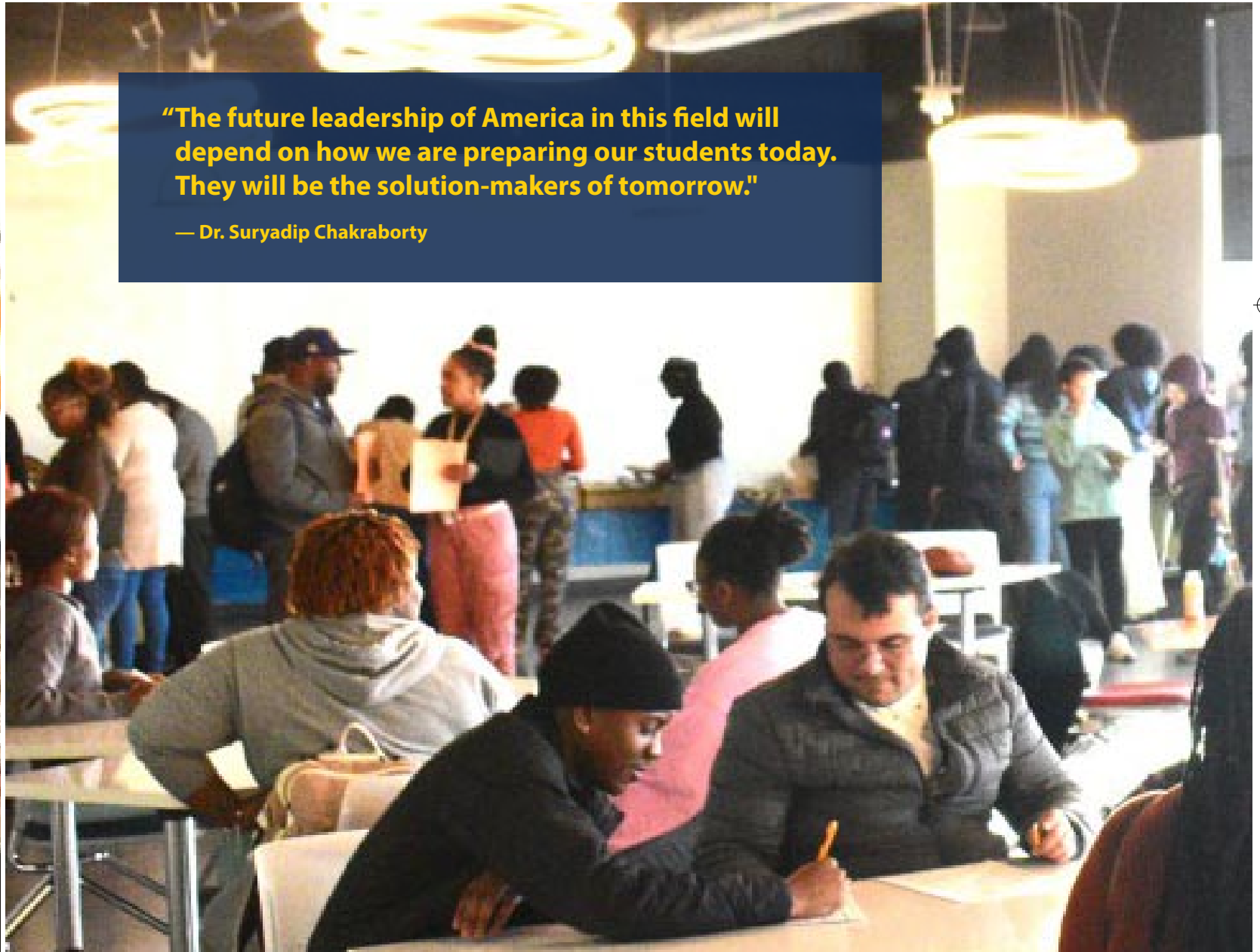
The students who attended were able to walk away with a folder filled with information about STEM opportunities, including internships.

Chakraborty says the grant will continue to connect students to STEM education through components like undergraduate research mentorship, summer research experiences, student scholarships, boot camps to strengthen programming languages and more.

"The future leadership of America in this field will depend on how we are preparing our students today. They will be the solution-makers of tomorrow," Chakraborty said after receiving the grant in late 2023. "If we invest in those students and in STEM today, it is an investment for the future of the nation and the world." **B**

**"The future leadership of America in this field will depend on how we are preparing our students today. They will be the solution-makers of tomorrow."**

**— Dr. Suryadip Chakraborty**





# Entertainer B. Simone Encourages Students to Invest in Self

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

**B**Simone, also known as Braelyn Simone, arrived on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University the evening of October 15, 2024, to drop big knowledge on the crowd. The comedian, entrepreneur and social media influencer came to share her story and enlighten students.

"I built a brand on authenticity. I built a brand on being myself."

Simone brought her authentic self to Gambrell Auditorium in Biddle Hall for the Lyceum Engagement Series event, hosted by GRAMMY award-winning entertainment executive and President Valerie Kinloch's Scholar in Residence, Amir Windom. Windom, in collaboration with Wells Fargo Executive and JCSU alumna Michelle Martin, announced a gift: \$2,500 worth of scholarships to be awarded to fortunate JCSU students via a QR code on the program.

Kinloch gave a warm welcome at the start of the event and led the crowd in an enthusiastic cheer: "JC-SU!" Provost Thierno

Thiam offered the call to order. JCSU student Kimyetta Butler '25 introduced the speaker, B. Simone, who filled the room with an energy of optimism with a healthy dose of realism.

"Remember this, the tough decisions are usually the correct ones" B. Simone declared.

Simone has an impressive social media portfolio with more than 6 million followers. The entertainer who has appeared on MTV's Wild 'N Out and is the owner of B. Simone Beauty, told the crowd of community members, JCSU students, faculty, staff and alumni that her professional sojourn has been riddled with myriad life lessons along their way. She urged students to step out of the comfort zone on occasion to take educated professional risks.

"This is the perfect age for you to try stuff," B. Simone said in direct address to the students. She encouraged JCSU students, including an aspiring podcaster, to move past fear to test the waters. According to B. Simone, this applies to social media content, podcasting, fashion, music production and more.

JCSU student moderator, Melanie Wright '25, asked



a series of probing questions that would amplify this message about recipe for success. One of the questions focused on the power of discernment.

"How do you separate yourself from the atmosphere you are in? How do you know you need to step away?" Wright inquired. B. Simone was quick on the volley, with a clear message for students.

"You have to put yourself first. You have to put some things aside so you can recover. Don't over promise and over-deliver. Make sure you have time for yourself. It will steal your joy when you compare your life to someone else. Focus on the vision God gave you and that will get you to your goals and purpose."

Wright, a social work student at JCSU, wanted to know how B. Simone maintains her stamina. "What keeps you going?" she asked. B. Simone shared these words of wisdom:

"Your friends either believe in you or they are Debbie-downers. I am super fulfilled by what I do."

Simone identified a combination of inner clarity, support from friends and family and therapy that help keep her grounded and pressing forward with a steady mindset. "Black

people need to get therapy - so you can express your trauma and your struggles."

Windom agreed. "You should want to invigorate your soul. That's the stuff that will help you get through."

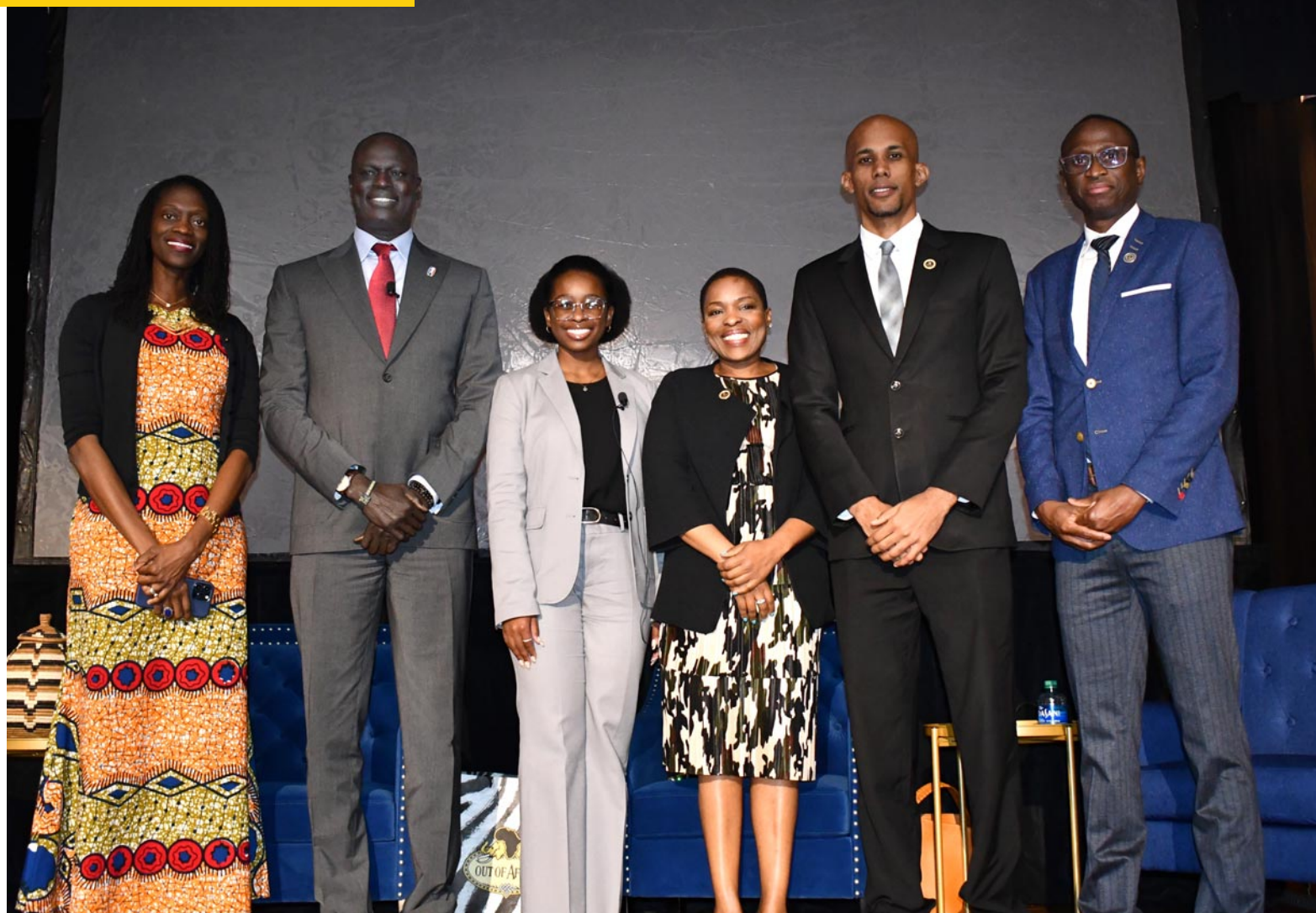
Turning the conversation toward the future, Windom asked B. Simone what she would say, "If you could talk to your 21-year-old self?"

Simone underscored the importance of financial literacy to the crowd of students assembled. "Investments. I am just understanding the work of investments. Build your credit and put money aside for investments."

Dr. Leslie Clement, a lead organizer of the Lyceum series and director of the Johnson C. Smith University Honors Program, brought a cadre of honors students to the event. B. Simone left those students and all the students seated in the historic Biddle Hall one final nugget.

"When you are on your journey, you don't have to know A-Z," Simone shared. In other words, take the first step, and the rest will follow. **B**





## The Pan-African Council Gets Down to Business at JCSU

By Dr. Cheryl Butler-Brayboy

**T**he Pan-African Council graced the stage of the historic Biddle Hall at Johnson C. Smith University on Feb. 22, 2024, as part of the Lyceum Series. The event, “Let There Be Light: A Community Renaissance,” featured three distinguished guests: Fabien Anthony, chairman of the Pan-African Council; Princess Tirelo Molotlegi of South Africa’s Royal Bafokeng Nation; and Amadou Gallo Fall, president of the Basketball Africa League and founder of the SEED Project.

Scores of students, faculty, staff and community members assembled in the Gambrell Auditorium for the distinguished panel discussion, including JCSU athletes and members of the JCSU Honors Program. Dr. Valerie Kinloch, 15th president of

JCSU offered a warm welcome to panelists and guests, while Provost Thierno Thiam, who presided over the Lyceum Series, brought the event to order. JCSU students Chance Brown, Charity Franks and Chayil Bullock-Mariscal introduced the speakers. JCSU student Purity Gumedede served as moderator. Gumedede introduced intellectual heft from the start: “Universities by their very nature are intrinsically situated in the community. The dissemination of knowledge does not have to be esoteric.”

Disseminating knowledge was front and center during the Lyceum featuring the Pan-African Council. As the African delegation traveled across the United States, part of the mission was to bring JCSU and other HBCUs into the conversation about economic development on the continent.



The Pan African Council aims to support this endeavor and to bind together nations in the African diaspora. Fall used the American scholar-athlete model to carve out a vision for the BAL whereby athletes, specifically in basketball, are encouraged to seek excellence in higher education and develop excellence in athletics simultaneously. In addition, Fall says intercontinental recruitment of American athletes into the Basketball Africa League is a significant goal. "In Africa, people did not think of sports except recreationally. In the US we know what it does to contribute to economies." Fall wants the BAL to be a viable next step for US college athletes, including athletes from schools like JCSU. He says global citizenship begins with an open mind.

Purity carried the theme of education and the "open mind" to Princess Tirelo Molotlegi, the first woman in South Africa to earn her private helicopter pilot's license. Gumede wanted to know "how organizations can create a supportive environment that encourages entrepreneurship?"

The Princess placed the focus on youth. "You need to listen to the voices, especially the young people. The only way to achieve that is to sit together, talking with one another, and collaborating together."

As with any business endeavor, there can be challenges. Gumede inquired about the challenges involved in intercultural

collaborations. Gallo Fall boiled it down to this: "It comes back to global citizenship, creating opportunities for exposure. Have respect for yourself, how you care for yourself. Respect has to be earned."

In the end, unity matters. Princess Tirelo Molotlegi whittled it down to the South African term, "Ubuntu." "Ubuntu applies to everybody. It is about diversification, togetherness, and unity."

Gallo Fall agreed. "The BAL is about pulling the world together and about bringing great economic development."

Technology is a big part of the equation, too. According to Fabian, "this is a period of incredible technological growth. With AI, they were able to leapfrog technologies to solve real problems."

Fabian aims to create a system of cross-cultural collaboration that is self-sustaining and self-generating. It is about "building a common destiny, planting a seed. My role is to create leaders and bring resources to them. The legacy will create itself."

In the 2024-2025 academic year, Dr. Leslie Gutierrez, the new Director of the Honors Program, will preside over the Lyceum Series. She anticipates great speakers and enlightening dialogue in the year to come. **B**



## LYCEUM 2023-2024



### DR. CORNEL WEST

**In November**, famed philosopher, author and professor Dr. Cornel West took to the stage to discuss injustice and the storied history of America's freedom fighters.

He explained that the Black community is a beacon of love because, despite all that has happened in the past 400 years, the community remains rooted in its legacy while ensuring it doesn't allow the history of violence against it to repeat itself.

"You can't talk about evil and injustice without situating yourself amongst a group of people that has taught the world what love is," he said. "There's never been a people in the last 400 years so chronically hated as Black people. Despite the catastrophes that have occurred, we have not allowed the blow to have the last word."

West specifically identified freedom fighters like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman and W.E.B. Du Boies. Amid a battle for equity under an ugly cloud of racism, they remained morally and spiritually excellent.

But West admitted that he is worried the younger generations have lost touch with virtuous characteristics and have replaced them with a hunger for money and stardom.

"What we have is the replacement of morally and spiritually excellent people with people who have market success," West said. "When Dr. King was shot down like a dog, no one was looking for the wealthiest Black man in the room. When you think about artists like Billie Holiday and Aretha Franklin, they produced music that pierced the soul. That whole culture has been pushed aside, and now it's all about money, title and glitz. It's a form of spiritual warfare."

West's talk was hosted by Kimberly Nelson '24, a recent graduate from the Interdisciplinary Studies program. Throughout the evening, Nelson asked thoughtful questions about justice, weaponized capitalism, racism and governance.



### NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES

**Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Nikole Hannah-Jones**, known for her passionate coverage of racial injustice for The New York Times Magazine, was March's Lyceum speaker.

Hannah-Jones became front-page news when she was denied tenure at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2021 despite not only meeting the requirements for tenure but also earning significant achievements in the field of journalism.

Years earlier, Hannah-Jones captivated the world with the release of "The 1619 Project," a book exploring the history behind racial injustice in America, starting with the first ship the carried Africans to the U.S. in 1619.

"We are indoctrinated all our lives to believe that America was founded on freedom," she said. "But America was founded



on freedom through the means of slavery. We've been taught the history of a country that never existed. My work has been about confronting these truths."

The discussion with Hannah-Jones was moderated by Political Science major Justin Nixon '25.

Hannah-Jones discussed the depths of racism in America, identifying it as not only a racial system but also an economic system that exploited more than 13 million people for profit. She said capitalism is a remnant of slavery.

"The Black wage gap has remained the same since Dr. King was assassinated," she said. "When I started the 1619 project, I knew I wanted to talk about how what happened a long time ago has influenced the systems we have today."

Another subject of her talk was reparations, a way to pay back the descendants of slaves who helped build America into an economic powerhouse.

Reparations, she said, should come in the form of cash payments as well as policy addressing the wealth gap between people of color and their white counterparts.

She said the solution to the ongoing problem of racism and economic injustice has been here all along.

"We are the solutions, and we always have been," she said. "So much of our history is struggle and pain. That history is critical. But I also wanted to be clear that through all of that, we were creating the first original American culture. You can't imagine American culture without Black people, who have played an unparalleled role in wealth, creative arts and, most importantly, democracy."

## CHESTER HIGGINS

**CHARLOTTE, N.C./Feb. 12, 2024** - "The photographer must be sympathetic to the object of the lens," legendary New York Times photojournalist Chester Higgins Jr. says he strives to re-educate the world about the cultural contributions of Black people, from the Americas to Africa.

The celebrated artistic genius and public intellectual, shared his talents with the Johnson C. Smith University community Feb. 8, 2024, during the Let There Be Light Lyceum, "A Community Renaissance." During the poignant event held inside Gambrell Auditorium, JCSU President Valerie Kinloch offered words of appreciation and inspiration, alongside Chairman of the Board of Trustees Steven Boyd and Provost Thierno Thiam.

For Higgins, the professional journey that spans five decades began when he picked up the camera to express love for family members. Over time, the prolific artist says he wanted "to change the negative images of people of color in media." With a heart for history and a discerning eye for the visual aesthetic, Higgins set out to change perceptions of blackness around the world.

Over the course of nearly four decades at The New York Times and five decades as a photographer, Higgins set out to explore the bounty and brilliance of Africa. He was able to,

"identify the physical footprints that tell the complete story." By capturing photographs of pyramids and mummies, the towering buildings and Ethiopian queens, Higgins captured the, "visual evidence [that] puts the ground under your feet in a firm way." Higgins' vision is made clear in his most recent book, *Sacred Nile*.


Student leaders Amara Turner and Kevin Hewitt paid tribute to Higgins from the podium during the event. The JCSU football team and students in the new JCSU Honors Program were acknowledged in the crowd. All gathered there watched and listened to the wise scribe in action.

"Culture determines what you become in the future," Higgins declared.

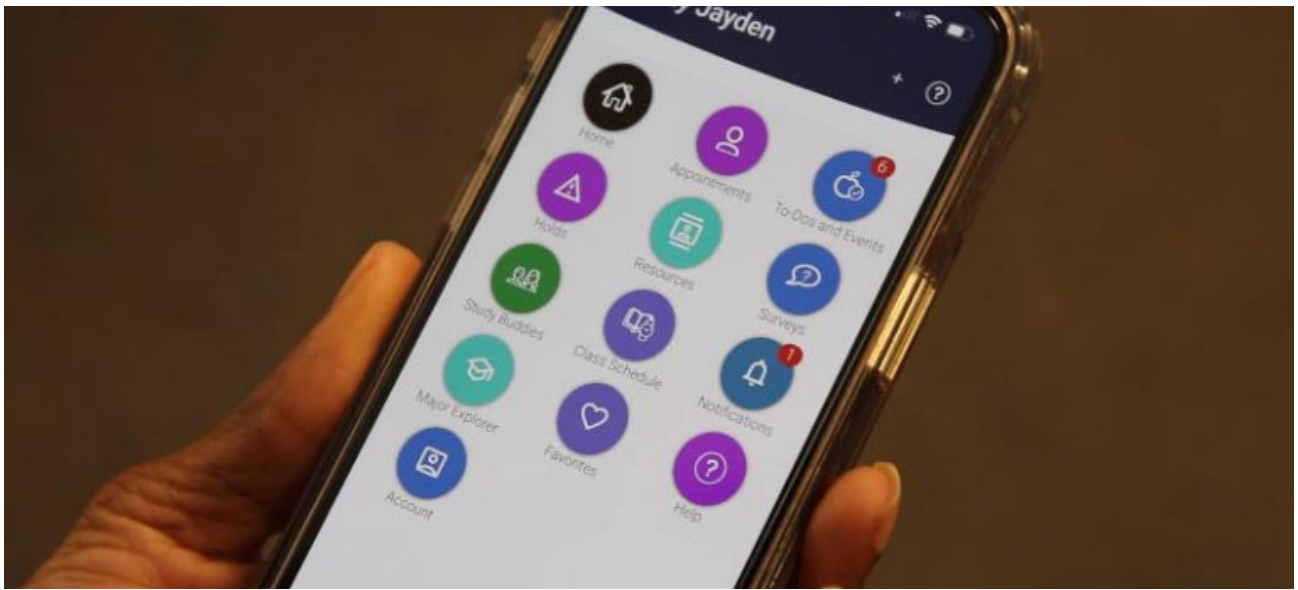
The scholar photographer teaches as he remembers. On Higgins' big screen we see ancient architecture still-standing, storing mysteries still unsolved. Our eyes peruse the images: Queens Nefertiti and Nefertari appear regal and unrelenting. Through Higgins' eyes we see: "Now it is my responsibility to see how I can be great, because the history was great."

In ancient Egyptian royal tombs there are two conversations, he says. In the private tombs, "it is a conversation with memory: who was I and what did I do." In contrast, "the royal tombs are full of writings, but they are mythological - no photos of their family." Photograph by photograph, country by country, Higgins pulls together a psychological composition of a people for the JCSU crowd.

"Our history does not begin in slavery," he said. "Slavery was an interruption in our rich history."

The story is still being written, catalytic moments captured in stills. 





## JCSU Institutes Coordinated Care Platform For Students

**Charlotte, N.C./Aug. 21, 2023** – Dr. Angela White, dean of College University and Student Success, hopes to make Johnson C. Smith University a model for holistic, coordinated student care at an HBCU.

In order to accomplish that goal, she has instituted an initiative that will work hand-in-hand to address student needs both inside and outside of the classroom.

“We have an opportunity to really increase our students’ sense of belonging, which we know is one of the key factors to retaining students,” she said. “Our students come to this institution because they want to maintain the same family feel they have in the communities they’ve come from. We have an opportunity to be an extension of those communities through our BullsNav initiative.”

BullsNav is a platform that will allow JCSU success coaches to connect with various support services to get students the help they need.

Students can download the BullsNav app from Navigate on their phone and easily interact with their success coaches, professors and advisors. Students will also be able to easily pull up their class schedule, which will tell them where their classes are and who their instructor is. White says it will also help students find any holes in their accounts, such as financial clearance, and will allow student success coaches to help their students mitigate some of those issues.

On the back end of the platform, success coaches, professors and advisors can cross-communicate to connect the student with other offices to ensure their success.


The BullsNav platform will allow success coaches and other stakeholders to view an academic snapshot of a student’s progress in the classroom and allow them to make notes about the student’s needs.

“It gives individuals who are a part of that student’s success team the opportunity to see how much or how frequently a student may use different services across campus,” said White. “We can also make recommendations through the platform and set appointments with that student.”

The Navigate platform serves more than 850 institutions and has a proven record of improving graduation rates by 3 to 15 percent.

BullsNav is paid for by funding from the Mayor’s Racial Equity Initiative (MREI), an initiative proposed by Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles in Nov. 2021 with four work streams: bridge the digital divide, invest in corridors of opportunity, catalyze employer commitment and transform JCSU into a top-tier HBCU.

The JCSU workstream surpassed its \$80 million fundraising goal in 2022 thanks to the generous support of longtime donors, like the Duke Endowment, and other corporate and private donors.

“This level of investment is very significant,” said White. “HBCUs have a priority for student success, but the level of investment oftentimes doesn’t match the need for realizing that priority. We know these two evidence-based approaches to student success are effective. For our institution, which is very small, to see the value in the investment for our student success coaches and the BullsNav platform, this is monumental.” 



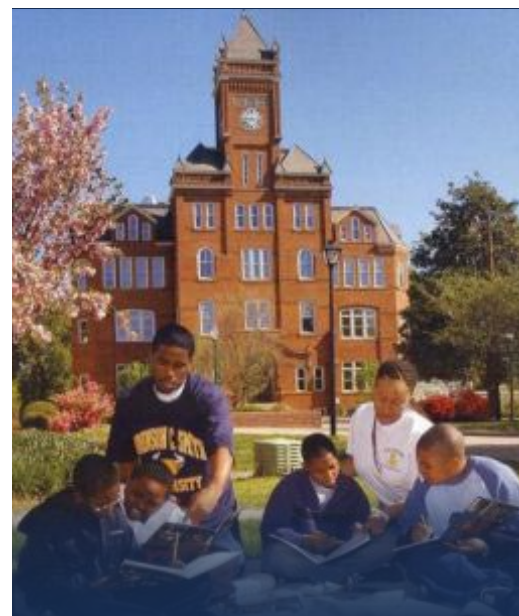
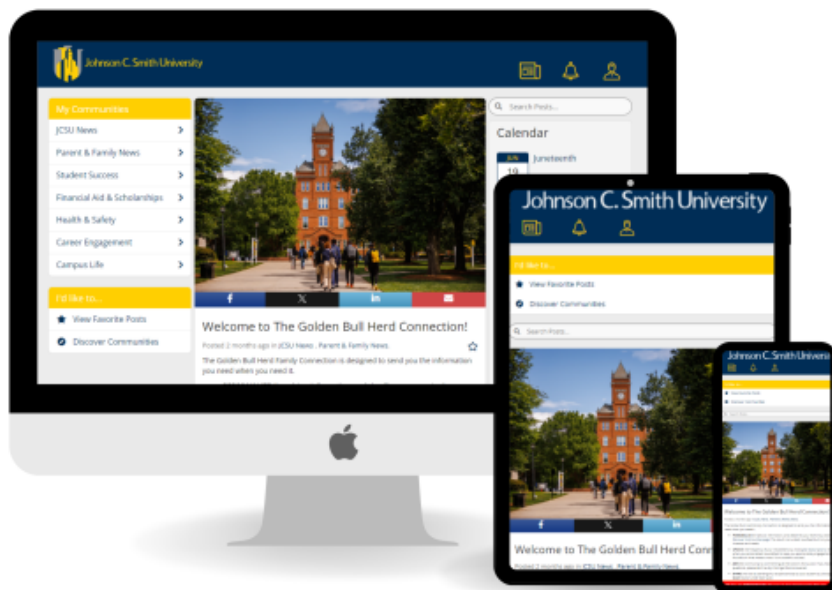
# JOIN THE GOLDEN BULL HERD CONNECTION!

**CampusESP** is a web portal that caters to parents and family members of college students and "turns them into partners." Each institution gets to name their portal and ours is the **Golden Bull Herd Connection**.

Dr. Davida Haywood '96, Vice President of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management, says the Golden Bull Herd Connection "aids in and equips parents and family members with the information they need to remain supportive of and active in their students' college transition, matriculation, and retention."

Join the Golden Bull Herd Connection now! Family members can join like-minded and themed "communities" like Athletics, Career Engagement, and Spiritual Life, and communicate across these communities.

## Access the Golden Bull Herd Connection



## INTRODUCING

# THE JCSU FAMILY PORTAL

## Personalize your JCSU Golden Bull Herd Connection

The Johnson C. Smith University Golden Bull Herd Connection is designed to provide the information you need, when you need it. This resource will help JCSU families stay engaged and focused on what matters most to your student's success.

Scan the QR code or sign up  
at: [jcsu.campusesp.com](https://jcsu.campusesp.com)





## JCSU Dancers Hit the Stage in the Big Apple

Every dancer dreams of leaping across the big stage in New York City. Imagine executing a pas de deux in the Big Apple, whereby each dancer in the pair displays individual choreography before the two take flight in unison on stage. During the summer of 2024, that dream of a big stage performance in the City that Never Sleeps became a dream-come-true for seven dancers and their professor from Johnson C. Smith University.

JCSU junior, Kennedy Meador describes the extraordinary experience.

"Dancing in New York alongside my peers was an amazing experience! We all connected to the theme of the dance in our own ways, and it was truly fascinating to see us come together to tell one story on stage. I felt such a belonging in NYC, being surrounded by so much art and culture."

Professor Jaclyn O'Toole led the charge to take the JCSU dancers to New York City for the White Wave Dance Festival held at the Mark Morris Center for Dance. Professor Ashley Martin helped guide the group, as well. It all happened on June 28th, 2024, one of the most exciting days in the dancers' lives.

According to Dr. O'Toole, "the dancers range from freshmen to seniors, and they are all unique in their personal experiences, identities, and how they emotionally connect to the piece."

The original piece the group performed is titled Dys. Dys is short for "Dysfunction." The dance references a brand of dysfunction that can happen in families, particularly during times of death and grief. In this case, O'Toole explained, "Dys is a movement interpretation of a glimpse into a family mourning the loss of a loved one, and the outside elements that complicate closure. The splitting and sharing of finances and physical items after a family member has passed can create dysfunctional tension, coupled with abrupt emotions."

The JCSU dancers brought the complexity of this family dynamic to life on stage with a combination of heart-felt and disciplined movements. "Dancers on stage use linear movement, floor work and unison phrases to represent the stages of grief as well as monetary distractions."

The performance is both specific and universal in the story it tells. It is a story of human frailty and illuminates the fractures that naturally can arise when pain is too





much. It is a story that embodies what O'Toole calls "the dark side of loss, and the selfishness that tends to emerge." The piece is beautiful, at times frenetic, and sublime. Zuri Presswood, a JCSU senior recognized the experience as a rare opportunity to travel, bond, and perform in the Big Apple.

"The opportunity served as a glimpse into what our future could look like as professional artists. To dance on stage in a city that has such a high caliber of performing arts allowed us to see ourselves in positions we've always aspired to be in." O'Toole applied for the Brooklyn-based White Wave Dance Festival in December and received the acceptance letter in February. The students rehearsed the nine-minute piece from March to June, a short timespan for such a long and complicated contemporary dance story. From the vantage point of their fearless leader, the JCSU students rose to the occasion!

The mission of the occasion, according to the White Wave Dance Festival website was "to be a potent stimulus for change and [foster] the expansion of the dance and arts world through

dance performances, classes, residences, and education." The festival also functioned to prove Shakespeare was correct, "All the world's a stage." Granting JCSU students access to this international stage was a timeless gift that began with one act of courage. [B](#)

### JCSU STUDENT & FACULTY PARTICIPANTS

Jaivyn Beauford (Sophomore)  
Zaria Dawson (Senior)(just graduated)  
Aliyah Thompson (Senior) (just graduated)  
Kennedy Meador (Junior)  
John Fortune II (Senior)  
Zuri Presswood (Senior)  
Savior Spruill (Sophomore)  
Professor Jaclyn O'Toole  
Professor Ashley Martin



Johnson C. Smith University

# Royal Court

2024-2025

**Miss JCSU**  
**Mister JCSU**

**Jessica McDonald**  
**Kameron Sanders**

**Left to Right:**

Miss Senior  
Mister Senior  
Miss Junior  
Mister Junior

Shelby Evans  
ustin Jackson  
Jaiden Isome  
Cameron Curtis

Miss Sophomore  
Mister Sophomore  
Miss Freshman  
Mister Freshman

Jaivyn Beauford  
Jaylin Jones  
Allison Black  
Frederick Logan





## Korn Ferry Creates Opportunities for JCSU Students

**On August 29, 2024**, executives from Korn Ferry, JT Saunders and Keisha Trotman, addressed Johnson C. Smith University students, faculty and staff during a "Chat and Chew" held inside Grimes Lounge. The event was a precursor to the HBCU Leadership Accelerator Program, scheduled for October 23 - October 24, 2024. In the program, Korn Ferry's leadership team helped JCSU students prepare for corporate careers. The team taught students about identifying professional purpose, setting goals, developing professional skills, networking and more. [Read More](#)



# Majeed Ederer Walks the Walk as JCSU Freshman Class President



**B**ooker T. Washington once said, “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.” A new student leader at Johnson C. Smith University asserts a plan predicated on community-building and collaborative change. His name is Majeed Ederer. In September 2024, Ederer was elected JCSU Freshman Class SGA President, 2024-2025.

Ederer, born in Tulsa, Oklahoma but raised in Charlotte for 12 out of his 18 years of life, dreams big. The graduate of Corvian Community School, a charter school in Charlotte, always has been an agent of change. Throughout his teen years he has been involved in environmental and social activism, working in concert with several non-profit organizations in the Queen City. For example, Majeed worked to support the unhoused

community in Charlotte, helping to build resources for the community through Crisis Assistance Ministry and Second Harvest Foodbank.

Majeed says he gives back to the community in this way due to his faith. “Being Muslim, we are very service-oriented. In Islam there is a strong emphasis on how we are improving the lives of those around us. That is something I have tried to exemplify.”

Ederer chose JCSU out of this community focus that took shape through a combination of coincidence and deliberate research. Majeed is a political science and marketing major. He aimed to attend a school centrally located – near the business district – in Charlotte. “HBCUs tend to have a political culture and service culture that closely aligns with my own. I came in with a lot of ambition. I wanted to do service and activist-oriented projects.” Ederer believed the JCSU community of faculty, staff, and students would provide him with the support and resources he would need to get the job done.

“It is small and private. I wanted to feel like I could be a part of the community as opposed to be a nameless face in the sea of nameless faces,” he said.

So far, so good! Majeed has hit the ground running with a plethora of ideas percolating, ideas that could lead to growth and expansion on campus. “My dream is to create a political engagement and upliftment program that is grass roots.” Ederer wants to emulate the ideas postulated by Fred Hampton via his Rainbow Coalition, a multicultural group of like-minded activists of the 1960s and 1970s. Currently, Ederer wants to bring service opportunities to JCSU freshmen. “The class of 2028 is a new chapter in JCSU’s history, because it represents a comeback, post-Covid. It represents the change that we want to see in the wider community to bring about social change at JCSU and the larger Charlotte community.”

During his tenure, Ederer would like to make sure freshmen are involved with non-profits in the area. He also wants to make general improvements to the Bullpen in the Mary Taylor Crisp Student Union. “Because we are putting so much into academics, I want to make sure the social aspects are not forgotten.” The well-rounded approach is one President Kinloch, herself, has taken. Majeed, following the path forged by President Kinloch and members of her administration, would like to raise money for the band, the cheer team, and other groups on campus. He already has raised money for wall-mounted automatic air fresheners for Residence Life and feminine hygiene products for women. Majeed Ederer says he is just getting started. Next on his agenda: raising funds for solar panels. For the class of 2028, he proclaims, “this is the tip of the iceberg.” **B**



A portrait of Islaea Anderson, a young woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and a black skirt. She is standing in a room with red curtains and wooden paneling, with her arms crossed and a smile.

# Islaea Anderson

**Class year:** Class of 2027

**Hometown:** Saint Paul, Minnesota

## **CHOOSING JCSU:**

I chose Johnson C. Smith University because of its strong commitment to academic excellence and its vibrant community. The emphasis on fostering leadership and social justice aligns perfectly with my personal values and aspirations. JCSU's supportive environment has allowed me to thrive both academically and socially.


## **MAJOR:**

I'm majoring in Psychology because I'm fascinated by the complexities of human behavior and how it influences our decisions and actions. Understanding psychological principles is crucial for a career in criminal justice, as it helps me analyze motivations and behaviors, which is essential for a lawyer advocating for justice.

## **CURRENT SGA TITLE:**

As the Sophomore Class President, I aim to enhance student engagement and promote a sense of community within our class. I hope to create initiatives that address student concerns and foster collaboration, making our time at JCSU more enriching and enjoyable.

## **PROFESSIONAL DREAM:**

My professional dream is to become a criminal justice lawyer because I am passionate about advocating for those who may not have a voice. With a background in psychology, I believe I can better understand the factors that lead individuals into the criminal justice system, allowing me to approach cases with empathy and insight. I want to contribute to meaningful change in the legal system, ensuring justice and fairness for all. 





## JCSU Student Finds Cultural Treasure in Travel to Africa

**M**arvin Brown has become a world-traveler. The Johnson C. Smith University Business Administration major spent the summer 2024 studying abroad in Accra and Legon in the African country of Ghana. Marvin studied for four weeks through a program sponsored by the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE). This was Brown's first time traveling internationally.

"During my time in Ghana, I encountered a captivating blend of cultural, historical, and natural elements that profoundly expanded my understanding of the region. The cultural richness was evident in vibrant festivals and ceremonies, such as the Homowo Festival, where I observed the joyous expressions of communal life and traditional music and dance," Brown recalled.

A native of Charleston, South Carolina, Brown says he was captivated by the stunning architecture of the region.

"The architectural landscape was equally fascinating, with modern buildings coexisting alongside historical structures like the Jamestown Lighthouse and colonial forts, reflecting Ghana's complex history. The natural beauty of the country





was striking, from the lush greenery of Kakum National Park with its canopy walkways to the serene expanse of Lake Volta and the dramatic Wli Waterfalls” Brown opined.

The journey was punctuated by the delicious flavors of the Ghanaian cuisine. Marvin Brown was most enthralled by a few signature dishes, including these:

- **Jollof Rice:** A staple across West Africa, Jollof rice is a vibrant dish made with tomatoes, onions, and a blend of spices. It’s often served with fried plantains and a variety of proteins like chicken, fish, or beef. Each country has its own take on Jollof, but in Ghana, it’s known for its distinctive, spicy flavor.
- **Waakye:** This dish combines rice and beans, typically black-eyed peas, and is often served with a variety of accompaniments such as fried plantains, boiled eggs, spaghetti, or fish. The dish is wrapped in dried leaves, which impart a unique flavor.
- **Fufu and Light Soup:** Fufu is a starchy dough made from cassava, yams, or plantains, pounded until smooth and stretchy. It’s traditionally eaten with light soup, a tomato-based broth that can include meats like goat or fish. This combination is comforting and hearty.
- **Banku and Tilapia:** Banku is a fermented corn and cassava dough, which is often paired with grilled tilapia (a type of fish) and spicy pepper sauce. The tangy taste of the Banku complements the smoky flavor of the tilapia beautifully

In Ghana, Brown’s cohort consisted of students from around the United States, from other HBCUs and Ivy League

institutions: “It was beautiful to see us all bond throughout the trip despite not having any prior interactions,” Brown recalled.

During his stay abroad, Marvin lived with a Ghanaian family, an experience that will leave an indelible mark on his memory.

“My amazing host family, the Lomotey family... consisted of a mom, dad, two brothers and one sister. My family had a huge house in the Greater Accra Region. My host family did an amazing job taking care of me and really making me feel at home! Choosing a homestay over a traditional dormitory during any study abroad trip enhances the experience,” according to Brown.

The four-week stay was riddled with travel, excursions that took the JCSU finance student across space and time.

“On Fridays and Saturdays, we had excursions around the country of Ghana, and we toured things like the Slave Dungeon and The Black Star Square, the last bath (where captured slaves took their last bath). Sundays were free days for cohort members, and we used that day to do all things Americans talk about doing in Africa like getting cheap haircuts and hairstyles, going to Ghanaian churches, and getting clothes made by [tailors]. For example, I got two genuinely nice suits for \$40 USD which equals 800 Ghanaian cedis.”

Brown says the cultural exchange experience has changed him forever. He is grateful to the faculty and administration at Johnson C. Smith, including Dean Alphonso Ogbuehi, who helped make the travel abroad experience possible.

“During my time growing up, I often felt disheartened by my circumstances, but JCSU’s lifechanging support has uplifted me and given me the feeling that I always needed. The experiences in Ghana deepened my understanding of global contexts and highlighted the importance of education in bridging gaps and creating opportunities. This newfound perspective has fueled my academic motivation, making me more determined to leverage my education to contribute meaningfully to both my community and the broader world.” **B**





## Longtime Johnson C. Smith basketball coach Steve Joyner retires

**S**tephen Joyner, Sr. who served as head coach of the Johnson C. Smith University men's basketball team for 36 years, retired on Feb. 24, 2024. It was the JCSU vs. Claflin game, the final regular-season home game played on the court that carries Joyner's name.

Joyner ranks as the third most winning coach in CIAA men's college basketball history. Joyner's team captured CIAA tournament championships in 2001, 2008 and 2009.

Joyner also coached the JCSU women's basketball team in the 1980s before taking over the men's squad for the 1987-88 season. He became the winningest basketball coach in JCSU history. He also served as the school's Director of Athletics on and off for many years while coaching the basketball team.

A native of Winston-Salem who won a basketball state championship in high school, Joyner also was a star point guard for Johnson C. Smith from 1969-73. He came back to his alma mater in 1978 as an assistant coach for the men's team. He would then become the women's head coach in 1980 before earning the men's head job in 1987. Joyner's roots in HBCU schools in North Carolina and the basketball played by those colleges runs deep. In Winston-Salem, he once delivered the newspaper to the home of Clarence "Big House" Gaines, who was a groundbreaking coach who led Winston-Salem State, the HBCU in Joyner's hometown, for 47 years. **IB**









## JCSU alumna Danielle Williams competes in the 2024 Paris Olympics

**T**rack star Danielle Williams, a 2016 alumna of Johnson C. Smith University, competed in the 2024 Paris Olympics, representing Jamaica, summer 2024. The appearance marked the first Olympics for the sprinter who is also a two-time World Champion in the women's 100-meter hurdles.

Williams, won nine NCAA titles (eight individual, one relay), 13 CIAA championships (11 individual, two relay), earned 13 All-American honors between 2013 and 2014. She also won USTFCCA National Women's Indoor Track or Outdoor Track Athlete of the Year three times during her time at JCSU. Williams inked her way into the NCAA Division II record books as a junior in 2013 when she scored 30½ points thanks to event titles in the

100, 200 and 4×100 relay, as well as a runner-up finish in the 100 Hurdles.

She set current divisional records in the 200 (22.62) and 4×100 relay (44.05), clocked the second-fastest performance in divisional history in the 100H (12.89) and notched the fifth fastest performance in the 100 (11.24).

Williams is the sixth track and field Olympian from JCSU. Williams represented Jamaica in 2024 Olympics. She said she felt the support from the JCSU community as she prepared for the Summer Games. She said she's felt the support from the JCSU community as she prepared for the Summer Games. **B**







## Welcome Home, Alumni!

**A**lumni Reunion Weekend at Johnson C. Smith University in 2024 was a vibrant celebration filled with nostalgia, camaraderie, and a deep connection to their alma mater. The weekend, spanning from Friday, May 17 to Sunday, May 19, brought together over 250 alumni from various classes, prominently celebrating those ending in 4's and 9's.

The highlight was the recognition of the Class of 1974, marking their 50th anniversary as the Golden Anniversary Class, and the Class of 1999 celebrating their 25th anniversary as the Silver Anniversary Class. Festivities commenced on Friday with alumni events across Charlotte, including a special celebration by the "Class Elite" of 1964 at The Studio 229, featuring jazz music and warm welcomes from university administrators.

Saturday saw a bustling campus as alumni from across the country gathered for registration, a continental breakfast, and various class meetings. The Class of 1974 was honored with medallions at the President's Breakfast, while fundraising discussions and updates were shared during alumni meetings. A significant moment occurred when the Class of 1999 planted a tree in remembrance of their departed classmates.

The day continued with a lively day party hosted by Alexis Bibbs '05 and Derrick Dilliard '00, followed by an elegant Alumni Banquet at the Sheraton Charlotte Airport Hotel. The banquet, hosted by Maya Lockett '19 and Jessica Saunders '19, recognized classes for their generous contributions to JCSU over the past five years, totaling an impressive \$5,338,060. The evening was accompanied by smooth jazz and lively dancing, creating lasting memories for all attendees.

On Sunday, the festivities concluded with the induction of 228 new Golden Bulls, alongside a poignant graduation walk for reunion classes. The Class of 1974, donned in gold robes, and the Class of 1999 in varying shades of gray, showcased their pride with class signs and pom poms.

Overall, Alumni Reunion Weekend 2024 was a testament to the enduring spirit and loyalty of Johnson C. Smith University alumni, reinforcing their commitment to their alma mater and the bonds forged during their college years. **B**



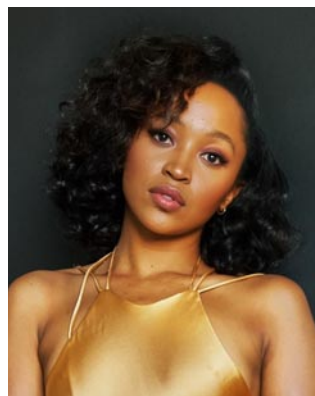






# The Picture of Life Through the Eyes of Thando Dlomo

Intelligent, determined, effervescent, and spiritually-grounded: these words describe one powerful JCSU alumna, Thando Dlomo '16. Thando's power is rooted in clarity of purpose. She knows her *raison d'être* and she refuses to deviate from the path. In a conversation with our editors in August 2024, Thando shared her thoughts on the past, present, and future.



The past is set in Johannesburg, South Africa, the region's largest city. As an eleven year old girl, eager and precocious, Thando auditioned for a seat at the then newly opened Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls. Her audition tape reveals the dramatic talent and depth of vision the young girl displayed all those years ago. Emerging out of what she calls "the depths of poverty," Thando found her place on the world's stage. In literal terms, she dreamed of becoming an actress one day. That day has come.

**The photographer must be sympathetic to the object of the lens.**

Thando will soon appear on screen in a new epic drama series called "King Shaka," to stream on Showtime. Thando will play the female lead in the show executive produced by Antoine Fuqua that depicts the life of famed African King, Shaka Zulu. According to "Deadline," actor Chelres Babalola will play Shaka. The show will chronicle the King's transformation from tormented child to world-renown warrior. Thando will play Pampatha, Shaka Zulu's love interest. It is a role Thando was born to play.

"I never worked so hard in my life, training physically, the long shooting schedule. This time I didn't have three lines. I was a lead character."

Thando's biggest fan might be her mom and role model, Oprah Winfrey.

"Mom has been so proud watching the journey, which has been such a good feeling for me. It is such a great and humbling moment to be able to make somebody of her stature proud. I am very humbled by her continued support of me. We met when I was 11 going on 12 in South Africa.... I took a liking to her and she took a liking to me. We have been stuck like glue ever since. Both of my biological parents are deceased, so to

have her in my corner championing me and watching the journey, has been everything."

Life can be cyclical. Thando just returned from South Africa where she worked on location to shoot the first season of King Shaka. It was a stint that lasted eight months long.

"The character was a strong and empowered young woman who falls in love with the lead guy."

Dlomo says playing this role takes a combination of confidence and endurance. She signed a multi-season deal. It's a marathon, not a sprint. Thando says raw life experiences conditioned her for this moment.

"I know poverty extremely well. I know grief extremely well. I have been through a lot of hard things. They have toughened me up quite nicely."

Johnson C. Smith University became a soft place to land for Thando, 2012-2016. She was a young achiever and a leader on campus.

"You view the experience differently when you come from a place where you didn't have the same resources. By the time I graduated from the Academy in South Africa, what I believed about education was very strong. I was very prepared to work hard.... I knew [JCSU] was an opportunity I couldn't afford to lose."

Thando understood the power of an HBCU education. Applying to Johnson C. Smith University was a conscious choice. She had done the research. In the interview, Thando perked up upon mention of the Gold and the Blue.

"JC-SU... The HBCU experience really does feel like family. It is such a personalized experience. I was Miss JCSU at some point. When I ran that campaign, everyone on that campus felt like my cousin, my family, the support. We came such a long way! I built bonds that felt like family, and that was quite a way to come into the United States. JCSU is a place of second chances for a lot of people."

After serving as Miss JCSU and graduating from the University in 2016, Dlomo worked for the Discovery Channel and then she completed her Masters in Journalism at the University of Southern California (USC). Education was always a top priority for her.

"When it comes to education, I am on par with the CEO of Starbucks. Education is an equalizer."

With her Bachelors Degree in Communications and Theater from JCSU and a Masters Degree from USC in hand, Thando Dlomo hit the ground running in Hollywood.

"When I started working at ET, it felt like such a good transition. I started to feel the catapult toward the career I had always dreamt of. I was really excited about that."

Dlomo was hired as a digital associate at Entertainment Tonight (ET). Her career was shaping up by rapid fire!

"I was printing rundowns, cue cards for the producers and talent. I was like, I know I am qualified for more/ I paid





my dues. Ultimately, I became a producer at Entertainment Tonight. I grew to love my job. It was an absolute dream from the red carpet, to the interviews, to the stories I was able to tell. I thought the Emmy would be for acting, but the work as a producer has more gravitas. My writing became the strongest it could be.

Thando discovered she had a real knack for storytelling, yet acting was her first love. "The Woman King" came a-calling.

"I scored my first big Hollywood acting role. It wasn't that big. I had like two or three talking lines. While I was at ET, I auditioned for A Woman King, with Viola Davis - ironically shot in South Africa, as well. While I did that my ET family had given me time to film that movie. While I was there, I was like 'I am

also a journalist. I can interview some of the main cast while I am out here.' So, ET got me to be a correspondent for the film while I was on [site] shooting it."

During this time, Thando built a professional team. She hired a manager, an agent and a lawyer. She was learning the tricks of the trade. That's when the role of a lifetime came her way. Now, as she awaits the international release of King Shaka, Thando Dloomo has her eyes on the prize.

"I really am working toward this EGOT, to use my voice to make an impact: singing, acting, journalism, speaking. I believe education did change my life. It literally is a thing of miracles." **B**





## Councilman Malcolm Graham '85 Celebrates 30 Years of Service

**J**ohnson C. Smith University alumnus, Malcolm Graham '85, celebrates 30 years of public service Fall 2024. The Charleston, South Carolina native came to JCSU on a tennis scholarship. Since graduating from JCSU, Graham served as North Carolina State Senator for ten years. He served as Charlotte City Councilman for District 4 for six

years and Graham currently serves as Charlotte City Councilman, District 2. Graham says he always has felt compelled to fight for the people. "My professional and public service career has been firmly rooted at the intersection of urban development and planning, community engagement, and social justice." [B](#)



# JCSU Alumnus Boise Kimber Takes the Helm at the Black Baptist Convention

**D**r. Boise Kimber, a 1981 graduate of Johnson C. Smith University, remembers his humble beginnings in Alabama, a young boy with big dreams. Now the former JCSU football player has risen to the highest ranks of the Baptist church as the newly elected President of the Black Baptist Convention. It is the largest Black Protestant denomination in the country with a history that dates back to 1886.

"My mission has always been to be a voice for those who could not or cannot speak for themselves. The Lord has given me a bigger platform now to be a voice for the disenfranchised people," Kimber remarked.

If you live in Hartford, Connecticut, you may have caught Rev. Kimber's electrifying sermon, delivered from the pulpit, rich with literary references and biblical allegory. He has served as pastor of the First Cavalry Baptist Church in New Haven and Hartford, Connecticut since the early 1980s. Prior to his rise to the national helm, Kimber served as the President of the Connecticut State Missionary Baptist Conference. He is an accomplished pastor and community leader who plotted a course toward success at an early age.

"I started preaching at the age of 15. When I came to Johnson M. Smith, I was a preacher. I used to preach inside the Jane M. Smith Church."

Kimber was a prodigious young man, a young preacher, majoring in Sociology, with an athletics foundation. He came to JCSU on a football scholarship, recruited by legendary Coach Eddie Mc Girt. Kimber played line-backer with a focus on academics.

"There was an instructor named Dr. Rippy. He was the department chair. He was very instrumental on spiritual and academic levels. On a spiritual level, Dr. Rippy was an officer at the AME Zion Church in Charlotte. He was very instrumental to me in providing encouragement and his own philosophy about the ministry."

"I would go to the library every night. I had tutors back then. One of my toughest classes was with Dr. Collins, a math instructor. I had a tough time in math, but I got out."

In fact, as a sophomore student, Kimber would drive up to Catawba, North Carolina with a few friends from the football team. Ambitious and oratorically gifted, Kimber served as the main preacher at Mount Sinai Baptist Church in Catawba, North Carolina. He began preaching there in 1978 as a sophomore student at JCSU.

Smith gave Kimber the focus he craved.

"I love Johnson C. Smith. The reason I came to Johnson C. Smith was because of the seminary they had there. I was planning to play football, which I did, but then they moved the seminary to Atlanta. That was one major reason why I wanted to come to Smith."



Kimber created an academic plan that combined theory and practice:

"I would go to the library every night. I had tutors back then. One of my toughest classes was with Dr. Collins, a math instructor. I had a tough time in math, but I got out."

Smith gave Kimber the focus he craved.

"I wasn't totally prepared for college life, but the faculty at JCSU took the time to help me to adjust to college life and academic expectations. From there I went on to receive a Master's degree from Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut - now National University. I earned a Master's in Sacred Theology from Yale Divinity School. In 2000 I graduated from the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio," Boise said.

Dr. Boise Kimber's life has been centered around social justice. He has been the head pastor at First Calvary Baptist Church in New Haven, Connecticut for 38 years. The majestic church is located three blocks from Yale.

"My mission has always been to be a voice for those who could not or cannot speak for themselves. The Lord has given me a bigger platform now to be a voice for the disenfranchised people."

Dr. Kimber has brought great Civil Rights leaders like Jesse Jackson, Ralph Abernathy, Yolanda King, and Martin Luther King III to speak before his congregation. Now, Dr. Kimber steps out on faith, as the President of the Black Baptist Convention.

"I have been a part of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc, for more than 40 years. I have been involved with Civil Rights even dating back to when I attended Johnson C. Smith."

Even with all these accolades, Kimber remembers his roots.

"One of my greatest accomplishments was to graduate from Johnson C. Smith University."

Hold high the gold and blue. **B**



## Lights, Camera, Action with JCSU Alumnus Steve Allen

**S**teven T. Allen is an accomplished cinematographer, creative director, and executive producer on his way to becoming a major mogul in the world of entertainment. Allen is a 2005 graduate of Johnson C. Smith University. He is a dreamer whose early success hinges on action.

The Atlanta-based co-owner of Studio Approach and owner of Stevision, has received credits in a long list of commercials, including two ads for the Paris Olympics, one featuring the most decorated gymnast in the world, Simone Biles. The other is a Coke ad featuring former Olympian, Carly Patterson. In addition, Allen produced an ad for Delta Airlines featuring its CEO. The video is playing in Delta airplanes right now.

In addition to his success in the world of commercials, Steve Allen has found success in scripted features in television and film. Credits include "Always a Bridesmaid," "BlackKorea," "The Family Business," "The Match," "Her," "Spin," "Around the World," "Jokerz Wild" and "Let it Shine: Extended Edition." Allen is Executive Producer of the thriller "The Match" currently streaming on AIBLK.

Allen, originally from Buffalo, New York, found his way to JCSU via a mix of luck and legacy. He was attending a job fair in his hometown in 2001 when he passed a booth decorated in the gold and the blue. The Johnson C. Smith sponsored table caught young Steve Allen's eye.

"I had heard of JCSU. My uncle William Allison graduated

from Johnson C. Smith in the class of 1951 or 1952. He used the GI Bill from WW II to attend JCSU. My cousin LaTasha also graduated from Smith in the 1990s. There was a strong family legacy to JCSU. My aunt lived off Beatties Ford Road."

Allen decided to apply and attend, site unseen. He arrived alone, bright-eyed and brave.

"I arrived in 2001 without attending Golden Bull Academy. I was 17 years old and terrified. As soon as I arrived on campus, I knew I wanted to be there."

Allen took the bull by the horn.

"Those days were really exciting for me. I felt a sense of family, a sense of belonging, a sense of home." Steve was given a mentor through student support services. That allowed him to get acclimated to the Smith way.

"I was a pretty scrappy kid. I grew up on the right side of the track but in the inner city. I had this grit about me that I was going to be okay. I would figure it out."

Figure it out, he did. Steve joined the drama club and participated in the Halloween play in Biddle Hall his first year. The former theater kid had found his lane.

Further, Steve says two members of the JCSU music program back then, kept him on the straight and narrow: Dr. Chris Weiss and Dr. Gregory Thompson. They set Allen on a path of innovation and entrepreneurship.

"I made money as a student by providing sound and equipment. Rather than hiring an outside company, I was getting booked for jobs on campus. I was able to make money while being a student by experimenting with the equipment we had. My ability to edit and create music allowed me to edit music for dance troupes and fraternities and sororities." Allen provided tech support to the Miss JCSU pageant and produced a history of JCSU video that impressed faculty and students, alike.

Allen says University choir changed his life.

"I met my wife, Tukia Exum '04 in the University choir. We were touring every year. We went to the Bahamas on tour. When Dr. Gregory Thompson was playing that would set it off. Whenever we went places, mouths would drop. We were singing Latin and German. We were singing very complicated pieces. People were like how did you memorize this?"

It was the perfect recipe for success: artistic ability, creative panache, and technical training.

"Smith taught me hustle. Smith taught me to dream big and showed me possibilities. I grew up there. I really found a way to find me."

After graduation, Allen left Charlotte and moved to Atlanta. Everything changed. Suddenly, he was attending GRAMMY parties, hanging with Usher, and on set with Tyler Perry. These young creatives were on the rise, and Allen made a decision to make a way out of no way, too!

"Know that there is a blueprint available for any industry you want to be apart of. Always study those who are where you want to be. Listen more than you talk. Be a sponge. You have to be relentless." **B**



# 100 CLUB AWARDS BANQUET







## Carlenia Ivory '72 Creating an Endowed Chair

On October 17, 2024 **Malcomb Coley** and **Kieth Cockrell** honor JCSU alumna, Carlenia Ivory-Cantey '72 in an event called "Cheering on the Next Generation." The event honors Ivory-Cantey's passionate and consistent support of Johnson C. Smith University and its students, both financially and spiritually. Cockrell and Coley recognize Carlenia's long-standing status as a catalyst for diversity, equity and inclusion as a life-long educator and Charlotte civic leader.

The purpose of the fundraiser is was support the campaign to build a \$1 million endowed fund which will offer scholarships annually to deserving Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) graduates accepted at JCSU. The funds will pave the way for deserving students to reach their full potential. **B**





# Dr. Andrew Alexander keeps his eye on the ball

**D**r. Andrew Alexander is a proud alumnus of Johnson C. Smith University. The biology major played on the football team during his matriculation at JCSU. Like many students today, Dr. Alexander found a way to balance sports and academics, which took hard work, focus, and dedication. Through it all, Dr. Alexander (a.k.a. Dr. Drew) kept his eye on the ball:



"I remember telling my football coaches from day one that I wanted to become a doctor. From that moment, they started calling me 'Dr. Drew,' which showed their confidence in me and gave me an early boost of motivation. Their belief in me played a huge role in my journey, almost as if they spoke it into existence. My professors were equally instrumental, pushing and supporting me at every step. I wouldn't be where I am today without their guidance.

Johnson C. Smith University is known for its tight-knit community, where students, faculty, staff, and alumni support one another like family. This support may be the secret ingredient that helped jettison Dr. Alexander to medical school at UNC Chapel Hill.

"Medical school was one of the toughest experiences of my life. The volume of material to learn in a short time was overwhelming, and I often battled imposter syndrome—


something I still contend with. But thanks to the support of my friends, mentors, and family, I kept pushing forward and found ways to overcome those challenges," he recalled.

In spite of the challenges, Andrew Alexander is achieving his dreams. He is a sports medicine physician, and for this JCSU alum, "becoming a sports medicine physician has been a dream of mine since I first decided to pursue medicine, so being in this position feels like a dream come true."

Dr. Alexander completed a Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation residency at Mayo Clinic.

In August 2024, he began a fellowship in sports medicine at Emory University. On LinkedIn, Dr. Alexander said that his "passion lies in delivering exceptional evidence-based musculoskeletal care to athletes of all levels by employing rehabilitative strategies, diagnostic ultrasound, and advanced ultra-sound-guided procedures to optimize their performance and recovery."

Following this year of training, Dr. Alexander will be an attending physician, the next step in fulfilling his lifelong goal. As he ponders lessons learned and advice to offer the next generation of Golden Bulls, Alexander says, "you don't have to be perfect, but you do have to be persistent if you want to fulfill your dreams. Nothing is too far out of reach if you're willing to work for it."

Dr. Alexander works with the Atlanta Falcons, Atlanta Hawks, and Skyhawks. He also provides medical care to Morehouse College, Oglethorpe University, and St. Pius X Catholic High School. Dr. Alexander says as you climb the ladder of success, "reach back and help someone else along the way." After all, that is the Smith way! 

**"You don't have to be perfect, but you do have to be persistent to fulfill your dreams."**

— Dr. Andrew Alexander





# FORTY UNDER 40

CLASS OF 2024



 Nichelle Taitt '15	 Dr. Daryl Jackson '07	 Tiffany Minter '06	 Kenneth Jleftwich II '13	 Matthew Robertson '10	 Shaun Caldwell '10	 Anthony Brown '07	 Dr. Stephanie White '08
 Aisha Lide '07	 Venessa Roy '08	 Christopher Coates '12	 Yasmine Chinnery '12	 Portia Rouse '13	 Essence Caleb '07	 Wesson Claiborne -Felder '09	 Sharika Comfort '12
 Sydney Williams '17	 Brittne Paramore '13	 Angelique Willis '14	 Shakya Jackson '14	 Michael Gentry '10	 Indya Davis '05	 Tymier Farrar '21	 Nadia Vanderhall '06
 Gregory Williams '11	 Trent Harvey '11	 Monique Chappell '16	 Sapphira Martin '11	 Brandon Benjamin '08	 Altamese Williams '06	 Dr. Elisha McDonald '11	 Ke'Aira Wilson Cox '18
 Branden T. Parker- McBride '08	 Rashad Lennen '11	 LeVar Crooms '05	 Ashley Henderson '10	 Charity Mullins '10	 Stephen Graddick IV '16	 Shisso Mbombo '19	 Shaquanna D. Jackson '14






## JCSU alumnus Art Norman receives Lifetime Achievement Award for his work in journalism

**Johnson C. Smith University alumnus,** Art Norman was honored during the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) Convention 2024 in Chicago. Norman received the Lifetime Achievement Award. JCSU's 15th President Dr. Valerie Kinloch was there to congratulate the TV news legend, Art Norman, on site as he was inducted into the NABJ Hall of Fame 2024 in Chicago. Dr. Ian Smith, a TV doctor known for his work on the Today Show and more, was on site for the celebration, as well.

Art Norman is a veteran journalist from NBC 5 Chicago where he currently serves as a special contributor. Norman spent many years as anchor for the venerable station.

Norman holds a BS in Math & Physics from JCSU. He is a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He began his award-winning journalism career in Charlotte as a television engineer at WCCB-TV. He also worked at WSOC TV in the early days. 





# Conversation *with* **Alumnus,** **James Saunders '85**

**Johnson C. Smith University alumnus**, James Saunders, retired from the University Spring 2024. We wanted to find out more about Saunders, his family, and their long-standing relationship with JCSU!



### What is your family legacy at JCSU?

Our family legacy began when my father, James Erwin Saunders Sr., attended JCSU in the late 1940's. Since that time, most of his brothers (four of five), his uncle, his son, James Erwin Saunders '85, and subsequently cousins, nieces and nephews followed his path to 100 Beatties Ford Road.

My deep appreciation and love for the University was fostered by the lifetime relationships my parents developed while sharing family friendships with Dr. Jack S. and Jeanne Brayboy, Coach Eddie C. and Minnie McGirt, Dr. Noble and Carole Cooper, and Clarence and Carolyn Wilson. Their activities usually centered around events sponsored by the University or the CIAA.

I am a third generation Smithite; great uncle, Roland Erwin '57, father, James Erwin Saunders Sr. '50, mother, Julia H. Saunders (Early Childhood Education professor and student teacher Coordinator, 1984-1992), daughter, Jessica Erin Saunders '19, (Miss JCSU 2018-2019), uncles, Claude W. Saunders '55, (First JCSU All CIAA Basketball Player), Carroll Blair Saunders '59, Alfred Saunders; cousins, Erwin Blair Costner '79, (Holds the record for longest Kick-off return in JCSU school history, 103 yards v. SC State), Edith Simpson Costner '79, Byron Brown '92, Tijarah Brown '94, nephew Rev. Christopher Lee '03 (3-time CIAA Tennis Conference Champion), niece, Dr. Jennifer A. Lee '08, (2005 CIAA Women's Rookie of the Year, 2008 JCSU Salutatorian and current JCSU Healthplex Coordinator), and incoming freshman Jade Brown.

### When did you begin working at JCSU? What were your various job titles?

#### Here is my work timeline:

1978-86 – National Youth Sports Program summer camps

1997-2024 – 27 Years of Professional Service to JCSU

Positions: University Golf Coach 1998-2005 (CIAA Coach of the Year 2003). Program Coordinator, Tutorial Coordinator, Assistant Director & Director, Student Support Services.

### Why did you decide to work at JCSU?

I decided to work at Smith during my junior year. Initially, my aspirations were to get a doctorate in Political Science/History and return to the University to teach and follow in my mentors' footsteps - Dr. James Bass and Dr. T. Jessie Dent. Although I never obtained a Ph.D., I think I positively changed students' life trajectories while serving as the Student Support Services Director for almost 20 years.



On the athletic side, following the legacy of one Eddie A. Harris was daunting. However, we did manage to win a CIAA Championship Tournament Medal in 2004, Nick Holmes, and the UNCF National Collegiate Tournament Medalist in 2000, James Bell. The team garnered CIAA Team Championship Runners Up in 1999 and 2003, and third place finishes in 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2005.

### Why is it important to give back to JCSU, to support this historic institution?

In my humble opinion, all of our HBCUs are under attack, and we have to stop looking for and relying on the cavalry to come and save us. In fact, depending on this upcoming election, the calvary will be ones who are firing shots at us. So, if not us, then who? Moreover, we must not only give back to all of our sacred institutions, but become more engaged in the policy development phases, in whatever capacity, to curb, impede and hopefully end the onslaught of our community's strategic decimation.

### What does the next chapter hold for you?

Well, last summer I started a boat rental company, "Divine9 Boat Rentals of Lake Norman". We are a licensed and registered company under the auspices of the Lake Norman Marine Commission. My plan is to offer rentals and lake experiences to those who haven't had the opportunity to enjoy all of the offerings a day on the lake can provide. Of course, playing golf as frequently as possible is in the plans. **B**



## JCSU Alumnus Gives Back Out of Gratitude

**L**eVar Crooms is a Johnson C. Smith University success story. The 2005 alumnus recently was named market president, United Bank, Arlington and Alexandria. Crooms is tasked with leading business for the Northern Virginia marketplace. The former JCSU SGA President is also on a mission to give back to the University in a major way.

"I am the face for the bank in the community. Part of my community is Johnson C. Smith University."

Originally, Crooms thought he would make a personal gift of \$15,000 to Johnson C. Smith.

"I decided to ask my company to match. They decided to make a contribution of \$10,000," a joint gift from the Arlington-Alexandria and Charlotte divisions of United Bank.

For LeVar Crooms, donating funds to JCSU is a natural extension of his JCSU experience that began two decades ago. He entered JCSU as a young football player.

"What I remember from JCSU was me coming in as an aloof young man. I thought sports was the end all be all." Throughout his matriculation at JCSU, Crooms became a well-rounded adult, ready to contribute to the world.

In addition to serving as SGA President, Crooms snagged an internship during his college days for venerable Charlotte law firm, Parker Poe. At that time, the goal was to become a lawyer. Instead, LeVar Crooms became a banker. His first professional role out of college was through BB & T's Management Training Program.

"It was a great opportunity, very competitive. There were four rounds of interviews. The women [in JCSU

Career Services] on campus prepared me well with mock interviews. There were over a thousand applicants, and they chose 10%. It was a good opportunity that launched my career."

It is a career in banking that spans some 18 years. The business program at JCSU was the starting point.

"That place changed my life. It put me on a trajectory I could not have imagined. I met so many life-long friends that have become like family to me.... I credit JCSU for a lot in my life. It sparked my curiosity for traveling the world."

Crooms has traveled to more than 20 countries since leaving JCSU, including France, Panama, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Cuba, England, Belgium, Barbados, Monaco, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Aruba and more.

The world traveler lives in Northern Virginia with his wife Anshia (an HBCU grad) and the couple's two year old son, Zachariah. Giving back to HBCUs is one part of the family mission. Crooms encourages others to give back to JCSU, too.

"For all the great times, hard times, imperfections, JCSU has welcomed us all in and given us something: community or family, backdrop or backstory to our growing up or coming of age."

When you go to [jcsu.edu/give](https://jcsu.edu/give) donors have options. They can choose to donate to the JCSU Fund, the Gap Scholarship Fund, Athletics, the Band, STEM, and more. For Crooms, it can be hard to whittle down the options.

"I would like to contribute to everything."

Widespread giving can happen with collaborations. Crooms says you have to be vocal.

"If you don't open your mouth, nothing will happen." **11**



# JCSU Emergency Aid Fun Raises More than \$300,00

**Johnson C. Smith University** raised more than \$300,000 and counting for the Back to Beatties Ford Road Emergency Aid Fund.

President Valerie Kinloch and Vice President for Institutional Advancement & External Affairs, Joy Paige Springs, were joined by a gallery of faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of the University for the JCSU Back to Beatties Ford Road Emergency AID Fund Zoom Call on Tuesday, August 26, 2024. The call was a huge success!

The funds support the JCSU General Scholarship Fund. The Knight Foundation made a significant donation of \$100,000. The Duke Endowment offered a generous gift of \$75,000, and a host of alumni, community members, faculty/staff, and friends

of the University donated a combined amount of over \$125,000 during the Emergency Zoom Call held on August 26, 2024.

The Emergency Fund was established to help a growing number of Johnson C. Smith University students financially clear at the start of the new year. In 2024-2025 JCSU's enrollment reaches record numbers with more than 1300 students enrolled. We applaud the efforts of the Office of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management for meeting an ambitious enrollment goal set by President Valerie Kinloch, Ph.D. '96 during the Spring 2024 term. We are thankful for a community of faithful donors. We are grateful to a growing number of new donors, as well, who contributed a combined amount of approximately \$45,000 to the cause. **B**





# JCSU Giving Campaigns 2023-2024

Johnson C. Smith University Office of Institutional Advancement is pleased to announce the total funds raised in 2023-2024 Giving Campaigns was \$3,559,007. We are grateful to the JCSU alumni who donated more than \$1 Million again this year.

## CAMPAIGN BREAKDOWN

\$50/50 Giving Campaign - over \$160,000

2024 Arch of Triumph Gala Revenue - \$388,900+

Ignite a New Era of Excellence Text to Give Campaign - \$550

24 Hours of Love - \$17,068

Commemorative Classic Giving Campaign - \$13,000

Annual Fund - \$892,326





An aerial photograph of the Johnson C. Smith University campus in Charlotte, North Carolina. The image shows a large, modern brick building with a flat roof, surrounded by lush green trees. In the background, the Charlotte skyline is visible under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The university's name is partially visible on a building in the foreground.

# Give to JCSU

**Your gift to Johnson C. Smith University** helps students flourish at the number one private HBCU in North Carolina and the only HBCU in Charlotte. Your donation will jettison our students toward academic and professional success. Private gifts fill the gap between tuition dollars students and their families provide and government revenue.

With your gift, JCSU can award more scholarships, recruit accomplished faculty, and support students in their overall growth. Students can grow into true scholars who engage in research, attend academic conferences and on-campus leadership opportunities. We want to give them top-notch training that will prepare them for a dynamic professional life post-graduation. Thank you for your gift! Let us forever hold high the Gold and Blue.

**NOTE:** All gifts received by alumni are counted toward graduating class participation and giving goals no matter how you choose to designate your gift.

1. You can make a gift now: [www.jcsu.edu/give-jcsu](http://www.jcsu.edu/give-jcsu) make sure you identify how you want your gift to be used.
2. You can make an automated monthly donation to JCSU through our Electronic Funds Transfer Program. Once you are enrolled, money will be withdrawn from your account on the 25th day of every month
3. You can give by check or money order. Make check payable to Johnson C. Smith University.  
**Note:** Individual donors will not be credited for checks from organizations due to IRS and fundraising regulations.
4. You can also make a cash donation.
5. Some companies/organizations allow donations via payroll deduction. Please contact your human resources department for information. Please use EIN number 25-0983069 for Johnson C. Smith University.
6. Some companies/organizations match donations made to JCSU. If you participate in a matching gift program please use EIN number 25-0983069.



## Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative's \$80 Million Dollar Gift Supports Academic Excellence at JCSU



**Dr. Harriet Hobbs** is Chief Strategist for Accreditation, Data Analytics & Transformation for Johnson C. Smith University. As the Chief Strategist for Transformation, just one of her roles, she manages the administration of projects and funding for MREI, the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative. The \$80 million gift came to JCSU in 2021. Phase two of the initiative

wrapped up this spring and Phase Three has begun. Hobbs says the infusion of MREI funding into programs at Johnson C. Smith University has been revolutionary for the University.

"MREI helps transform Johnson C. Smith into a top tier HBCU. We have done that by hiring new deans, offering new degree programs with top performing faculty and staff, as well as matriculating, mentoring, and maintaining more graduates of Johnson C. Smith University."

MREI funding also supports Dr. Kinloch's mission to increase enrollment and to provide scholarships to incoming students. Hobbs says that support continues as students progress through their majors.

"MREI funds help provide internships for students throughout the city of Charlotte. The funds help ensure we are successful in closing that gap."

Dr. Hobbs expressed excitement in how MREI funds have supported accelerated growth in the JCSU School of Business. "Under the leadership of Dean Ogbuehi the School of Business has received candidate status toward receiving accreditation," she beamed.

### MREI PROJECTS

**MREI Project: STEM**, Creating a Biomedical-Computational Biology Health Equity Laboratory at JCSU

**Lead Investigator: Dr. Patrick Martin**

The Mayor's Racial Equity and Inclusion grant funds provided STEM students with specialized training in science, technology, engineering, and math, including experiential learning opportunities in coding and research. This was made possible through the creation of new science labs, including a new computational biology computer lab with 30 new computers, a combination of PCs and MACs, with the necessary





computational and informatic software for students to conduct innovative computational health equity analytics. The College of STEM also has embarked on upfitting a biomedical-research laboratory in the New Science Center. This laboratory will house 3,000 square feet of research space that will be used to promote health equity research and offer a dedicated space for experiential learning opportunities. In fact, a JCSU team of faculty and students, led by Dr. Sabina Otienoburu, were awarded the top North Carolina COVID-19 health equity research award. Many of these developments were featured in the documentaries “Innovations Unveiled: Building a Better Tomorrow” and “Innovations Unveiled: Champions in Athletic Innovation” which debuted at the Black Film Festival, Winston Salem, NC, July 2024.

## MREI AND ATHLETICS

**Lead Investigator: Coach Maurice Flowers, Dr. Denisha Hendricks, Dr. Angela White**



With the support of MREI funds, JCSU Department of Athletics has installed a new turf field, and has made upgrades to the locker room and weight room. In addition, Athletics has hired new, highly skilled coaches. In recent months, there has been a sustained focus placed on the development of the JCSU scholar-athlete. In fact, JCSU athletes have the highest team cumulative GPA in the CIAA. MREI funds have helped jettison

athletes toward success inside the classroom through a new collaboration between Athletics and Student Success Coaches. Dr. Angela White, Senior Vice President for Strategic Enrollment and Retention Management, and Head Football Coach Maurice Flowers worked together on this multi-pronged endeavor. First, JCSU Athletes participate in a 6-week program called P.A.S.S. - Preparing Athletes for Student Success. Athletes take two classes and participate in enrichment programs, including a visit to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Charlotte, NC. Second, JCSU football players participated in S.C.O.R.E. - Summer Cohort for On Campus Readiness and Enrichment.

## MREI & JCSU UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

**Lead Investigator: Dr. Leslie Clement**



Under the leadership of Dr. Leslie Clement, the Director of the University Honors Program, JCSU onboarded 20 scholars into the JCSU Honors Program. These scholars all maintain a GPA of 3.5 or higher. With the support of MREI funding, 75% of Johnson C. Smith honors students have obtained competitive internships with companies such as Apple, Titleist, and the SAS Institute. In addition, thanks to MREI, more than half receive merit-based scholarships that cover their tuition, housing, book stipends and personal laptop computers. The first cohort of students also visited graduate schools. In addition, they participated in an African diasporic cultural excursion to Charleston, SC where they visited the International African American Museum, toured the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture and participated in Gullah Tours.

## MREI & THE STUDENT SUCCESS COACH INITIATIVE

**Lead Investigator: Dr. Angela M. White**



### Project Description and Outcomes (Achievements):

During the 2023-2024 academic year, Dr. Angela White was in charge of running the JCSU Student Success Coach Initiative that takes JCSU students on a journey of transformation from their first year to graduation. Using the InsideTrack coaching method, this initiative assigns two dedicated Student Success Coaches to each college, offering personalized coaching in key areas: Effectiveness, Academics, School Community, Commitment to Completion, Career, Managing Commitments, Finances, and Health & Support. The numbers are staggering. There were 2,044 appointments during the Fall 2023 semester, for a contact rate of 87%. Furthermore, coaches met with 95% of the students on their caseloads at least once during the Spring 2024 semester, while 80% of contacted students met with their success coach at least twice. That amounts to an 89.6% persistence rate from Fall 2023 to Spring 2024, nearly three percentage points higher than their non-coached counterparts. Finally, 47% of all freshmen served by the student success coaches earned a Fall 2023 semester GPA of 3.0 or higher. Dr. White also used MREI funds to launch the JCSU Early Alert System known as "BullsNav" platform, which offers user-friendly tutoring, mental health services and more via cellphones and tablets.

## MREI & BECOMING KINGS

**Lead Investigator: Shirley Townsend & Alexis Bibbs**

Becoming Kings, is an MREI initiative housed within the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Becoming Kings is a six-week summer bridge program designed to improve the enrollment and degree completion of first year male students. During the summer program, participants take two courses, focus on academic and personal success and engage in career readiness--with a keen focus on

entrepreneurship. During summer 2024 with the help of MREI funds, Johnson C. Smith University MREI leads, Alexis Bibbs '05 and Shirley Townsend, plus professor Jasmine Corbett-Warren and Becoming Kings student scholars, led a youth group through a JCSU campus tour rich with JCSU chants, a scavenger hunt across campus, and a lap around the scenic track at the Irwin Belk Complex. One of the standout moments of the summer happened at neighboring No Grease Barbershop. Becoming Kings students enjoyed haircuts and conversation



with shop owner and JCSU alumnus, David Powell, plus weekly "shop talk" sessions with community leaders and entrepreneurs. In the final week of the program, several Becoming Kings students took part in a meaningful community service project at West Mecklenburg High School

in collaboration with Elevation Church. They helped pack over 700 backpacks with essential items for school children.

## MREI & NEW MEDIA CENTER

**Lead Investigator: Cheryl Brayboy, Ph.D., Gabrielle Allison, Josh Nypaver, Brandon Jones, VP Joy Paige Springs**

**The JCSU Media Center and Broadcast Studio** will be the university's epicenter for marketing and public relations content production which serves as an interdisciplinary training ground for students in communication, computer science, computer engineering, business, Esports & gaming, interdisciplinary studies, and more. The digital studio, supported by MREI funds, will be run by University Communications and Marketing. The studio will emerge as a site on campus that truly is interdisciplinary in approach. Students will learn to work studio cameras, lights, microphones, teleprompters, computers, sound boards, green screens, and more. Through guided internships, students will get the hands-on media training they need. They will engage in media production: video recording, audio recording, editing, posting, and broadcasting shows with recorded segments (packages) and in studio segments. With the support of the MREI grant, GBTV aims to produce a multitude of digital formats through Golden Bulls TV: lifestyle, news and sports shows, educational seminars and more.



## OTHER ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

### COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS



**Dean Anita Bledsoe-Gardner, Ph.D.**

#### Rhetoric and Communications Department:

WJCS Bulls Radio is the latest 24-hour digital news and entertainment hub featuring new hip hop and R&B and student-staff-community programming.

#### Social Science and Interdisciplinary Studies:

Scholars and Faculty are engaging in global and international research and experiential learning opportunities in Australia, Iceland, South Africa, Cape Verde, Japan, and across the US.

#### Arts and Humanities:

The Music Program has made tremendous strides recently in increasing its membership: the Band now has 98 members, and the Choir has 34 members. Faculty and scholars are engaging in international research in Senegal.

### COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

#### Dean Alphonso Ogbuehi

##### Academics

Marvin Brown '27 - Spent four weeks studying and living in Ghana as a recipient of the Council on International Educational Exchange scholarship (CIEE) and a recipient of the JCSU Dean's Executive Advisory Board Summer Fellowship. Marvin also received a Benjamin A. Gilman International Award for 2024 and will serve as an ambassador at JCSU for Fall 2024.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

in 2023, the JCSU College of Business and Professional Studies formally inaugurated the Dean's Executive Advisory Board comprising of 20 leading executives and captains of industry including alumni from the Carolinas and beyond. The Dean's Executive Advisory Board has collectively launched the Dean's Excellence Fund with donations of nearly \$85,000 which will be used to support students, faculty, and staff. [B](#)





\* Deceased donors

## 2024 | 1867 GIVING SOCIETIES INDUCTEES

**Smith Society** in honor of the University's most influential donor, Mrs. Johnson C. Smith.

**Cumulative gifts ranging from \$1 million and up**  
Mr. Ric Elias

**Golden Bull Society** in honor of the University's golden bull mascot - the embodiment of pride, spirit and association with Johnson C. Smith University.

**Cumulative gifts ranging from \$100,000 - \$499,999**  
Mrs. Earldene Boyd '79  
Trustee Steven L. Boyd '79  
Mrs. Wilhelmina Page Kimpson '56 \*

**Duke Society** in honor of James B. Duke, who included Johnson C. Smith University in the Duke Endowment in 1924.

**Cumulative gifts ranging from \$50,000 - \$99,999**  
Mr. Calvin Banks '69  
Dr. Bobby G. Dawkins '72  
Dr. Phyllis Worthy Dawkins '75

Ms. Edith Strickland DeLaine '60  
Mr. Spencer Fulweiler  
Mrs. Dawn Jackson  
Mr. George Jackson  
Mrs. Betty Allen McGill '55

**Myers Society** in honor of Col. William R. Myers' gifts of eight acres of land to establish a permanent site for the then Biddle Memorial Institute.

**Cumulative gifts ranging from \$25,000 - \$49,999**

Dr. Shirley Aluko  
Dr. Yele Aluko  
Mrs. Donna Atkinson-Travis '77  
Mr. Anthony Bright '85  
Mrs. Jeannie Frasier Bryant '67  
Mrs. Bernice S. Ferguson '59  
Mr. George P. Franklin '63  
Mr. Barry A. Harrison  
Mrs. Cabrina Harrison  
Mrs. Gerald E. Hatcher '72  
Dr. William H. Joyner '62\*  
Dr. Valerie F. Kinloch '96  
Mr. Jeremiah Sims '86  
Mr. James Vanderhall '78  
Mrs. Valerie D. Vanderhall '80  
Mr. Lawrence Yizar



**Sanders Society** in honor of Dr. Daniel J. Sanders, the first African-American President of Johnson C. Smith University.

**Cumulative gifts ranging from \$10,000 - \$24,999**

Mrs. Julie Babbs  
Mr. Robert L. Babbs '54  
Mr. Michael Brown '98  
Mr. William C. Steele '69  
Mrs. Tracey Childs-Motley '83  
Trustee Kieth Cockrell  
Dr. Vincent D. Mallory '77  
Mrs. Ellen E. Eummer '64  
Ms. Iris G. Blackshire '90  
Ms. Constance G. Fisher-Mallory '77  
Mrs. Carlenia G. Ivory-Cantey '72  
Mr. Kenneth Goodwin, Jr. '96  
Mrs. Annette Graddick Wright '78  
Reverend Dr. Lloyd Green, Jr. '70  
Mr. William Harris IV '01  
Mr. Charles Howard '71

Ms. Brenda J. Hammond '82  
Ms. Betty Jones White '67  
Mr. Mickel L. Roseborough '78  
Mr. Fred L. Tatum '69  
Dr. Pamela L. Taylor '93  
Mr. Jeffrey Ledford  
Reverend Johnnie Lee Wright '77  
Mr. Fred Lewis '63  
Mr. Gregory M. Motley '82  
Mrs. Bessie Meeks Green '70  
Mr. David O. Prince '66  
Ms. Serena P. Cockrell  
Ms. Rosalyn Panda  
Ms. Verida Sarratt '77  
Mr. Scott Shell  
Mr. Michael A. Travis '77  
Mr. Eugene Woods  
Ms. Edith Worsham '77  
Ms. Marie Worsley Matthews '77

## The 1867 Society

The 1867 Society recognizes donors whose cumulative giving since January 2000 to Johnson C. Smith University totals \$10,000 or more. This distinguished society is comprised of six societal giving levels, names in honor of images and transformational leaders and donors of the University. The 1867 Society members are inducted into the society at one of the societal levels and recognized for each new level attained.

### 1867 SOCIETY MEMBERS

Mr. Andrew Alexander '15  
Reverend State W. Alexander '41\*  
Reverend James L. Allen '60\*  
Mr. Kendall Alley  
Dr. Shirley Aluko  
Dr. Yele Aluko  
President Clarence D. Armbrister  
Mrs. Denise McGregor Armbrister  
Estate of Roy Arnold\*  
Mrs. Donna Atkinson-Travis '77  
Mrs. Julie Babbs  
Mr. Jack S. Bailey III  
Mrs. Mary Roberts Bailey '62  
Estate of Mrs. Willa Martin Bailey '73\*  
Trustee Emeritus Thomas E. Baldwin '71  
Mr. Calvin Banks '69  
Dr. Boisey O. Barnes, Jr. '64  
Mr. Thomas L. Barnhardt  
Dr. Pat Barr-Harrison '64  
Mrs. Madelon Baulknight \*

Dr. Venton Lee Bell '66\*  
Mr. Alston Bellamy '55\*  
Mrs. Sarah E. Bellamy '67\*  
Dr. Leonard L. Bethel '64  
Mrs. Veronica Bynum Bethel '64  
Mrs. Evelyn J. Blackwell '55  
Dr. Lucinda Bowen Blue '74  
Mrs. Alice Jo Blyther '62  
Mr. Leonard E. Bodrick '77  
Colonel Morris L. Bodrick '89  
Mrs. Sharon T. Bodrick '77  
Mr. Johnny R. Bowen  
Dr. Henry Joseph Bowers '66  
Dr. Olivia Diane Bowles  
Mrs. Earldene Boyd '79  
Trustee Steven L. Boyd '79  
Dr. Curtis Branch '71  
Mr. James Brantley '93  
Mrs. Jeanne Brayboy  
Ms. Joyce M. Brayboy  
Mr. Anthony Bright '85  
Mrs. Leora Ernestine Broady '51

Mr. Paul L. Broady '51  
Mr. Michael Brown '98  
Ms. Okeatta Brown  
Mrs. Pamela Fuller Brown '75  
Trustee Sheila Renee Brown '77  
Mr. Stephen K. Brown '74  
Mr. Bunyan Bryant  
Trustee Christy Shelton Bryant '75  
Mr. Gregory Bryant '89  
Ms. Emily Burt  
Mrs. Velma Butler-Brown '72  
Mrs. Bettye Garrick Byrd '64  
Mr. Luther C. Jones '63  
Mr. William C. Steele '69  
Mr. Riley and Mrs. Helen Cabiness\*  
Reverend Dr. Arthur William Canada  
Dr. Octavia M. Cannon '88  
Mrs. Elizabeth A. Carrothers '55  
Mr. Luther Carter, Jr. '75  
Dr. Ronald L. Carter  
Estate of Mattie Carter Sydnor '50  
Mr. Albert Tim Catlett '77

Mrs. Dorothy B. Cherry '60\*  
 Estate of Jerome Cherry a.k.a. Jai Oscar  
 St. John '69\*  
 Mrs. Tracey Childs-Motley '83  
 Dr. Baldeo K. Chopra  
 The Honorable Eva McPherson Clayton '55  
 Mr. Theaoseus T. Clayton '55\*  
 Mr. Freddie Sinclair Clinton '64  
 Trustee Kieth Cockrell  
 Reverend Franklin D. Colclough  
 Dr. Harry T. Coleman '65  
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 Mrs. Johnnie M. Collins '53  
 Ms. Willie Beatrice Colson '64  
 Mr. Wilton and Mrs. Catherine Connor  
 Mrs. Jessie Cook  
 Dr. Ladda B. Cook '57\*  
 Dr. Noble P. Cooper '50\*  
 Mrs. Jean Blue Corey '57  
 Dr. James H. Costen '53\*  
 Mrs. Melva W. Costen '53\*  
 Ms. Catherine Council '94  
 Reverend James R. Covington, Jr.  
 Mrs. Kathryn P. Covington '45\*  
 Dr. Rhonda O. Covington '74  
 Dr. Valencia P. Covington '78  
 Mr. Michael W. Crowell '72  
 Mr. Edward Crutchfield\*  
 Mrs. Peggy B. Culbertson  
 Mr. John P. Cureton '60  
 Dr. Charles Lorenza Curry '55  
 Mr. Haywood Curry, Jr. '64  
 Dr. Vincent D. Mallory '77  
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Alumni financial support is the critical difference in the life and legacy of the University. During Fiscal Year 2023-2024, alumni giving totaled \$1,286,048 and the alumni giving participation rate was 15 percent.

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Estate of Mrs. Sheppie Moore

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Mr. Charles W. Hargrave

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Dr. Telezee Littlejohn Foster  
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Mrs. Neutrice Quick Towns  
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Mrs. Hannah A. Miller  
Mr. James Walker  
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Ms. Cora C. Howard  
Mrs. Sylvia Smith Ivey  
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Mrs. Rosa Evans Martin  
Mrs. Eddimae Gamble Tisdale  
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Mrs. Veronica Bynum Bethel  
Mrs. Bettye Garrick Byrd  
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Mrs. Ellen L. Doiley  
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Mrs. Rebecca James Fulton  
Mrs. Joy Worthy Graves  
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Mrs. Vivian Jones Honor  
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Mr. Clarence Ellie Little  
Mrs. Mae White Little  
Mrs. Marian G. Mathes  
Ms. Amy L. Pasour  
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Ms. Constance A. Sims  
Mr. Ulysses Spears

Ms. Willie Belton Suswell  
Mrs. Mamie B. Thomas  
Dr. Dorothy Cowser Yancy  
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Mrs. Shirley M. Hunter  
Mr. Obie Patterson  
Mr. Richard Blackout Reeves  
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Mrs. Harriet S. Thomas  
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Dr. Kenneth Whitted  
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Ms. Annette P. Graham  
Ms. Marguerite D. Greene  
Ms. Gertude Hadley  
Ms. Mary L. Lesesne  
Mr. Marion Herman Massey  
Ms. Shirley Mills-Harris  
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Mr. James Ray  
Mr. Samuel H. Reid  
Mr. Leonard R. Sanders, Jr.  
Mr. Marion Sanders  
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Dr. Ronald K. Gray  
Mr. Matthew J. Green  
Mr. James Lee Greene  
Mrs. Carole Coles Henley  
Mr. Grover Jackson  
Mr. Rance Jackson  
Mr. Ronald T. Johnson  
Mrs. Marjorie McIver

Mrs. Melba D. Mobley  
Mr. Troy C. Newman  
Ms. Claudia Nichols  
Ms. Lendora M. Nowlin  
Mrs. Virginia W. Peterkin  
Ms. Lenora V. Powe  
Mrs. Mattie P. Sanders  
Mrs. Trudelle G. Stroman  
Ms. Margo Judge Watts  
Ms. Betty Jones White  
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Mr. Johnny J. Jenkins  
Ms. Deidre G. Johnson  
Mrs. Rosemary Lunn Lawrence  
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Mrs. Bertha Harris  
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Mr. James Truman Humbert  
Mrs. Carolyn Blount Johnson  
Mr. Raymond Johnson  
Mrs. Sallie Boulter Johnson  
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Mr. Elijah Washington  
Mrs. Donise Broughton White  
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#### **CLASS OF 1971 - \$31,850**

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Ms. Betty L. Dawson  
Mrs. Hazel I. Drummond  
Mrs. Anita Garcia  
Mr. Charles Harvey  
Reverend Dr. Larry Hill  
Mr. Charles Howard  
Mrs. Veronica M. Isaac  
Mrs. Jacquelyn M. Jenkins  
Dr. James Phillip Jeter  
Mr. Bernard V. McGraw  
Ms. Ivy A. Metz  
Mrs. Yvette B. Patterson  
Ms. Julia Rose Shepherd  
Reverend James E. Simmons  
Ms. Lolita Sherard Turner  
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Mrs. Velma Butler-Brown  
Ms. Hilda Hayes Conner  
Mr. Robert D. Craven  
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Dr. Bobby G. Dawkins  
Mr. John W. Elliott  
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Mrs. Cynthia B. Jenkins  
Ms. Patricia Jennings  
Mr. Kenneth Harold Koontz  
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Reverend Marguerite C. Lee  
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Mrs. Shirley J. McDonald  
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Mrs. Gwendolyn Smith  
Mrs. Kutricia Hubbard Spann  
Ms. Gwendolyn Olivia Whitsell

#### **CLASS OF 1973 - \$22,012**

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Mrs. Linda Mosley-Gordon  
Ms. Linda M. Newkirk  
Mrs. Jeanette McLean Praylor  
Ms. Alvine Robinson  
Mr. Roddy P. Starr  
Mrs. Lovieree L. Warren  
Mrs. DeLois Walker Washington  
Ms. Sidonie Raglin Webber

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Ms. Leondras Perry Davis  
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Mr. Kenny H. Faulkner  
Ms. Debra Dry Frazier  
Mr. Benjamin F. Galloway  
Ms. Consuella Gibson  
Mr. Daniel Harvin, Jr.  
Mrs. Dorothy Baldwin Latimer  
Ms. Constance Lesesne  
Ms. Glenda L. Pyant  
Major Dennis P. Settles

Mrs. Maggie Peterson Thomas  
Mr. Leroy A. Thompson, Jr.  
Ms. Shirley A. Tillman  
Dr. Connie Pendergrass Williams  
Dr. Vereda Johnson Williams  
Ms. Blenda D. Younger

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Mr. Luther Carter, Jr.  
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Ms. Carolyn McClain Ellis  
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Mr. Claude Green  
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Ms. Vanessa D. McCoy  
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Ms. Karen Cole  
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Mr. Wallace H. Davis  
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Mr. Steffen C. Knight  
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Mrs. Diane Wilson Proctor  
Ms. Doris Reid  
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Mrs. Gail W. Tolbert  
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Dr. Angela B. Bell  
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Mr. Leonard E. Bodrick  
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Mrs. Dawn Carter  
Mr. A. Tim Catlett  
Mr. Earl A. Clipper  
Mr. Paul Coleman  
Ms. Deltha J. Cousar-Jeffries  
Ms. Claudette Coyle  
Mrs. Sharon Tucker Daniel  
Mrs. Deotis J. Bragg Davis  
Ms. Mary Baker Doby  
Mrs. Jacqueline Denise Duke  
Ms. Constance G. Fisher-Mallory  
Ms. LaFrieda Flack  
Mr. Drucilla Fogle  
Mr. Lloyd Beaver Gibson  
Mrs. Jacqueline C. Green  
Mr. George Griffin  
Mrs. Sadie Haney-Morgan  
Mr. Timothy Harkness  
Mr. Johnny L. Headen  
Ms. Gwendolyn A. Henderson-Gethers  
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Mrs. Geraldine B. Hogan  
Mr. Stevenson Hogan  
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Mr. James Robert Jackson  
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Mr. Warren D. Jones  
Mrs. Juanita Jones-Hall  
Mrs. Emma H. Kurtz  
Mr. Preston LaGrand  
Mrs. Deborah W. Lanier  
Mrs. Catherine Laster-Cook  
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Mr. Alphonso Lide  
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Mr. Larry V. Mackins  
Dr. Vincent D. Mallory  
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Mr. Timothy McCoy  
Mrs. Ann Murray-Richardson  
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Ms. Essie Wallace Pierce  
Ms. Phyllis Watkins Ratliffe  
Mr. Maurice Redmond  
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Mr. Andrew Rogers III  
Ms. Wanda Gail Rogers Phillips  
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Ms. Pinkey Ann Sullivan  
Ms. T. Diane Phillips Surgeon  
Mrs. Blanche E. Talley  
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Mr. Michael A. Travis  
Mrs. Marilyn M. Watkins  
Mrs. Valecia Williams  
Ms. Edith Worsham  
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**CLASS OF 1978 - \$44,285**

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Mrs. Miriam Butts Choice  
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Lieutenant Colonel Reginald E. Spivey  
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Mr. Alvin B. Wideman  
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Ms. Cynthia Peters  
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Mrs. Helen Turner  
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Mr. Nathan R. Walker  
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Ms. Janet V. Crowder-Carlisle  
Mrs. Brenda L. Grant  
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Ms. Carol D. Jones  
Mrs. Margaret J. Massey  
Mrs. Maxie C. McRae  
Mrs. Loretta B. Moore  
Mrs. Vickie Teresa Moseley-Jones  
Mr. Jeff Owens  
Ms. Sharon Washington Risher



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Mr. Edwin D. Smith  
Ms. Michelle R. Thompson  
Mrs. Valerie D. Vanderhall  
Ms. Karen E. Watson  
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Ms. Lisa L. Durmo  
Mrs. Lauryetta G. Gentry  
Mrs. Sylbria Valgene Brown Graves  
Dr. Stanette Hall  
Ms. Lorraine Jones  
Mrs. Sarah-elaine Jones  
Dr. Albertha H. Lawson  
Mr. T. Anthony Lindsey  
Mr. Dwight S. Miller  
Mr. Robert A. Owens  
Ms. Janice Squirewell Paige  
Ms. Fernanda G. Tate-Owens  
Mr. Keva and Mrs. Juanita Walton

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Ms. Nadine Y. Ford  
Mr. Johnny Hall  
Ms. Brenda J. Hammond  
Mrs. Theresa Gaston James  
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Mrs. Gail McFadden-Roberts  
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Mrs. Pearl Monroe  
Ms. Vanessa F. Nicholson  
Ms. Janice Gwendolyn Sanker  
Ms. Lorraine Smith  
Mr. Willie T. Smith  
Mrs. Yvette H. Smith  
Mrs. Phyllis T. Thibodeaux  
Mrs. Gaile S. Threatt  
Ms. Pamela Tinson  
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#### **CLASS OF 1983 - \$18,113**

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Ms. Winifred Battle-Cozart  
Mr. Asa Eric Bennett  
Mr. Kwame N. Bing  
Ms. Veverly Blassingame  
Ms. Zonyia Bryer  
Ms. Cathy Carter  
Mr. Dwayne K. Chambers  
Mr. Edward Cooper  
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Ms. Karlinda Dixon  
Ms. Ordella Dunn  
Ms. Lisa B. Fewell  
Mrs. Sherry Ford-Ellis  
Mr. Henry Gilmore III  
Mrs. Wanda Gilmore  
Mrs. Charell M. Harper  
Ms. Sondra E. Zonobia Hines  
Mr. Thomas S. Johnson  
Mr. Raymond Knox, Jr.  
Mrs. Anita McAfee Lee  
Ms. Helen D. Lindsey  
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Ms. Nancy E. Mark  
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Mrs. Brenda L. McMurray  
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Mr. Mark G. Rackard  
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Ms. Chanda Brenette Truesdell  
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Mr. M. Ray Wiggins  
Mrs. Joan Bulger Williams  
Mr. Reginald M. Wilson  
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#### **CLASS OF 1984 - \$33,956**

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Mrs. Elizabeth Anne Dames

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Ms. Ola M. Earl  
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Ms. Laverne Ingrid Fuller  
Mrs. Kathy Wallace Goss  
Mr. Ervin L. Gourdine  
Ms. Shenita Lynn Ihekaire  
Mr. Dave L. James  
Ms. Randolyn Camille Mayo  
Ms. Teresa Purefoy-Gray  
Mr. Marc H. Strothers  
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Ms. Cheryl D. Vaughn  
Mr. Ricky G. Wade  
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#### **CLASS OF 1985 - \$7,804**

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Mrs. Deborah Caldwell Goode  
Ms. Ronnise C. Handy  
Mr. Charles E. Head  
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Mr. Walter A. McAllister  
Mrs. Cynthia A. Murray  
Mr. Sylvester Reed, Sr.  
Ms. Veronica Williams-Mosley

#### **CLASS OF 1986 - \$13,119**

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Mr. Marvin C. Sharp  
Mr. Jeremiah Sims  
Mr. Dennis Squirewell

#### **CLASS OF 1987 - \$5,767**

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Mr. Billy M. Banks  
Mr. Craig A. Bell  
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Dr. Herman Clark Gore  
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Ms. LaShun Lawson  
Ms. LaTonya M. McGowan

Ms. Kathryn McKenzie-Zeigler  
Mrs. Valerie Stockton Sammons

**CLASS OF 1988 - \$46,680**

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Mr. James Ely III  
Ms. Motini Davis Gates  
Mrs. Kim McLean Graham  
Mr. Benjamin Greene  
Mr. Kenneth Griffin  
Mr. Claiborne O. Hughes  
Ms. Tina Renee King  
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Mr. Martin L. Cox  
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Mr. Gregg P. Hankins  
Mrs. Lynnette Helene Harris-Scott  
Mrs. Samantha L. Hines  
Mr. Robyn Y. Johnson  
Ms. Stephaine Jones  
Ms. Andrea Knotts  
Ms. Cheryl Dawkins Pulliam  
Ms. Kimberly Lee Richardson  
Mrs. Adrian Ward-Jackson  
Mrs. Donna Wong-Long

**CLASS OF 1990 - \$3,454**

*Class Agents - Mrs. Wanda Holloway Jones*

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Ms. Alicia Bell  
Ms. Iris G. Blackshire  
Mr. John Dennis  
Ms. Alisa Everett  
Ms. Felice D. Hightower  
Dr. Sonya Johnson-Crum  
Dr. Rosalind C. Lee  
Ms. Natina Savage  
Dr. Jimmie H. Smith, Jr.  
Ms. Patricia Wright

**CLASS OF 1991 - \$2,490**

*Class Agent - Ms. Patricia Wilson*

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Ms. Janet Campbell  
Ms. Tammie Dingle  
Ms. Shania L. Jackson  
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Mr. Marvin M. Maynor  
Mrs. Tonya Y. Morrow  
Mr. John M. Norris, Jr.  
Ms. Debra M. Tate  
Mr. Jonathan D. Truesdale  
Ms. Patricia Wilson  
Mrs. Susan Wilson

**CLASS OF 1992 - \$11,224**

*Class Agents - Rev. Adrian Harper*

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Alexander-Grissett  
Ms. Vanessa Alford  
Mrs. Karen Harris Barksdale  
Dr. Joy M. Barnes-Johnson  
Mr. Edwin O. Benjamin  
Ms. Cindy Brown  
Ms. Bernice Miche Clark  
Ms. Dorothy Davis  
Ms. Kathryn L. Goins  
Dr. Patrick C. Graham  
Mrs. Felicia Walton Gray  
Reverend Adrian Harper  
Mr. Carlton Harris  
Mr. Charlton J. Harris  
Mr. Curtis Lee E. Ifill  
Mr. Marshall P. Ivey, Jr.  
Mr. Shedrick D. Kirkpatrick  
Ms. Stephanie Mack  
Mr. Joseph Major III  
Ms. Angel Manago  
Ms. Janea D. Matchett  
Ms. Severa McCollum  
Ms. Gail McDowell  
Ms. Nina La Dawn Newton  
Mr. Mwami Pecou  
Ms. Panise Iris Perry  
Ms. Gladys Pierce  
Mr. Mark Douglas Sherrill  
Mrs. Tasha Sherrill  
Ms. Mia Lowery Stockton  
Ms. Venita J. Walker  
Dr. Joylette E. Williams  
Ms. Angela L. Williamson  
Mrs. Cynthia B. Wilson  
Dr. Marvin T. York

**CLASS OF 1993 - \$12,780**

*Class Agents - Mrs. Jeri M. Thompson*

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Mrs. Darlene Simmons Boles  
Mr. Jeffrey Bovain  
Mr. Corey O. Bowdre  
Mrs. Hope Brown  
Ms. Latissa Simmons Brown  
Ms. Dana Campbell  
Mr. Julian Coaxum  
Ms. Donna Crawford  
Mrs. Barbara D. Grant-Kelly  
Ms. Kia Hilton  
Mr. Anthony L. Holloman  
Mrs. Kimberly F. Ifill  
Ms. Raquel Jackson  
Mr. Makaibu Jones  
Mr. Marlon Tyrone Jones  
Ms. Juana Renee Jordan  
Mr. Edward Lee  
Ms. Allison Marks  
Ms. Nicole McNeil  
Mrs. Debra Briggs O'Banner  
Mrs. Dawn R. Perry  
Mr. LaMonte Richardson  
Ms. Jacqueline Patrice Smith  
Dr. Pamela L. Taylor  
Ms. Jennifer Snow Webster  
Mr. Elliott A. Willingham, Jr.  
Ms. Nannie Priscilla Willingham

**CLASS OF 1994 - \$24,855**

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Dr. Shanna Greene Benjamin  
Ms. Regina Javelle Boyd  
Mr. Ron C. Boyd  
Mr. William Bullock  
Mrs. Aimee Cooper  
Ms. Catherine Council  
Ms. Kristyn C. Dunn  
Ms. Spamveta Edwards  
Mr. Myron U. Frieson  
Mr. Duane A. Johnson  
Dr. Melanie L. Johnson  
Mrs. Lanette R. Madison  
Ms. Katrina McWilliams  
Mrs. Tamara Alford Neely  
Mr. Columbus Parker  
Mrs. Kimberly Payne  
Mrs. DeLone Dupree Pittman  
Mr. Marion Eugene Robinson  
Mrs. Cassandra Smith  
Ms. Cheryl J. Smith



Mrs. Marva J'Neen Taylor  
 Ms. Kadisha Thompson  
 Ms. Tifferney Michelle White  
 Mr. Marcus Williams  
 Mr. Marion Williams  
 Ms. Christine Winchester

**CLASS OF 1995 - \$ 7,309**

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 Ms. Sivi Kenyatta Bobbitt  
 Mr. Frank L. Brown, Esq.  
 Ms. Bonita Eason  
 Mr. Roy D. English  
 Mr. Juan J. Flowers  
 Mr. Peter Holman  
 Ms. Jeannine Frances Hunter  
 Dr. Brian L. Johnson  
 Mr. Damian Johnson  
 Ms. Viva Jordan  
 Ms. Olaiya Kelly  
 Mr. Donrielle Lemonte McHam  
 Ms. Rasheda L. McMullin  
 Ms. Vinita Moore  
 Mrs. Cynthia D. Richardson  
 Mr. Haileab Samuel

**CLASS OF 1996 - \$36,241**

*Class Agents - Ms. Terricia Y. Gaines*  
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 Dr. Funmilayo Aranmolate  
 Mrs. Ashanti Yasmin Baxter  
 Mrs. Kristen J. Berry  
 Ms. Demetrial Shavon Coleman  
 Ms. Kiona DeWitt  
 Mrs. Michaela O'Neal Farmer  
 Ms. Terricia Y. Gaines  
 Mr. Kenneth A. Goodwin, Jr.  
 Mr. Eddie Ingram  
 Ms. Benjenus Elizabeth Jenkins

Dr. Saphronia R. Johnson  
 Dr. Valerie F. Kinloch  
 Pastor Toure C. Marshall  
 Mr. Carlton Merritt  
 Ms. Vivian Moss-Metz  
 Ms. Natalie Nesbit  
 Mr. Michael L. Owens  
 Ms. Keisha T. Powe  
 Ms. Tricia Preston  
 Ms. Angela Simmons  
 Mr. Sumiko Smith  
 Ms. Terra Smith  
 Mr. Milton Ray Wiggins  
 Ms. Michelle Hunter Wilkins

**CLASS OF 1997 - \$11,150**

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 Mr. Keith Cradle  
 Mr. Nakia Frazier  
 Ms. Kia A. Ghee  
 Dr. Dennis Leroy Humphrey  
 Dr. Deja Johnson  
 Mrs. Shemeka Barnes Johnson  
 Ms. Lawata F. Kelly  
 Ms. Sonia Moorman  
 Mrs. Nakia Reynolds Robinson  
 Ms. Andrea Nicole Royster  
 Mr. Fatihah Dua Shariah  
 Ms. Kenya Strong  
 Mrs. Krista Faye Terrell  
 Ms. Khuanduen Shideise Toatley  
 Mrs. Keisha Ramey Wilson

**CLASS OF 1998 - \$9,174**

*Class Agent - Ms. Petrina M. Smith*  
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 Mrs. M. Alicia Bennett  
 Mr. Marcus Bishop

Mr. Michael Brown  
 Ms. Dana Cannon  
 Ms. Kimberly Carter  
 Mr. Herman Clark, Jr.  
 Mrs. Dannerlyn Moore Crosland  
 Ms. Ivy Cuttino  
 Mr. Larry D. Eaton  
 Ms. Colette Geathers  
 Ms. Toye D. Griffin  
 Ms. Niya Hamilton  
 Dr. Davida Loren Haywood  
 Mr. Bryant S. Knox  
 Ms. Nedra Morant  
 Mrs. Eunice Murray  
 Ms. Shanikwa Peterkin  
 Ms. ReGinae Y. Reynolds  
 Ms. Tennille Gibson Rogers  
 Mrs. Gina Roy-Dykes  
 Ms. Allyson L. Shropshire  
 Ms. Altovese Simmons  
 Ms. Yolanda Jackson Small  
 Mrs. Jasmine C. Smith  
 Ms. Petrina M. Smith  
 Mrs. Regenal Elam Weekes  
 Ms. Desiree' Wells  
 Ms. Ronisha Evelina Wood

**CLASS OF 1999 - \$13,190**

*Class Agent - Ms. Rashida Lawrence*  
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 Mr. Adrian L. Calhoun  
 Ms. Brooke Campbell  
 Mr. Jason O. Davis  
 Ms. Gwendolyn Denice Devins  
 Dr. Anwar Y. Dunbar  
 Ms. Rosalind Faulkner  
 Mr. Carlton O. Fenton  
 Ms. Keith Hutchinson  
 Mr. Conyus R. Johnson, Jr.



Mr. Damon J. Johnson  
 Ms. Ieshia Kreshunda Jones  
 Mr. Melvin Kelly  
 Ms. Rashida Lawrence  
 Ms. Malaika Lesesne  
 Mr. Kraig Marable  
 Ms. Angela S. McClain  
 Ms. Beverly McDuffie  
 Ms. Shantel Mitchell  
 Ms. Patrice Y. Moore  
 Mr. Johnny Morant  
 Ms. Stephanie Reed  
 Mr. Christopher Reese  
 Ms. Shomara Reyes  
 Mr. Robert Ridley IV  
 Mr. Johnny V. Sidbury  
 Ms. Rokami Taylor Gillette  
 Ms. Tara M. Tyler  
 Mr. William S. P. Watkins  
 Ms. Carolyn Frances Whaley  
 Ms. Alicia Williamson

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*Class Agent - Mr. Derrick Dillard*

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 Mr. Anthony E. Albury  
 Ms. Steftia Antoine  
 Ms. Fafa L. Baker  
 Mrs. Andra D. Bellamy  
 Ms. Linora JoVithy Carr  
 Ms. Lawanna Davis  
 Mr. Derrick Dillard  
 Miss Melissa D. Eades  
 Ms. Kesha Edwards  
 Mr. Ahmed Evans  
 Ms. Courtney Gholson  
 Mr. Herman Brian Gloster  
 Ms. Triva M. Haley  
 Ms. Juanita Harper  
 Mr. Cornelius R. Henderson II  
 Mr. Antonio Henry  
 Mr. George Jenkins  
 Dr. Kristene Brathwaite Kelly  
 Ms. Leslie L. Kirby  
 Ms. Jada Lowther-Nichols  
 Mrs. Kimaada N. Moore  
 Mr. Raqib Muhammad  
 Mr. Kemuel Murray  
 Ms. Sheikia S. Norris  
 Ms. Rekita Pitchford  
 Mr. Justin Powell  
 Ms. Lauakia Richburg  
 Ms. Shamika Scott Morris  
 Ms. Lisa M. Settle  
 Mrs. Asahya Richardson Smith

Ms. Keona Williams Timmons  
 Ms. Cassandra Rene Timothy  
 Mr. Charles Walls  
 Dr. Alicia Nicki Washington  
 Ms. Maisha M. Williams

#### CLASS OF 2001 - \$4,634

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## GIVING BY ALUMNI ORGANIZATIONS

Alumni organizations serve as the catalyst for alumni engagement around the nation. We applaud all alumni chapters and organizations for continuously holding high the Gold and Blue.

Organizations	Giving Total
Alpha Omicron Chapter Alumni of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	\$100
Gamma Lambda Chapter	\$4,198
JCSU 100 Club	\$52,800
JCSU Atlanta Alumni Chapter	\$750
JCSU Baltimore Alumni Chapter	\$1,100
JCSU Charleston Alumni Chapter	\$5,000
JCSU Charlotte Alumni Chapter	\$2,000
JCSU Columbia Alumni Chapter	\$4,100
JCSU Durham Alumni Chapter	\$1,000
JCSU Homecoming Scholarship Group	\$15,000
JCSU National Alumni Association	\$22,212
JCSU New York Chapter	\$1,924
JCSU Philadelphia Alumni Chapter	\$400
JCSU Raleigh Durham Chapter	\$3,000
JCSU Sumter Regional Alumni Chapter	\$1,000
JCSU Washington Metropolitan Chapter	\$500
The Lumber Company	\$3,000
Miracle on 27th Street	\$669
Omega Psi Phi	\$100
SGRHO - Beta Upsilon	\$100
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$118,952</b>



JOHNSON SMITH UNIVERSITY





## JCSU President Valerie Kinloch Nabs GRAMMY Award-winning Entertainment Executive, Amir Windom, for New Role as President's Scholar in Residence

**D**r. Valerie Kinloch, 15th President of Johnson C. Smith University, appoints Amir Windom, Grammy Award-winning music and film executive, as the new President's Scholar in Residence & Visiting Faculty at Johnson C. Smith University for the 2024-2025 academic year.



In this role, Amir will partner with the University on projects bridging his 360-creative-perspective with Johnson C. Smith University's mission. He will use his expertise to support faculty development, student engagement and alumni connectivity. Amir will be featured in a master class series on entertainment, talent development, and production.

Windom says he is "excited about all the creative and impactful things we can accomplish together." He will employ his experience in the entertainment industry to provide JCSU students with education, experience, and opportunity in the world of entertainment.

Currently, Amir Windom is regarded as one of the nation's top young leaders and creative minds in entertainment. As a successful executive of A&R (artists & repertoire) and creative affairs, Amir has been an influential figure in the careers of some of today's biggest stars, including Bruno Mars, Kanye West and Pharrell Williams. Amir's distinguished career has provided him with opportunities to creatively contribute to numerous GRAMMY Award-winning songs, albums and film soundtracks that have sold millions of records and won many awards.

Amir Windom is also an Oscar-nominated film/music supervisor and producer. In the music industry, he composes, produces and places music, creates original scores, and designs creative strategies for major film companies, such as Sony Pictures, Universal Pictures and Lionsgate Films.

In addition, Amir Windom's projects include feature films like "Little," "Despicable Me 2," "Collateral Beauty," "Act Like a Lady," "Think Like a Man," "Why did I Get Married 2," and "Stomp the Yard 2." Amir's projects include highly-rated network and cable television series like "Insecure" (HBO) "Sherman's Showcase" (AMC), "Bigger" (BET), "Being Mary Jane" (BET), "Alphas" (SyFy) and "Entourage" (HBO).







Windom has put his skills to work in the business world through global marketing campaigns for the Coca-Cola Company (Summer Olympics & Respect Your Verse), Kodak (So Kodak feat Drake & Rihanna), ESPN and more.

Amir made history when he, as part of a collective, helped launch Black News Channel, the first major TV network that airs 24 hour news and original programming specifically geared to the African American audience. The network currently can be viewed in close to 100 million homes via DirecTV, Comcast, Dish, U-Verse, Charter/Spectrum and Roku to name a few.

Amir also has created or curated a number of festivals around the country including the Capella Music Festival ([www.capellamusicfestival.com](http://www.capellamusicfestival.com)) and Grits & Biscuits ([www.gritsandbiscuits.com](http://www.gritsandbiscuits.com)).

Most recently, Amir created The Big Homecoming Festival. The Big Homecoming (TBH) is the first 365 Impact festival to

benefit HBCUs. The festival uses all the components of the HBCU homecoming experience to create a festival experience that feels like you're attending all the HBCU homecomings by attending just one big homecoming. The festival extends beyond the two-day festival and is the first festival that creates 365 Impact for HBCUs, by visiting them throughout the school year through programming, events and activations focused on entrepreneurship, financial wellness, health & wellness, recruitment, leadership development and Tech ([www.thebighomecoming.com](http://www.thebighomecoming.com)). Amir and his ventures have donated more than \$500k in scholarships and grants.

Dr. Kinloch along with JCSU faculty, staff, students, and alumni are excited to welcome Amir Windom to Johnson C. Smith University in this New Era of Excellence. **B**



## CITIP Program Aims to Improve Campus and Community Connectivity

In Feb. 2023, Johnson C. Smith University received its largest federal grant in the institution's history – \$5.7 million from the U.S. Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

The grant, titled The Charlotte Inclusive Tech-Innovation Pilot Program or CITIP program, was written and submitted by the University's Government Sponsored Programs and Research (GSPAR) team led by Dr. Diane Bowles. The aim of the project is to make much-needed technology upgrades around campus while deploying 5G broadband across campus and into the local community.

"Applying for and receiving this grant has been a labor of love," said Bowles. "This project is important because broadband 5G deployment will help build a bridge between JCSU and our community."



By June, JCSU hired Dr. John Oliver as the CITIP project manager. In his role, he works with JCSU's Information Technology Department and builds relationships with the wider community to focus on digital literacy and access.

Now a year after his hire date, Oliver says that the first phase of the project is complete.

"One of the core functions for the first phase of the grant was to move the campus from a 3G infrastructure to a 5G infrastructure," said Oliver. "The internet was lagging, particularly when people were on Zoom, WebEx or Teams meetings. This can result in dropped calls. That's now improved across campus for both our students and our faculty and staff."

The 3G infrastructure the campus had been operating on before 2023 was initially introduced in the U.S. in 2001, meaning that the campus hadn't received an upgrade in at least 23 years.

While HBCUs have produced 40 percent of all Black engineers, they still face significant issues in funding which have led to a digital divide and lack of effective access to the internet and its resources.

John Norris, JCSU's chief information officer, said that earning the grant was exciting.



"As campus and community needs evolve, including the proliferation of mobile devices, it is exciting to create a network with high availability, recoverability, scalability and manageability," said Norris.

A second part of Phase 1 included ensuring that JCSU students had access to laptops and tablets. In April 2023, students flooded the James B. Duke Memorial Library where they were able to receive a free refurbished laptop from Eliminate the Digital Divide (E2D), a company founded in 2013 to address the digital divide in Mecklenburg County.

About 400 laptops were distributed that day with the support of Truist, TIAA and Duke Energy. They helped students in need like Jamerya Kelley, a student in the Pre-Law program who struggled to complete assignments.

"I had a laptop, but it broke a few months ago," said Kelley back in April. "I have a lot of papers to do as a Pre-Law student, and I've been writing them on my phone or iPad for about three months now. I'm very grateful that this company reached out to our school to help because a lot of us are facing the same problem."

Several of JCSU's travel buses were also equipped with wireless connectivity to allow students who are traveling to complete their school work on the road.

Oliver said Phase 1 has been completed, and the team is on to the next phase, which focuses on connecting to the community within a 15-mile radius of JCSU to provide digital access and education alongside workforce development.

"Many in the community are not connected," said Oliver. "According to the Center for Digital Equity at Queens University, more than 56,000 households have no internet access in Mecklenburg County, and about 7 percent of households have only mobile internet or dial-up service."

But a high-speed connection isn't all the community needs. Like JCSU students, the community needs access to devices that will help connect them to the internet.

To achieve this, Oliver said that the program is focusing on helping community members get the right device that gives them access to the applications they need. He says connecting the community to the internet is an important first step in addressing financial disparities in Charlotte.

"This is about what our society is evolving toward," said Oliver.

Oliver recognized that everything from job applications to social interactions is happening online. Leaving communities without a way to engage, specifically in skill-building and job opportunities, increases the likelihood of poor economic mobility.

"People born into poverty are very unlikely to move out of it," said Oliver. "Some of that can be a result of the number of people who do not have broadband access."

In addition to device distribution, Oliver said Phase 2 focuses on community partnerships with faith-based and community organizations to educate community members of all ages on properly using their devices. This phase will also help those organizations expand their own access so they can be self-sufficient and better able to serve their communities.

The CITIP grant is set to expire in Feb. 2025, but Oliver hopes to extend it through Feb. 2026. Oliver credits Dr. Bowles, Norris, and former employees Donette Johnson and Terik Tidwell for an exceptional grant application. He also thanked his team, including his CITIP Fellows who go out into the community to make connections and bridge the gap of digital inequities in Mecklenburg County. [B](#)



Did you know the CITIP grant originated from a conversation between Dr. Diane Bowles and other HBCUs at a CASE Summit on Technology? Federal program officers heard the conversation and, as a result, crafted the CITIP grant. JCSU created a pathway for the country in addressing digital inequity!

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### DR. ROBERT LINDSEY

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### DR. DAVID LUCIANO

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### DR. LASONYA TOWNSEND

- Townsend, L.C., Johnson, D., & Crocker-Billingsley, J. (2024, March). The Black church and HBCUs: Promoting social justice through rural community-based social work practice. Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Townsend, L.C. (2024, March). The four sources of self-efficacy: Implications for BSW student readiness for practicum. Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Townsend, L.C. (2024, March). Living archives project exhibit launch panelist. James B. Duke Memorial Library, JCSU. Charlotte, NC.

### DR. ANGELA WHITE

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# Faculty Updates

## BAI OBTAINS GOOGLE TENSORFLOW AWARD, PRESENTS RESEARCH



**Dr. Ying Bai**, a professor in the Department of Computer Science, Engineering, and Mathematics, obtained the Google TensorFlow College Award of \$10,000. The award will be used to help Bai create a new AI course at JCSU. Dr. Bai already is immersed in AI research. Earlier in the year, Bai presented a paper titled *Estimate and Predict the Foreign*

*Currency Exchanging Rates by Using Adaptive Neuro Fuzzy Inference System and Deep Learning Algorithms*, at the 4th International Conference on Information Communications and Software Engineering (ICICSE-2024) held in Beijing, China during May 10-12. The paper discussed two AI-related methods, ANFIS and Deep Learning, to estimate and predict the current foreign currency exchange rates based on the history data with two NASDAQ datasets. Bai was also selected as a Session Chair.

## DR. ROBERT LINDSEY WINS STUDENT-VOTED PROFESSOR OF THE YEAR AWARD



**Dr. Robert Lindsey** nabbed Best Professor of the Year honors at the Bulls Entertainment Awards during Bullfest Week 2024. The Office of Student Leadership and Engagement made the announcement during the annual awards ceremony.

Dr. Lindsey has served as a professor of Health Education in the Department of Health and Human Performance since August 2006. He teaches personal health, program planning and evaluation, epidemiology, sport psychology, senior paper, and Health Administration. Lindsey also led the implementation of a successful 17th Annual Health/Career Fair on Thursday, March 7, 2024.

## DEFORREST TAKES INTERIM POSITION ON UNION COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Dr. Matthew DeForrest**, professor of English at Johnson C. Smith University and a resident of Monroe, N.C. was named Acting Executive Director of Union County Community Action, Inc. Board of Directors on October 6, 2024. The appointment comes upon the unexpected passing of Executive Director, Jenny McGuirt.

"No one can replace Jenny," DeForrest said. "I am fortunate that I am stepping into my role with an agency that she made strong with a staff she trained well."

DeForrest will serve in the role of Acting Executive Director while the Board of Directors conducts a search for the next Executive Director. "It's our hope that we can have a new Executive Director named and in place in early January," DeForrest explained. "Until that time, I will do what I can to support and lead our staff."

Dr. DeForrest is a long-serving member of the UCCA Board of Directors, having served 10 years as an appointee of the Union County Board of County Commissioners. He has served as Treasurer and the Chair of the Board.





## Dr. Cindy Kistenberg Directs Staged Reading to Raise Funds for Charlotte Black/Jewish Alliance

On Sunday, September 29, **Dr. Cindy Kistenberg**, professor of Communication and Theatre, directed a staged reading of Calvin Ramsey's *The Green Book* as a fundraiser for the Charlotte Black/Jewish Alliance (CBJA) at Queens University. The performance featured two JCSU graduates, Tyran Green and DiaShanna Logan, and one current student, Isaiah Tolliver. Ramsey's play, which precedes the movie by the same name by more than a decade, is set primarily in one of the homes featured in the book. In the play, a Holocaust survivor is traveling to see his dying friend—a Black soldier who rescued the survivor during WWII—and he refuses to stay in a hotel that won't allow Blacks. He arrives at the home hoping to find a room. This is where the conflict ensues.

## 1940s

**Roberta Brooks Shearin '44** passed on April 20, 2024. She was the last charter member of the Gamma Lambda Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

**Mildred S. Grier '45** passed on March 9, 2024.

**Dr. James Deotis Roberts '47** passed on July 22, 2022.

**Vivian F. Hairston '48** passed on April 4, 2022.

**Annie Caldwell Lee '48** passed on October 9, 2020.

## 1950s

**Dr. Vera Poe Swann '51** passed on November 10, 2022.

**Paul L. Broady '51** passed on October 20, 2023.

**Melton Ellerby '52** passed on February 24, 2022.

**Mamie Ellis Jones '52** passed on August 13, 2023.

**Dr. William W. Funderburk '52** passed on February 1, 2024.

**Dr. Benjamin Orestes Watkins, Jr. '53** passed on March 10, 2022.

**Dr. Melva Wilson Costen '53**, former member of the board of trustees passed away. Costen joined the JCSU faculty in 1973 and became the Helmar Nielsen Professor of Music and Worship in 1987. She held advanced degrees from UNC Chapel Hill and Georgia State University and was a leading voice in African and African-American worship practices.



**Alma Motley '54** passed on June 19, 2022. In 2000, Motley received the Long Leaf Pine Award, the highest honor in North Carolina, for organizing a free summer tutoring program to prepare kindergarteners for first grade.

**Dr. Bertha Maxwell-Roddey '54** passed on March 21, 2024.

**Mary Johnson Jones '55** passed on December 14, 2023

**Roosevelt D. Odom, Sr. '56** passed on March 3, 2023.

**Muriel D. Wiggins '56** passed on March 17, 2023.

**James Dyson '56** passed on July 13, 2023.

**Daniel W. Freeman III '57** passed on September 22, 2023.

**Vernice Rice Young '58** passed on August 13, 2023.

**Harold B. Winston '59** passed on October 13, 2023.

## 1960s

**Rev. McKinley Washington Jr. '61, '73**



MDiv, passed on July 24, 2022. Rev. Washington was a member of the JCSU Board of Trustees from 2005 to 2020 and was named Trustee Emeritus in 2021 for his dedication and service to the University.

Washington served as a Democratic senator and representative in the South Carolina state legislature for more than 25 years. During his time in office, he was applauded for his ability to reach across racial lines to connect Black and white leaders to work together on major statewide issues.

**Dr. Ida M. Richmond '61** passed on November 29, 2022.

**George Dorman, Jr. '62** passed on December 11, 2022.

**Gladys Alexander Massey '62** passed on December 27, 2022.

**Dr. William H. Joyner '62** passed on March 31, 2024.

**Pettis Norman '62** was enshrined into the North Carolina Hall of Fame during the 60th annual Induction Celebration on Friday, May 10, at the Charlotte Convention Center as part of its 2024 induction class.

**Mrs. Viella H. Mason '63** passed on December 12, 2022.

**Dr. Carol Janerette '63** passed on April 12, 2024.

**Irene Joyner Byrum '63** passed on December 16, 2023.

**Fontaine R. Haynes '63** passed on November 18, 2023.

**Clearance Elroy Wilson '64** passed on April 26, 2023.

**Lonnie Cromwell Peace '65** passed on November 25, 2022.

**Tyson Marshal Pasour '65** passed on November 15, 2022.



Former 1965-1966 Miss Johnson C. Smith University, **Ida B. Reid '66** passed away on July 13, 2022.

**Dr. Lewis C. Dowdy, Jr. '66** passed on September 6, 2022.

**Judy D. Carothers Cohen '68** passed on December 22, 2022.

Colonel Gaston Emmanuel Rouse, Jr. '68 passed on August 10, 2022.

**Wiley Williams '69** passed on December 14, 2023.



**Bruce E. Bivins '69**  
passed on January 16, 2023.

**Dave Burch '69**  
was interviewed by John Vorperian from the Professional Football Researchers Association about the Triple City Jets.

**Trellis Carmichael Henson '69** passed on June 7, 2023.

**Edgar Farmer, Jr. '69**  
passed on June 19, 2023.

## 1970s

**Melvin Thomas Pinn, Jr., MD '70**  
passed on July 26, 2022. The JCSU alumnus served inner city residents of Charlotte, N.C. as the Director of the Neighborhood Medical Center of Carolina Medical Center for more than 20 years, followed by a 17-year tenure as Senior Medical Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Health Center.



**Edward G. West '70**  
passed on January 2, 2023.

**Dr. James B. Ewers Jr.'s** latest book, "Views from My Corner of The World: Essays on Black Lives Matter, The Coronavirus, Politics and Voting" was approved to be a part of the New Orleans Louisiana Public Library.

**William "Bill" Dusenberry '70** was inducted into the John B. McLendon Hall of Fame at the 2024 CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament in Baltimore, MD. The induction ceremony was held March 1, 2024 at the Baltimore Convention Center Ballroom.

**Dr. James "Jimmy" B. Ewers, Jr. '70** was also inducted into the John B. McLendon Hall of Fame at the 2024 CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament in Baltimore, MD.

**Tim Beamer '70**, a former football and track star for the Johnson C. Smith University Golden Bulls, was featured in the book, Beamer, by Neil Caudle. The book details Beamer's heroic journey from a mill town in Virginia to a job with the NFL's Buffalo Bills, where he played with O. J. Simpson.

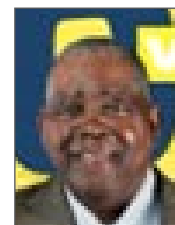
**Dr. Gladys Feely Robinson '71**  
passed on February 21, 2023.

**Dr. Warner L. Pinchback, Jr. '71**  
passed on May 25, 2023.

**Lawrence (Laurence) Brown '71**  
passed on November 19, 2023.

**Miss Patricia N. Robinson '73**  
passed on April 20, 2023.

**Faye Diane Wright '73**  
passed on December 5, 2023.



**Steve Joyner, Sr. '73**  
retired as head men's basketball coach, Spring 2024 after more than 35 years. Joyner is the third most winning coach in CIAA history.



**Rhonda Covington '74**  
wrote "Under the Circumstances" a tale of a 1980s woman returning to her southern roots.



# GOT Good NEWS?

*Tell us about it!*  
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anniversaries,  
promotions and  
accomplishments to:  
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### William Thomas Gillespie '74

passed on December 13, 2022.

### Dr. Lucinda Blue '74



was awarded the Spencer Educational Foundation (Risk Manager on Campus) Grant for the second time. This foundation, established in 1979, funds the education of future leaders in risk management and insurance.

Blue coordinated an event where Risk Managers from The Hartford, Liberty Mutual, Marsh, Amwins Group, and Sompco, Inc. engaged with 50 students about the insurance industry and risk management profession.



### Kathryn P. Carter (Morris) '75

released Book 2 of the Lizzie B. Hayes children's book series.



### Kathryn Carter '75

was the TEDx Speaker at TedxMintStreet on February 24, 2024, at Do Greater Charlotte.

### Gregory Thigpen '76

passed on February 5, 2023.

### Frederick Barnes '77

passed on December 24, 2022.

### Ralph Elmore '77

passed on October 25, 2022.

### Clarence E. Lewers '77

passed on February 20, 2024.

### Arnett Barksdale '77

passed on March 10, 2024.

### Johnny Headen '77



received the Outstanding Alumnus of the Year Award at the UNCF NAC Legacy Gala on Friday, February 23, 2024.

### Lynette Johnson Hampton '77

passed on November 3, 2023.

### Mickel Roseborough '78



received the Socialite Humanitarian Award during the third annual Queen Charlotte's Ball at The Long Room CLT on December 23, 2023.

### Clarence "CJ" Johnson '79

passed on April 4, 2024.

## 1980s

### Dr. Phillip Michael Green '80

passed on August 23, 2023.

### Barry O. Cole '81

passed on November 4, 2023.



**Steven Jarrett '81**, director of Diversity, Development and Engagement at PSA Airlines, presented Johnson C. Smith University with 500,000 flight miles on behalf of PSA Airlines.

### Ronald Earl "Ron" Green '81

passed on October 25, 2023

### William (Wild Bill) Roberts '82

was appointed Executive Director for the Academy for Risk Management & Insurance at Bowie State University.

### Dr. Richard Greggory Johnson '87

represented Johnson C. Smith University with the Northern California HBCU Coalition.

## 1990s

**Dr. Anthony Hollman '93** was named the 11th Commissioner of the SIAC.

### Sonya Helene Hodges '92

passed on December 1, 2022.

She was also a member of the Gamma Delta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

### Chad Dion Lassiter '96



was appointed on the Presidential Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational, Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans at the White House.

### Dr. Richard D. Reynolds '97

was unanimously appointed as the new Superintendent of the Garfield Heights City Schools. Reynolds joined the district most recently having served as Director of Operations for the Warrensville Heights City Schools and maintaining a long career in public education.

### Patricia Porter-Mayfield '98



returned as The Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference's Associate Commissioner for Strategic Communications.



**Shay Moore '99**, class agent for the class of 1999, began hosting her own morning radio show called the Shay Moore Morning Show.



## 2000s



**Dr. Kristene Kelly '00** was named the Director of Athletics at Albany State University.

**Marcus Scurry '05** was named as the deputy project director for the RedHook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, N.Y. He also released his first book "Dear Young King."

**Dr. Frederick Engram '05** visited



JCSU several times as a speaker and was also a featured guest on the Tavis Smiley Show regarding "Black Joy as an Act of Resistance" which is the title of his 2021 TEDx Talk. He also published his first monograph titled "Black Liberation through Action and Resistance: MOVE" and kicked off a book tour in support of the work.

**Tyrell Hughes '05** published a book entitled "Just a Kid from Arbor Hill."

**Tanisha S. Mickles, BA, MA '06**



was granted an opportunity to work with the US Army Command as a Budget Analyst in Fort Irwin, CA.



**Anthony Brown '07** was named as the director of Student Leadership and Engagement at Johnson C. Smith University.

**Walter Tucker '07** was featured on the annual list of the most powerful music executives in Hip-Hop & R&B in Billboard Magazine.

**Brittany Martin '08** was named the senior corporate compliance paralegal for Etoro, USA.

## 2010



**Harrington Smith '11** was hired by the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association as the Associate Commissioner for Championships & Brand Management.

**Brittne D. Paramore '12** has been named as the director of the Office of Diversity Initiatives at Purdue University.

**Langston "The Media Prince" Vincent '12** received the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Brandon Harris '13** was appointed as the transfer admissions counselor for the Office of Admissions.



**Rachel Zeigler '13** placed second in the Black Girl Venture Pitch Competition. During the competition, Zeigler pitched her vegan skincare business, Naked Chemistry Skincare.



**Xavier Bentley '15** is the ec-co taught teacher for Math 1 /Foundation of Math/Learning Coach / Wrestling/Girls Flag Football/ Lab at Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools.



**Jeremiah Chapman '15** was nominated for the prestigious "Solutions Journalism" Award by the Los Angeles Press Club for his exemplary work on the "Farm Refresh" series, produced for Spectrum News.



**Stephen Graddick '16** was named the morning news anchor for Fox 5 DC.

**Craig Cannon '16** was named as the senior public relations coordinator at Youth Villages. He serves as the official communications representative of the organization for operations in North Carolina and Georgia.



**Danielle Williams '16** competed in the Prefontaine Classic at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon.



**Bernard A. Smith, Jr '17** was appointed as the cloud solution architect-engineering at Microsoft. Smith also received the Outstanding Young Alumni Award during the UNCF Legacy Awards Gala on February 23, 2024 in Jacksonville, Florida.

**Nikhiya Young '17** received a degree in Communication/Media Relations from Johns Hopkins University in 2021.

## 2020s

**Shakoya Brown '20** was named the instructor of Rhetoric and Communications at Johnson C. Smith University.



**Taneva Bush '20** is currently teaching High School Chemistry and Physical Science at Overhills High School in Springdale, N.C.

### JaKeyah B. McNeil, M.S., '20



is the head strength and conditioning coordinator at Johnson C. Smith University. Her responsibilities are overseeing the weight room facilities as well as all the athletic programs.

### Taequan Owens '21 and former



member of the University Concert Choir performed as a backup singer with American singer, songwriter, and actress Alicia Keys on August 2, 2022, at the

Charlotte Metro Credit Union Amphitheatre in Charlotte, N.C.



**Jarin Simmons '22**, reigning Miss Charlotte competed in the Miss North Carolina USA Pageant. Simmons placed top ten out of 70 contestants.



**Alexys Gabriel '22** is the Human Resources Rotational Analyst Program for Equitable. She served as a recruiter during the 2023 Annual Career Fair



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- 2 Online** [www.jcsu.edu/giving](http://www.jcsu.edu/giving)
- 3 Telephone** (704) 378-3577 or (704) 330-1424







## Dr. Terza Lima-Neves

**On July 3rd, 2024**, Dr. Terza Lima-Neves was honored with a Professional Merit Medal and Certificate by the Government of Cabo Verde during a state gala with Prime Minister, Ulisses Correia e Silva and his delegation.

Book: Cabo Verdeans in the United States: Twenty-First Century Critical Perspectives



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