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# HBCU CONNECT 2026

Annual Conference & Career Fair

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## EMPLOYER & SPONSOR PARTICIPATION GUIDE

**Event Dates: Thursday, April 30 – Friday, May 1, 2026**

### **Career Fair Venue**

**The Westin Washington DC Downtown**

999 9th Street NW, Washington, DC 20001

202-898-9000

### **Hotel Reservations**

Book online: <https://book.passkey.com/go/HBCUConnect>

Or call 1-800-228-9290 and reference the HBCU Connect Room Block

**Reservations must be made by April 8, 2026**



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## EVENT OVERVIEW

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We are excited to welcome your organization to the HBCU CONNECT 2026 Annual Conference & Career Fair. This guide outlines key logistical and operational details to ensure a smooth and successful experience.

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## THURSDAY, APRIL 30TH — VIP KICKOFF RECEPTION

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### VIP Professional Networking Kickoff Reception

*Official Opening Event of Conference Weekend*

#### WHAT TO EXPECT

This is an exclusive VIP Networking & Event Kickoff Reception launching the HBCU CONNECT Conference & Career Fair Weekend. This is not a career fair—it is a premium, invitation-style evening designed to set the tone for the full conference experience.

You will be joining a curated audience of accomplished Black and Brown professionals, corporate leaders, and conference partners in an intimate setting built for meaningful relationships and high-impact connections.

Expect an upscale, cocktail reception atmosphere with warm lighting, premium refreshments, and direct access to excellent talent.

#### EVENT DETAILS

<b>Event</b>	VIP Professional Networking Kickoff Reception
<b>Date</b>	Thursday, April 30, 2026
<b>Time</b>	6:00 PM – 9:00 PM ET
<b>Venue</b>	The Gathering Spot
<b>Address</b>	1720 I Street NW, Washington, DC 20006 (“I Street” — like the letter I)
<b>Dress Code</b>	Branded Company Shirts/Polos or Business Professional
<b>Format</b>	Open networking, curated introductions, cocktail reception

#### WHO WILL BE IN THE ROOM

This reception brings together a select group of professionals and decision-makers, including:

- Senior professionals, executives, and corporate leaders
- HBCU alumni leaders across industries
- Entrepreneurs, innovators, and emerging business leaders
- Employer partners and event sponsors
- Conference VIP guests and invited delegates

#### HOW TO PREPARE

- **Bring plenty of business cards or your LinkedIn app.** This is a high-value networking environment—be ready to exchange information with multiple contacts throughout the evening.

- **Come prepared to engage.** Attendees are accomplished professionals. Be ready with a clear, conversational elevator pitch about your organization and the roles or opportunities you offer.
- **Plan your arrival.** Doors open at 6:00 PM.
- **Know your goals.** Identify what you want to accomplish—whether it's brand visibility, talent pipeline development, or building strategic partnerships.
- **Dress the part.** Candidates will be looking to network. Make it easy on them by wearing company gear to stand out from other guests.

## FRIDAY, MAY 1ST — CAREER FAIR DAY

<b>Sponsor/Employer Check-In &amp; Setup</b> 6:00 AM – 8:30 AM	<b>Career Fair Hours</b> 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM
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<b>Registration Desk</b> Potomac Registration Desk (6:00 AM – 4:30 PM)	<b>Exhibit Area / Career Fair</b> Potomac Ballroom & Potomac Foyer
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### FRIDAY CAREER FAIR SCHEDULE

Time	Activity
6:00 AM	Exhibitor Setup Opens
6:15 AM	Breakfast Begins
8:00 AM	Breakfast Concludes
8:15 AM	Setup Concludes
9:00 AM	Career Fair Opens
12:00 – 2:00 PM	Lunch Available for Employers
4:30 PM	Career Fair Concludes
4:30 – 6:30 PM	Exhibitor Breakdown

## SPONSOR / EMPLOYER PRE-EVENT CHECKLIST

Please complete the items below before the event.

### BOOTH & SETUP

- Confirm your booth size based on your sponsorship level
- Plan booth signage, banners, and displays to fit within your booth space

### POWER & INTERNET

- Request electrical service from HBCU CONNECT (if your booth needs power)
- Plan to purchase venue Wi-Fi if your team needs internet access

### SHIPPING (IF SENDING MATERIALS)

- Label all shipments with company name and contact info

- Include return shipping labels for outbound materials
- Budget for venue package handling fees

### **BOOTH MATERIALS TO BRING**

- Company banner or tabletop signage
- Job descriptions or QR codes to careers page
- Recruiter business cards
- Promotional or giveaway items (optional)

### **RECRUITER BADGES**

- Submit attendee list (names, titles, emails) before the deadline

### **TRAVEL & HOTEL**

- Book hotel accommodations
- Plan for daily parking costs

### **TEAM PREPARATION**

- Coordinate business or company-branded attire
- Review event schedule and arrival time (setup begins at 6:00 AM)

### **END-OF-DAY PLANNING**

- Plan for booth breakdown after the event
- Prepare materials and labels for return shipping (if needed)

## **BOOTH SIZE & LAYOUT SPECIFICATIONS**

Your booth size is determined by your sponsorship level:

Sponsorship Level	Booth Size	Table	Chairs
Platinum	20' x 20'	2 — 6-Foot Tables	8
Gold	10' x 20'	1 — 6-Foot Table	6
Silver	10' x 10'	1 — 6-Foot Table	4
Bronze	10' x 10'	1 — 6-Foot Table	2
Non-Profit	10' x 10'	1 — 6-Foot Table	2

### **DISPLAY GUIDELINES**

- Floor-standing banners and pop-up displays are allowed within your booth footprint
- Displays may not extend into aisles or neighboring booth space

## **POWER & INTERNET SERVICES**

### **ELECTRICITY**

Power is NOT included with booth space. If your booth requires electrical access, please contact HBCU CONNECT to request pricing and arrangements.

## WI-FI

Wi-Fi service is available through the venue for a fee. Details on ordering packages, pricing, and deadlines will be shared once confirmed.

Use the following link to secure Wifi/Electric for your booth:

[Encore EventNow](#) | [Audio Visual Solutions](#) | [Order Online](#)

## MEALS & HOSPITALITY

Meal	Time	Location
Breakfast	6:00 AM – 8:00 AM	Potomac Foyer / Career Fair Ballroom
Lunch	12:00 PM – 2:00 PM	Anacostia Salon F

## SHIPPING & RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS

Exhibitors shipping materials to the hotel should plan ahead to ensure packages arrive and are properly labeled.

Westin Official Shipping Documentation: [Download Here](#)

### SHIPPING DEADLINES

<b>Earliest Package Arrival</b>	Friday, April 24th
<b>Final Arrival Deadline</b>	Wednesday, April 29th

*Note: We are working with the hotel to extend FedEx hours—potentially open until 10:00 PM on Thursday, April 30th and opening at 5:45 AM on Friday, May 1st. Updates will be communicated.*

### SHIP TO ADDRESS

Attn: (Guest Name / Company Name / Cell Phone)

The Westin Washington, DC Downtown

999 9th Street NW, Washington, DC 20001

**Hold for HBCU CONNECT Career Fair — May 1, 2026**

### LABEL PACKAGES CLEARLY WITH

- Event Name: HBCU CONNECT Conference & Career Fair
- Guest Name
- Company Name
- Cell Phone Number
- Box \_\_\_ of \_\_\_

**⚠ Important:** Package handling and storage fees are NOT included in your sponsorship. Exhibitors are responsible for all venue handling charges. Please see the Westin shipping document linked above for full details. Bring return labels if shipping materials back after the event.

Full shipping details & fees: [Westin Shipping Instructions](#)

## MOVE-OUT & BREAKDOWN INSTRUCTIONS

Breakdown begins at 4:30 PM when the career fair concludes.

### Move-Out Window: 4:30 PM – 6:00 PM

- Remove all booth materials and signage
- Pack and label outgoing shipments
- Deliver outbound packages to designated hotel shipping location (FedEx Onsite)

Loading dock access requires a completed form: [Download Loading Dock Form](#)

*The form must be returned to the hotel promptly.*

## PARKING INFORMATION

Parking is available at The Westin DC Downtown. [Download Full Parking Rates](#)

## EVENT DAY CONTACTS

Role	Name	Cell Phone	Email
Exhibitor Check-In	KB	TBD	annualevent@hbcuconnect.com
Shipping / Packages	Del Ro	TBD	annualevent@hbcuconnect.com
AV / Tech Support	Nathan Scheib	717-439-0143	nathan.scheib@encoreglobal.com
Event Director	Dashawnda Brown	312-399-4459	annualevent@hbcuconnect.com

## BADGES & CHECK-IN PROCESS

Employers will check in at the Potomac Registration Desk beginning at 6:00 AM on Friday, May 1, 2026.

Each organization must submit their booth representatives on the event prep website by April 24, 2026.

Manage your booth reps here: [Event Portal](#)



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Badges will be pre-printed and available at check-in — one per registered booth rep.

## DRESS CODE GUIDANCE

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Business or business casual attire is recommended. Wearing company-branded apparel (polos, button-downs, blazers with logo) is encouraged to help attendees easily identify your recruiting team.

We also suggest comfortable shoes and bringing a water bottle to support your comfort during the course of the career fair.

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**Questions? Contact Us**  
[annualevent@hbcuconnect.com](mailto:annualevent@hbcuconnect.com)