

HBCU CONNECT

on campus

FALL/WINTER 2025



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THESE 5!

HBCU BANDS
MORE THAN
ENTERTAINMENT

**TOP 10
SCHOLARSHIPS
FOR STUDENTS**



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U.S. Department
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For more information about this program and jobs caring for Veterans, visit VAcareers.VA.gov.



LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2025 edition of the HBCU Student Magazine! Each issue is more than a collection of stories — it is a celebration of the history, resilience, and promise of our HBCU community.

This season, we highlight the opportunities that are shaping the future for today's students. From the NBA's HBCU Fellowship Program to transformative gifts supporting scholarships, to the spotlight on athletic excellence and the traditions of homecoming, every page reminds us that our institutions remain at the center of progress and possibility.

HBCUs have always been more than classrooms and campuses. They are spaces where leaders are forged, where culture is preserved, and where dreams become tangible. The students, alumni, and faculty featured here represent not only personal success but also the collective strength of our community.

As you turn these pages, I encourage you to see yourself in these stories and to take advantage of the resources within. Share opportunities, apply for scholarships, and embrace the networks that HBCUs uniquely provide. Your journey is part of a greater legacy — one that continues to grow stronger with every generation.

HBCUCONNECT.COM – Get Connected!

Sincerely,

Will Moss

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TOP 10 SCHOLARSHIPS for HBCU Students



College costs continue to rise, but scholarships can make the difference. You should look for scholarships primarily because they provide “free money” for education that does not have to be repaid, which significantly reduces student debt and financial stress. Beyond the financial aspects, scholarships offer numerous personal and professional benefits. Here are 10 key opportunities for HBCU students to know.

Apply to as many as possible. Applying for scholarships is a strategic investment in your future that provides both immediate financial relief and long-term professional advantages. There are thousands of scholarships available based on a wide range of criteria beyond just academic merit or financial need, including special talents, extracurricular involvement, community service, specific fields of study, or personal background. This means there is likely a scholarship out there for you, no matter your unique qualifications.

To explore even more opportunities, visit:
www.hbcuconnect.com/scholarships

- 1 HBCU Connect Scholarships**
Career-focused awards for members of the HBCU community.
- 2 Thurgood Marshall College Fund**
For students at public HBCUs; awards vary.
- 3 UNCF Scholarships**
Thousands of awards; visit uncf.org for current listings.
- 4 Ron Brown Scholar Program**
\$40,000 for talented Black students with leadership potential.
- 5 Coca-Cola Scholars Program**
\$20,000 for high-achieving high school seniors.
- 6 Microsoft Scholarship**
For students in STEM, especially computer science.
- 7 Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholarship**
\$30,000 over 4 years; includes mentoring.
- 8 Apple HBCU Scholars Program**
Paid internship plus a \$25,000 scholarship.
- 9 Google Student Veterans of America Scholarship**
For veterans pursuing tech or STEM.
- 10 National Association of Black Journalists**
Scholarships for journalism majors.



STEM Power: HBCU STUDENTS LEADING THE AI REVOLUTION



Artificial intelligence is reshaping every field, and HBCU students are emerging as some of the most forward-thinking contributors to this new era. From developing bias-reducing algorithms to designing tools that improve healthcare access in underserved communities, students across HBCUs are proving that innovation thrives where opportunity and purpose meet. North Carolina A&T's computer science program is producing researchers whose work has been cited in national AI ethics discussions, while Howard University's partnership with Google continues to open doors for students eager to enter machine learning and software engineering roles.

This growth isn't happening in isolation. Tech giants such as Microsoft, Meta, and NVIDIA are expanding pipelines directly to HBCUs, offering access to advanced computing labs, mentorship, and competitive fellowships. Students are also launching AI-driven startups, entering global hackathons, and contributing to the future of automation, robotics, and data science. As AI becomes embedded in every industry, HBCU students aren't just preparing to participate — they're shaping the direction of the future, ensuring that technology reflects the communities it serves.

HBCU Sports SPOTLIGHT



HBCUs have long been home to incredible athletic talent, and this year is no exception. Jackson State's quarterback Avery Johnson has been turning heads with record-setting passing yards, drawing attention from NFL scouts. Meanwhile, Howard University's women's basketball team is dominating the MEAC, showing the strength and resilience of HBCU athletes on the national stage.

Beyond wins and stats, these players embody leadership, academic excellence, and community service. For many, athletics is not just about sports — it's a platform for representing their universities and inspiring the next generation. Whether in football, basketball, track, or emerging sports like esports, HBCU athletes are making their mark. Keep watching — the next superstar you see on national TV might have gotten their start at your campus.

Currently, other top HBCU athletes for 2025 include football players like **Elijah Williams** (Morgan State, defensive player of the year), **Jacobian Morgan** (Jackson State, offensive player of the year), and **Antwone Watts** (Bethune-Cookman, Black College Football Player of the Year watch list). Other standouts across sports are **David Jeanne-Grandinot** (Alabama State, softball) and **Paris Fieldings** (Howard, men's golf).

Campus Safety: **HBCUS RESPOND TO THREATS**



In recent months, several HBCUs across the country have faced troubling security threats that led to campus lockdowns and heightened anxiety among students. University leaders have responded by boosting campus police presence, upgrading emergency alert systems, and partnering with local law enforcement. For students, awareness and preparedness are critical. Experts recommend saving campus emergency numbers in your phone, staying alert to text or email alerts, and knowing the nearest exits in dorms and classrooms. Many campuses also offer free safety apps that connect students directly with security teams at the press of a button.

While these threats are disruptive, they've also strengthened the resolve of HBCU communities to protect one another. Students continue to thrive academically and socially, sending a clear message that nothing can shake the determination of HBCUs to provide safe, nurturing environments for their students. To improve your safety on an HBCU campus, stay aware of your surroundings, walk with others or use campus escort services at night, secure your dorm room, report suspicious activity to campus security, and take advantage of campus safety resources like emergency alerts and self-defense classes.



TURNING THE TIDE:

The Philanthropic Wave Reshaping HBCUs

HBCUs are experiencing one of the most significant funding moments in their history. Over the past year, more than \$700 million in unrestricted gifts — led by philanthropist MacKenzie Scott and supported by major nonprofits and corporate partners — has poured into campuses nationwide. For institutions that have long operated with smaller endowments and limited resources, this surge represents a rare chance to strengthen scholarships, expand research capacity, and modernize aging facilities. Many HBCUs are using the funds to launch STEM programs, build tech-forward learning spaces, and create new financial pathways that reduce student debt.

The timing matters. HBCUs continue to produce a disproportionate share of Black professionals — engineers, doctors, educators, judges — yet have historically been underfunded compared to predominantly white institutions. These new investments help close that gap while supporting long-term stability and innovation. Students are already seeing results: more scholarships, upgraded infrastructure, and stronger academic support. Still, challenges remain, including housing needs and deferred maintenance across many campuses.

Even so, the current philanthropic momentum marks a turning point. Strengthening HBCUs is increasingly recognized not as charity but as an essential investment in the nation's workforce, future leaders, and economic growth.

Saint Augustine's ACCREDITATION BATTLE

Saint Augustine's University in Raleigh, NC, one of the nation's oldest HBCUs, is fighting for survival after its accreditation was revoked in 2024. Accreditation ensures that students can receive federal financial aid and that their degrees remain recognized nationwide. Without it, enrollment often plummets, and alumni worry about the value of their diplomas. The school quickly filed an appeal, which allows it to remain accredited during the review process.



Leaders argue that Saint Augustine's provides critical opportunities for students from underserved backgrounds and deserves support while it works through financial and administrative challenges. For students currently enrolled, the message has been clear: stay focused, continue your studies, and lean on faculty and staff who are committed to your success. The future is uncertain, but the fight to preserve this historic HBCU is far from over.

The crisis has drawn national attention to the financial strain many HBCUs face. Limited endowments, reliance on tuition, and infrastructure challenges make these schools vulnerable to sanctions from accrediting bodies. Still, Saint Augustine's alumni, community leaders, and advocacy groups have rallied to raise funds and lobby for support. Students, meanwhile, are finding strength in solidarity, organizing prayer circles, fundraisers, and media campaigns to share their stories. The outcome of the appeal will shape not only the future of Saint Augustine's but also spark conversations about how to better support all HBCUs. Whether through increased philanthropy, stronger alumni engagement, or more robust government funding, the lesson is clear: HBCUs remain vital, and their survival is a shared responsibility.

As an update, Saint Augustine's University is once again accredited after a court granted a preliminary injunction last week that will keep the institution in good standing while it continues its legal battle with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. SAU began its new school year virtually on Sept. 2 as an accredited institution.



\$70 MILLION GIFT TO UNCF

A Boost for HBCUs

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) recently received a historic \$70 million donation, one of the largest single gifts in its history. The contribution, made by philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, will support scholarships, faculty development, and critical resources for HBCUs nationwide. UNCF President Michael Lomax described the gift as “transformational,” noting that it will expand opportunities for thousands of students who rely on financial aid to pursue their degrees.

The gift highlights the importance of philanthropy in closing funding gaps that disproportionately affect HBCUs compared to other institutions. For students, this means more scholarships, stronger academic programs, and long-term investment in their future success. Alumni and supporters are encouraged to match the momentum by contributing in their own way, whether through donations, mentoring, or advocacy.

At a time when education costs continue to rise, this gift is a powerful reminder of the value of investing in the next generation of Black excellence. To donate to a specific Historically Black College or University (HBCU), the most direct method is to visit the university's official website and use their online donation portal. Most institutions have a “Give” or “Donate” button on their homepage.

NBA WELCOMES HBCU Fellowship Class of 2025



Seventy-three Fellows from 23 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are spending this summer interning across NBA and WNBA teams and league offices through the NBA Foundation's HBCU Fellowship Program. After a two-day orientation at league headquarters, the 10-week experience began with workshops and panels to prepare students for careers beyond the court.

Now in its fourth year, the fellowship has engaged 265 alumni from 42 HBCUs, with 21% securing full-time roles or early-career positions within the NBA ecosystem. New this year, Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) joined as a partner to help recruit and coach Fellows during their internships.

League executives encouraged the 2025 class to pursue ambition and embrace leadership. One Fellow, Michael Clark — a Howard and Columbia grad interning in Apparel & Merchandising Partnerships — noted that while fans see the NBA on-court, the real career opportunities also thrive behind the scenes.

The program underscores the NBA's long-term commitment to HBCU talent, diversity, and building pathways for students to influence the game in lasting ways.



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Money Moves: SIDE HUSTLES FOR STUDENTS



Balancing classes and bills isn't easy, but side hustles can help. Here are three realistic options for HBCU students:

TUTORING

Use your expertise in math, writing, or coding to help classmates or local high school students. Rates can range from \$15–\$30 an hour.

RESELLING

Thrift finds, sneakers, and tech gadgets can be flipped online through apps like Poshmark, eBay, or StockX.

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Small businesses often need help running Instagram or TikTok pages. Students with creative skills can earn steady income.

These hustles require little startup cash and fit into flexible schedules. Even a few extra hours a week can cover groceries, books, or help with rent. The key is to pick something you enjoy and can manage alongside your studies — so you make money without burning out. Other student side hustles include online options like freelance writing, graphic design, as well as local services such as pet sitting, babysitting, and delivery driving. Other ideas involve participating in market research, and becoming a brand ambassador or content creator. The best choice depends on the student's skills, interests, and available time.



Homecoming isn't just an event at HBCUs — it's a cultural phenomenon. Each fall, alumni, students, and community members come together to celebrate school pride, tradition, and unity. From the thunder of marching bands to the energy of step shows, homecoming weekends are packed with unforgettable moments.

They're also major networking opportunities, as alumni return eager to mentor and connect with current students. Fashion plays a big role too, with students showing off fresh looks that turn the campus into a runway. The atmosphere is electric: food vendors, tailgates, pep rallies, and concerts bring everyone together. For many, homecoming is the highlight of the year — a time to recharge school spirit and create memories that last long after graduation.



Top traditions that make HBCU homecoming legendary:

1. MARCHING BANDS

High-energy halftime shows that mix music, dance, and precision.

2. STEP SHOWS

Fraternities and sororities showcase culture, rhythm, and competition.

3. TAILGATING

Food, family, and fun outside the stadium before the big game.

4. FASHION & STYLE

Outfits that turn sidewalks into runways, capturing campus culture.

5. ALUMNI NETWORKING

Graduates return to reconnect, give back, and inspire current students.

These traditions go beyond entertainment — they build community and remind students of the legacy they're part of. For first-years, it's an introduction to what makes HBCUs unique; for alumni, it's a return home. Either way, homecoming is more than a weekend — it's a celebration of culture, resilience, and pride.

INTERNSHIP TO IMPACT

HBCU Grads Turning Opportunities Into Careers



Internships have always been valuable, but for today's HBCU students, they're becoming pathways to long-term professional success. Companies are actively recruiting from HBCUs, recognizing the strength, leadership, and creativity these students consistently bring to the workplace. Recent graduates from Florida A&M, Spelman, and Hampton University share stories of beginning as summer interns at organizations such as Google, NASA, and Deloitte, only to return as full-time analysts, engineers, researchers, and consultants. Their journeys reveal a powerful trend: when opportunity meets preparation, HBCU talent rises to the top.

Many of these success stories are fueled by supportive on-campus career centers, alumni networks, and fellowship programs that mentor students through the transition from classroom to corporate. Whether through structured rotational programs, remote internship experiences, or hands-on research opportunities, HBCU students are learning how to turn short-term roles into long-term careers. Their achievements are inspiring younger students to pursue internships early and often — and they're proving to employers nationwide that the HBCU talent pipeline is one of the strongest and most reliable sources of rising leaders.

5 APPS Every Student Should Use



College life is busy, but the right apps can keep you on track. Apps are crucial for college success, helping students with organization, productivity, and studying. Using apps allows students to manage tasks, take notes, collaborate on projects, and excel academically. Here are just a few apps that will hopefully get you on the right track to success.



NOTION
Organize notes, schedules, and projects in one place.



MINT
Track spending, budget wisely, and avoid surprise overdrafts.



QUIZLET
Create flashcards to study anywhere, anytime.



HEADSPACE
Guided meditation to reduce stress and improve focus.



LINKEDIN
Build your professional profile, network, and find internships.

Each app offers free versions, and many include student discounts for premium upgrades. Adding these tools to your phone can help you stay balanced, focused, and prepared for both classes and future career moves.

WHEN THE BAND POPS: HBCU Marching Culture Takes Center Stage



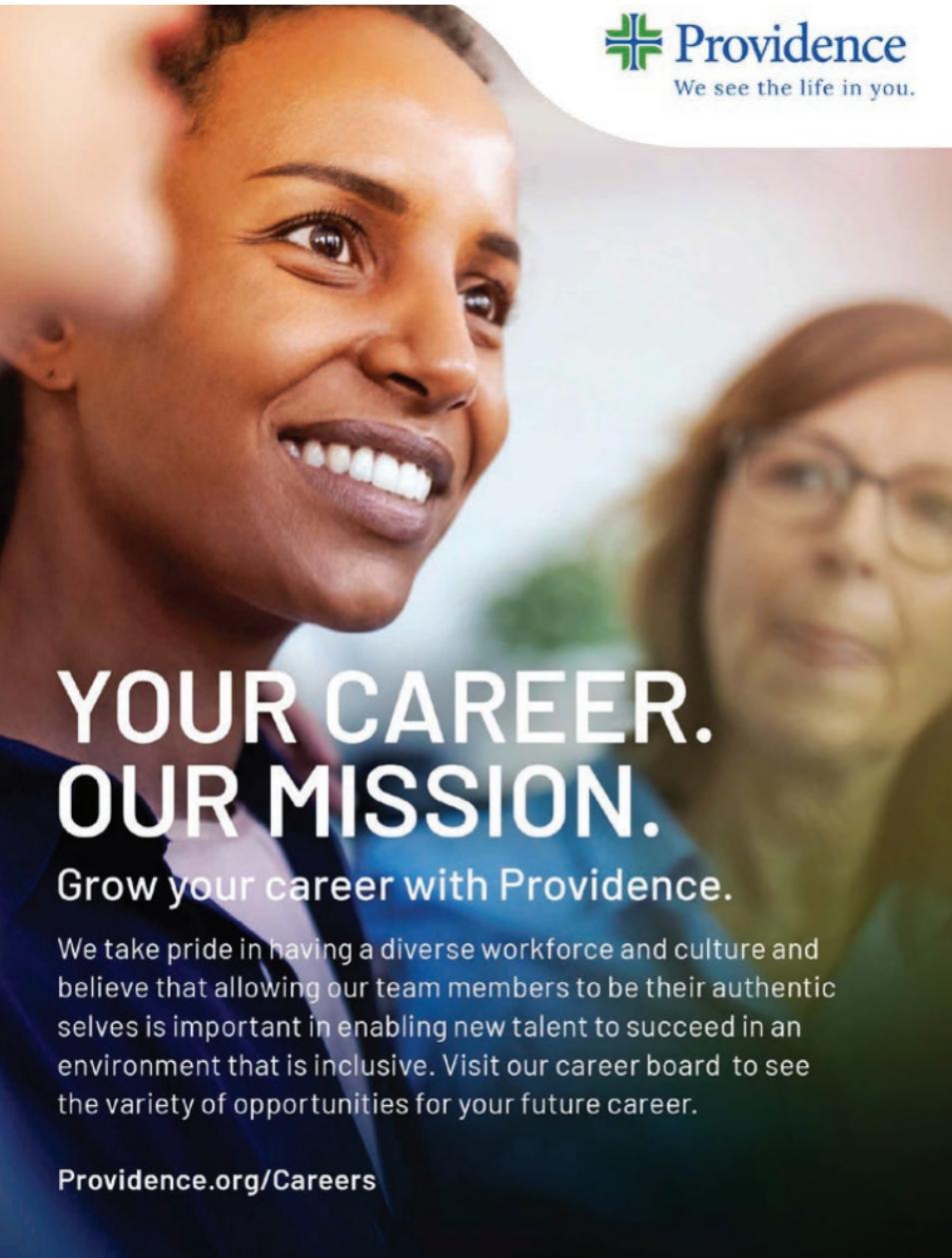
HBCU marching bands are stepping into a new level of national spotlight, fueled by the upcoming 2025 Red Lobster HBCU Band of the Year competition. Last year's champions — the Miles College Purple Marching Machine — return to defend their title against elite programs like Florida A&M University, whose performances regularly go viral.

More than halftime entertainment, HBCU bands represent a unique blend of precision, athleticism, music, and culture. Behind every high-energy performance are hours of demanding rehearsals, intricate formations, and choreography rooted in Black musical tradition — from jazz and gospel to hip-hop.

This rising visibility is opening new doors for student musicians, including scholarships, NIL opportunities, national TV appearances, and invitations to major cultural events. For many students, band culture is also a key factor in choosing an HBCU.

But beyond accolades, HBCU bands serve as cultural ambassadors. Their performances preserve tradition, inspire community pride, and showcase creativity that is distinct to the HBCU experience.

As the Band of the Year competition approaches, excitement is building — not just around who wins, but about the legacy each program carries. HBCU bands aren't simply performing; they're shaping the cultural narrative in real time.



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