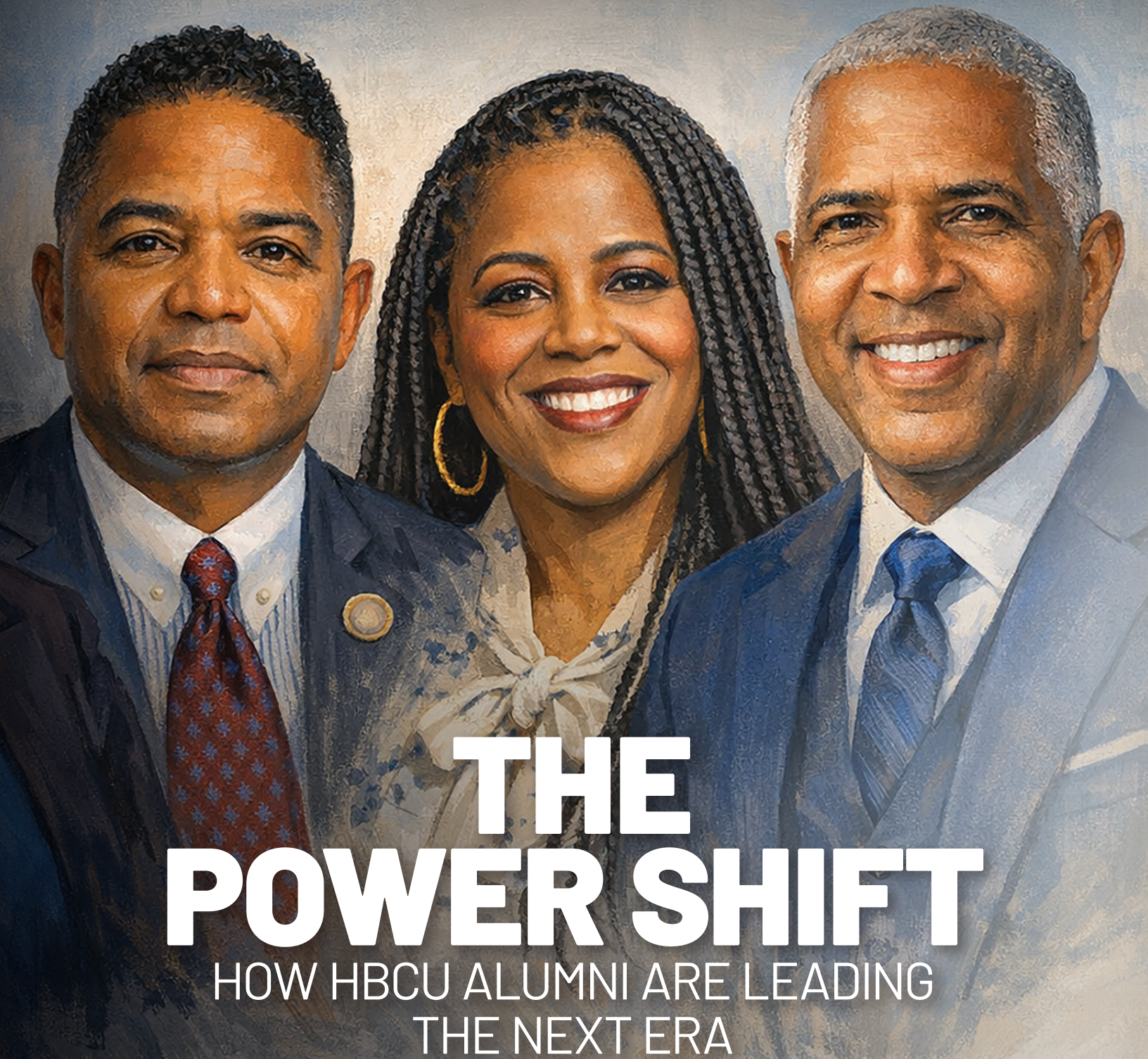




## THE POWER SHIFT

HOW HBCU ALUMNI ARE LEADING  
THE NEXT ERA

THE POWER OF  
**HOME COMING**

HOW TO NEGOTIATE YOUR  
**SALARY**





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## A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

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As the Publisher of HBCUConnect Alumni Magazine, it is my honor to welcome you to the Winter/Spring 2026 issue—a celebration of the continued achievements, leadership, and lasting influence of HBCU alumni across the country and around the world.

Within these pages, we highlight the resilience, innovation, and excellence that define our community. From corporate boardrooms to entrepreneurial ventures, from technological advancement to cultural impact, HBCU graduates are not just participating in the future—they are shaping it.

Each story featured in this issue reflects the strength of our alumni network and the power of connection. Whether we are discussing career growth, financial empowerment, innovation, or community leadership, our mission remains the same: to inform, inspire, and connect our audience to opportunity.

The legacy of Historically Black Colleges and Universities continues to produce leaders who move industries forward and uplift communities. We are proud to showcase the voices, accomplishments, and partnerships that help drive that momentum.

Thank you for being part of the HBCUConnect family. Together, we will continue building pathways, strengthening relationships, and creating lasting impact for generations to come.

Yours in success,

Sincerely,

*Will Moss*

Will Moss | CEO | HBCU CONNECT  
[www.hbcuconnect.com/willmoss](http://www.hbcuconnect.com/willmoss)



# THE POWER



*“HBCU alumni are no longer just entering corporate America — they are shaping its direction.”*



# SHIFT

## How **HBCU** Alumni Are Leading The Next Era

---

Across corporate boardrooms, venture-backed startups, and global enterprises, a measurable shift is underway.

HBCU alumni are increasingly occupying positions of influence—serving as chief executives, division presidents, founders, board members, and strategic decision-makers at some of the world's most recognizable organizations.

**This is not symbolic progress. It is structural change.**

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have long produced a disproportionate share of Black professionals in high-impact industries. HBCUs account for nearly 20% of all Black graduates nationwide and produce a significant percentage of Black engineers, physicians, judges, and STEM professionals. They are responsible for approximately 80% of Black judges and 50% of Black lawyers and doctors, underscoring their foundational role in shaping leadership pipelines across America.

Today, that pipeline is expanding into executive ranks. Leaders such as Rosalind Brewer (Spelman College), former CEO of Walgreens Boots Alliance; Calvin Butler (Howard University), President and CEO of Exelon; and Thasunda Brown Duckett (University of Houston and former HBCU supporter and executive advocate), who leads TIAA, represent a growing cohort of







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executives influencing billion-dollar enterprises. Their leadership reflects not only operational expertise, but a strategic perspective shaped by institutions rooted in resilience, community, and excellence.

## But the power shift extends beyond corporate corner offices.

Entrepreneurs with HBCU foundations are building scalable companies across fintech, healthcare, media, and technology. Robert F. Smith (Cornell University and a major HBCU investor and philanthropist) has deployed billions into Black-led innovation ecosystems, while alumni founders emerging from institutions such as Howard University, Florida A&M University, and North Carolina A&T State University continue to secure venture capital and strategic partnerships at accelerating rates.

This dual pathway—executive leadership and high-growth entrepreneurship—illustrates a broader evolution in influence.

Corporate performance data reinforces this trend. Research consistently shows that companies with diverse executive leadership outperform peers in profitability, innovation output, and long-term value creation. As organizations shift from symbolic commitments to measurable accountability, HBCU recruitment pipelines have become strategic assets.

Major employers are strengthening direct partnerships with HBCUs, investing in leadership development

programs, and establishing structured hiring pathways. Career expos and national recruitment initiatives — including large-scale events like the HBCUConnect Career Fair — serve as catalysts that connect top-tier alumni talent directly with Fortune 500 employers and growth-stage companies seeking competitive advantage.

## These events reflect a new era of intentional access.

What distinguishes this moment is not access alone — it is influence.

HBCU alumni are participating in earnings calls, leading acquisition strategies, guiding capital allocation decisions, and serving on corporate boards. They are launching venture funds, mentoring founders, and designing ecosystems that multiply opportunity.

## This is the power shift.

It is visible in boardrooms, in venture term sheets, in executive appointments, and in enterprise expansion strategies. It is reflected in growing alumni networks that connect decision-makers with the next generation of leaders entering the workforce.

## The next era of leadership is not approaching.

## It is already underway.

HBCUs ACCOUNT FOR  
**20%**  
OF ALL BLACK GRADUATES

HBCUS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR  
**80%** & **50%**  
OF BLACK JUDGES OF BLACK LAWYERS



# HOW HBCUCONNECT CAREER FAIRS ARE CREATING STRUCTURED ACCESS TO *OPPORTUNITY*



In today's competitive hiring landscape, access alone is no longer enough. Visibility without structure often leads to missed opportunities — for both employers and candidates. What organizations need today is intentional engagement: environments where conversations are purposeful, connections are immediate, and outcomes are measurable.

That is where the HBCUConnect's Career Fair recruitment events stand apart.

Over the past two decades, HBCUConnect has built one of the most effective recruitment ecosystems for connecting employers with highly qualified HBCU students, alumni, and diverse professionals across a wide range of industries. Through a combination of digital reach and in-person experiences, the platform has evolved into a system designed not just to introduce talent — but to convert opportunity into action. At the center of this effort is the HBCUConnect Career Fair experience.

While virtual events continue to play a role in expanding national access, the in-person career fair remains a cornerstone of high-impact engagement — bringing together talent and employers in a setting designed for real conversations, real relationships, and real hiring outcomes.

## IN-PERSON CAREER FAIR EXPERIENCE

May 1 | 9:00 AM 4:30 PM ET  
The Westin DC Downtown Hotel  
Washington, DC

For professionals who value direct interaction, the HBCUConnect in-person Career Fair delivers a level of engagement that goes beyond traditional recruiting events. This is not simply a job fair. It is a curated, multi-day professional experience designed to maximize connection, visibility, and opportunity.

## 50+ TOP COMPANIES ATTENDING:

Technology, Finance, Healthcare, Energy,  
Consumer Goods, Government, and Public Sector.





## WHO SHOULD ATTEND

The HBCUConnect Career Fair is intentionally designed to serve a broad and diverse audience of professionals at different stages of their careers:

- Students preparing to enter the workforce
- Recent graduates seeking their first professional roles
- Alumni pursuing advancement or career transitions
- Experienced professionals exploring leadership opportunities
- Passive candidates open to the right opportunity

This multi-level engagement creates a dynamic environment where talent and opportunity intersect across experience levels — not just at the entry level.

Throughout the event, attendees have access to professional development sessions focused on:

- Career strategy and mobility
- Leadership development
- Personal branding and positioning
- Financial literacy and wealth-building

These sessions provide practical insights that extend beyond the event itself — ensuring that candidates leave not only with opportunities, but with the tools to navigate their careers over time.

In alignment with this broader vision, HBCUConnect has partnered with The Black Wealth Summit, a nonprofit organization dedicated to closing the racial wealth gap through education and empowerment.

By integrating financial education into the career fair experience, attendees gain a more complete understanding of how professional growth translates into long-term financial stability.

## THURSDAY EVENING: VIP NETWORKING KICKOFF

The experience begins with an exclusive VIP Professional Networking Reception, offering early access to recruiters, corporate leaders, and fellow professionals in a more intimate setting. Rather than navigating crowded booths, attendees have the opportunity to establish real connections — setting the stage for deeper engagement during the career fair.

## FRIDAY: FULL-SCALE CAREER FAIR ACTIVATION

The following day, the energy shifts into a high-impact recruitment environment featuring over 50 participating companies representing industries such as Technology, Finance, Healthcare, Energy, Consumer Goods, Government, and Public Sector.

Attendees engage directly with hiring managers and recruiters who are actively seeking talent — not simply collecting resumes. This includes:

- On-the-spot interviews
- Immediate follow-up conversations
- Direct introductions to decision-makers
- Opportunities across internship, entry-level, mid-career, and experienced roles

Unlike passive recruiting channels, this format accelerates the hiring process—turning introductions into interviews, and conversations into offers.

# REGISTER TODAY!

To participate in the upcoming  
in-person Career Fair, visit:

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# THE NEAR-UNIVERSAL ADOPTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AT HBCUs



**A**rtificial intelligence is no longer a futuristic concept on HBCU campuses — it's a present reality. A new report from Ellucian, the United Negro College Fund's Institute for Capacity Building (UNCF ICB), and Huston-Tillotson University reveals that AI tools are already deeply integrated into academic and professional workflows across Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

According to the study, 98% of HBCU students and 96% of faculty members report using AI tools for academic, professional, and personal purposes. Nearly 81% of administrators surveyed also indicated AI usage in their daily work, signaling that AI adoption spans campus constituencies and functions.

What sets this trend apart is not merely adoption but purposeful engagement. Students report that AI enhances the quality of their schoolwork, supports creative problem-solving, and reinforces readiness for workforce applications. Many faculty members are exploring AI to supplement teaching, personalize feedback, and streamline administrative tasks — even as they emphasize the importance of ethical use and data privacy frameworks.

Despite near-universal usage, the report highlights areas requiring strategic investment. Fewer than half of faculty and administrators said their institutions have formal AI implementation plans in place, and many indicated uncertainty about their school's technical readiness for broad AI integration. A significant portion also identified access barriers — such as technology costs and limited high-speed connectivity — that could hinder equitable participation.

Faculty and administrators alike see AI's promise for workforce alignment: over 90% predict AI's role in career planning and job-ready skill development will grow markedly in the next two years, while more than 80% foresee broader AI integration into curricula that align with industry needs.

This rapid rise in AI usage at HBCUs reflects both opportunities and responsibilities. As campuses embrace AI tools, institutional support systems — including formal training, data governance structures, and ethical guidelines — must keep pace. When they do, HBCUs have the potential to model equitable and mission-centered AI adoption that prepares students not only to use powerful technologies but to lead with them in future careers.

WHO IS USING  
AI ON CAMPUS?

**98%**  
OF STUDENTS

**96%**  
OF FACULTY

**81%**  
OF ADMINISTRATORS

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# WHY FINANCIAL LITERACY AND OWNERSHIP MATTER MORE THAN EVER FOR HBCU ALUMNI



## Career advancement creates opportunity. Wealth-building creates stability.

For many HBCU alumni, professional success is only part of the equation. Long-term financial security requires intentional strategies — from investing and retirement planning to entrepreneurship and asset ownership. As national conversations continue around closing the racial wealth gap, financial literacy has become more than a personal goal; it is a generational imperative. According to federal data, median household wealth disparities persist across racial lines, underscoring the importance of early investment habits, diversified income streams, and long-term financial planning. For HBCU graduates entering competitive industries, the opportunity to build wealth is real — but it must be pursued strategically.

### Financial experts emphasize several foundational principles:

- Establishing emergency savings and eliminating high-interest debt
- Maximizing employer-sponsored retirement contributions
- Investing consistently in diversified portfolios
- Exploring real estate and business ownership opportunities
- Building credit strength and financial discipline

Beyond individual tactics, collective awareness matters. Alumni networks, mentorship circles, and professional organizations play a critical role in sharing knowledge, expanding access to financial advisors, and encouraging wealth-building conversations that were historically underrepresented. Events like *a* — focused on equipping individuals with practical financial education at every stage of life — reflect a growing emphasis on economic empowerment within the HBCU community.

Financial growth is not about short-term wins. It is about sustainable systems. When alumni prioritize ownership — whether through home equity, equity markets, entrepreneurship, or retirement vehicles — they create stability not only for themselves but for the next generation.

Wealth-building is not accidental. It is intentional.

And for HBCU alumni, it is increasingly part of the broader definition of success.

# WHY INVESTING IN HBCUs IS INVESTING IN AMERICA

## Investment is often measured in dollars. Its true value is measured in impact.

Across the United States, Historically Black Colleges and Universities continue to prove that investing in their students, programs, and infrastructure delivers returns that extend far beyond campus boundaries. From producing a significant percentage of Black professionals in medicine, law, engineering, and education to driving upward mobility across generations, HBCUs play a critical role in shaping the nation's workforce. Yet, their impact has often outpaced their resources.

Despite longstanding disparities in funding, HBCUs consistently produce graduates who enter the workforce prepared to contribute, lead, and innovate. According to national data, HBCUs produce a disproportionate share of Black STEM graduates and professionals in high-impact industries — making them essential contributors to the country's economic growth.

Recognizing this, both public and private sector investments in HBCUs have increased in recent years. Organizations such as Netflix have made significant contributions to HBCUs, including multi-million-dollar investments to support scholarships and infrastructure. Philanthropic leaders like MacKenzie Scott have directed substantial funding toward HBCUs, helping strengthen endowments and expand institutional capacity.

Major corporations have also stepped forward. Companies like Google, Apple, and Microsoft have developed partnerships with HBCUs to support technology education, workforce development, and career pipelines. These collaborations are designed to align academic preparation with industry needs — ensuring that graduates are equipped with the

skills required in a rapidly evolving economy.

This is where connection becomes critical. Investment alone is not enough. Opportunity must be accessible. Platforms like HBCUConnect play a vital role in bridging that gap. By connecting employers directly with HBCU students and alumni through career fairs, recruitment events, and digital engagement, HBCUConnect helps translate investment into real-world outcomes.

Through national events — both virtual and in-person — companies are able to engage directly with diverse talent, while candidates gain access to opportunities that may otherwise remain out of reach. These interactions accelerate hiring, strengthen pipelines, and ensure that investments in education lead to measurable career advancement.

This interconnected system — investment, education, and access — is what drives long-term progress. When corporations invest in HBCUs, they are not simply supporting institutions. They are investing in workforce development. They are investing in innovation. They are investing in economic mobility. And ultimately, they are investing in the future of the country.

The conversation is no longer about whether HBCUs matter. It is about how much more can be achieved when they are fully supported. Because when HBCUs are strengthened, the impact is not limited to their campuses. It is felt across industries, communities, and generations. Investing in HBCUs is not just an educational decision. It is an economic strategy. And it is one of the most important investments the nation can make.



# FROM CAMPUS TO CEO

## HOW HBCU ALUMNI ARE BUILDING BUSINESSES THAT CREATE OPPORTUNITY

Entrepreneurship has always been a part of the HBCU tradition. Long before startup culture became mainstream, Historically Black Colleges and Universities were producing graduates who understood the importance of ownership, innovation, and self-determination.

Today, that tradition is evolving into a new generation of founders who are not only building successful companies, but also creating ecosystems that expand opportunity for others. Across industries—from technology and media to education and professional services—HBCU alumni are launching ventures that address real-world challenges while generating economic impact within their communities.

One example is Lakeysha Hallmon, founder of *Black Girl Ventures*, an organization dedicated to increasing access to capital for Black and Brown women entrepreneurs. Through pitch competitions, community engagement, and funding opportunities, Hallmon has helped create a pathway for founders who have historically been overlooked by traditional investment channels. Her work reflects a broader shift happening within the HBCU alumni community—one where access to capital is no longer seen as a barrier, but as a challenge to be solved collectively.

Similarly, entrepreneurs like Luke Lawal Jr. have built platforms that amplify the voices and experiences of HBCU students and graduates. As the founder of *HBCU Buzz*, Lawal created a digital media brand that has grown into a trusted source of news, culture, and insight for the HBCU community.





### **WHAT CONNECTS THESE FOUNDERS IS NOT JUST THEIR SUCCESS, BUT THEIR APPROACH.**

HBCU alumni entrepreneurs often build with purpose. Their companies are not solely focused on profitability—they are designed to create access, solve problems, and reinvest in the communities that shaped them.

This mindset is particularly important in today's economic landscape, where access to resources, mentorship, and capital continues to influence who is able to start and sustain a business.

According to industry reports, Black founders still receive a disproportionately small percentage of venture capital funding. In response, many HBCU alumni are creating alternative pathways—forming investment groups, launching community-based funding initiatives, and mentoring the next generation of entrepreneurs.

### **THESE EFFORTS ARE HELPING TO RESHAPE WHAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP LOOKS LIKE.**

Rather than operating in isolation, today's founders are building networks. They are collaborating across industries, sharing knowledge, and creating support systems that extend beyond individual companies. The result is a growing ecosystem where success is not just measured by revenue, but by impact.

HBCU alumni are also leveraging their professional experiences to transition into entrepreneurship. Many begin their careers in corporate environments, gaining valuable skills in operations, finance, and strategy before applying that knowledge to their own ventures.

This combination of experience and purpose positions them uniquely in the marketplace.

- They understand both structure and innovation.
- They understand both execution and vision.
- And increasingly, they are choosing ownership.

As more HBCU alumni step into entrepreneurship, they are redefining what it means to build a business. They are proving that success is not only about individual achievement, but about creating opportunities for others to grow alongside them.

**From campus to CEO, the path is becoming clearer. And for HBCU alumni, that path is leading toward ownership, impact, and long-term influence.**



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# SALARY NEGOTIATION

## KNOWING YOUR VALUE — AND ASKING FOR IT



**L**anding the job offer is a major milestone. But what you do next can shape your financial trajectory for years to come. Too often, professionals — especially early in their careers — accept the first offer presented without negotiation. Not because they lack value, but because they lack clarity on how to approach the conversation. For HBCU alumni entering competitive industries, understanding how to negotiate is not just a skill. It is a strategy.

Your starting salary does more than define your initial paycheck. It influences future raises, bonus structures, retirement contributions, long-term earning potential. Even a modest increase at the offer stage can compound significantly over time. Negotiation is not about being difficult. It is about being informed.

### DO YOUR RESEARCH FIRST

Confidence in negotiation comes from preparation. Before responding to an offer, take time to understand market salary ranges for your role, compensation trends within the industry, geographic differences in pay, and the company's size and structure. Platforms like Glassdoor and LinkedIn can provide useful benchmarks, but conversations within your network are often even more valuable. Within the HBCU community, alumni connections can offer real-world insight into what companies are actually paying — not just what is publicly listed.

Salary is only one part of the conversation. A strong negotiation can also include signing bonuses, relocation assistance, remote or hybrid flexibility, professional development support, and performance review timelines. If an employer cannot move significantly on base salary, they may have flexibility in other areas. Understanding the full compensation package allows you to negotiate more effectively.

### HOW TO APPROACH THE CONVERSATION

Tone matters. The goal is not to challenge the offer — it is to refine it. A strong response is appreciative, professional, data-informed. For example, “I’m excited about the opportunity and appreciate the offer. Based on my research and the value I bring to this role, I was hoping we could explore a base salary closer to [range].” This approach signals confidence without confrontation. One of the biggest barriers to negotiation is hesitation. Many professionals worry that asking for more could jeopardize the offer. In most cases, it does not. Employers expect negotiation. And when handled professionally, it reinforces your understanding of your value. For HBCU alumni, this is especially important. Closing compensation gaps begins with individual conversations — where preparation meets confidence.

### OWN THE OUTCOME

At its core, negotiation is about ownership. Ownership of your skills. Ownership of your value. Ownership of your future. The offer is the starting point. What you do with it is up to you.



# JEWEL BURKS SOLOMON

## BUILDING ACCESS AT THE INTERSECTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND OPPORTUNITY

How a Howard University Graduate Is Shaping the Future of Innovation and Inclusion

**I**nnovation often begins with identifying a gap. Leadership begins with choosing to close it. For Jewel Burks Solomon, that intersection — where opportunity meets intention — has defined her career. As a technology entrepreneur, investor, and Head of Google for Startups U.S., Solomon has built a reputation around one core principle: Access should not be accidental. It should be designed.

Entrepreneurship often begins with an idea. Sustaining it requires vision. Scaling it requires purpose. For Mikaila Ulmer, founder of the fast-growing beverage brand *Me & the Bees Lemonade*, that journey began long before most entrepreneurs write their first business plan. It started with a problem — and a purpose.



**FROM HOWARD TO TECH**

A graduate of Howard University, Solomon entered the tech industry with both business acumen and a strong sense of community. That foundation shaped how she approached opportunity — not just as something to pursue, but something to expand for others.

Rather than simply navigating the tech ecosystem, she set out to influence it.

**BUILDING WITH PURPOSE**

As co-founder of Partpic, Solomon helped develop a platform that used computer vision to identify replacement parts — solving a real-world problem with scalable technology. The company quickly gained traction and was eventually acquired by Amazon. But the acquisition wasn't the finish line — it was a stepping stone. At Amazon, she gained experience operating within a large-scale tech environment, learning how innovation evolves beyond the startup phase.

**EXPANDING ACCESS AT GOOGLE**

Today, Solomon leads Google for Startups U.S., where she focuses on supporting founders — particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. Her work centers on providing:

- Access to capital and resources

- Technical support
- Mentorship and networks

More importantly, it addresses a long-standing issue: Access to the startup ecosystem has not been evenly distributed. By creating intentional pathways, Solomon is helping expand who gets to build, scale, and succeed in tech.

**THE HBCU INFLUENCE**

Institutions like Howard University have long emphasized not only academic excellence, but also community responsibility, leadership, and impact.

## The values that guide Solomon's work are deeply aligned with the HBCU experience.

They prepare students to operate in environments where representation may be limited — but influence is not.

For Solomon, that preparation is evident. She operates with both strategic precision and cultural awareness — an approach that allows her to navigate complex systems while maintaining a clear sense of purpose. Her success also reinforces an important narrative: HBCU graduates are not only prepared to compete in high-growth industries. They are prepared to lead them.

**CREATING PATHWAYS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION**

Beyond her formal role, Solomon continues to serve as a visible example of what is possible.

Her career offers a framework for emerging entrepreneurs and professionals:

- Identify real problems
- Build solutions with intention
- Scale through execution
- Use success to expand access for others

These principles are particularly relevant within the HBCU

community, where talent and ambition are abundant, but access has not always been evenly distributed.

By helping to close that gap, Solomon is not just building companies or programs.

She is building pathways.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

As the startup ecosystem continues to grow and evolve, leaders like Solomon will play an increasingly important role in determining its direction. Her work at Google represents more than support for founders. It represents a shift toward a more inclusive and accessible innovation economy. And in that shift, one thing becomes clear: The future of technology will not be defined by a single perspective. It will be shaped by those who are intentional about expanding who gets to build it.



# THE POWER OF HOMECOMING

## WHY THE HBCU TRADITION IS MORE THAN A CELEBRATION — IT'S A CULTURAL FORCE

### **FOR MANY, HOMECOMING IS AN EVENT.**

At Historically Black Colleges and Universities, it is an experience.

Each year, campuses across the country transform into vibrant centers of celebration, connection, and cultural expression. From Howard University's nationally recognized "Yardfest" to Florida A&M University's legendary homecoming parade and tailgate culture, these events draw thousands of alumni, students, and supporters back to campus.

### **HBCU HOMECOMING IS NOT JUST A CELEBRATION. IT IS A CULTURAL INSTITUTION.**

At North Carolina A&T State University, one of the largest homecomings in the country, alumni return in record numbers each year for the "Greatest Homecoming on Earth," where the campus becomes a hub of energy, networking, and tradition. Similarly, Tennessee State University's homecoming transforms Nashville into a full-scale celebration, blending campus events with citywide engagement.

From the moment alumni arrive on campus, there is an unmistakable energy. The sights, the sounds, the familiar rhythms of marching bands — like the iconic "Marching 100" of Florida A&M — and the shared sense of pride create an environment that feels both nostalgic and alive.

### **FOR MANY GRADUATES, HOMECOMING IS A RETURN TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.**

It is a chance to reconnect with classmates, revisit

formative experiences, and reflect on the journey from student to professional. But beyond nostalgia, homecoming serves as a powerful networking platform — one where relationships are renewed, opportunities are created, and connections are strengthened.

Informal conversations on the yard often lead to job opportunities, business partnerships, and mentorship relationships that extend far beyond the weekend. In that way, homecoming functions as both a social and professional ecosystem.

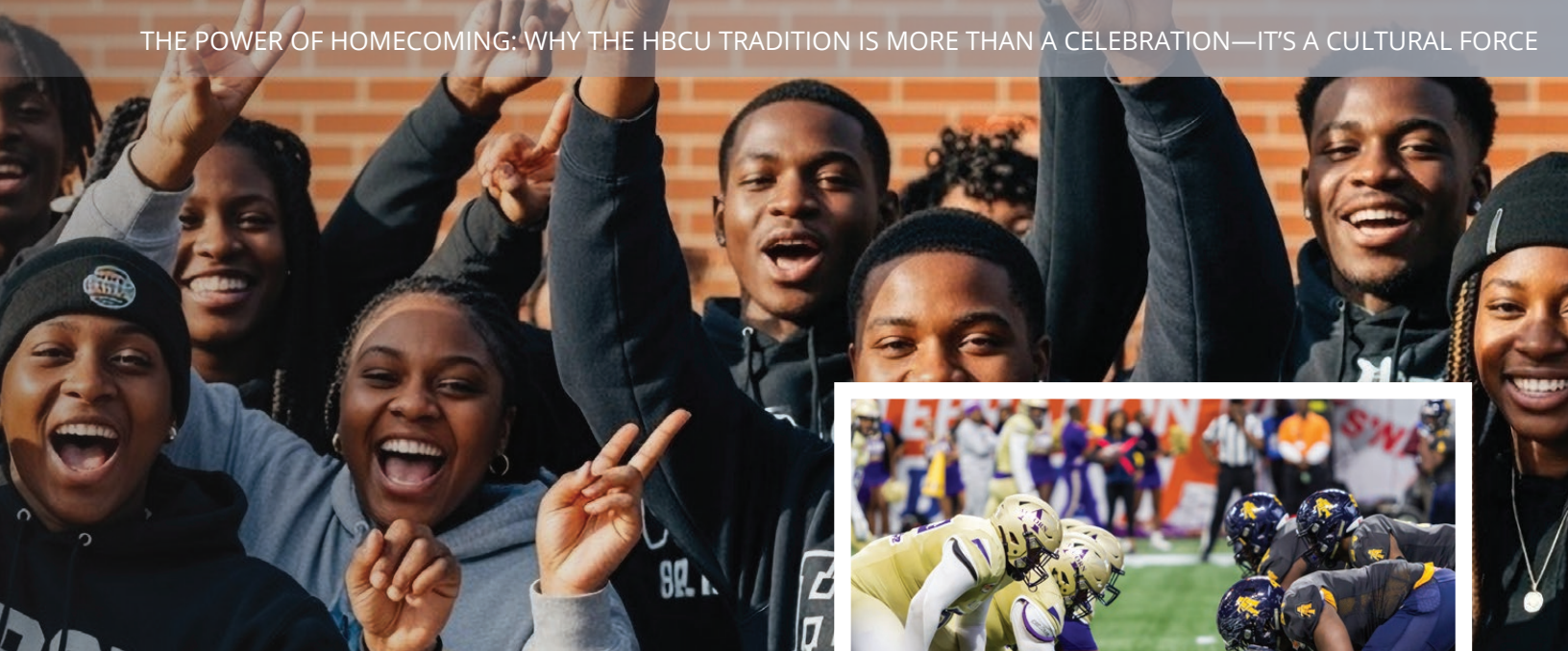
### **THE ECONOMIC IMPACT IS ALSO SIGNIFICANT.**

Cities like Washington, D.C., Tallahassee, and Greensboro experience major economic boosts during homecoming weekends, with hotels fully booked, restaurants operating at capacity, and local businesses benefiting from the influx of visitors.

This economic activity reinforces the broader value of HBCUs — not just as educational institutions, but as anchors within their communities.

### **CULTURALLY, HOMECOMING IS UNMATCHED.**

From step shows and tailgates to fashion statements and halftime performances, every element reflects a unique blend of tradition and creativity. Bands deliver performances that rival professional productions, while Greek organizations showcase discipline, unity, and legacy through step.



### **EVEN THE FASHION TELLS A STORY.**

At events like Howard's Yardfest or A&T's tailgate, homecoming becomes a runway — where alumni and students express individuality through bold, creative, and culturally inspired looks.

### **BUT PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF HOMECOMING IS WHAT IT REPRESENTS.**

It is a reminder.

A reminder of the role HBCUs play in shaping lives, building confidence, and creating lifelong communities. A reminder that these institutions are more than places of learning — they are environments where identity is affirmed, excellence is cultivated, and legacy is built.

For current students, homecoming is an introduction to that legacy.

For alumni, it is a continuation of it.

And for the broader community, it is a window into the culture, pride, and impact of HBCUs.

In a world that is constantly evolving, HBCU homecoming remains a constant.

It brings people back.

It brings people together.

And it reinforces a truth that continues to define the HBCU experience:

The connection never leaves.

## **IT ONLY GROWS STRONGER.**







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# THE SKILLS THAT MATTER MOST IN TODAY'S JOB MARKET



**T**he job market is evolving faster than ever. Advancements in technology, shifts in workplace expectations, and the rise of artificial intelligence are redefining what it means to be a competitive professional. For HBCU alumni entering — or advancing within — this landscape, success is no longer defined by a single skill set. It is defined by adaptability.

Today's employers are not just looking for degrees or technical knowledge. They are looking for individuals who can think critically, communicate effectively, and evolve alongside the industries they serve.

## **Among the most in-demand skills is digital fluency.**

As organizations continue to integrate tools powered by artificial intelligence, data analytics, and automation, professionals who understand how to work alongside these technologies have a clear advantage. This does not necessarily mean becoming a software engineer — it means being comfortable navigating digital platforms, interpreting data, and leveraging technology to improve efficiency and decision-making.

**Equally important is communication.** The ability to clearly articulate ideas, collaborate across teams, and engage with diverse audiences remains one of the most valuable skills in any industry. Whether presenting to leadership, working with clients, or contributing to team initiatives, strong communication separates good professionals from great ones.

**Leadership is another critical component.** Even early in their careers, professionals are expected to demonstrate initiative, accountability, and problem-solving ability. Leadership today is not defined by title — it is defined by action. It is the ability to take ownership, contribute meaningfully, and support the success of a team.

**Adaptability, however, is what ties everything together.** Industries are changing rapidly. Roles that exist today may look very different in just a few years. Professionals who remain open to learning, willing to reskill, and prepared to pivot when necessary are the ones who will continue to grow.

## **This is where the HBCU experience provides a unique advantage.**

HBCUs have long cultivated environments that require students to be resourceful, collaborative, and resilient. These institutions produce graduates who are not only academically prepared, but also equipped with the soft skills and mindset needed to navigate complex environments.

Employers recognize this. The most successful professionals are not those who rely solely on what they learned in the classroom. They are those who continue to learn. They seek out new experiences, stay informed about industry trends, and invest in their own development. In today's job market, skills are not static. They are evolving. And for HBCU alumni, the ability to grow, adapt, and lead is what will define long-term success.





# THE HBCU-ONLY MOMENTS THAT ONLY MAKE SENSE ONCE YOU'VE LIVED THEM

**T**here are certain experiences that don't need explanation. If you've lived them, you recognize them instantly. And if you went to an HBCU, there are moments — small, specific, unforgettable moments — that stay with you long after graduation.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** dealing with the financial aid office required patience, persistence, and sometimes a little strategy. You learned quickly that timing mattered, lines were real, and getting things handled often meant showing up early — and staying longer than expected.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** homecoming was more than just a weekend — it was an entire experience. It felt like a family reunion, a fashion show, a concert, and a celebration all happening at once. Alumni returned, energy shifted, and campus became something bigger than itself.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** the band wasn't just part of the game — it was the event. The sound, the precision, the presence — it could take over the entire stadium. And in many cases, halftime was what everyone was really waiting for.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** the choir could stop you in your tracks. Whether it was a campus

event, a special program, or a random moment where voices filled a room, there was a level of emotion and excellence that made you pause and take it in.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** certain songs instantly took you back to specific moments. Whether it was the crowd moving together, music echoing through campus, or that one song that always played at the right time, the energy was collective — and unforgettable.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** your freshman dorm had personality. It may not have been perfect, but it was where friendships were built, late-night conversations happened, and the transition into independence really began.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** Greek life wasn't just visible — it was influential. The presence, the history, the discipline, and the pride connected to the Divine Nine were all part of the culture you experienced, whether directly or from the outside looking in.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** you realized quickly how diverse the experience really was. People came from different cities, different countries, and different backgrounds, all bringing their own perspectives into one shared space.

**You know you went to an HBCU if** there was a sense of connection that extended beyond your campus. Meeting someone from another HBCU didn't feel like meeting a stranger — it felt familiar. There was an understanding that didn't need to be explained.

**And more than anything, you know you went to an HBCU if** you left with something deeper than a degree. You left with confidence. You left with awareness. You left understanding who you are in a way that is difficult to replicate anywhere else. Because the HBCU experience is not just about where you studied. It's about what you carry with you afterward. So if you know, you know. And if you don't — Now you have an idea.



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