



THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE AND HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The National Football League (NFL) is proud of its long history with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Players from HBCUs in the NFL have had a tremendous impact on the game, and they continue to exemplify a standard of excellence and character. In fact, there is an elite brotherhood of NFL Legends who have attended HBCUs that are also NFL Hall of Famers. The NFL is proud of the tremendous legacy fostered by HBCUs, and we look forward to continuing to build upon our strong partnership.

STRENGTH OF HBCU'S, IMPACTING PRO FOOTBALL SINCE 1948

In May 2016, the NFL launched *Strength of HBCU's, Impacting Pro Football Since 1948* in partnership with two preeminent HBCU athletic conferences, the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) and Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC). This initiative celebrates and honors the history and impact HBCUs and their players have had on the game, and works to increase career opportunities for students and athletic administrators from these institutions.

▲ Careers in Football Initiative

With an objective to provide promising ethnic minorities with preparation and skills to successfully secure employment in professional football, the [NFL Careers in Football Forum](#) was established in 2016 around the Celebration Bowl in Atlanta, Georgia. Each year, the forum introduces students and entry-level administrators to professional football career opportunities.

In addition, MEAC and SWAC personnel benefit from programs that include internships at the club and league level, integration of HBCU football operations staff — including athletic trainers, officials, video directors and equipment managers — into existing NFL platforms such as the Pro Bowl, and networking and mentorship opportunities.

▲ Black Football College Hall of Fame

In early 2016, the Pro Football Hall of Fame (PFHOF) and the Black College Football Hall of Fame (BCFHOF) announced a partnership that will result in a permanent home for the BCFHOF as part of the new Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Village on the PFHOF's campus in Canton, Ohio, adding to the history and association of HBCUs and their players influence on the game.

▲ SUPER BOWL LI

Continuing the celebration of the legacy and impact of HBCUs and their players, the NFL recognized the 29 Pro Football Hall of Fame players who attended HBCUs during Super Bowl LI in Houston, Texas. NFL Legends and former Grambling State players, Doug Williams and the late Paul “Tank” Younger, were also honored in Houston for their achievements and impact on the game. In addition to the on-field tribute during the pregame show on FOX, the NFL honored this elite group the week leading up to Super Bowl LI at several events in Houston including NFL Honors.

▲ 2018 BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATORY DOCUMENTARY

In celebration of Black History Month, the documentary film Breaking Ground premiered on the NFL Network on February 9th. The hour-long documentary explores how HBCUs played a crucial role in shaping the National Football League.

Through firsthand interviews with former HBCU players, the program explores the experience of Black athletes and the importance of those experiences within the context of America’s history and social climate. Each featured athlete – including NFL Legends Doug Williams, Jerry Rice, and Mel Blount – shares his journey providing words of inspiration on subjects from breaking stereotypes to overcoming obstacles.

▲ MOREHOUSE COLLEGE + ROSS INITIATIVE IN SPORTS FOR EQUALITY

The NFL, Morehouse College, and the Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality (RISE) hosted a weekend-long Advocacy in Sport Workshop at Morehouse College in Atlanta in February 2018. The workshop was designed to educate athletes on how to develop and implement effective advocacy platforms that positively impact society. Workshop participants learned about previous movements and focused on process, acquired knowledge of impactful tools and resources, and heard from athlete activists, politicians and social activists. You can read more about the workshop here.

▲ RHODEN FELLOWS INITIATIVE

The NFL has also partnered with the Rhoden Fellows Initiative, a training program for the next generation of sports journalists from HBCUs, headed by former New York Times award-winning columnist and Undefeated editor-at-large William C. Rhoden. This powerful collaboration exposes HBCU students to the many aspects of the sports industry beyond the playing field, the broadcast booth, and the traditional newsroom.

▲ HBCU BATTLE OF THE BRAINS COMPETITION

The NFL served as the title sponsor for the 3rd Annual HBCU Battle of the Brains competition held in Austin, Texas in March. In this competition, several dozen teams of the top STEM and Business students from HBCUs compete for more than \$50,000 in college scholarships and bragging rights in the hackathon-style event.

The NFL is committed to continuing this historic partnership and celebration of HBCUs and their players.

▲ **CAMPUS CONNECTION: HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

The NFL and Howard University launched the [Campus Connection program](#) in 2018. The initiative introduces and prepares students for future careers in professional football administration.

The NFL's presence on Howard's campus extends through several programs, including an executive lecture series, a student-lab case study class partnership, and the Howard School of Business Sports and Entertainment Summit.

▲ **EXPERIENCESHIP PROGRAM**

The Experienceship Program connects, develops, and provides diverse collegiate and professional participants with opportunities to learn about the business of sports through practical hands-on learning experiences at NFL tentpole events, **partnership activations**, and research projects. Candidates are selected from among those attending NFL HBCU Careers in Football Forum, National Black MBA Convention, National Association of Black Journalist Convention, SXSW Battle of the Brains and/or other NFL sponsored events. Candidates attend designated NFL tentpole, partnership activation, and developmental events.

▲ **WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON HBCUs**

The Initiative works with agencies, private-sector employers, educational associations, philanthropic organizations, and other partners to increase the capacity and competitiveness of HBCUs to provide the highest-quality education to an increasing number of students. The Initiative has increased federal funding for HBCUs by a record 13%. The NFL has supported the WHI-HBCUs and their National HBCU Week Conference with the integration of NFL Legends from HBCU institutions.

▲ **HBCU Combine**

With an objective to provide exposure, mentorship, and development opportunities for HBCU prospects, the NFL created the inaugural HBCU Combine in 2020. HBCU athletes have the opportunity to showcase their talent both in the classroom and on the field. Through this combine, HBCU athletes experience a world-class on-field evaluation by NFL scouts. In addition, NFL Legends and club personnel network with these athletes of color and drive awareness of opportunities to be involved in professional football beyond the playing field. These are intentional efforts to bring awareness about opportunities for students of color.