

# Blazer Male Excellence Network Newsletter



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## Welcome to the BMEN Newsletter!

Thank you for reading the Blazer Male Excellence Network (BMEN) Newsletter! This a space meant to celebrate the organization and its brothers as well as provide a variety of insight to the readers. We hope you enjoy the experience and take something away from this piece.

# Awards Dinner Recap!



Ron Pride was chosen as the 2023 BMEN Community Champion for his continued support of the brotherhood through his photography and other efforts.

## 15 Years of Excellence!

Thank you to everyone who attended the BMEN 15th Anniversary Awards Dinner! We had a wonderful time honoring our brothers for their accomplishments both on and off campus. Congratulations to our award winners at all levels and thank you to all of our sponsors, guests, vendors, event staff and who made this celebration possible. So much happened this night but here are some great moments and highlights from the evening!



Yancey Williams II was awarded the Green Blazer of Excellence for his dedication to mentorship, BMEN, and the other amazing work he does both on and off campus.



Mentor Joseph Alexander III and Director of the Student Multicultural and Diversity Programs, Herbert Wilkerson, awarded Dr. Kathryn Morgan the BMEN Campus Champion Award for her contributions to BMEN and to the UAB Community.



Mentors gifted presents and flowers to advisor Sharifa Wip for all her amazing work with the organization and for the work she put into making the Awards Dinner a success. Thank you to John Goodman's mother for putting the gifts together!



Dr. Christopher Jones, Dr. Tracy Lyons, and Tasha Simone discuss the origins of BMEN, why its aims are still important today, and how to best support Black men at universities.

# President's Diversity Champion Awards

On March 2, the BMEN organization was awarded the President's Diversity Champion Award in acknowledgement of the work we do on campus for our members and our work within the community. In addition to this recognition, BMEN advisor Sharifa A. Wip and mentor Yancey Williams II were recognized for their individual work supporting diversity and inclusion on campus with individual President's Diversity Champion Awards. Congratulations to all our members, Sharifa, and Yancey for these awards and thank you for your commitment to supporting Black men at UAB!



Yancey Williams II is a four year participant of BMEN who has demonstrated a commitment to service during his time at UAB. He is a committed mentor, leader in numerous campus organizations, and one of UAB's most accomplished undergraduate researchers. He has touched the lives of so many Black men on campus and this award recognizes his amazing commitment to uplifting others all across UAB. Congratulations Yancey!

Sharifa A. Wip serves as the advisor of BMEN and Assistant Director in SMDP. She has remained committed to helping Black men succeed for years. From recruiting mentors and mentees to planning and executing the yearly awards dinner, she does amazing work for the organization and the UAB community as a whole. The network of BMEN itself would not be what it is today without her dedication to enriching our students. Congratulations on this amazing award!

BMEN was awarded the Diversity Champion Award in the student organization category. Our mentorship, in conjunction with our other activities that positively impact the community, were recognized this night by this award. Thank you to everyone involved in what we do! This award serves as encouragement to keep doing good work in our community and it is a great addition to our historic 15th year.

# Shoutouts!



BMEN advisor Sharifa A. Wip participated in a panel discussing relevant issues concerning young men of color.

## BMEN Participates in Birmingham Black Male Summit!

Several members of BMEN and members within the network of BMEN participated in the Birmingham Black Male Summit in February. This summit convened individuals in the private and public sectors in order to discuss the problems facing at-risk youth (particularly young men of color). BMEN members Dijon Robinson, John Goodman, and Yancey Williams II and friend of BMEN D'Andre McBride (pictured in the bottom left photo from left to right) participated in a panel discussing their experiences as Black men on a predominantly white campus.



Yancey Williams participated in the State of the Black Male Panel and shared his background as well as college experiences

# Shoutouts!



## BMEN Members See Raphael Warnock Speak at College Sunday !

Several members of BMEN attended College Sunday at the 6th Avenue Baptist church to hear Georgia Senator Raphael Warnock speak to members of the congregation. Members who attended this event were gifted an autographed of Sen. It was a great experience being able to see the first black senator from Georgia speak to the public!

# Important Dates, Events, and Opportunities



**Collaboration with University of Alabama BRIDGE Program: April 7th**  
Please mark your calendars for the upcoming collaboration event with the University of Alabama BRIDGE Program. This program has similar aims to BMEN and seeks to support men of color on their campus. We have committed to collaboration event with them on April 7th where we would have a networking luncheon and a charity basketball event. We need a strong turnout so please see if you can come! Transportation to and from UA will be provided. Message Daniel Elston if you can commit to attending. You can read more about the BRIDGE Program below.  
<https://success.ua.edu/bridge>

## Honors College Presidential Summer Fellowship

The UAB Honors College Presidential Summer Fellowship is still accepting applications! This is a program for UAB Honors College students interested in pioneering a project related to research, creative activity, community engagement, or some other scholarly activity over the summer. The program will fund selected students for the summer to carry out an approved project with a faculty member. Past projects have ranged from traditional scientific research all the way to filming a self-directed documentary. In addition to working on their project, participants also attend workshops throughout the summer. The summer stipend for this year is \$2500. If you are an honors student and interested, you can find the application on the UAB Honors College page on Canvas.

## Page Pals

BMEN has committed to volunteering with local schools for the Page Pals program. This program seeks to improve the literacy skills of students within Birmingham City Schools. We encourage everyone to sign up for a thirty minute slot using the QR code to the left and give back to the community.

# An Interview with Dr. John Jones III

## Vice President of UAB Student Affairs

Dr. John Jones III is the Vice President of Student Affairs at UAB. Student Affairs involves anything regarding students outside the classroom including dining, housing, student health, and more. Dr. Jones is responsible for all these departments and strives to engage students on campus as well as make campus an inclusive space for them to participate in. Listen to the full interview using the link below!

**Q: I took a look at your CV over the past few years, and I admired both the number and duration of your military positions. First, what influenced your decision to join the Army National Guard, and second, what are some values that you have learned from that experience?**

A: I wanted to give back to the country and serving in the armed forces was a distinctive, unique way to do this. My take away from it was that it gave me the opportunity with different folk throughout the country, it gave me the opportunity to travel, serve in leadership roles, [and transition those skills into higher education].



**Q: Why did you transition to working in student affairs at UAB? What have you learned from your time being here?**

A: Initially, I was studying to be a faculty member but, however, as I was studying... I had the opportunity to work in housing... and that exposed me to the wonderful world of student affairs – developing students and helping them become a better version of themselves. That was instrumental in me changing my career path. Second piece is when I was looking to come to UAB, I thought it was a unique opportunity to rebuild the Division of Student Affairs [which had largely gone away at the time].

**Q: How did you find your network of support or find "your people"?**

A: Don't be afraid to ask! Most leaders climb [for a long time] and they climb hard but sometimes they climb on the back of others. Don't be afraid to ask for help and don't be afraid to lift [others up] as you climb.... Growing up in the student affairs profession, I saw some incredible leaders down the path that I'm travelling... they mention that they want to give back as well. Many of us who are striving to continue to be successful at the same time continue to pull other people along as well.

**Q: Do you have any advice for people just coming to college?**

A: The most important dates of your life... the day that you were born and the day that you discover why. That discovered "why" may happen while you're in college... but sometimes that "why" happens well beyond college... Don't be afraid to follow your passion. That "why" may be different that what your parents want for you, that "why" may be different than what that mentor wants for you... Once you discover that "why" life will be much easier.

Link to the full interview: [BMEN Newsletter Interviews](#)

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# Credits and Contacts



This newsletter was assembled through collaborative work of BMEN brothers (from left to right) Jailon James, Yancey Williams II, and Daniel Elston. We would like to thank everyone who helped with this project and everyone for taking the time to read the newsletter. We hope you have been able to take advantage of the opportunities, appreciate the conversation, and learn something from this piece. If you have questions or submissions, please use the below link tree or email one of us.

Jailon: [jailon01@uab.edu](mailto:jailon01@uab.edu)  
Yancey: [yanceyw@uab.edu](mailto:yanceyw@uab.edu)  
Daniel: [delston@uab.edu](mailto:delston@uab.edu)  
BMEN linktree: <https://linktr.ee/blazermaleexcellencenetwork>

BMEN would like to give a special thanks to Pride Photography and MGRAY Creative for handling all of the photography and videography during the BMEN Awards Dinner. We appreciate you so much for capturing these great moments!

