African American Alumni Association History

During the early 2000s an organized group of Alumni began meeting under the director of Staci Price-Brown to begin discussion about the creation of an African American Alumni Association. This founding group of alumni met a few times in Charlotte, North Carolina at the public libraries as well as via conference call. After several meetings and a few years, the Staci Price Brown along with a few other alumni from the founding group met with Dontrell Parson and Director of Alumni Affairs, Tracey Ford. Ms. Ford and Mr. Parson were very instrumental in assisting this group of African American Alumni in coming up with a constitution. As a result of diligent work, the Appalachian State University African American Alumni Association (AAAA) became official on paper in 2003 and became officially active in 2007. Over the course of 2000-2003, informal efforts to engage alumni during Homecoming had started by offering Meet & Greet Receptions at local Boone businesses as well as in the Multicultural Center on ASU’s campus.

In 2007, Dr. Renee’ Evans, former student and professor at the time, worked along with fellow alum Dontrell Parson to began efforts to engage AA Alumni during Homecoming events. Evans put together a group of alumni to start the first AAAA formal Board of Directors. Evans’ goal was to be the University Representative for the association along with Dontrell Parson. Monica Davis-Smith served as the association’s first official President with Fernando Little serving as the Vice President for a short period. During her reign, Monica lead the Board’s first retreat in November, 2007. She brought in a professional consultant to work with Board members as they prepared to start their first official Board year. The Board’s first official members were: Vice President, Fernando Little; Monica Glover, Secretary; Edna Cummings, Board Member, Dwayne Elliott, Homecoming Chair, and Dontrell Parson, University Representative. Due to the need to balance work/life Monica had to step down as President. Upon that time, Evans took over as President while recognizing that the mark that Monica left while laying the foundation for the association to move forward.

Under the leadership of Dr. Renee’ Evans, the group began identifying goals for the association. Some of the first goals were to: identify ways to work collaboratively with the University in engaging African American Alumni; identify ways to give back to the University community; offer activities that focused specifically on African American Alumni celebration preferences during Homecoming; raising money towards the association’s operation cost and start of a scholarship that would focus on African American students at Appalachian; and offering a recognition reception that would highlight successes of fellow African American Alumni.

After a few years of out-of-pocket contributions towards homecoming activities from three fellow alumni, several alumni inquire about ways to get involved. Shortly thereafter, Warren Posey and Kevin Canty of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. led efforts for their Fraternity to sponsor Homecoming tailgate activities for the next five years. Dr. Willie Fleming was also instrumental in closing out Homecoming by offering church services on Homecoming Sunday. Dr. Fleming would come back on the mountain from Charlotte, NC along with his church congregation. During this time, Dr. Fleming never charged the association for his travel or for his services.
From 2007-2012, the association and board continued to promote the existence of the association via methods such as Facebook and email blasts. During these years, the association developed collaborative efforts with the Office of Advancement as well as with the Alumni Affairs office. Both offices as well as the Office of the Chancellor have been very supportive in the efforts of AAAA. In 2012, Evans expanded the Board to reflect some of the subgroups of the association.

The 2012-2013 Board had the second Board retreat in Mount Holly, North Carolina during Summer, 2012. The Board is continuing to move forward in carrying out the original goals through additional collaborative efforts and work to engage alumni. One goal was accomplished by way of fellow alum, Attorney Gary Henderson. Atty. Henderson contacted the Advancement Office as well as AAAA to share his vision for leading efforts to create a scholarship in honor of University legend, Dr. Willie C. Fleming. Dr. Fleming has had an amazing on so many African American students during his time at Appalachian as a student then, as a member of the staff in the office of Multicultural Student Development, then, as Creator and Director of the ASU Gospel Choir, and later as a member of the faculty in the Department of Human Development & Psychological Counseling. Gary shared that he had a vision of offering this scholarship as an AAAA scholarship in collaboration with the Office of Advancement. Since his initial contact in 2011, Atty. Henderson has accomplished his goal. The Dr. Willie C. Fleming Endowed Scholarship is now in existence!

African American Alumni have made an impact around the country and it is partly because of their preparation while here at Appalachian. We want to continue to engage this group of alumni with the hopes that they too will want to reconnect with the University. In return, we hope the University will gain an understanding about such as remarkable group of alumni who will only add to the history of the University.

Founding Members: Staci Price-Brown, Kevin Canty, Russcina Bates-Dixon, Renee’ Evans, Todd Gill, Nakia Hardy, Tamar Lane, Michelle Simmons, and unknown female alum from Durham, NC.