A Soulful Affair: Food, Fellowship, and Fun

Persevering through adversity is a hallmark of African American culture. So it is no wonder that the BFSA Annual Welcome Breakfast was a resounding success despite obstacles — a fire alarm that just would not quit was merely a minor inconvenience in an otherwise lovely morning.

The annual breakfast was held in the Gibbons Alumni Center. “The event helps to reinforce a sense of community”, said BFSA President Gene Murdock. “We are here to enhance the lives of our students, staff and faculty.”

Approximately 150 members of the USF community turned out for a soulful breakfast and fellowship. USF President Judy Genshaft and Provost Ralph Wilcox joined in welcoming new African American employees to the university. Introduced by their deans and department heads, the new hires were greeted warmly with smiles and applause as their names were announced.

Mistress of ceremonies duties were provided by the witty and charming Dr. Nicole West. Last year’s longevity award recipients, Dr. Samuel L. Wright and Wanda Mundy, presented the longevity award to Dr. Ted Williams for his 35 years of service to USF and BFSA. All three are now retired.

Special guests also included Hillsborough District 3 Commissioner Les Miller and Dr. Tamara Bertron-Jones, Assistant Professor, Florida State University.

“It’s always an impressive gathering”, said Dr. Gwendolyn Hills. “We don’t get to see each other that often on such a large campus and given our history of finding it difficult to find employment that matches our education and preparation, it’s always inspiring to see new faces.”

Well-respected community photographer Lomax Macintyre documented the proceedings; Dexter Allen of Nostalgia Music Entertainment, LLC, provided music; and the breakfast itself was prepared by Econo Catering.

A sincere thank you to our generous community sponsors: USF Federal Credit Union, Fifth Third Bank, USF Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity and Howard McKnight, CPA, Dr. Ted Williams, Attitude Plus, 56th Street Florida, Pro Copy, Affinity Insurance Agency and Brown’s Trophies. Fifth Third Bank also provided a raffle prize, which was two tickets to a Tampa Bay Buccaneers game. The raffle was won by Eddie Aikins, an Administrative Specialist from the USF Office of Research & Innovation.

Professional Development: Cookies, Coffee, and Conversation

BFSA collaborated with the Presidential Advisory/Student Committee on Black Affairs to host a professional development event for students. Representatives from various USF departments shared information during the “How to Choose a Major” segment. The event offered students an opportunity to network with peers and USF employees, while learning useful information about career planning. BFSA looks forward to collaborating with a variety of offices on campus in order to provide diverse groups of students pertinent information to help them be successful at USF... and in life beyond!

BFSA Vision Statement:
The Black Faculty and Staff Association is comprised of committed, active members made up of Faculty, Staff, Students and the USF and Tampa Bay Community.

We are interconnected through community engagement which involves service through mentorship and professional development. This is accomplished by empowering and enhancing members’ lives as well as advocating for a diverse community.

We do all this pro-actively with integrity, respect and professionalism towards all.

This is who we are · This is what we do · This is how we do it
Scholarship Winners: Achievers In Action

At the BFSA Annual Welcome Breakfast, Gary Oliver — Assistant Director/Graduate Student Service Office of Graduate Studies — announced the recipients of BFSA’s 2014-2015 scholarship awards:

- Undergraduate Jamie Copeland, who received $1,000; Jamie is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Exceptional Education; and
- Graduate student Omar Salaam, who received $1,500; Omar is pursuing a degree in Adult, Career and Higher Education.

Congratulations Jamie & Omar — BFSA wishes you success in all of your endeavors!

Mentor of the Year: Promoting Student Success

Congratulations to Associate Director of Student Services and Diversity Programs Director, Bernard Batson. Mr. Batson received the Sloan Mentor of the Year Award at the 20th Institute of Teaching and Mentoring in Arlington, VA. The conference is annually the largest gathering of minority doctoral scholars in the country.

Selected among numerous nominees, Mr. Batson earned this honor due to his dedication to student academic success and personal development. His consistent dedication in promoting student success is also a key factor in the numerous achievements of minority doctoral students.

Under Mr. Batson’s guidance, the USF College of Engineering is ranked in the top five nationally by Diverse Issues in Higher Education for conferring engineering doctorates to both African American and Hispanic/Latino students. This ranking was listed in the publication’s annual listing of the top 100 minority graduate degree producers in 2013.

Mr. Batson’s hard work and dedication is an important part of the success of USF students. BFSA is proud to honor his commitment to helping students from diverse backgrounds — we appreciate all that you do to support student success!