

GRADS ARE BACK



**BUILDING CONFIDENT COMMUNICATORS
FOR THE FUTURE**



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Welcome back to the Hill and to “Grads are Back!”



This program has become the “go to” event for our SJGC students and others from across campus. Our Board of Visitors and the Grads Are Back committee has worked very hard to produce sessions for students that will help them navigate the world of work awaiting them.

We have a new offering this year, a Fireside Chat where I will converse with distinguished alumna Staci R. Collins Jackson, who graduated from the School of Journalism & Graphic Communication in 1996. This is an opportunity for students interested in entertainment to hear firsthand what it takes to make it as a Hollywood public relations executive.

We also will delve into the enticing topic of AI (Artificial Intelligence) during our Colloquium on Thursday morning. And there are other sessions centered around graphic design, broadcasting and public relations.

All of this is in support of our theme: “Grads are Back: Building Confident Communicators for the Future.”

Hands-on experiences are deeply valuable to our students. So, too, is innovation.

As such, my commitment remains to create opportunities for our students to learn and grow in spaces that offer both.

When you think back on “Grads Are Back” this year, I hope it is among your best experiences of Homecoming 2023.

The best truly is yet to come.

Sincerely,

Mira Lowe

Dean, School Of Journalism & Graphic Communication

CHAIR OF BOARD OF VISITORS LETTER

Hello FAMUly!



As the chair of the Board of Visitors for the School of Journalism & Graphic Communication (SJGC), I am excited to welcome you for Grads are Back!

As a graduate of SJGC, it is my honor to serve my alma mater at a time in our nation and country when the need for solid journalism is so necessary.

In my role as president of ABC News, I see, every day, how the role of journalism shapes our society. I join Dean Mira Lowe in her commitment to ensure that FAMU is turning out the next generation of confident communicators. That mission is in line with theme of Grads are Back this year.

Enjoy the program today and gain as much knowledge as you can.

I look forward to seeing the work that each of you will do in the future.

And I look forward to running into you in halls during Grads are Back this Homecoming weekend.

Continue "Striking from the Top!"

My best,

Kimberly Godwin Manning '84
President, ABC News
Chair, SJGC Board of Visitors

CO-CHAIR'S LETTER

Welcome Home Rattlers!



I am thrilled to once again, serve as chair of the Grads are Back committee for 2023. We had quite a good time last year, and I expect this year will be just as wonderful.

The theme for 2023 is: "Grads are Back: Building Confident Communicators for the Future."

Now, more than ever, we need confident and competent journalists in leadership roles in newsrooms. We aimed to produce a program that will engage and excite students, and perhaps open their eyes to innovative opportunities.

Innovation is the key word. It is all around us - in our daily lives, our consumer habits, and in the way we communicate. That is why we thought it important to tackle the topic of Artificial Intelligence. We are thankful to our sponsors from Paramount Content Creators House for supporting this discussion.

Alumna Staci R. Collins Jackson will be in conversation in a new feature this year called Grads are Back After Dark: A Fireside Chat with the Dean. Collins Jackson is a 1996 graduate of SJGC and a Hollywood public relations executive who will share her journey with students in this intimate dialogue.

We know that students have an interest in taking their talents to other areas outside of news. So, we will focus on the intersection of journalism and entertainment, and how the skills learned in the School of Journalism & Graphic Communication can transfer to roles in just about any industry.

This one-day conference could not have happened without the support of Dean Mira Lowe, the SJGC Board of Visitors, and the Grads are Back committee including: Christian Whitaker, Brian Rice, Denise Hendricks, Rod Carter, Clarence Fowler, Will Ayers, Ranata Hughes, Paula Witt, Kim Hankerson, and Alicia Hope.

We sincerely hope you enjoy the programming this year. And we hope you will consider participating next year. We'll be soliciting workshop proposals in the Spring!

Onward and upward,

Elise Durham '91

Assistant General Manager of Marketing, Communications, and Customer Experience
Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

GRADS ARE BACK

OCT. 25-26



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2023

5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Grads are Back After Dark: A Fireside Chat with the Dean featuring Hollywood PR Executive Staci R. Collins Jackson '96

SJGC Lecture Hall Room 2002

6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Grads are Back Opening Reception

SJGC Gallery Room 2015

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2023

Workshop Block I 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Polishing Your Presence

SJGC Room 3127

PR -vs- Press: How to Get the Media Attention You Want

SJGC Lecture Hall Room 2002

EVENT SCHEDULE

FOIA: The Other Four-Letter Word

SJGC Room 3052

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Colloquium – The Future of AI: Where Diversity, Academics and Content Creation Meet Powered By

Paramount Content for Change
Creators House

Charles Winter Wood Theatre,
Tucker Hall

10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Grads are Back Career Fair

SJGC Library

Noon - 2:00 p.m.

Grads are Back BBQ

SJGC Plaza



Workshop Block II 2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

In Living Color: The Power of Producing

SJGC Lecture Hall Room 2002

From the Highest of Seven Hills to Hollywood

SJGC Room 2037

Beyond the Degree: Where Design Meets Destiny

SJGC Room 3127

Workshop Block III 3:45 – 5 p.m.

Keeping it in the FAMUly

SJGC Lecture Hall, Room 2002

The Other Side of PR: The Road Less Taken

SJGC Room 2037



WED 10.25

5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Grads are Back After Dark:
**A Fireside Chat
with the Dean**

*Featuring Hollywood PR Executive
Staci R. Collins Jackson*

SJGC Lecture Hall Room 2002

Dean Mira Lowe, School of Journalism and Graphic Communication
Staci R. Collins Jackson, '96, The Collins Jackson Agency



**Dean Mira Lowe, School of Journalism &
Graphic Communication**

Dean Mira Lowe is the chief academic and administrative officer of the School of Journalism & Graphic Communication (SJGC) at Florida A&M University. She previously served as assistant dean for student experiences at the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications. While at CNN Digital, Lowe was the senior editor for Features who oversaw various editorial initiatives, partnerships, and multiplatform opportunities, working closely with research, sales, and product teams.

Before CNN, she was the editor-in-chief of JET magazine, becoming the first woman to helm the venerable African-American newsweekly. Dean Mira Lowe is a shaper of ideas, a motivator of people, an innovator who builds new things.



Staci R. Collins Jackson '96

**Hollywood PR Executive,
The Collins Jackson Agency**

Staci R. Collins Jackson is Founder & CEO of The Collins Jackson Agency and one of the most accomplished Black public relations executives in the entertainment business. Named as one of the ESSENCE Black Women In Hollywood Publicists to Know, some of her many film credits include the Oscar® nominated films Black Panther 2: Wakanda Forever, Mudbound, Harriet, and Judas and the Black Messiah, as well as streaming successes Coming 2 America, They Cloned Tyrone, and the Emmy® nominated Sylvie's Love; plus, box office hits Girls Trip, Ride Along 2 and the Think Like a Man film franchise. Her next films Shadow Force starring Kerry Washington, The Mothership starring Halle Berry and Never Let Go, also starring Halle Berry, will all hit theaters worldwide in 2024. Prior to launching her PR firm, Jackson was Director of Communications at Harpo Studios and publicist for Oprah Winfrey where she developed and executed the PR strategy and communications counsel as a spokesperson for Harpo Studios, its owner, as well as all of its senior executives, business units and productions.

WED 10.25

GRADS ARE BACK

'23

OPENING RECEPTION

SJGC Gallery Room 2015

6:00 – 7:00 p.m.





DEFEAT



THUR 10.26

9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Polishing Your Presence

Join us as we explore diverse pathways within the industry of Graphic Design.

SJGC Room 3127

Presenters:

Brian Rice '91, SVP, Chief Brand and Design Officer, 3M

Kia Dolby '97, Visual Communications Professor, SCAD



Brian Rice, SVP, Chief Brand and Design Officer, 3M

Brian Rice joined 3M as Senior Vice President, Chief Brand and Design Officer in October of 2020. As the global leader for the 3M Design, corporate brand, and partnerships functions, Brian oversees 3M's endeavors to leverage company purpose, brand positioning, design, and corporate partnerships to connect with customers, consumers, and stakeholders to continually deliver on the company's legacy of 3M Science. Applied to Life™. Brian holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Graphic Design and Management from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida, where he currently serves as a board member for the School of Journalism & Graphic Communication and is the recipient of the 2022 SJGC Alumni Award of Appreciation.





Kia Dolby '97,

Visual Communications Professor, SCAD

Kia Dolby is a professor of visual communications at Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in Atlanta. She is the founder of The Happy Solopreneur, where she creates and facilitates courses on small business ownership, creativity, and business/life balance. Dolby uses design as a tool to tell stories about history and culture, and is especially excited by outsider art, hip hop, and street art. Her professional experience has spanned many areas of design, including as part of IBM's Arts Cafe where she designed website interfaces for Fortune 500 companies. After several design jobs including working as a publication designer and a product designer, she became interested in the multifaceted field of digital marketing and began working as a digital strategist in several corporate roles. She earned a BS in graphic design from the SJGC at FAMU and an MFA in visual design at Temple University (Tyler School of Art) in Philadelphia.



THUR 10.26

9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

PR -vs- Press:

How to Get the Media Attention You Want

No matter what your major is, come learn about the different aspects of Public Relations and see how the skills you learn are transferable.

SJGC Lecture Hall Room 2002

Moderator: Paula Witt '91, Vice President, Sunshine Sachs Morgan & Lylis

Panelists: Carole Sykes '91, Dir. of Communications, Fulton Co. Government // Dana McPherson '93, AVP, Marketing and Communications, Howard University // Ashley Flete '18, 10X Client Relations Specialist // Rod Carter '90, Anchor/Reporter, CBS17 // Sean Sanders '17, Producer, Good Morning America



Paula Witt, Vice President, Sunshine Sachs Morgan & Lylis

Paula Witt graduated in 1991 from the FAMU School of Journalism and Graphic Communication with a BA in Broadcast Journalism. She is currently a Vice President at PR firm Sunshine Sachs Morgan & Lylis where her primary focus is personal PR for musicians and events including Janet Jackson, the BET Awards, the NAACP Image Awards. She kicked off her career in PR at Greenpeace and the UniverSoul Circus in Atlanta until taking a leap of faith and moving to NYC to focus on music. She currently lives in Brooklyn, NY.



Carole Sykes '91, Dir. of Communications, Fulton Co. Government

For over fourteen years, Carole has worked for Fulton County Government, serving in various professional capacities, including arts program manager, public affairs manager, and the director of communications for the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners and is currently the director of public affairs for the Atlanta Judicial Circuit the largest Public Defender Office in the Southeast. She is credited with raising the visibility of Fulton County Arts & Culture through expanding partnerships and establishing marketing protocols and art direction. She serves as a board member for the National Black Arts Festival, the City of South Fulton Convention and Visitors Bureau, and an appointed Fulton County Reparations Taskforce. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from Florida A&M University, a CPM from The University of Georgia, and post-baccalaureate work at Clark Atlanta University.



Dana McPherson '93, AVP, Marketing and Communications, Howard University

Dana McPherson is the assistant vice president for marketing and communications in the Office of University Communications at Howard University. Prior to Howard, she served as the executive director of marketing and brand management for the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing at the University of Florida.

McPherson is a graduate of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Florida, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism with a concentration in public relations.



Ashley Flete '18, 10X Client Relations Specialist

Ashley Flete is a thriving entrepreneur with a background in media & marketing. As a bilingual communicator, Ashley is focused on bridging the gap between cultures. Throughout her career, Ashley was responsible for identifying target audiences, creating compelling advertising campaigns, and utilizing various channels to promote products or services. This involved market research, product positioning, pricing strategies, and digital marketing efforts. While channeling her knowledge in public relations, she built relationships with media outlets, stakeholders, and the public to manage and control the flow of information, handle communication operations, and enhance her company's reputation.



Rod Carter '90, Anchor/Reporter, CBS17

Rod Carter is the weeknight evening anchor at CBS 17, Raleigh, NC. Before that he spent about 20 years at WFLA in Tampa, FL. Rod is a life member of the FAMU National Alumni Association. He coaches and guides upcoming journalists as a mentor. For years he has been the lead teacher for the NABJ-FAMU Journalism Short Course, instructing students in broadcast during an intensive weekend course. Rod was a Fall 2021 adjunct professor of communications at St. Augustine's University in Raleigh. He is immediate past Region III Director for the National Association of Black Journalists, as well as a past president of the Tampa Bay Association of Black Journalists. He's currently a member of the Raleigh-Durham Chapter of the NABJ.



Sean Sanders '17, Producer, Good Morning America

Sean Sanders is a Spring 2017 graduate of Florida A&M University and an award-winning journalist & producer for ABC's Good Morning America - the nation's #1 morning news broadcast. A passionate storyteller at heart, Sean's mission is to inform, impact, and inspire communities through journalism. In his time at GMA, Sean has covered major events like The Queen's Jubilee in London, the presidential election, and the 2020 protests following the murder of George Floyd and subsequent trial for Derek Chauvin. His concentration focuses on stories surrounding social justice, race, and culture.

THUR 10.26

9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

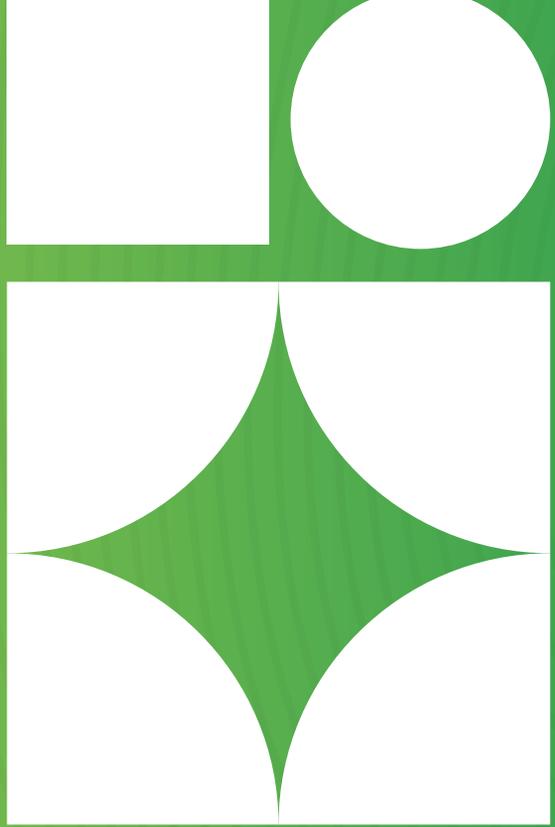
FOIA:

The Other Four-Letter Word

What is it, how to use it, and why it's a foundation of Journalism. Join this intensive workshop, and take a deep dive.

SJGC Room 3052

Presenter: Jessica Larché Washington '05, Anchor/Reporter, WTKR-TV





Jessica Larche Washington '05

Anchor/Reporter, WTKR-TV

Jessica Larché is a regional Emmy® award-winning news anchor and investigative reporter in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Her most notable work here includes a series of reports that led to the release of several wrongfully incarcerated Black men in Virginia. She also launched News 3's "Have You Seen Me" series, which highlights missing people of color—stories that traditionally have not received widespread media attention. Jessica has also focused her investigative work at News 3 on cold case abductions, excessive prison sentences, and embattled medical professionals. She has interviewed several Virginia governors, music icon Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott. Jessica and has been featured on the Ellen DeGeneres Show. She made history as the first news anchor for FAMU-TV 20's live broadcast. Over the course of her career, Jessica's work has earned a regional Emmy® Award, National Association of Black Journalists Salute to Excellence Awards for investigative reporting, Virginia Association of Broadcasters Award, Mississippi Associated Press Awards, Florida Associated Press Awards, and William Randolph Hearst Awards.

THUR 10.26

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

COLLOQUIUM

The Future of AI:

Where Diversity, Academics and Content Creation Meet

The moderated conversation will examine how diversity is represented in this new space and what job could be at stake when it fully takes hold.

Charles Winter Wood Theatre, Tucker Hall

Moderator: Dean Mira Lowe, School of Journalism & Graphic Communications

Panelists: Dr. Desmond Stephens, Director, FAMU Faculty Development // Laksh Nathan, CIO/EVP, Paramount Global // Christopher Parsons, Creative Director and Celebrity Photographer



Dean Mira Lowe

School of Journalism & Graphic Communication



Dr. Desmond Stephens, Director, Faculty Development, FAMU

Dr. Desmond Stephens is an experienced associate professor of mathematics with more than 25 years of teaching experience. He also serves as the University Director for Faculty Development, where he focuses on using effective teaching strategies to engage students and improve learning. With leadership roles as the Quality Enhancement Plan's Faculty Development Coordinator and Director of the Innovative Academic Instruction Project, he has designed active learning spaces and provided faculty training on best teaching practices. Dr. Stephens has successfully obtained over \$7 million in funding for initiatives in teaching and learning and is currently a coPI and Director for the STEM Center for the Advancement of Learning, Achievement and Research on an NSF-supported activity that improves STEM students' learning experiences and provides support and guidance for faculty developing teaching and learning research projects. Dr. Stephens has been a Florida resident for 30 years and proudly calls Florida home. He holds a master's and doctorate in mathematics from Florida Tech and a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics from Delaware State University.



Laksh Nathan, CIO/EVP, Paramount Global

Laksh Nathan is EVP and Chief Information Officer of Paramount Global, one of the world's leading producers of media and entertainment content. He manages and oversees all of Paramount's application services and business technology liaisons, including corporate applications, commercial systems, client/production services, and end-user technology. He has dedicated over a decade to running major technology initiatives across CBS divisions and has supported many major integration initiatives to bridge legacy systems across multiple integration areas.



Christopher Parsons, Creative Director and Celebrity Photographer

Christopher Parsons is an American photographer, short film director, artist and modern-day storyteller. His works include portraits, fashion editorials, music videos and documentaries. He gained notoriety and amassed a cult following while on tour with B.o.B, Lupe Fiasco, Usher and Kendrick Lamar. After connecting with Kendrick Lamar, Parsons stayed on his artistic team for nearly a decade developing visual collaborations and documenting the influential musician's impact on an entire generation. Parsons' striking aesthetic and architectural background can be felt throughout his bodies of work. Known for his signature black and white portraits and short films, he delivers reflective biographic interpretations of his subjects, capturing raw emotion with a layer of sophistication.



THUR 10.26

GRADS ARE BACK BBO

'23



Noon – 2:00 p.m.

SJGC Plaza





THUR 10.26

Office of Jobs and Internships

CAREER Fair

10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. SJGC Library

**Learn about exciting opportunities
to jump-start your career!**

Bloomberg • Google • Paramount • ABC 27 (E.W. Scripps) • MARS, Inc. • AON • WCTV (Gray TV) • Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (GSP) • Moore • FAMU Career Center • Indelible Solutions • Gadsden County News Corp. • Columbia Graduate School & HBCU Fellowship Program • FSU College of Communication & Information Graduate Program • FAMU School of Graduate Studies & Research • Royalty Marketing Group Capital City Cultural Community Outreach • Sachs Media • One Church One Child • Golin Black Automotive Media Group/Hyundai • Kyle Footman Group | Coldwell Banker Hartung Tallahassee Democrat • State Affairs • SET Magazine (Sports & Entertainment) • FPRA • Business Automation Pros • Big Bend Habitat for Humanities • LMichelle Media • Capital Outlook • WFSU • The Florida Channel

THUR 10.26

2:15 – 3:30 p.m.

In Living Color:

The Power of Producing

From newsrooms to studios and writers' rooms - the power behind the content lies with the producers. But if they are not in the room, how will our stories be told?

SJGC Lecture Hall Room 2002

Moderator: Denise Hendricks '92, Executive Producer, MSNBC

Panelists: Kareem White '97, Director of Talent Production, ESPN // Alyssa Camacho, '19, News Producer/Internship Coordinator, WCTV // Ila Wilborn, '19, Content Producer, CNN Newsource // Sakina Bowser, '08, Segment Producer, NBC News Now // Danyelle Johnson, '16, Producer, CBS47/FOX30 Action News Jacksonville // Rickayla Mitchell, '20, Producer, WFAA-TV

Denise Hendricks, Executive Producer, MSNBC

Denise Hendricks is an award-winning television producer, writer, and media consultant. She has produced for: CNN, HLN Morning Express with Robin Meade, "The Oprah Winfrey Show," the OWN network, ABC's "The Revolution" daytime talk show, BET's late-night talk show "The Mo'Nique Show," "The Cross Connection with Tiffany Cross" at MSNBC, and for NBC, CBS, ABC and FOX television news affiliates across the country. She is currently the executive producer for national political perspective programs the Katie Phang Show, and the Saturday and Sunday Shows with Jonathan Capehart at MSNBC. Denise holds a B.S. in Journalism from Florida A&M University, n M.A. in Christian Education from the Interdenominational Theological Center, and a Screenwriting certificate from Emory University.





Kareem White '97, Director of Talent Production, ESPN

Kareem White is a senior talent producer at ESPN, where he has worked for 15 years. White spent his first 5½ years at ESPN in the production research department working on shows such as “SportsCenter,” “Mike and Mike,” “NFL Live” and “First Take.” Prior to his time at ESPN, he worked for the Jacksonville Jaguars and the Denver Broncos in the media relations/community relations department. He received a bachelor’s degree in broadcast journalism from Florida A&M University, and a master’s degree in sports management from Florida State University in 2003. During his career in sports public relations and broadcast journalism, he has worked at high-profile events, including several Super Bowls, NBA Finals and College Football Playoffs. White is a two-time Emmy Award winner for work on “SportsCenter” in 2021, E:60 in 2022.



Alyssa Camacho '19, News Producer/Internship Coordinator, WCTV

Miami native Alyssa Camacho is a 2019 graduate of Florida A&M University, with a bachelor’s degree in Broadcast Journalism. In 2021, she joined the WCTV Eyewitness News team as a news producer. Prior to her time at WCTV, Alyssa worked as a news and video producer for the Griot (previously known as The Black News Channel). Since joining the Eyewitness News team, she has worked on Eyewitness News at noon, 4 p.m., 6 p.m., 11 p.m. and more. She currently produces the 5 and 5:30 p.m. newscasts. She is currently working on her master’s in communications from Syracuse University.



Ila Wilborn '19, Content Producer, CNN NewsSource

Ila Wilborn is a 2019 graduate of Florida A&M University, where she obtained a bachelor’s degree in Broadcast Journalism. She is currently a Content Producer for CNN NewsSource in Atlanta, GA where she supports the CNN NewsSource reporters in the field with reporter live shots and field producing logistics. She has field-produced live shots in the direct aftermath of the Buffalo, NY mass shooting, Hurricane Ian, Former President Trump’s surrender in Atlanta and most recently, Hurricane Idalia. Ila also programs live satellite channels during breaking news and plans events to provide coverage for CNN’s 1,000+ local affiliates within CNN NewsSource.

Sakina Bowser '08, Segment Producer, NBC News Now

Sakina Bowser was born in Brooklyn, NY, but was raised in Gainesville, FL. She is the youngest of ten children and the third FAMU graduate in her family. During her last year at SJGC she was part of the inaugural class of the live newscast “Live at Five on TV20.” The following semester she produced her 15-minute documentary as well as a 5-minute short on the “Black Republican.” Bowser graduated from FAMU in 2008 and was hired by WTXL as a part-time editor. Between 2011 and 2019, Bowser produced news at KHBS/KHOG 40/29 News in Fayetteville, AR, WINK News in Fort Myers, FL, and WTSP 10News in Tampa, FL. Bowser made her jump to network news as a content producer for CBS News Streaming service that is viewed in 94 countries. Currently, she is an Emmy-nominated segment producer for NBC News Daily that broadcasts nationwide on the network as well as the streaming channel, NBC News Now.



Danyelle Johnson '16, Producer, CBS47/FOX30 Action News Jacksonville

Danyelle Johnson was born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida. She graduated from Florida A&M University with a Bachelor’s degree in broadcast journalism. She is currently a producer at CBS47/FOX30 Action News Jax in Jacksonville. She began her journalism career working for FAMU TV-20 in 2014 where she served as a floor director and camera operator. She then went on to become a reporter and entertainment anchor writing, shooting, and editing news packages for FAMU. In college, Johnson wrote for the FAMUAN newspaper and was also published in the Tallahassee Democrat. She interned at the Capital Outlook newspaper, where she served as a reporter and editor. She has also produced and anchored live news segments on Tallahassee’s WANM 90.5.



Rickayla Mitchell '20, Producer, WFAA-TV

Rickayla Mitchell is a Spring 2020 graduate of the School of Journalism and Graphic Communication. During her matriculation at FAMU SJGC, she was the winner of the College Media Pinnacle Award, a sports personality for WANM 90.5 “The Flava Station”, a staff writer for “The FAMUAN” and “Journey Magazine”, and a Senior News Producer at FAMU TV20. Rickayla began her professional career eight months before graduation as Weekend News Producer at WCTV-Eyewitness News in Tallahassee, Florida. She is currently the morning producer at WFAA-TV in Dallas for the award-winning Daybreak show where she mixes breaking news, special projects, and entertainment on the daily basis. She is a proud initiate of the Beta Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and a member of the National Association of Black Journalists.



THUR 10.26

2:15 – 3:30 p.m.

From the Highest of Seven Hills to Hollywood

Join this session to hear how a leading multicultural communications PR firm, led by three SJGC graduates, has gone from Tallahassee to working on brand projects with entertainment tie-ins in New York, LA and yes, Hollywood.

SJGC Room 2037

Moderator: Damali Hill '94, Account Manager, Lead Media Relations Strategist, PRecise Communications

Panelists: Hillary John '95, Executive V.P. & Managing Dir., PRecise Communications // Brinton Flowers '08, Dir. of Marketing and Business Development, Flowers Communications Group // Laroyce C. Hawkins, Actor, *Chicago P.D.*



Damali Hill, Account Manager, Lead Media Relations Strategist, PRecise Communications

Former news producer turned PR pro; Damali joined PRecise Communications in the fall of 2022. She is an account manager supervising client campaigns day-to-day. Damali maximizes her combined journalism and public relations experiences to craft and implement strategies that secure press coverage. She has led projects for Lexus, National AIDS Memorial, and the Center for Black Health and Equity. Producing broadcast news, satellite and travel media tours, and video content represents some of her specialties. She lives and works in her hometown, Houston.



Hillary John '95, Executive V.P. & Managing Dir., PRecise Communications

Hillary is PRecise's first managing director. She is second-in-command, leading agency accounts and managing team members across the country day-to-day. Hillary has nearly 30 years of communications experience including corporate, agency, nonprofit and public affairs. Her expertise is working with C-Suite executives on thought leadership, positioning, board governance and project management. She spent the bulk of her career with AARP and then AARP Foundation, where she led DEI work as part of her many duties as Director of the President's Office. She has also worked for leading companies including Sara Lee and Wells Fargo as well as two influential PR agencies, including Ketchum in Atlanta and Washington D.C. Hillary is based in Maryland, right outside of D.C.



Brinton Flowers '08, Dir. of Marketing and Business Development, Flowers Communications Group

Brinton Flowers is the Director of Marketing and Business Development at Flowers Communications Group (FCG) in Chicago. FCG is an award-winning, Black-owned integrated marketing firm that has been connecting multicultural consumers with the world's most renowned brands for more than 30 years. Brinton is responsible for driving new business goals and opportunities; building relationships with various industry leaders; and managing the iconic FCG brand.

Hailing from Ft. Lauderdale, Brinton was a top on-air talent with Cumulus Broadcasting in Tallahassee, serving as the nighttime personality for WWLD Blazin' 102.3. His experience in broadcast media, influencer engagement, promotions, and entertainment energizes his leadership role at FCG. During his nearly ten years with FCG, he has excelled as an integrated marketing communications strategist on the agency's blue-chip client portfolio, - having led communications initiatives for McDonald's; Jack Daniel's; Nike; NBA; Illinois Department of Transportation, Cook County; iHeart Media; the Stellar Gospel Music Awards and other brands.

Brinton, who has received numerous industry awards for excellence in communications, marketing, and advertising, is a member of the Chicago chapters of National Association of Black Journalists and the Publicity Club of Chicago.



LaRoyce C. Hawkins, Actor, Chicago P.D.

LaRoyce C. Hawkins is an actor, stand-up comedian, spoken word artist, and musician currently starring in NBC's police drama *Chicago P.D.* He plays Officer Kevin Atwater in the show that's been on the air for ten seasons. Hawkins is also a regular on the crossover show *Chicago Fire*. Before his time on *Chicago P.D.*, Hawkins appeared in HBO's *Ballers*, TBS' Tyler Perry's *House of Payne*, MTV's *Underemployed*, and ABC's *Detroit 1-8-7*.

THUR 10.26

2:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Beyond the Degree:

Where Design Meets Destiny

Join us for a thrilling discussion with accomplished alumni and industry experts who will share their journeys, insights, and the latest trends in the design field.

SJGC Room 3127

Moderator: Alicia Hope '04, Graphic Communication Instructor, SJGC

Panelists: Dian Holton, Art Director, Do the Work and AARP // Novia Lindsay '01, Amadeus // Kah'Milah Ledgester, '22, Junior Brand Designer, Paramount/BET+ // Teirra Tysinger '22, OVME

Alicia Hope, Graphic Communication Instructor, SJGC

Alicia E. Hope is an accomplished Instructor and proud alumna of the School of Journalism and Graphic Communication. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Graphic Design from FAMU and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Media Design from Full Sail University. With over a decade of experience in the creative industry, Alicia specializes in print design, brand development, and design strategy.

Alicia embarked on her professional journey as a graphic designer at the Marome Agency in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Little did she know that this career choice would eventually lead her back to her alma mater as an educator. Presently, Alicia passionately imparts her knowledge and love for design to the next generation of scholars at SJGC. Teaching them the fundamentals in program software, graphic design and how to in the words of her students "Secure the bag."





Dian Holton, Art Director, Do the Work and AARP

Dian Holton is the NYT bestseller art director of Do The Work! and art director at AARP where she oversees creative for TheGirlfriend.com and Sistersletter.com. She routinely contributes art direction and design to AARP The Magazine and specifically cover stories and entertainment related stories. Her background includes book design, branding, retail installation, styling and footwear design. Her passions include education, philanthropy, fashion and pop culture.



Novia Lindsay '01, Amadeus

Novia has over 20 years of experience in design for a wide variety of public, private, and government clients. Novia graduated from FAMU with honors in 2001, earning her Bachelor's in Graphic Design from the School of Journalism and Graphic Communication. Novia also holds a certificate in Web Design and Interactive Media from the Art Institute of Atlanta as well as interface design and analysis training from Carleton's University's Sprott School of Business. Prior to joining Amadeus, a global technology firm, she worked as a User Experience Designer at InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) where she worked to launch their industry-changing Guest Reservation System. Additional work focused on writing user interface guidelines, leading their change control process for user interfaces, and championing their Black Employee Resource Group (BERG). Prior to IHG, Novia provided graphics and branding support to the Centers for Disease control as well as the Detroit Free Press.



Kah'Milah Ledgester '22, Junior Brand Designer, Paramount/BET+

Kah'Milah Ledgester, a proud Fall '22 graduate of Florida A&M University and an award-winning graphic designer, holds a bachelor's degree in Graphic Communication. Hailing from the vibrant city of Miami, Florida, where she continues to make her mark.

Her journey took an exciting turn when she seized the opportunity to join Paramount/BET+ as a Junior Brand Designer. With a skill set as diverse as her ambitions, Kah'Milah excels in branding, illustration, digital design, and interactive design.

Among her accomplishments, Kah'Milah participated in Target's 2021 HBCU design contest and JCPenney's Young, Gifted and Black design challenge. Winning both competitions, she appeared in a Target commercial & her designs were showcased on a national stage for Black History Month in 2022.

In her leisure time, Kah'Milah draws inspiration from her passion for travel, reading, and her relentless pursuit of knowledge.



Teirra Tysinger '22, OVME

Teirra Tysinger is a Fall '22 grad receiving her Bachelors in Graphic Communications. She's native to the West Palm Beaches, but currently resides in Atlanta, Georgia, where she works at OVME, a fast growing medical spa. As a junior graphic designer, her responsibilities include supporting Creative with in-studio needs, producing creative design collateral for studio events and specials, working closely with the Chief Marketing Officer to aid in rebranding effort, and working closely with the Better Half agency to bring brand to life with creative emails, campaigns, website content and social media.

THUR 10.26

3:45 – 5 p.m.

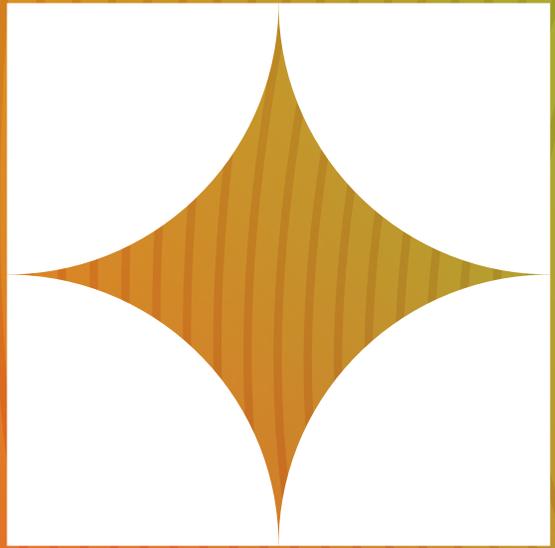
Keeping it in the FAMUly

Meet some of FAMU's most influential and multigenerational sibling duos and trios as they discuss working with family to move their personal and professional brands forward; sharing space to make cultural impact in various industries; and the art of continuing their FAMU family legacy.

SJGC Lecture Hall, Room 2002

Moderator: Rashan Ali '97, Multi-Media Personality, Author, Voice Talent

Panelists: Ameer Brown '14, President/Head of Product, Breakr // Anthony "Tony" Brown '10, Co-Founder, CEO, Breakr3 // Dr. Atira Brown Charles '04, CEO, The Charles Consulting Group // Monique Mitchell '10, Franchise Manager, 9 Story Media Group, Netflix's "Karma's World" // Mel Mitchell '15, Comedian, Influencer and Actress // Melissa Mitchell '05, CEO, Abeille Creations // Elijah Rutland '22, Graphic Designer, COO, Fix My Sole // Edna Rutland '23, Production Associate, ABC NEWS LIVE



Rashan Ali

Multi-Media Personality, Author, Voice Talent



Moderator

With a passion for sports and empowering young women, Rashan Ali has established herself as a revered multimedia personality within the sports and entertainment industries. An Atlanta native and graduate of Florida A&M University, she gave her candid perspective on local radio for 12 years on HOT 107.9, V-103 FM and Streetz 94.5 FM. She worked as a freelance sports anchor for HLN and CNN; sideline reporter for CBS Sports Network, host of Under Armour Highlights of the Week on the NFHS Network, and as the co-host of Falcons Rise Up Weekly on the CW. Rashan was one of four co-hosts on the nationally syndicated daily talk show, Sister Circle Live on TV One. She is currently the host of "The Cool Soror Show," which highlights outstanding women and men in Black Greek-lettered organizations. Her passion and purpose are deeply tied to the community. She is the founder of Sporty Girls, Inc., a non-profit organization that encourages the development of life and academic skills in girls ages 8-18. Since its inception in 2006, Sporty Girls has served nearly 1,500 girls in the Metro Atlanta area. Rashan is author of a vibrant children's book called "Piper Sky's Pink Popsicle Shoes." She is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. where she serves internationally on the Honorary and Awards Committee. She is married to Brian Smith, and the couple has two daughters, Bailey, and Carter.



Ameer Brown '14, President/Head of Product, Breakr

During his years working in the music and promotion industry, running his own brand for a decade, Ameer saw firsthand the problems both influencers and artists faced when collaborating with one another. An engineer by trade, Ameer invented Breakr, an influencer marketing platform to solve the problem. Before Breakr, Ameer worked at Adobe as an Apprentice Software Engineer and Software Quality Engineer III on the Adobe Spark team. He worked as an intern at Viacom-BET Networks and held positions at GlobalData, /+ssembly, and Lavish Entertainment Group. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.



Anthony "Tony" Brown '10, Co-Founder, CEO, Breakr

Anthony Brown comes from the financial services background, having worked as a principal at Acumen Fund and both J.P. Morgan and Goldman Sachs. He has over ten years of experience building long-term investment relationships with wealthy family offices, executives, influencers, and institutional investors. Anthony received a B.S. in Business Administration from Florida A&M University and master from UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy. Anthony has partnered with the American Kidney Fund, and UCSF to become a vocal advocate for the kidney disease population across the United States. His work has been featured in the Huffington Post, and various national media outlets.



Dr. Atira Brown Charles '04, CEO, The Charles Consulting Group

Dr. Atira Charles says her first trip to FAMU was like a scene out of a movie. She visited the campus during a college tour when she was in the 10th grade. From that moment, she just knew she had landed in the right place. The New York native began her journey at FAMU in 1998 on a full presidential scholarship. She enrolled in the five-year MBA program and graduated in 2004. She received her Ph.D. from Arizona State University. She has had the good fortune to share her passions with thousands of students at Florida State University, Northeastern University and her alma mater Florida A&M University where she served as an Assistant Professor of Management. She was later the Head of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity at Moët Hennessy, North America. Her boutique consulting firm focuses on issues of D&I and wellness. She has an audiobook titled "The Art of Unmasking: Peeling back the layers to maximize personal and professional success," and she has given a TedX talk on rethinking Diversity & Inclusion as a health dilemma. Her work has been featured in Black Enterprise and Essence.



Monique Mitchell '10, Franchise Manager, 9 Story Media Group, Netflix's "Karma's World"

Monique A. Mitchell is a certified full-time dreamer and doer, juggling many hats as an entrepreneur, publicist, podcaster, and media influencer. She's a skilled communications guru with over 12 years of experience in the entertainment and network television industries. Her inherent knack for public relations landed her NBC Universal East Coast Page program in New York City where she worked for various shows and networks including: "Saturday Night Live," "TODAY," "30 Rock Live," Oxygen and NBC News. She's held roles at Cartoon Network and Adult Swim as a publicist and at Warner Bros. Discovery, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as a communication and marketing manager. Today, she works for 9 Story Media and Netflix's animated series created by rapper Chris "Ludacris" Bridges, "Karma's World." In this role, she oversees talent and influencer relations, activations and events, DEI initiatives, and communications.



Mel Mitchell '15, Comedian, Influencer and Actress

Mel Mitchell is an Atlanta-native with ties and roots in Miami. She's the leader of #BlackGirlJoy and a certified internet sensation. She's gained popularity across social media platforms with skits, podcasts, and short films. Her cheeky humor, authentic voice and down to earth aesthetic have made her a staple across Black Twitter as @TheBaddestMitch. Over the last year, her comedic star has skyrocketed opening the door for brand marketing content collabs with major companies HBO Max, Prime Video, Sony Pictures, Focus Features, Fenty Beauty, and Target. Mel's life motto is "laugh to keep from crying," which motivated her to start doing stand-up comedy. She recently opened for comedian, Roy Wood Jr. on his national tour, and award-winning recording artist, Ari Lennox for the release of her sophomore album. She's currently on tour with Kev on Stage opening for several of his dates across the country. Her work has been highlighted in Fast Company, Mic, Essence, BuzzFeed, Baller Alert and Mary Sue.



Melissa Mitchell '05, EO, Abeille Creations

Melissa A. Mitchell is a powerhouse and a prominent Bahamian self-taught artist. The Miami native uses her creations to heal people through the happiness that only creating can bring. Her accolades are many. She's struck global deals with Foot Locker and SPANX, been an official TED TALK speaker, an inaugural member of Hennessey's "Never Stop Never Settle Society," an Afropunk/Shopify Black Fashion Accelerator member, and she has been featured in Forbes and Vogue. She holds a bachelor's degree in public relations and a minor in graphic design from Florida A&M University. With over 500 original art pieces and 40 larger-than-life murals, other notable features and partnerships include ESSENCE Magazine, Black Enterprise, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The Huffington Post, Peloton, Cadillac, Microsoft, Pepsi, CNN, The Home Depot, MARTA, Jack Daniels, and countless others. She is also the author of Black Love Notes to Self, Pages from my Notebook, a coffee table book, Views from My Kaleidoscope and an interactive coloring book, Color & Manifest.



Elijah Rutland '22, Graphic Designer, COO, Fix My Sole

Elijah Rutland is the founder and creator of the rapidly emerging Fix My Sole brand (fixmysole.com), which specializes in the artistic customization of sneakers, the conceptualization and execution of unique digital illustrations, and, most recently, custom apparel design. His work, such as the viral sensation "Black Rolf," has been shared by and seen by millions of people worldwide. He has also worked with various notable clients, such as Chance the Rapper, Cartoon Network, the NBA, the NFL, Beats by Dre, Nike, and Mercedes-Benz. He has also been featured in news outlets such as BuzzFeed, GQ, and Complex.



Edna Rutland '23, Production Associate, ABC NEWS LIVE

Edna has always had a love of words and a passion for storytelling. Starting her professional journey in 2017, Edna presented her paper, Fear, at Harvard University's AOCC conference. Continuing to share her story, she also appeared in NPR's Macon Conversations. In 2018, Edna became executive producer for Bibb County School District's W-VIPTV, where she created dynamic and relevant packages, including coverage of the Parkland shootings. In 2019, Edna was awarded the Diversity in Journalism Award from the National Press Club. While in college, Edna was a staff writer for the award-winning FAMUAN newspaper, was a desk, entertainment and weather anchor on FAMU's News 20 at Five. In 2021, she also helped launch the first ever Apple Campus Leaders program on FAMU's campus. Edna premiered her first documentary, Digital Kindergarten (2022) focusing on parasocial relationships, the relationship between famous/known personalities and their audiences. Edna was an inaugural Disney Storytellers Scholar (2023) and production intern at ABC's The View. Currently, Edna is a Production Associate for ABC NEWS LIVE.

THUR 10.26

3:45 – 5 p.m.

The Other Side of PR

The Road Less Taken

Public relations is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders, and implementing planned programs of action that will serve the organization and the public interest.

SJGC Room 2037

Moderator: Anna Taylor '08, Director of Global Communications, Phenomenex

Panelists: Akeem Anderson, SVP of Digital at H/Advisors Abernathy // Ricquel Lewis Jackson, Int'l and Executive Comms Lead, Blue Shield of California // Tyre Sperling, Communications Director, Royal Canin North America // Mikhail A. Scott', Director of Government & Corp Relations, Indelible

Anna Taylor, Director of Global Communications, Phenomenex

Anna Taylor is the Director of Global Communications at Phenomenex, an Operating Company of a Fortune 500. She has more than 15 years of communications experience across various industries—from the White House to the Housewives, in different verticles from internal, external, and consultant communications. Currently, her team manages internal and external communication –from employees to executives. Before this role, she was the head of diversity and inclusion communications, where she dove deep into corporate and social issues impacting historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.





Akeem Anderson, SVP of Digital at H/Advisors Abernathy

Akeem is a veteran digital strategist, counseling clients on forward-leaning integrated communications planning across corporate reputation, public affairs, and internal communications campaigns. In addition to leading digital programs, Akeem has led media relations and strategic communications for healthcare, hospitality, and CPG clients. Before joining H/Advisors Abernathy, Akeem was a Director at Brunswick, where he led digital and social strategy development out of the firm's Chicago office. Akeem's former clients include Nike, Pinterest, NAACP, Universal Music Group, The Obama Foundation, and more.



Ricquel Lewis Jackson, Int'l and Executive Comms Lead, Blue Shield of California

Ricquel has a deep strategic communications, storytelling, and marketing background. She has worked in various facets of the healthcare industry, including government, insurance, non-profit, and professional physician organizations. Ricquel partners with senior leaders to help build their executive visibility and thought leadership programs. In her current capacity, Ricquel leads the communications strategy for the Executive Vice President, General Counsel and manages internal communications for the customer experience team, the largest group of employees within the organization. Ricquel graduated from SJGC in 2005.



Tyre Sperling, Communications Director, Royal Canin North America

Tyre brings 20+ years of experience managing global corporate public relations programs and developing strategic communications plans for Fortune 100 companies. Tyre Sperling joined Royal Canin North America, a division of Mars Petcare, in July 2022, where he leads the Communications and Sustainability team. Before this role, Tyre worked for The Coca-Cola Company, where he held various positions, including the Communications Lead for the Global People Function, and he led communications for the Global Diversity & Inclusion function, focused on developing and implementing communications to support the company's global diversity and inclusion efforts.



Mikhail A. Scott, Director of Government & Corp Relations, Indelible

Mikhail has more than ten years of experience in government, legislative, and public affairs with state and federal agencies. Over the years, he has served in numerous public sector roles where he supported the research, analysis, and development of legislative policy and government programs. Mikhail has worked with corporate, non-profit, and governmental organizations, advocating and advancing state and local policies and programs. He has developed an intimate understanding of the legislative process and how policy impacts internal and external stakeholders. Mikhail has also implemented public and private sector initiatives supporting advancements in social equity and inclusion among underserved and high-risk populations across Florida.

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