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COMMUNICATIONS

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NFL HOSTS FOURTH ANNUAL HBCU CAREERS IN FOOTBALL FORUM

HBCU Students Nominated by Respective University and Athletic Conference Leadership to Attend Forum

NEW YORK (December 12, 2019) - A total 95 students from Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) will participate in the fourth annual [NFL Careers in Football Forum](#), alongside the Celebration Bowl in Atlanta, Ga., December 19-21.

NFL Football Operations is committed to fostering and enhancing its relationships with HBCUs across the country. Hosted annually with **ESPN**, the Careers in Football Forum is a premiere event and serves to provide professional development and networking opportunities for HBCU students. Through this effort, students from participating institutions have the opportunity to engage with League and club executives and learn about career opportunities across the sports industry with a focus on football. The Forum also teaches participants about the skills needed to secure employment and allows the league to assist them in becoming strong candidates for open positions.

“Each year, the NFL Careers in Football Forum brings together talented, bright minds to learn and explore the potential for opportunities in professional football,” said **NATARA HOLLOWAY**, Vice President of Football Strategy and Business Development. “This program is one of the most important ways we engage with the HBCU community and helps to grow a more diverse and inclusive workforce across the league.”

Participants will hear from the **NCAA** with remarks from Executive Vice President of Inclusion and Human Resources, **DR. KATRICE ALBERT**, followed by a breakout session later in the day on opportunities available through the Association’s office of Leadership Development. Students will also engage in a panel discussion moderated by ESPN/ACC Network reporter **LERICIA HARRIS**. Panelists include Asia Gholston, NFL Manager of Integrated Sales & Marketing; Courtland Bragg, NFL Films Associate Producer; Tywana Smith, founder of Athlete Nexus and best-selling author of “Surviving the Lights,”; Shaina Weil founder of Minorities in Sports; and Jamil Gittens, NFL Director of Football Administration and Club Services. Each panelist will provide the students with personal accounts of their journey from college graduate to team executives. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to network with the program’s guest speakers, NFL and club personnel, and learn about entry-level opportunities across the NFL. Representatives from the following NFL clubs are slated to attend: **ATLANTA FALCONS, BALTIMORE RAVENS, CAROLINA PANTHERS, DETROIT LIONS, HOUSTON TEXANS, JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS, LOS ANGELES RAMS, MIAMI DOLPHINS, MINNESOTA VIKINGS, OAKLAND RAIDERS, AND TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS.**

While at the Forum, participants will also compete in a group case study competition. Made up of eight groups, the competition will require students to present on one of the following topics selected by NFL clubs: Diversity Among Front Office Staff; HBCU Fan Engagement; Engaging Local University Students; Maintaining Employee Retention; Diversity and Inclusion Employee Engagement Plan; Cyber Security, Fan Safety and Stadium Security Plan; Social Media Engagement Plan; Engaging Women Supporters. Each group will present its case study to a panel of NFL and club executives. The first and second place winners will be recognized during a dinner reception held at the College Football Hall of Fame. Additionally, select participants will win the opportunity to complete an **NFL EXPERIENCESHIP** at the 2020 Pro Bowl in Orlando, FL, and Super Bowl LIV in Miami, FL. The NFL Experienceship program aims to connect, develop, and provide 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.

Ahead of the 2019 Celebration Bowl between North Carolina A&T and Alcorn State, both teams will attend the Forum's team breakfast. In each session, student-athletes will hear from NFL Manager of Player Engagement and NFL Legend **USAMA YOUNG** as well as founder of Athlete Nexus and best-selling author of "Surviving the Lights", Tywana Smith on life as a professional football player.

"Once again, the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference is honored to partner with the NFL to provide opportunities for our students during the week of the Celebration Bowl for the fourth consecutive year," said **DR. DENNIS E. THOMAS**, Commissioner of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC). "Having the opportunity to network and dialogue with NFL front office, human resource and team personnel in an intimate setting is an invaluable experience which should benefit our students in their future employment opportunities."

"The Southwestern Athletic Conference is once again excited to partner with the National Football League (NFL) and the Careers in Football Forum," said **DR. CHARLES MCCLELLAND**, Southwestern Athletic Conference Commissioner. "These types of opportunities for professional development have provided students within the Southwestern Athletic Conference high level experience that has catapulted many of them to productive careers at the collegiate and professional levels. We look forward to partnering with the NFL for another successful forum and we know that our students look forward to this event each and every year."

Since 2016, the NFL Careers in Football Forum has introduced more than 270 students and entry-level athletic department administrators to career opportunities in professional football through collaboration with all four HBCU athletic conferences in tandem with the Celebration Bowl.

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