

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI's Bell and Flemming Join HBCU Scholars for 2023 Cohort

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From left to right: Jackeima Flemming and Michael Bell. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS TRACK AND FIELD FEDERATION.

Two representatives from UVI have been selected for the 2023 cohort of the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Recent UVI graduate Michael Bell and senior Jackeima Flemming have joined this prestigious program, which enjoys an HBCU participation rate of over 70 percent.

The 2023 cohort is comprised of 102 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. They were chosen from a pool of more than 300 applicants, hailing from 29 different states and countries. The program recognizes these students for their achievements in academics, leadership, and civic engagement. This year's cohort is the largest since the inception of the program in 2014.

UVI Provost Dr. Camille McKayle expressed the university's pride in the students. "Michael Bell and Jackeima Flemming have taken advantage of many of the out-of-classroom opportunities that UVI offers. They are indeed standouts as on-campus student leaders. I look forward to witnessing their continued growth as they serve as ambassadors of the White House Initiative on HBCUs," stated McKayle.

Echoing the sentiments, Dr. Sharon Honore, associate professor in the UVI Communication Unit, said, "Michael and Jackeima are outstanding students and role models. I know they will continue to excel and proudly represent UVI and the HBCU community while taking part in this prestigious program."

St. Croix native Michael Bell graduated from UVI in 2023 with a degree in communications. He served as the president of the UVI Association of Black Journalists Chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists and participated in the White House Press briefing with Vice President Kamala Harris.

Marketing major Jackeima Flemming, originally from St. Kitts, serves as the president of the UVI Student Government Association. She also holds the titles of Miss UVI (2021-22), Miss National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame in 2021, and the reigning Miss Black International Ambassador 2022-2023. Flemming has numerous accolades, including a first-place victory in the HBCU Truist-Thurgood Marshall Innovation and Ideation Business Challenge.

U.S. Secretary of Education, Miguel Cardona, applauded the scholars, stating, "Our 2023 HBCU Scholars are talented students who embody the culture of excellence and inclusion championed by our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities. I congratulate each of our 2023 HBCU scholars on this prestigious recognition and thank them for their commitment to serving their communities."

As part of their responsibilities, Bell and Flemming will serve as ambassadors of the White House Initiative on HBCUs, the U.S. Department of Education, and UVI. They are expected to uplift their communities, unite others around student success, and work to strengthen democracy.

The scholars will have the opportunity to present their ideas at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center during the National HBCU Week Conference in September. Furthermore, they will attend the 2023 HBCU Week National Annual Conference, with the program aiming to enhance professional development and access to post-graduation opportunities.