

# Celebrating UNH's Black Pioneers

**Weekend pulls together alumni from 1960s and 1970s, inducts nine into Diversity Hall of Fame**

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Friday, July 10, 2015

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UNH hosted a Pioneer Black Alumni Weekend recently to pay homage to those who paved the way for future generations by being among the first students of color to enroll at UNH.

The weekend also featured the induction of nine new members of the UNH Alumni Diversity Hall of Fame: Yusuf Ali El '72, Alfred McClain Jr. '84, Edward Bruce Bynum '70, Lawrence Woods '72, Joseph Hill '73, Gregory Banks '74, Warren Hardy Scott '73, Yvette Olivia George '71 and Deborah Bynum-Morgan '73.

The evening was organized by John Laymon '73, who wanted to bring together the living legends of the 60s and 70s at UNH. It also brought together alumni with today's students of color, allowing them to meet with some of the school's first African-American students, and hear about their experiences here.

Laymon told the evening's attendees that while the group gathered that weekend was an impressive group of groundbreakers, it was by no means the entire roster.

"We weren't the first blacks here, but we were the first large group," Laymon said.

He recalled the 60s and 70s at UNH and boasted about of the Diversity Hall of Fame inductees — from their accomplishments on campus, to the careers and interests they have pursued since graduating. He recalled a sit-in on Thompson Hall lawn in 1969, where black students demanded things like an increase in minority students and faculty, and also a new name.

"We were called 'disadvantaged students,' and we didn't like that. We had James Brown, we were black and proud," Laymon said. They also demanded a black house, a place where students of color could gather to socialize, and also maintain their culture — even when that just meant having breakfast with grits.

Sean McGhee, director of the [Office of Multicultural Student Affairs](#), emceed the awards ceremony, during which current students from the [Black Student Union](#), MOS:DEF and the [UNH chapter of the National Society for Black Engineers](#) presented each inductee with their UNH pin and a framed certificate.

For the alumni, it was also a chance to catch up with classmates they hadn't seen in decades, reminisce about their early days at UNH, and the relationships they forged during those years of unrest on America's college campuses, from Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, to the Vietnam War, the Kent State shootings and more.

"It's nice to be connected again — a big part of your life was those four years at UNH. I haven't seen some of these people in 20 years. It's good to bring people back," said Gregory Banks '74.

Lawrence Woods agreed.

"I think it's a nice recognition that us coming here was beneficial to both parties. We gained the experience and education, and UNH gained through the diversity of people of color coming here. There were relationships created during those years that have lasted a lifetime," he said.

**CLICK ON ANY PHOTO BELOW TO READ EACH INDUCTEE'S STORY, AS PROVIDED IN THEIR BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.**



**Yusuf Ali El '72**

**Yvette George '71**

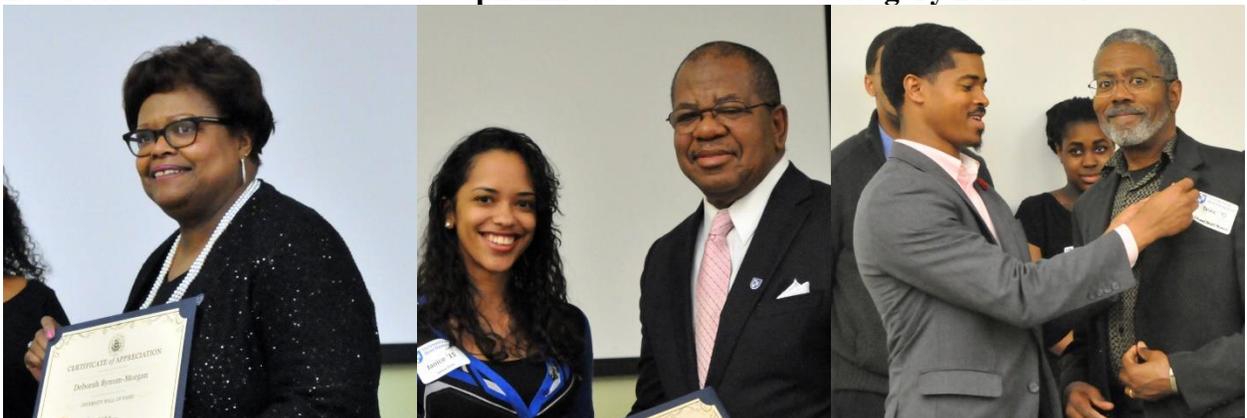
**Alfred McClain Jr. '84**



**Lawrence Woods '72**

**Joseph Hill '73**

**Gregory Banks '74**



**Deborah  
Bynum-Morgan '73**

**Warren Hardy Scott '73**

**Edward Bruce Bynum '70**

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