

## UF's black alumni celebrating 50th

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This year marks the 50th Anniversary of W. George Allen's achievement as the first African-American student to graduate from the University of Florida (UF).

This weekend the university's black alumni will commemorate that historic milestone and their legacy.

Black alumni from the University of Florida expect Gators from the 1960s through today to return to Gainesville in record numbers Oct. 12-14, and are gearing for a special celebration of a significant milestone in the university's history.

All UF alumni and citizens throughout the state are welcome to attend. To register or get more information for the UF Black Alumni 50th Anniversary Commemoration Weekend visit [aba.ufalumni.ufl.edu](http://aba.ufalumni.ufl.edu)

The culminating event of the weekend is the Commemoration Dinner and Awards Program which will honor leaders who have made significant contributions to diversity at the University of Florida or in their professional fields of endeavor.

George H. Starke Jr. and W. George Allen will be honored as the first African-American student and first graduate, respectively; pioneer alumni athletes Ron Coleman, Willie Jackson Sr., and Don Gaffney will be honored for their role in integrating UF athletics.

Marshall Criser Jr., eighth president of UF, will be honored as a visionary who approved the concept and formal establishment of the Association of Black Alumni.

Yvette Miley, a Riviera Beach native now MSNBC News vice president and executive editor (New York); Mike Ricketts, president and CEO of Quality Packaging Specialists International (Pennsylvania); and Eugene Pettis (Fort Lauderdale), president-elect of the Florida Bar who will become the first African-A

merican president in the 105-year history of the state's 93,000 attorneys, are among the leaders who will be honored at the event.

Underscoring the significance of the weekend activities, Florida Supreme Court Justice Peggy Quince and NAACP National Board Vice Chairman Leon Russell will participate in a Saturday morning Champagne Brunch and Virgil Hawkins Legacy Symposium, during which they will headline a panel that includes a discussion of strategies employed by civil rights leaders to integrate educational institutions in the Jim Crow South.

The Levin College of Law and the University of Florida Alumni Association are partnering with the Association of Black Alumni for the historic celebration. The law school will host an Opening Ceremony and public program for university officials and staff, students, alumni, and the public.

"I have been inspired by the calls and emails I've received from black alumni who have not been back to Gainesville in years, yet are making it a point to get back for this occasion," said Terry Nealy, national president of the UF Association of Black Alumni.

"They are genuinely looking forward to reuniting with old teammates, classmates and friends — I think this is going to be a special weekend for all of us, regardless of when we were at the University of Florida."

\*Pictured above is Yvette Miely and W. George Allen.