



## **Lee Johnson, Paine College- c/o 2010, Management Information Systems**



**Name :** Lee Johnson

**Your HBCU :** Paine College

**Graduation Year :** 2010

**Major :** Management Information Systems

### **1. Where are you from? Who introduced you to HBCUs?\***

I was born and raised in Decatur, GA. I am an alumnus of Southwest Dekalb High School (2006). I can say my family introduced me to HBCUs. My parents are both alumni of Paine College and my older sister is an alumna from Howard University. I have three older cousins who also graduated from Paine College, one of which was a recruiter the year I graduated from High School. He personally took me down to Augusta, GA to tour the school and meet current students to gain insight on the HBCU experience. From there, that's when my love for HBCUs began...



Lee J, Jr.-Learning & Development Trainer for Microsoft

### **2. Why did you choose an HBCU over a pwi?\***

I have nothing against Predominantly White Institutions. During my college application process, I applied to HBCUs and PWIs with interest in going to whichever school provided the best possible learning and college experience. I chose an HBCU over a PWI because of the strong HBCU lineage my family created for me. Their guidance and support inspired me to follow in their footsteps. Also, I believed that it was important for me to learn and grow at an institution where we, as a race, are the majority and not the minority. I was proud to walk on campus and see so many variations of melanin and black excellence exuding through the campus halls and classrooms.

### **3. What is the story of your "experience" at Your HBCU given its heralded status as a stellar and prestigious institution?\***

My HBCU "experience" at Paine College was one I will never forget! I took tremendous pride in the HBCU I chose to attend, from the moment I became Mr. Freshman in 2006, to becoming Mr. Paine College 2008-2009, and until I walked across the stage in 2010 with a plethora of accolades and awards. However, the most important thing I earned throughout my college experience was my educational, mental, psychological, and spiritual balance as a man, ready to take on anything coming my way. I enjoyed every aspect of my college experience. The college chants we created on the Quad, heated competition in the Homecoming Dorm stepshows, spontaneous flag-football tournaments/basketball games sparked on campus, the electric energy at the boy/girls basketball games, the beginning of DJ moments with some of my best friends in the Student Center, witnessing some of my friends join fraternities/sororities of their desire, playing alongside the PC baseball team in the SIAC tournament, and so many more. Homecoming at Paine College is

literally a HUGE family reunion where everyone rejoices and reminisces on the priceless memories we've experienced at our beloved institution. We meet with the current students and pique their interest about their experiences and find ways to support their future. Paine College is a small number in student body, but extremely large in support of each other as a family. I lived by our "Paine College Ideal" and motto: "You Can Get There From Here."

#### **4. "First time" experiences at your HBCU?\***

"First time" experiences I had the best moments during Freshman Orientation week. The Orientation Team was phenomenal setting the bar on creating PC Pride, passionately singing "P-C-L Got Soul" at the top of their lungs as we set foot on campus. They helped every freshman and family move their belongings into dorms, learn points of contact, and became members of the Paine College family. This tradition inspired me to join OT and create the same experiences for freshman throughout my college matriculation.

#### **5. Who are the professors that have impacted your life in and out of the classroom? How did they do that?\***

Mr. Pontoo- He encouraged me to work through the woes of HBCU "enhancement" courses. Although I was skilled in math, enhancement courses do not provide any college credit upon completion. So, he worked with me to ensure I passed the course. Ms. Wilson- I looked to Ms. Wilson like a mother away from home. She engaged in tough conversations with me, pushed me when I felt like giving up, and always found a way to make me laugh. Dr. Cardenas- "Dr.C" was what we called her, was a key anchor in the Business Administration department. She was a cool, down-to-earth professor that did not take mediocre effort from her students. She pushed me in each of her classes to believe in myself as a future business man and see the bigger picture beyond college. Creating business plans, researching Fortune 500 companies, and engaging in thought-provoking dialogue paved the way for me to succeed after graduation. Dr. Etinge- Worked as a Professor and Director of Student Affairs, Dr. Etinge was a charismatic, laid-back man. He gained trust in my parents by conveying transparency on concerns in college, plus sharing his personal phone numbers in case of emergencies. He earned my trust by listening to my interests and constantly checking in with me to see how classes and student-life involvement was going. He was harder on me because I was in leadership capacities and represented myself, my family, and the school at all times. Dr. Pollard - Hands down, he was the coolest, most down-to-earth African American History teacher. Hands down.



Lee J,Jr.-Graduate from Paine College 2010

#### **6. What sports do/did you play at your HBCU? What positions?**

I played with the Paine College baseball team. I played all outfield positions (Center, Left, Right).

#### **7. What is your major? and Why did you choose it?**

I chose Management Information Systems because I have a passion for Information Technology. I

grew up reading tech magazines, manipulating computer hardware, and learning MacOS and Windows operating systems. I dreamed of working for a large tech company, which became reality in 2011 when I got hired with Microsoft.

### **8. How are you positively active on campus? (e.g. clubs, SGA, etc.)**

I can honestly say I participated in nearly everything my beloved institution could provide. To sum it all up, here is a list of things I did: -Mr. Freshman 2006-2007 -Mahogany Essence Dance Team - Sophomore Class Vice President 2007-2008 -Rotaract Club -Paine College Baseball Team -Mr. Paine College 2008-2009 -Fall 2008 Initiate of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated (Eta Alpha Chapter) -Student Government Association Board Member 2009-2010

### **9. How did you overcome your nervousness about going to college?**

During the summer before my first year at Paine College, I talked to some of my family and friends that attended and graduated from college. The nerves building within me were primarily "What-if" scenarios that struck fear in me fitting in, getting along with people, and ultimately succeeding. My dad kept it simple and gave me the best advice, "As long as you remember where you've come from, represent yourself and your family, and give 'em hell, nothing can stop you." I keep those words close to my heart everyday.

### **10. Are you a member of a fraternity?**

Fall 2008 Initiate of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated (Eta Alpha Chapter).

### **11. How did your HBCU help you to transition into your careers workforce?**

Paine College provided me with tools to hone my craft in information technology and build confidence with public speaking by serving in multiple capacities. My college advisor aligned my educational skills with my passion to work for a large tech company by challenging me to learn as much as possible on programming languages and certifications. Everything I learned prepared me for the rigorous process of job applications and selling my true value. I have worked at Microsoft for eight years, in which seven years have been with Microsoft Retail. I transitioned from Retail to Microsoft Cloud Operations + Innovation in 2018 as a Learning & Development Trainer in the Northern Virginia Data centers.