



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**WeCOACH Partners with Conferences Representing Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**

February 21, 2023 – WeCOACH is proud to announce a historic partnership with all five HBCU collegiate athletics conferences to support and increase the number of women coaches of color in the profession. All HBCU and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) not affiliated with an HBCU athletic conference are also included in this partnership. As our newest WeCOACH members, over 900+ women coaches from these esteemed institutions and conferences now have access to year-round professional growth and leadership development programs, including participation in WeAMPLIFY, an initiative created in 2020 to drive conversations and change surrounding social and institutional barriers. WeCOACH aims to amplify the voices, presence, and experiences of women coaches of color nationwide.

The partnering conferences representing 56 institutions include: the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA), Gulf Coast Athletic Conference (GCAC), Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC), Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAC), and Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC). Four of these conferences are affiliated with the NCAA, and we welcome the GCAC as our first-ever NAIA conference-wide member, further expanding our mission to serve women coaches in all national collegiate athletic organizations.

"The GCAC is excited to partner with WECOACH to provide our coaches with opportunities for expert programming to propel their professional development. Thanks to CEO Vanessa Fuchs, her team, as well as board member Dr. Ingrid Wicker McCree and Dr. Renae Myles-Payne for their passion and commitment to increasing the number of women coaches nationwide," said Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes, GCAC Commissioner.

This partnership also features a collaboration with the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota, as well as the NCAA Inclusion and Leadership Development Offices, to expand the research available on women coaches of color. Based on the 2021-22 Women in College Coaching Report Card released by the Tucker Center, women coaches of color are vastly underrepresented (7.3%) as Division I head coaches of women's teams. The NCAA's 2022 report, *The State of Women in College Sports*, estimated about 16% of female head coaches of women's teams in all three NCAA divisions are minority women, and minority women hold around 24% of assistant coaching positions for women's teams. Tucker Center Director, Dr. Nicole M. LaVoi notes, "The Tucker Team is honored to collaborate with the WeCOACH community to design action-oriented research that will help remove barriers and increase supports for women coaches of color."

"This powerful partnership has been made possible through grant funding from the Truist Charitable Fund to expand the impact of our WeAMPLIFY program and will feature monthly professional development initiatives, both in-person and virtual," said Vanessa Fuchs, CEO of WeCOACH. "Our organization exists to move the numbers of women in coaching and the current data on women of color tells us an investment of resources and dedicated action is necessary to close the gaps. By exponentially increasing women coaches of color in the profession, not only will we see the overall numbers start to move at a faster rate, but most importantly, female student-athletes

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across the country will benefit from seeing women leaders in sport who look like them, which will help them catch a vision for their own lives and careers.”

The CIAA is the first HBCU conference-wide member to join WeCOACH. “This partnership with WeCOACH aligns with our strategic efforts to provide leadership opportunities for our coaches and administrators,” said CIAA Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams. “Anytime we can position the CIAA to be in a space of advocacy and change and provide opportunities for growth and gain from an organization like WeCOACH, it is a win for our conference. The statistics reveal the direct need to identify more female coaches at all levels and the CIAA is always on board to help move the needle in shaping and preparing the women of our conference to take the helm when the opportunity avails.”

SWAC Commissioner Dr. Charles McClelland shared, “the Southwestern Athletic Conference is extremely excited to partner with WeCOACH for programming and initiatives that we truly feel will positively impact the coaches and administrators within our league.” This unique program will undoubtedly serve as a catalyst towards advancing our conferences and our HBCUs while simultaneously providing the participants with professional development and opportunities that will help shape the foundation of their respective careers. This partnership is a win-win for our league and all parties involved and we look forward to celebrating the success that will follow its implementation.”

MEAC Commissioner Sonja Stills spoke about how WeCOACH’s plan aligns with the MEAC’s mission and more. “Providing opportunities and pushing for more inclusive leadership spaces, both in athletics and in general, is at the foundation of what we do in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference. Particularly on the heels of Title IX’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it’s incumbent upon us to continue working to make those opportunities available for women. The MEAC is proud to support WeCOACH and look forward to doing our part in advocating for the women coaches in our conference – both current and forthcoming as our student-athletes graduate and transition into the professional world.”

“The SIAC is excited to support the mission and vision of WeCOACH in its effort to recruit, advance, and retain women coaches in all sports and levels through its year-round professional growth & leadership development programs. The SIAC strives to create an inclusive culture that encourages women to lead and provides opportunities for access to roles in leadership on and off the playing fields. This partnership ensures our core principles are aligned with our quest to create a diverse talent pool for our member institutions,” said Anthony Holloman, SIAC Commissioner.

In addition to WeAMPLIFY, the women coaches representing these conferences will benefit from year-round programs and resources, including the NCAA Women Coaches Academy, Academy 2.0, Regional Workshops, Mentor Program, monthly Video Chats, Breakthrough Summit, and more. To learn more about WeCOACH member benefits, visit [wecoachsports.org/membership/why-join](https://wecoachsports.org/membership/why-join).

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### **About the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA)**

Founded in 1912, the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) is the first, and longest running, African American athletic conference in the U.S. and one of the most recognized conferences in Division II. The CIAA conducts 14 championships attended by more than 150,000 fans from around the country. In 2020, the conference celebrates the special 75th anniversary of its Championship Basketball Tournament - an event that has become a must-see in the African American community. The Basketball Tournament has been honored as a 2019 Champion of Economic Impact in Sports Tourism by Sports Destination Management, the leading publication with the largest circulation of sports event planners and tournament directors in the sports tourism market, for both 2018 and 2019.

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Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, the CIAA is governed by the Presidents and Chancellors of its 12 member-institutions: Bowie State University, Claflin University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Lincoln University of Pennsylvania, Livingstone College, Saint Augustine's University, Shaw University, Virginia State University, Virginia Union University, and Winston-Salem State University. To get the latest information about the CIAA, visit [theciaa.com](http://theciaa.com).

### **About the Gulf Coast Athletic Conference (GCAC)**

The GCAC is celebrating its 40th year as a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). The GCAC is one of only five conferences comprised of members representing Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the United States. The GCAC membership includes Dillard University (LA), Fisk University (TN), Oakwood University (AL), Philander Smith College (AR), Rust College (MS), Southern University at New Orleans (LA), Tougaloo College (MS), and Wiley College (TX). The University of the Virgin Islands joins the conference July 1, 2023, becoming the ninth member of the GCAC. The GCAC sponsors championships in Men and Women's Basketball, Men and Women's Cross Country, Men, and Women's Track and Field, Women's Volleyball, and Baseball. For more information, visit [gcaconf.com](http://gcaconf.com).

### **About the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC)**

The Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) is in its 52nd year of intercollegiate competition with the 2022-23 academic school year. Located in Norfolk, Va., the MEAC is made up of eight outstanding historically black institutions across the Atlantic coastline: Coppin State University, Delaware State University, Howard University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Morgan State University, Norfolk State University, North Carolina Central University and South Carolina State University. For more information, visit [meacsports.com](http://meacsports.com).

### **About the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC)**

The SIAC is a NCAA athletic conference consisting primarily of historically black colleges and universities with headquarters in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. The SIAC includes 14 member institutions (Albany State University, Allen University, Benedict College, Central State University, Clark Atlanta University, Fort Valley State University, Kentucky State University, Lane College, LeMoyne-Owen College, Miles College, Morehouse College, Savannah State University, Spring Hill College, and Tuskegee University), which are located within a contiguous six-state footprint (Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee and Ohio). The SIAC sponsors seven men's and six women's sports and is a proud member of the NCAA Division II. For more information, visit [thesiac.com](http://thesiac.com).

### **About the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC)**

The Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) is considered one of the premier HBCU conferences in the country and currently ranks among the elite in the nation in terms of HBCU alumni playing with professional sports teams. Current championship competition offered by the league for men includes baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, indoor track and field, outdoor track and field and tennis. Women's competition is offered in the sports of basketball, bowling, cross country, golf, indoor track and field, outdoor track and field, soccer, softball, tennis and volleyball. For more information, visit [swac.org](http://swac.org).

### **About WeCOACH**

Founded in 2011, WeCOACH is a one-of-a-kind nonprofit dedicated to recruiting, advancing, and retaining women coaches in all sports and levels through year-round professional growth & leadership development programs. Prior to Title IX, over 90% of women's collegiate sports teams were coached by women. Today, 50 years later, data indicates that number has decreased to a stagnant 41% in all three NCAA Divisions, with only 7.3% women coaches of color. Five percent of women coach men's teams, and at the youth level, the data is hard to estimate, approximately less than 20% of teams are coached by women. As part of its year-long Title IX 50th Anniversary campaign, WeCOACH launched MOVE the NUMBERS to help change the landscape for women coaches and to impact history for the next 50 years. For more information, visit [wecoachsports.org/50th](http://wecoachsports.org/50th).