

THE BLACK BOYS & MEN NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

WORKING TOGETHER TO CHANGE CONDITIONS AND ELEVATE LIVES



**FIVE YEARS OF IMPACT
2022-2026**

Grand Valley State University
Battle Creek, Michigan
Grand Rapids, Michigan

THE VISION

The Architect: Dr. B. Donta Truss

The Black Boys & Men Symposium was established through the vision and leadership of Dr. B. Donta Truss, who first began developing the concept while serving at Shippensburg University before bringing that vision to Grand Valley State University.

Recognizing the need for a dedicated space where educators, community leaders, practitioners, researchers, advocates, and students could come together to address the opportunities and challenges facing Black boys and men, Dr. Truss worked to transform that vision into action.

What began as a vision has grown into a nationally recognized gathering focused on advancing educational attainment, leadership development, mentorship, workforce readiness, health and wellness, and community impact.

Since its inception in 2022, the Symposium has served as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue, collaborative action, and lasting partnerships committed to improving outcomes for Black boys and men across the nation.



“

The future of Black Boys and Men cannot depend on moments of inspiration alone. It requires sustained investment, intentional partnerships, courageous leadership, and institutions willing to move from conversation to action.”

— **Dr. B. Donta Truss**

Vice President for Enrollment Development & College Futures

THE BEGINNING

2022

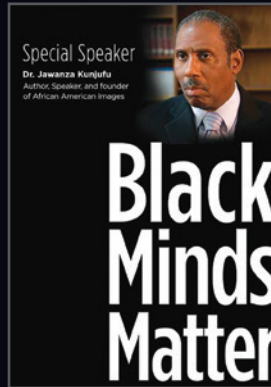
The inaugural Black Boys & Men Symposium established a foundation for meaningful dialogue and action centered on the experiences, aspirations, and success of Black boys and men.

Held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the Symposium brought together educators, community leaders, students, and advocates committed to creating stronger pathways for achievement and opportunity.

Featuring keynote speakers Dr. Michael Eric Dyson and Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, the opening conversations challenged participants to think boldly about leadership, responsibility, and collective action in support of future generations.

Key Themes:

Leadership, Equity, Systems Change, Collective Responsibility





..... BUILDING MOMENTUM

Building on the success of its inaugural year, the Symposium continued to grow in both participation and impact.

National voices, including Bakari Sellers and Dr. Adolph Brown challenged attendees to engage in courageous conversations surrounding education, leadership, identity, and opportunity.

The second year reinforced the Symposium's commitment to creating practical solutions while building a community of individuals dedicated to advancing positive outcomes for Black boys and men.

Key Themes:

Challenging Assumptions, Student Potential, Authentic Leadership, Personal Growth



2023



EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION

The third annual Symposium marked a significant milestone in the growth of the movement.

Featuring nationally recognized leaders including Jalen Rose, Dr. Walter Kimbrough, and Dr. Rashad Richey, the event broadened discussions around education, mentorship, athletics, leadership, and community engagement.

The energy throughout the Symposium reflected a growing recognition that improving outcomes for Black boys and men requires collaboration across sectors and generations.

Key Themes:

Exposure Creates Opportunity, Educational Achievement, Mentorship, Changing the Narrative



2024



..... BECOMING NATIONAL

As participation and interest continued to expand, the Symposium entered a new chapter in 2025.

To reflect its growing reach and influence, the event officially became the Black Boys & Men National Symposium.

Keynote speakers Judge Greg Mathis, Reginald Beaty and Tony Owens (Two Men and a Stool), and Steve Pemberton challenged attendees to lead with resilience, purpose, accountability, and action while engaging in conversations focused on mentorship, education, workforce development, and community impact.

The release of A Mentorship Handbook for Black Boys: Empowering Potential further strengthened the Symposium's commitment to providing practical tools and resources that extend beyond the conference experience.

Key Themes:

Mentorship, Structure, Accountability, Community Support



Empowering Potential

A Mentorship Handbook for Black Boys

THE BLACK BOYS & MEN NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM



LOOKING AHEAD 2026

As the Symposium celebrates five years of impact, the vision for the future remains clear.

The move to Battle Creek marks an important milestone in the Symposium's continued growth and commitment to expanding its reach, partnerships, and community impact throughout Michigan and beyond.

The relationships, partnerships, and momentum generated through the Symposium continue to inspire new opportunities for collaboration, research, mentorship, and community engagement.

Among those opportunities is the continued exploration of the Black Boys & Men National Institute, an initiative designed to expand the work of the Symposium beyond an annual gathering and support year-round learning, research, partnership development, professional engagement, and strategic action.

The 2026 Symposium will feature nationally recognized leaders including Dr. Walter Kimbrough, Steve Pemberton, and Dr. Steve Perry as the conversation continues to evolve and grow.

While the work continues to evolve, the commitment remains unchanged: creating pathways that support the success and well-being of Black boys and men for generations to come.

Key Themes:

Action, Leadership, Collaboration, Lasting Impact



Action & Impact

AWARD RECIPIENTS



2024

Dr. B. Donta Truss



2025

Dr. Kimberly Carter

2026

Joseph M. Stewart & Family

The Black Boys & Men National Symposium is proud to recognize Joseph Stewart with the 2026 Action & Impact Award for his lifelong commitment to education, service, leadership, and community impact.

A respected business leader, former Grand Valley State University Trustee, and champion for future generations, Stewart has dedicated his life to creating opportunities for others and advancing equity through mentorship, philanthropy, and civic engagement.

Guided by the principle of Ubuntu—the belief that our humanity is connected through one another—his legacy continues to inspire individuals, families, and communities throughout Michigan and beyond.



... THE TEAM BEHIND THE SYMPOSIUM ...

The success of the Black Boys & Men National Symposium is made possible through the collective efforts of committed leaders, partners, volunteers, and advocates who believe deeply in this work.



Jason Cronkrite



Benardo J. Dargan



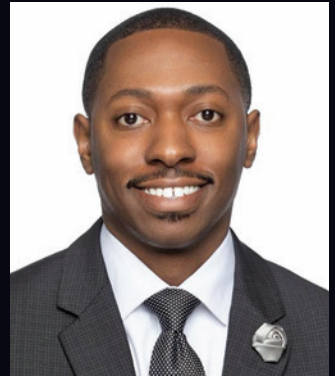
Tyrish Garrett



Marilyn Gilbreath



Adrian Hall



Adam Harris



Dr. Marlene Kowalski-Braun



India Manns



Samantha Mayse

We proudly recognize the members of the Symposium Steering Committee whose leadership and service have helped shape the experience and impact of the Symposium.



Dr. Taran L. McZee



Angelina Quezada-Reynolds



Amanda Rainey



Kobe Rhynes



Al Shifflett



Dr. B. Donta Truss



Dr. Danny Vélez



Dr. LuWanna Williams

PARTNERS IN IMPACT

The success and growth of the Black Boys & Men National Symposium has been made possible through the generosity, partnership, and shared commitment of organizations and individuals who believe in this work.

As we celebrate five years of impact, we recognize the sponsors and partners whose investments have helped create opportunities for dialogue, learning, mentorship, leadership development, and community engagement.

Together, their support continues to strengthen the Symposium's mission and expand its reach for future generations.

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THE WORK CONTINUES

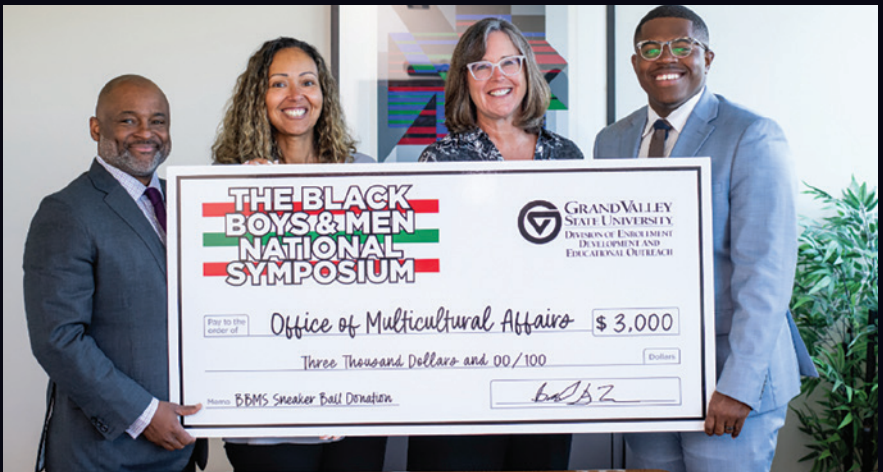
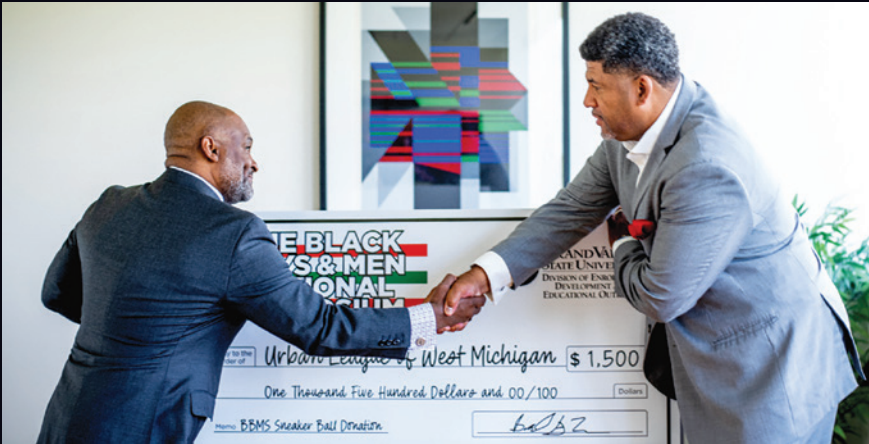
The impact of the Black Boys & Men National Symposium extends beyond the conference experience through investments in organizations and initiatives that support the success and well-being of Black boys and men throughout the year.

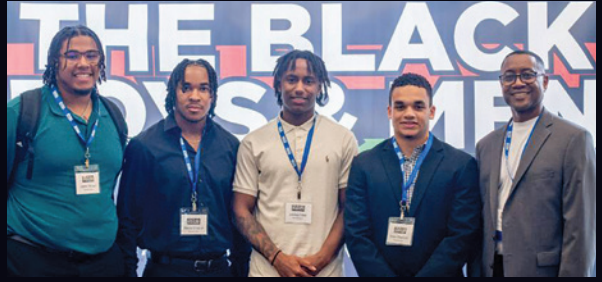
Through the generosity of sponsors, partners, and attendees, the Symposium has provided support to community-based organizations and programs that align with its mission and commitment to creating positive outcomes for Black boys and men.

Highlighted partners include:

- Urban League of West Michigan
- Office of Multicultural Affairs at Grand Valley State University

Together, these investments help extend the reach and impact of the Symposium far beyond the annual gathering.



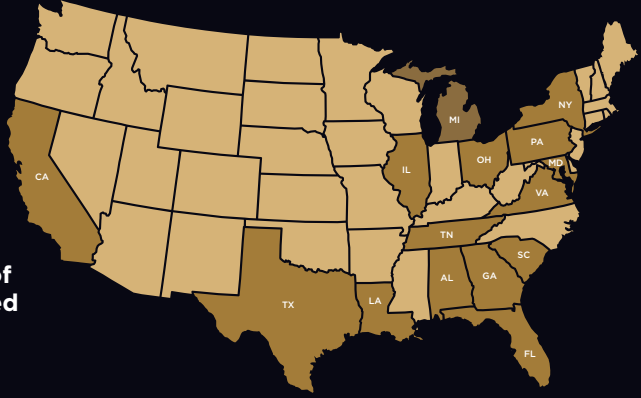


DATA & IMPACT

SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS TRAVEL ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO ATTEND

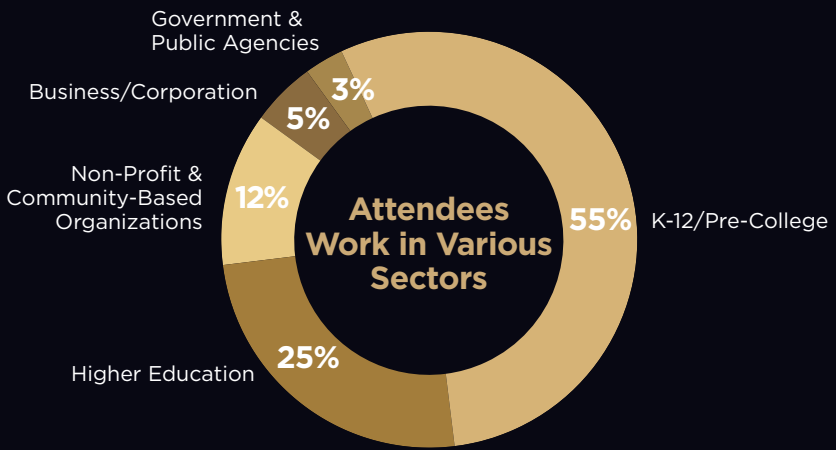
15

States and District of Columbia represented



1,500+

Since 2022, the symposium has welcomed over 1,500 participants.



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DIVISION OF ENROLLMENT DEVELOPMENT AND COLLEGE FUTURES
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY®

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