



Jabari S. Walker

Sustainability and Energy Coordinator at Bowie State University

2024 Individual Leadership Award

"Bowie State University (BSU), a Historically Black University in Maryland, is committed to providing high-quality, accessible education. As Maryland's first historically black institution, Bowie State focuses on empowering diverse students through innovative programs and a nurturing environment. The university emphasizes academic excellence, research, and community engagement, fostering a supportive atmosphere that prepares students for success in a global society. With a dedication to inclusivity and a rich history, Bowie State University continues to shape future leaders and contribute to the advancement of knowledge and social progress. In addition to its 29 undergraduate majors, Bowie State offers 20 master's degree programs, 16 specialty certificates and three doctoral programs with specific focus on science, technology, business, education, and related disciplines.

Jabari Walker is the inaugural Sustainability and Energy Coordinator at Bowie State University in which he spearheads, leads, and organizes comprehensive sustainability events, programs, and projects.

Highlights from his recent efforts include:

Microgrid resilience feasibility study

Mr. Walker is the principal investigator (PI) on a 1-year (18 mos with no-cost extension) microgrid resilience feasibility study funded by the Maryland Energy Administration with support from Optimize Renewables, a renewable energy consultancy agency. This particular project endeavors to create resiliency from multiple renewable energy resources for critical campus energy loads for emergency situations, enable savings over time, and provide paid internships for BSU students.

Natural resources master plan

After becoming aware of an underutilized and unmaintained trail system partially owned by BSU (and the state of Maryland) located on campus, Mr. Walker became the BSU principal investigator on a grant submitted to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

through the University's partner, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. In December 2023 approximately \$580k in funding was received to develop a natural resources master plan for BSU-owned woodlands and wetlands, as well as the state-owned Uhler Natural Resource Management Area adjacent to the BSU Main Campus. The nearby wetlands and forests in that area serve as a major filter for significant campus stormwater runoff. This project will engage BSU students through internships and entry-level jobs, guided field experiences, and course integration, and will ensure the successful restoration and conservation of the nearby habitat. It will also be accessible to the public for recreational purposes.

Maryland Climate Teach-In

In 2023, in his role as co-chair of ECO in the Maryland Commission on Climate Change, Mr. Jabari initiated a plan with workgroup members to create and promote 'The Maryland Climate Teach-In' as an annual week of events focused on climate change education and solutions. Maryland is the only state known to have created this initiative. In its second year, the effort saw over 70 registrants, which is about triple the amount of the previous year. The group solicited the Maryland Teacher of the Year as the event spokesperson and also planned a kick off event which was held at Annapolis High School, the TOTY home which consisted of remarks by the MD Secretary of the Environment and presentation of the declaration by Governor Wes Moore's office of April 1-7, 2024 as Climate Education Week in Maryland (something this same group achieved) in addition to a panel discussion, keynote presentation, and a meditative yoga session. The event was covered by local media.

Climate Career Expo

After receiving several job announcements for students in green fields, in 2022 Mr. Jabari developed, coordinated, and promoted a specialized virtual career fair where students could meet with potential employers in the green & clean energy fields. He also coordinated a virtual roundtable discussion with the Maryland Secretary of the Environment, Ben Grumbles, the President of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Peter Godwin, and BSU President Dr. Aminta Breaux. The event featured over 100 students, and many were successfully retained for various jobs and internships. In 2023, Mr. Jabari transitioned the event to in-person and added a speaking portion which featured two Prince George's County council members as well a representative from the District Heights Mayor's office. Mr. Jabari collaborated with nearby HBCUs- Morgan State and Coppin State Universities to bring their students for this year's event.

Peace Park Restoration

In 2022, Mr. Jabari, along with a coworker, had the vision of restoring an area of campus originally referred to as 'Peace Plot', which consisted of a peace symbol made of tarp and gravel surrounded by trees and picnic tables. Over the years, it had fallen into disuse. As principal investigator for BSU, Mr. Jabari applied for a small grant from Prince George's County Stormwater Division and received funding, enabling the implementation of

conservation landscaping practices using native plant species. This served to create wildlife habitat, reduce stormwater runoff, and provide a communal space and meditative environment. The area has seen over 120 native plants & flowers planted, several trees, the University logo created from natural brick & rock, a solar street light installed, a swinging bench and stormwater signage. During this year's Earth Day celebration, the reformed area featured a ribbon-cutting attended by the BSU President & other special guests.

MOU with US Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Through his relationship with the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge, Mr. Jabari facilitated BSU's partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Foundation through an MOU. BSU is one of a small handful of HBCUs, the only HBCU in Maryland, and the only HBCU in its region (North Atlantic) to sign on to the national MOU. Opportunities enabled by the partnership include internships and access for students to the research facility. The MOU has now been officially signed and is awaiting a formal signing ceremony to be held late in the summer.

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Mr. Jabari took over as the liaison with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay ('the Alliance') in 2020. The Alliance has been collaborating with Bowie State University since 2018 which primarily consisted of occasional seminar offerings to students, an ongoing water monitoring project, and student participation on the annual Chesapeake Watershed Forum. Since then, BSU has strengthened its partnership to include clean-up events, more seminars for the campus community, several events during Earth Week/month, creation of a job for BSU students with the Alliance, restoration efforts, grant applications, and membership on the Steering Committee for the Alliance's HBCU/MSI Chesapeake Bay Summit. The partnership has also allowed the Alliance to form a new partnership with fellow HBCU - Coppin State University in Baltimore.

Collington Retirement Community

Mr. Jabari serves as the POC connecting the Collington Retirement Community with Bowie State University. In early 2021, members from this nearby community expressed interest in creating a partnership to help the surrounding environment and bridge the gap between generations. As a result, this collaboration has seen the two groups work collectively on a major clean-up effort in a county park with a waterway leading to the Chesapeake Bay. BSU now has a staff member on the Community's Foundation board and an annual event known as 'Dinner with the Bulldogs' has been established where students tour the Community and share a meal and discussion with the residents of Collington. Future plans envision help with the Community's garden and a possible paid position for a BSU student to work on green initiatives."